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7. Double-loop learning towards adaptive lifelong learning programming: making it stick

At the diagnosis stage of this research, participating NGOs established that single-loop learning is more common than double-loop learning; NGOs are more likely to change their action strategies than their underlying beliefs and goals. In the three-year PAR following this diagnosis, one NGO engaged in reflection on their learning practice and innovated with the volunteer role and community engagement approaches to push their limits of adaptiveness. In chapter 6 we have seen how this led to several double-loop changes. In this final empirical chapter, I analyse our PAR experience and outcomes to identify what could make such double-loop learning practices and outcomes stick. Based on these insights I revisit Argyris' theory of double-loop learning and expand several of his concepts to situate double-loop learning as a normative practice for transformative change in the field of lifelong learning for development.

7.1 Introduction

So far, our journey with practitioners in education NGOs has illustrated the swampy lowlands of their work in the field of lifelong learning for development. We have also seen how they shape and utilise Organisational Learning Mechanisms (OLMs) to navigate these dilemmas with a keen interest in developing their learners' capabilities. In chapter 4, a rich portrait was sketched illustrating a plethora of unique OLMs across seven education NGOs. On the one hand, we observed that many of the changes reported as a result of organisational learning happened at the single-loop level, neatly fitting within the pre-scripted programme design. However, we also observed that the NGO practitioners enacted their normative professionalism – opening space for learners' and community members' insights or giving them influence over the intervention design. In chapter 5 we utilised a community perspective to analyse the fields emerging around the NGO. We mapped the perspectives of community members to understand how they

would like to be engaged in the collective learning efforts of NGOs. This sub-study revealed that a high number of NGOs operated in the village in a disconnected manner. The relationship between various community actors and NGOs seemed distorted by a clash of logics; the NGOs' project logic ignored the complex and heterogeneous character of communities. This clash of logics was displayed during the community-NGO meeting organised in the context of this research as well. In the fleeting, temporary spaces emerging in the research, we witnessed defensive routines when NGO practitioners and local government representatives engaged in advocacy for their own logic, rather than an inquiry into the perspectives and experiences of youth. Chapter 6 illustrated the potential of double-loop learning interventions to push the perceived limits of adaptiveness. Through a series of PAR activities, the PAR team was able to reframe problematic situations as well as to reconstruct success experiences and the mental models that enabled these successes. Thus, the PAR resulted in various insights about how critical learning spaces could be shaped to support a normative practice in education NGOs (see table 18).

Table 18 Ingredients of critical learning identified in this PAR, chapters 4-7

Chapter	Data source	Insights about critical learning spaces
4	Interviews and co-analysis of the status quo of organisational learning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Bringing in multiple knowledges - Taking the position of 'the other' - Utilising informal spaces - Learning-oriented leadership
5	Collective inquiry into community perceptions of NGO-community collaboration.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Investing in conversational space - Embracing emergence - Dealing with discomfort - Creative partnerships between NGO, community, academia
6	Double-loop learning interventions with the PAR team to investigate their approaches to learning with external actors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Zooming in on micro-situations - Providing conceptual frameworks - Carefully selecting participants - Selecting a dedicated facilitator - Leadership encouraging critical dialogue

In this final empirical chapter¹³, I answer the main research question: How can education NGOs in Uganda create space for double-loop learning involving external actors towards meaningful lifelong learning for development interventions? I particularly speak to an aspect that was largely silent in the previous chapters: did double-loop learning stick? 'To stick' here means both the durability and spread of a learning practice and its results. To distil which factors determine whether double-loop learning sticks, I reconstruct two learning pathways that emerged in this PAR: 1) volunteers as catalysts of double-loop learning, and 2) reframing community engagement. The first is used to illustrate conditions and interventions that enabled durable double-loop learning changes and the second is to illustrate factors stalling critical change. In this chapter, I further support the premise that double-loop learning can function as an emancipatory project which could potentially lead to transformational changes in the field of lifelong learning for development (Bokeno, 2003; Foldy & Creed, 1999). To understand how this might happen requires us to untangle the relationship between learning spaces and their environment. Lipshitz et al. (2007): "we still know very little about the conditions that enable such [cultural] islands to emerge, how they coexist with the dominant culture, and how they might influence it over time" (p. 247). Therefore, I review the emerging spaces in the two pathways in their context and illustrate the interplay between enclaves and the wider field. In doing so, I expand Argyris' original double-loop learning theory by making power and normativity more explicit using field theoretical concepts. In addition, I illustrate a shift in the location of double-loop learning to the border area where the organisation meets its external environment – especially the community the NGO operates in. To provide a foundation for this analysis and expansion of the theory, I first revisit key concepts of Argyris' work. After this, I present the two learning pathways and finally, I present six propositions to expand Argyris' theory towards normative double-loop learning. These propositions are not meant as a universal theory for double-loop learning, rather they aim at situating double-loop learning in the field of lifelong learning for development.

¹³ This chapter presents my personal post-analysis of the PAR process in relation to the theoretical frameworks guiding the research. As such the findings presented here do not necessarily represent the views of the participants.

7.2 Argyris' work on facilitating double-loop learning

7.2.1 *What is double-loop learning and why is it relevant to education NGOs?*

In chapter 2, I problematised that organisational learning does not always lead to transformative change – instead, it can make organisations better at doing the ‘wrong’ thing (also see Pedler & Hsu, 2019). I explored double-loop learning in combination with field theory to argue that organisational learning can be used for positive change if it takes a more critical shape, facilitating reflexivity about problematic beliefs and assumptions that are internalised through processes of socialisation. Double-loop learning is defined by Argyris as: “Double-loop learning occurs when mismatches are corrected by first examining and altering governing variables and then actions” (Argyris, 1999, p. 68). In line with Ernie Stringer’s recommendations, I posed conceptual frameworks to the research participants to ask whether these could help make sense of their life world (Dustman et al., 2014). The most explicit introduction to double-loop learning was made during the leadership workshop in April 2017 and the double-loop learning workshop with the selected programme team in January 2018. In both instances, double-loop learning was introduced in contrast to single-loop learning. Using fictive cases as well as personal experiences, participants tested the usability of the lens of double-loop learning. Communicatively the team confirmed the merit of the concept of double-loop learning and expanded it to fit their context. The team confirmed that they tend to engage in single-loop learning more frequently, which is sometimes insufficient to solve the problems their learners are facing. The team associated double-loop learning particularly with going beyond the predetermined programme activities and theories-of-change.

Not just focusing on hmm probably the activity we had set out to do-
Are we doing it rightly, should we go out for more of these or that but
you're looking at really is that activity actually the right thing for us to
do?

Andrew, double-loop learning workshop

The participants connected double-loop learning to their ideal of investigating what is required to meet the needs of learners and communities and helping them achieve their goals. They noted that double-loop learning would enable them to resist the pressure to

focus on narrow, pre-defined targets, as well as dig deeper into the authentic needs of learners and communities beyond the tokenistic answers.

During the PAR the team expanded the definition of double-loop learning in two ways: moving beyond error-correcting and secondly, moving beyond internal OLMs. Argyris (1999) focuses his definition of double-loop learning on correcting errors. However, when the PAR team was introduced to 'learning from success' (Schechter et al., 2004), this approach to organisational learning resonated deeply with them.

Yeah learning from success, was eh, was a core thing. [...] I always want to critique, to observe and pick out that one thing that sometimes others may not be paying attention to. But I learned to relax, [...] and look at what is that that went well. [...] [...] the other side of the coin that we are looking at now is the success aspect". And the whole session actually was beautiful, to actually get to listen from people's experiences and appreciate what people had done. Riding on the positives there's the energy it creates and yeah so, it's one core thing that I learned.

Andrew, support staff, PAR workshop, December 2018

Learning from success does not mean that learning is less critical – it equally brings theories-in-use to the surface and when done at a group level can lead to others correcting the mental models underlying their action theories. In double column case interviews where the learning from success method was used, we unpacked mental models that helped achieve this success. The action theories that were made explicit were shared with a new cohort of volunteers during their orientation training. In addition, in other interviews where the reframing method was used, success framing came in as a result of double-loop reflection, for example, where several volunteers felt like they had failed to achieve any change, or when Andrew (as quoted above) said he would not consider the event a success unproblematically. What started occurring through redefining success is that we established smaller steps and indicators of success – generating reframing value (Wenger et al., 2011). Double-loop learning to the practitioners, thus, was not simply a process of correcting errors but also proactively scanning for successes and unpacking which mental models enabled team members to achieve this success to find ways to expand this success.

Another facet the PAR team added to double-loop learning is the component of involving external actors. The majority of literature on double-loop learning has focused on internal organisational learning mechanisms (OLMs). Some of these OLMs adopt lenses to scan the environment for new information, developments etcetera (Robinson, 2001; Watkins & O'Neil, 2013) or acknowledge the external environment influences whether organisational learning is productive or not (Lipshitz et al., 2007). In chapter 3 I illustrated that research participants considered double-loop learning and learning with and from external actors two sides of the same coin. Their reasoning was that bringing in the perspective of 'the other' facilitates more critical learning. This external-internal interplay has been the main focus of this PAR. We have gained insights into the theories-in-use of NGO practitioners when they are interacting with external actors – particularly at the community and local government level. We have witnessed the heterogeneity and value pluralism in the communities in which education interventions are delivered. We have untangled clashes of logic and the role of power dynamics between NGOs, their funders and various community actors. Finally, we have seen how learning collectively with 'the other' can boost double-loop learning and change by forming boundary-crossing OLMs. However, as shown in chapters 5 and 6, simply being in the same space is not sufficient. The quality of the relationship, methodology and facilitation style, frequency, venue, etcetera all play a role in ensuring the problematic power dynamics and self-sealing processes are not reproduced. When the conditions are created, such learning spaces can turn into enclaves in which power dynamics and positions shift, new insights can be developed, assumptions about 'the other' tested and – maybe most importantly – new accountability pressures to act on the new theories-in-use can emerge.

Therefore, the initial perspective of practitioners that double-loop learning and learning with external actors go hand in hand offers a helpful expansion of the original focus of double-loop learning. During this PAR we discovered that double-loop learning and collective learning with external actors can be mutually reinforcing in four ways:

- a) Getting data and insights directly from the people affected by the NGO programme enriches the organisation's understanding of the problems (and their root causes) at hand
- b) Presenting an opportunity to collectively investigate and address potential conflicts or discrepancies at the level of beliefs, values and assumptions

- c) Creating accountability pressure to show change on the new theories-of-action and an opportunity to implement these changes together
- d) The enclave factor: directly experiencing and practising ways of relating in a more mutual and inquiry-oriented manner with different power attributes

Throughout the PAR, participants made the concept of double-loop learning their own, but as I mentioned earlier, they also felt double-loop learning was not common enough in education NGOs – leading to mismatches between their education programmes and the needs of learners. In the next section, I explore Argyris’ Model 1 learning theories-in-use which he uses to explain why double-loop learning is difficult to achieve due to the symbolic order that exists in many organisations.

7.2.2 Why is double-loop learning so difficult?

Argyris (1982) noted that double-loop learning is a rare practice that requires intentional effort and skill. He investigated the phenomenon in a variety of organisational contexts and identified recurring patterns in terms of how people respond in learning situations that question their existing mental models. He established that there is a universal theory-in-use across organisations and countries that he summarises into Model 1 theories-in-use (see figure 8).

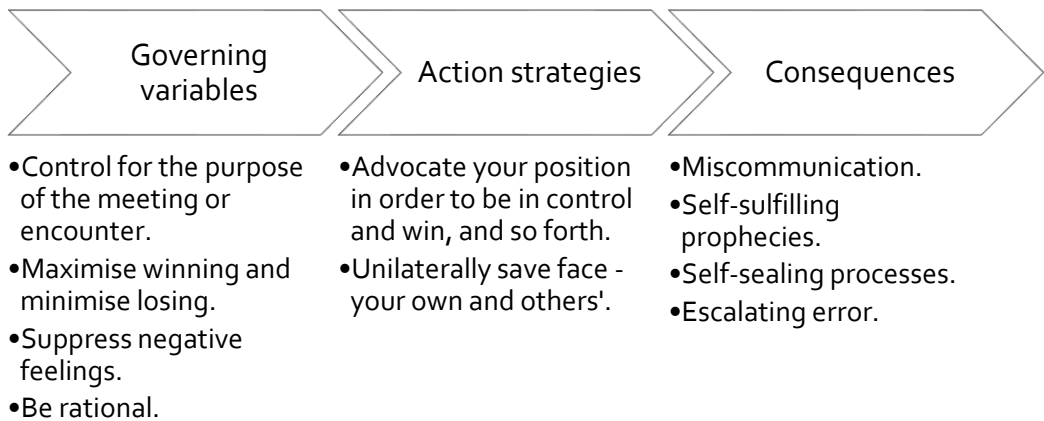


Figure 8 Model 1 theories-in-use (Argyris, 1982, p. 12)

Ultimately, Model 1 reasoning aims at protecting the person against disruptive change – especially in ambiguous and uncertain situations (Argyris, 2010). People internalise and

normalise this theory-in-use through socialisation in the community, education, as well as the workplace. In these social settings, actions in line with model 1 strategies are usually incentivised and celebrated. Model 1 governing variables are self-sealing and self-fulfilling. In other words, whereas members think they act in support of learning and inquiry, their actual actions prevent learning and this goes unnoticed without intentional effort (Argyris, 1977, 1982, 1999, 2002, 2010). In work situations, model 1 theories-of-action can lead to skilled incompetence, whereby people are becoming increasingly efficient at doing the wrong thing and covering up their incompetence.

In broad strokes, we discovered that, when we most need to learn, we paradoxically work hardest at shutting down conversations, shutting down other people, and shutting down ourselves. We tell ourselves and each other, 'don't go there', where 'there' is any sensitive issue that might upset the status quo that envelops us like a cocoon. We have tacitly agreed to rule off limits, to make undiscussable, topics that challenge our accepted sense of self and our comfortable organisational routines. (Argyris, 2010, p. 188)

If a learning situation uncovers an uncomfortable truth about someone's work, a skilled incompetent team may give the impression of being critical without asking about the root causes many may know about. Because the theory-of-action is collectively shared by the team, members will contribute to covering up and saving face of themselves and the other. Some members may be aware of the cover-up approaches, but they too switch on Model 1 learning theories-in-use and cover-up this observation – sustaining the skilled incompetence in an organisation and eventually escalating error (Argyris, 2010). As a result of these defensive routines and miscommunications rooted in Model 1 theories-in-use, people tend to make inconsistent claims or asks – which they (and others) treat as being consistent and make the inconsistency undiscussable (Argyris, 2010).

To enable double-loop learning, Argyris (2010) suggests that organisations need to establish Model 2 learning theories-in-use. This theory-of-action is not focused on protecting oneself but solving problems effectively. He has found that people often espouse this Model 2 reasoning but act in line with learning Model 1; only a few people act consistently on Model 2 theories-in-use.

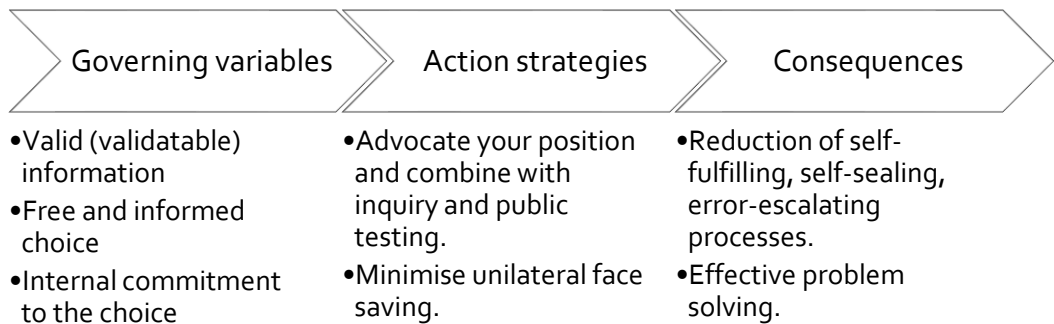


Figure 9 Model 2 theories-in-use (Argyris, 1982, p. 19)

Argyris (1999) warns organisational learning researchers and interventionists not to focus on first-order learning problems, which are those barriers to learning at the level of espoused actions and considerations. Instead, to ensure productive learning occurs, one should address second-order errors, which are those processes through which organisational members cover up their problematic practices and develop taboos, games of control, mixed messages and defensive routines (Argyris, 1999). He proposes that the most effective organisational learning interventions scrutinise the underlying theories-in-use and tackle the problematic elements of Model 1 theories-in-use. By doing so he implicitly touches on dynamics highlighted by Bourdieu (1977) – Model 1 theories-in-use become part of our habitus, forming a durable set of dispositions, harmonising our social activity. Bourdieu in a way speaks of defensive routines *avant la lettre* when he describes the ‘hysteresis effect’: “practices are always liable to incur negative sanctions when the environment with which they are actually confronted is too distant from that to which they are objectively fitted” (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 78). Though more than Argyris, Bourdieu stresses that the symbolic order in a field – albeit Model 1 or Model 2 learning theories-in-use – are constructed and sustained through processes of power. It could be that Model 1 theories-in-use are sustained because they benefit those in positions of power – whether this is consciously acknowledged or not. In section 7.3 I utilise this field theoretical perspective to link the temporary enclaves emerging in this research that displayed Learning Model 2 and more durable transformation of the wider field.

7.2.3 How can people develop double-loop learning skills?

To help people develop double-loop learning skills and overcome Learning Model 1, Argyris developed a method that simulates situations that trigger Model 1 theories-in-use and then raises awareness of participants about their theories-in-use (Argyris, 1977,

1982, 1999, 2002, 2010). In a workshop format, a facilitator engages participants in discussing a fictive case in which the persona fails to achieve their goals in an interaction with a colleague. The participants are asked to advise the persona on how to handle the situation more effectively, the workshop facilitator eventually uses the conversation that emerges as a way to illustrate that the participants, as well as the main character of the case study, get stuck because of Model 1 theories-in-use. From this awareness stage, the facilitator invites participants to develop their own case studies using left and right columns; on the left, writing what was said in a situation and on the right, what the person thought and felt. This case study is then used to investigate one's own learning norms in a given situation. Though these methods have helped some leaders develop double-loop learning skills, Argyris also concludes that some people are not capable of truly developing double-loop learning skills (Argyris, 1999; Friedman & Lipshitz, 1992).

Friedman and Lipshitz (1992) applied Argyris' methods with their college students and faced challenges in instilling double-loop learning skills. In their classes, they facilitated a similar process that exposed students to the discrepancies between their theories-in-use and espoused theories. Upon realising very few students were able to overcome their defensive routines they fine-tuned a modified approach to building double-loop learning skills: the reconceptualisation model. I briefly discuss this model since it offers interesting building blocks for our contextual approach to double-loop learning. To build new interventions they adopted the conditions for learning identified by Schein (1969 as cited in Friedman & Lipshitz, 1992): disconfirmation, indication of guilt-anxiety and creating psychological safety. Disconfirmation involves raising awareness that the mental models of people of particular situations are inconsistent in one way or another. Indication of guilt-anxiety involves people accepting that they are inadequate in one way or another. Psychological safety refers to reducing the threat and anxiety that can be involved in guilt-anxiety or disconfirmation. Friedman and Lipshitz (1992) noted that by being more intentional about providing psychological safety, defensive routines are less likely to be triggered. They create this sense of safety by equipping participants with the conceptual tools to use when engaging in double-loop learning (sense of competence), using non-personal cases to illustrate these concepts safely, and only engage in analysing their own case when competence had been developed. Furthermore, they attributed the difficulty of developing double-loop learning skills to the educational environment rather than the students – acknowledging

that the conventional learning environments students are exposed to dis-incentivise double-loop learning (Friedman & Lipshitz, 1992).

Inspired by this reconceptualisation model, in this PAR I also aimed at achieving all three conditions for learning identified by Schein (see table 19). For the element of indication of guilt anxiety, I utilised very similar approaches to Argyris, for example, through double-column case interviews and group discussions about our theories-in-use, but like Friedman and Lipshitz (1992) I ensured there was a level of psychological safety to engage in this critical form of learning. Even though we highlighted in chapter 5 that feelings of discomfort can play an important role in learning, at the early stages I intentionally aimed at creating safety, for example, by equipping participants with conceptual tools or starting with fictive case studies before diving into personal experiences. In regards to disconfirmation, however, this research used a unique approach to double-loop learning. Here, the external environment played a much more important role. The voices of the external actors were considered but we also critically reviewed assumptions about ‘the other’. This went beyond just collecting insights, to actually trying out new spaces in the border area of the NGO and the community as I illustrate in section 7.3. Before I present the two learning trajectories I reflect on a final theoretical building block Argyris offered towards improving double-loop learning: how it should be evaluated.

Table 19 Overview of strategies contributing to mechanisms of unfreezing

Mechanism of unfreezing	Strategies to realising this mechanism used in this research
a) Disconfirmation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Documenting and feeding in perceptions of various community actors, government officials, fellow NGOs/CBOs, organisational members and - In-depth analysis of cases and scenarios - Metaphors (elephant mapping, alien map) - Critical questioning by the facilitator - Dialogue - What, why, who inquiry - Collective learning activities between staff and volunteers, NGOs and community actors
b) Indication of guilt-anxiety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Diagnosis activities - Co-analysis activities - Double column case interviews

c) Creating psychological safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Voluntary participation - Relationship building, hanging around - Peer-only meetings, one-on-one's to interchanged with multi-actor meetings - Fictive cases - Introducing concepts and tools - Reflexivity of the facilitator
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7.2.4 How can we establish whether double-loop learning occurred?

According to Argyris (1999), learning has only occurred when a new invention has been executed (not just thought of), but he places the bar a little higher than just trying out new action strategies; he promotes changes at a deeper level – second-order errors. In his work on action science Argyris (1999) presents a hierarchy of tests that scholarly consultants or researchers can use, with level 4 being the most rigorous:

1. Predict what will and will not occur under conditions that are consistent with the universe as is – that is, the status quo.
2. Predict the conditions under which the above conditions will persevere.
3. Predict that if the solutions are to be implemented, they will require a context that does not exist in the present universe.
4. Predict the conditions under which 3 will persevere. (Argyris, 1999, p. 314)

Argyris proposes that social scientists should test the alternative theories emerging from their analysis of a social situation to ascertain if it is a viable strategy that actually achieves better results. For this, he promotes an action science approach. "Action science is a form of action research. It shares the values and the participative strategy described above, but it emphasises certain tacit theories-in-use that participants spontaneously bring to situations of practice or research whenever feelings of embarrassment or threat come into play" (Argyris, 1999, p. 433). He refers to Lewin to state that "the development of the theory is critical to the effectiveness of the intervention, and it is the intervention that tests the theory" (Argyris, 1999, p. 437). Though Argyris sets a high bar for rigour in organisational learning interventions, his own research particularly zooms in on the results during an intervention in terms of the quality of the inquiry, but not necessarily what happens after (Robinson, 2001). Therefore, his work does not provide clear

guidance on how to establish whether second-order errors are resolved or a new symbolic order is taking shape.

Earlier in this thesis, I illustrated how field theory can help us track change as a result of organisational learning in various ways. First, by zooming in on individual learning as interconnected with social learning that could have effects beyond the individual onto the wider field. Secondly, by viewing organisational learning as a trajectory in which smaller shifts in thinking, doing and relating can cause transformative change to an entire field (Friedman, 2011). In chapter 5 we utilised the layers of value introduced by Wenger et al. (2011) to trace these smaller shifts over time, depth and sphere of influence.

Table 20 Layers of value created through collective learning (Wenger et al., 2011)

Layer	Examples
1. Immediate value	Meeting new people
2. Potential value	New insights on causes of early school leaving
3. Applied value	Adjusted action plan
4. Realised value	Improved results of an education activity
5. Reframing value	Adopted an alternative vision on quality education

These more nuanced change frameworks enrich the idea that learning could be more or less transformative – just like single- or double-loop learning. They can help identify whether the effects are lasting on the field (second-order errors) or just an issue at the surface in a temporary manner (single-order errors). However, it blurs the lines between single- and double-loop learning as well. Others have cautioned researchers about creating imaginary distinctions between levels of learning. For example, Simonin (2017), who invites organisational learning researchers to gather empirical data to understand the effects and value of learning at each level – cautioning us to consider higher-level learning as better, it could be that single-loop learning is more valuable in certain situations. Foldy and Creed (1999) also illustrate that change as a result of organisational learning is fragmented, multi-layered and often contradictory. They argue that one cannot separate single-loop from double- or triple-loop learning as the three are inter-linked and inter-dependent. “One cannot understand a broader organisational change without attention to individual sites of struggle: how individual employees have participated or resisted, how different work groups have adapted or rebelled, and how

different subcultures have modified the effort. Scholars cannot understand organisational change without detailed attention to the broad and shifting range of reactions and effects it creates" (Foldy & Creed, 1999, p. 225). It is with this perspective in mind that I analyse the effects resulting from the two learning pathways.

7.3 Two pathways to change

Chapter 3 introduced three learning trajectories that emerged in this PAR: 1) volunteers as catalysts of double-loop learning, 2) reframing community engagement and 3) double-loop learning capabilities. Below I reconstruct trajectories 1 and 2 and explore the interplay between the individual spaces and the environment in which they happened (both in and outside the organisation). Based on these trajectories I distil factors that promote or hinder durable double-loop learning. Durable double-loop learning here is associated with conducive spaces for double-loop learning and their effects, but also resolving second-order errors and creating conducive learning norms in wider or related fields.

7.3.1 Learning trajectory 1: Volunteers as catalysts of double-loop learning

Observed outcomes of this trajectory

Early on in this PAR, it became clear that volunteers were key actors in organisational learning; they interact directly with external actors in the community. If this programme team were to improve the way they learn with external actors and feed these insights back into the organisation towards transformative change, the volunteer role would offer a breeding ground for critical organisational learning. Volunteers are gatekeepers at the border of the organisational field; they filter which information comes in, what questions are asked in regards to the education design and they translate the education programme to the realities on the ground. However, as became clear during the volunteer Focus Group Discussion (FGD) in 2017, their recommendations were not being acted on, sustaining several discrepancies and misalignments in the education design. In the PAR several spaces emerged where volunteers and staff – most times together – reflected on the OLMs that involved the volunteers in adapting the programme to unique realities in the various communities (see chapters 3 and 6 for a description of these spaces). Table 21 summarises the original model 1 theory-in-use that we uncovered through the PAR. These theories-in-use were not made explicit in one single seating, rather this unfolded as the PAR process progressed.

Table 21 Examples of how Argyris' Model 1 theory-in-use manifested in managing volunteers¹⁴

Governing variables	Action strategies	Consequences
<p>Control for the purpose of the encounter Beliefs held: <i>"Volunteers won't do anything if they don't have targets"</i></p>	<p>Advocate for your position Strategies used: <i>Continuously remind volunteers of targets. Make bad examples of those who do not meet their targets and praise those who do.</i></p>	<p>Miscommunication Examples identified: <i>'Be creative in the way you teach, but make sure you cover all topics within the timelines and budget', 'Let the groups decide on their own business ideas and plan but only groups who meet the requirements will receive funding.'</i></p>
<p>Maximise winning, minimise losing Beliefs held: <i>"If we don't implement the programme as designed, we shall lose funding and/or positive feedback from the manager/donor".</i></p>	<p>Unilaterally save face (own and the other) Strategies used: <i>Start extra youth groups to ensure at least one is eligible for funding at the end, if I do something people may disagree with, I'll do it without telling others, talk about extremely unethical things to avoid talking about nuanced more common ethical dilemmas.</i></p>	<p>Self-sealing processes Examples identified: <i>Undiscussable ethical beliefs and dilemmas, hiding behind systems and tools that hypothetically fix problems</i></p>
<p>Suppress negative feeling Beliefs held: <i>"As long as you can report progress on the plan you can justify your role and perform well."</i></p>		<p>Self-fulfilling prophecies Examples identified: <i>Activities that do not link to targets are deprioritised – maintaining linear learning and teaching, learning spaces remain tokenistic – receiving socially</i></p>

¹⁴ This table was created by Marit during the preparation of this thesis, it has not been validated by the PAR participants.

		<i>desirable answers, the belief that the donor is not flexible is reinforced by not reporting critical insights to them.</i>
Be rational Beliefs held: <i>“Follow the plan: stick to the targets, follow the curriculum, fit within the reporting template, stay within the budget.”</i>		Escalating error Examples identified: <i>Innovations, improvisation and failure are hidden, confirming that the model-as-designed is effective.</i>

Eventually, the team reframed their action theories resulting in redefining the volunteer role and identified alternative action strategies to set up the volunteers as changemakers. Several of these action strategies were executed – for example in the volunteer training or by mobilising alumni to provide support to new volunteers. Volunteers were given the opportunity to come up with programme adaptations guided by their understanding of the community needs. While I cannot ascertain that these changes lasted far beyond the period of this PAR, the team considered the innovations a success based on the capabilities displayed by the new volunteer cohort to make meaningful adaptations to the programme and solve problems or dilemmas on-ground (also see chapter 6).

Yeah, the difference is, like basically last year we were we were strictly volunteers were strictly following the targets. [...] Now this year some of the placements have gone even beyond like for example, [...] some placements actually invited some health workers to come and offer services, that was even outside the activity, so which means that at least maybe like maybe they, they had that connection.

Elia, implementing staff, reflection interview, May 2019

I categorise this learning pathway as durable double-loop learning because we achieved an applied form of reframing value (Wenger et al., 2011). Not only was the outcome a change at the level of the team’s mental models – but it also brought about lasting spaces in which critical organisational learning could be continued. By reframing the volunteer role as ‘changemakers’ their operations occurred in a space with new norms, their

mission changed, the relationship with staff changed and consequently, space was opened up for insights from the external environment to trickle in and shape the lifelong learning interventions. In terms of the trajectories of change of Friedman (2011) this may not have been a pathway of full transformation, but at least a relatively durable enclave took shape that was more than just a fleeting one-off experience. Reflecting on this pathway I would like to highlight four factors that supported the formation of this enclave.

Factors supporting durable double-loop learning

1. *Direct involvement in the PAR process* – What contributed significantly to the unfreezing of the Model 1 theory-in-use depicted in table 21 was the presence and participation of volunteers in the back-stage organisational learning processes created in this PAR. At first, their views were gathered separately and fed into the process by me, but in April 2018 they joined the table and chaired several of the PAR meetings. Co-researchers and participants mentioned that this enabled them to see things from a different perspective. This is similar to one of the critical learning ingredients mentioned in chapter 4 during the diagnostic stage: changing position to understand issues from the perspective of ‘the other’ is helpful. What could have also played a role is that the proximity of volunteers increased the willingness of the team members to act on recommendations. Their indication of guilt-anxiety in front of the volunteers could have created an accountability pressure to act. However, there was a need for a balance, there were moments where volunteers and staff met separately creating psychological safety to admit more intimate encounters and experiences that usually did not come out during collective meetings. Lastly, the participation of volunteers may have also played a pragmatic role, they generally had more time to implement ideas such as preparing a training session for the next cohort of volunteers. In my experience too, it was easier to schedule meetings and interviews with volunteers compared to the staff whose schedules were full and unpredictable. Though there existed numerous OLMs where staff and volunteers met, this PAR created new learning norms focused on inquiry – something that I facilitated at first as a ‘neutral’ facilitator but something that staff embraced carrying over to the next volunteer cohort.

2. *Planning innovations around natural moments of change* – At the start of 2019 a new cohort of volunteers came on board and a new programme cycle started. This came along with new plans and budgets generating opportunities to revise the volunteer training.

Our December 2018 PAR meeting was organised at the right time to feed ideas, generated through the research, into the planning processes. The team leader showed a strong commitment to integrating as many of the ideas generated in the PAR as possible. As the researcher I was able to consolidate all ideas generated over the past year into three thematic areas:

1. Volunteers use creative methods to deliver out-of-school curriculum and respond to needs emerging in their teen mother groups.
2. Volunteers openly share feedback and engage in problem-solving processes within parameters of community needs, organisational policy and donor requirement.
3. Volunteers use a network of local actors including positive youth role models that can carry on the movement beyond their time in the field.

I presented these to the team leader at the start of 2019 together with a framework of backwards planning – starting with the end goal to determine action steps. She translated the numerous ideas into actionable steps. At this point, she had taken ownership over the change process and my role vanished to the background as I wrapped up the PAR process. The timing allowed for the enclave emerging in the PAR to spread out into the wider field – albeit at the programme team level and not yet the organisational level. Although the latter could still occur through the potential value created as I explain in the third ingredient of durable double-loop learning.

Table 22 Action plan developed to revise the 2019 volunteer training

Goal area	Proposed change	What it would take
1. Volunteers use creative methods to deliver out-of-school curriculum and respond to needs emerging in their teen mother groups.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include a session on lesson planning together with a mock session. • Institute a WhatsApp group and have volunteers share their lesson plan ideas and questions in advance. • Introduce a monthly award for creative and responsive actions by volunteers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Session on lesson planning. • Communicate expectations of responsive lesson planning. • Communicate award/reward for creativity.

2. Volunteers openly share feedback and engage in problem-solving processes within parameters of community needs, organisational policy and donor requirements.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invite a former volunteer to share their experiences in the field. • Include a session on problem-solving with real-life scenarios from previous volunteers. • Include team-building activities and informal moments between staff and volunteers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frame volunteer role as being problem-solvers and change-makers. • Alumni session. • In the problem-solving session include elements of stakeholder engagement & dealing with challenges. • Staff participate actively in team-building and social activities.
3. Volunteers use a network of local actors including positive youth role models that can carry on the movement beyond their time in the field.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give every placement a report on stakeholders and findings from the risk assessment conducted by staff. • Give specific 'networking' tasks for the first week at placement (e.g., a scavenger hunt in the community or a bingo card). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In parent club session/planning meeting – give a networking task like meet 5 parents of adolescents.

3. *Packaging insights into a transferable product* – One of the steps we took in this process that seemed to contribute to change being durable, was translating the insights into an actionable product: a volunteer training session. The 2018 cohort volunteers prepared this session using curated findings of the research, including quotes from various volunteer interviews. Together with the volunteers, we found a way to introduce the complexities of community engagement to the incoming volunteers. Box 1 presents the five inspiration points the former volunteers wanted to hand over to the new volunteers to encourage them to act as change-makers amidst the dilemmas they would face.

1. **Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) are complex – success starts small and small is beautiful.** The problem is multi-dimensional; it has elements of gender, religion, culture, socio-economic capabilities. Everyone trying to create a change in such a field is up against high levels of complexity, can feel like the walls are closing in on you.
2. **To avoid stakeholders becoming your problem, build positive relationships with diverse actors so that they become the solution.** You can't take the load of the world on your shoulders, moreover your time in the community is short. Work in a humane way with actors, they want to work with you as people not a paper-based organisation. If you only show up when you need them it is likely they treat you like other NGOs, expecting money.
3. **Change starts with you – you can't change other people's actions, reflect on how your actions impact others.** All your actions have an impact on the field you work in, you can either go with the way things are done, do nothing, or change the way things are done. Usually, you can influence aspects of the field through your actions. You can't change other people's actions, but you can change how you impact others. In every case it is important to look at the organisation's capacity to support some changes – discuss this with the programme officer.
4. **Be ready for change as a team, have multiple options and be flexible.** Things may not happen as expected, have a plan B and C ready in case needed.
5. **Involve staff as you are making change.** In case you need more information or you want to know a change is possible, always consult staff. Avoid starting a new organisation in the field, yet you are volunteering for this NGO.

Box 1 Inspiration points for change-makers presented during the 2019 volunteer training

During the session, new volunteers discovered the dilemmas experienced by the previous cohort through quotes from the interviews and discussed how they would approach such a dilemma using the inspiration points. There was also an opportunity for the 2019 volunteers to ask the 2018 volunteers questions, which they utilised actively. By concretising the new framing of the volunteer role, the OLM created embedded in their role was made durable beyond one volunteer cohort. Moreover, by documenting these insights we developed potential value that could influence other programmes. One of the co-researchers working in the head office, for example, shared the training session with all other programme teams that had volunteer training coming up.

4. *Organisational commitment to youth engagement and rethinking volunteer role* – There were signs that our learning process about the volunteer role as catalysts of learning, coincided with an organisation-wide rethinking of the volunteer model. Given the organisation's focus on youth engagement, the volunteer position has been a key strategy to develop youths' capabilities to lead development. During the PAR process, a representative of the international office contacted me to find out what we had learned so far about the volunteer role, their training and their experience. More closely to the research process, all team members were committed and passionate about youth. This passion may have acted as a fuel to scrutinise their own theories-in-use and tackle discrepancies between their current approach and ideal. The desire to make youth engagement more intentional and authentic was displayed by the leadership, as well as the staff and volunteers.

As an organisation that is really putting youth engagement at the forefront, we need to have tangible evidence that demonstrates meaningful youth engagement. If we convene a meeting and say we want young people to come in our annual review, we have to structure it in a way that it is so meaningful they actually coming to improve the review process. We have to deliberately track the recommendations from young people on our program. We may not necessarily implement everything they recommend, but be in position to track and say from this review, we had this number of young people, they recommended the following and because of their recommendations, adjustments were made on these programmes in these areas.

Suzanna, team leader, orientation workshop, October 2017

In addition, because the organisation is so youth-oriented, some of the team members had grown inside the organisation. Some had been volunteers in the past or had implemented other programmes in which 'things were different'. For example, when the training used to be longer or staff had more time to prepare themselves to deliver sessions etcetera. Thus, what made our double-loop learning insights and spaces 'stick' was the presence of other cultural islands across the organisation – including the international level – where similar governing variables were accepted and aspired to.

In brief, besides the ingredients for critical organisational learning spaces presented in previous chapters, this learning trajectory illustrates how different layers of

value, timing and presence of other enclaves can make double-loop learning stick and spread. We cannot say a full transformation of the field has taken place, we did not see the entire organisation take up the framing of the volunteer role as changemakers and instituting the same incentives for thinking outside of the box. Perhaps that is not realistic within the time period either – if anything this process has illustrated that change happens slowly and requires commitment from all parties involved. Beyond the singular, fleeting spaces we have seen how over time enclaves emerged in this PAR. Through the learning norms simulating Model 2 theories-in-use, prioritising inquiry and choice, we saw an unfreezing, increased trust and a new manner of relating between staff and volunteers. However, this was influenced by the wider environment as well, other enclaves were emerging in the organisation promoting similar values and the timing enabled these temporary spaces to stick. This is partly where the second learning trajectory was different, but this is not all that could explain why double-loop learning did not stick in our learning trajectory on community members.

7.3.2 Learning trajectory 2: Towards mutual relationships with community actors

Observed outcomes of this trajectory

This PAR focused on the organisational learning processes that engaged external actors – whether to learn from them or with them – to promote double-loop learning. From the start, the team acknowledged that in many cases they ended up sharing information with the external actors rather than listening to them. Through the PAR meetings and the double-column case interviews, we unpacked what made the team shape the spaces for collective learning this way. This revealed several governing variables that resembled Model 1 theories-in-use – translating into a transactional relationship with external actors (see table 23).

Table 23 Examples of Argyris’ Model 1 theory-in-use in interactions with external actors

Governing variables	Action strategies	Consequences
<p>Control for the purpose of the encounter Beliefs held: "Do not trust the intentions of the external actors (especially local leaders), they are interested"</p>	<p>Advocate for your position Strategies used: <i>Convince external actors to support the plan- throw in 'benefits', overpromise to convince</i></p>	<p>Miscommunication Examples identified: 'Work with communities but make sure to meet the targets'.</p>

<i>in money or other forms of personal gain."</i>	<i>others to join and fulfil your plan.</i>	
Maximise winning, minimise losing Beliefs held: <i>"We would fail if the external actors do not participate in the plan as stated at the on-set of the programme. Ensure they do not opt-out if they do replace them as soon as possible."</i>	Unilaterally save face (own and the other) Strategies used: <i>Work within the confines of what is accepted by government, religion and other powerful players, avoid creating spaces in which too much ambiguity or value contradictions would surface.</i> <i>Do not explicitly talk about money in meetings but call financial facilitation 'expectations' or 'motivation'.</i>	Self-sealing processes Examples identified: <i>Engagement is limited to pre-planned activities sustaining a simplistic framing of community development and learning agendas. No other questions are asked or information is shared about underlying or related problems.</i>
Suppress negative feeling Beliefs held: <i>"It is important that external actors appreciate our work and only speak positively about us."</i>		Self-fulfilling prophecies Examples identified: <i>Cynicism about the intentions of the external actors, little exchange of critical/conflicting views resulting in limited learning.</i>
Be rational Beliefs held: <i>"Follow the plan: stick to the targets, follow the curriculum, fit within the reporting template, stay within the budget."</i>		Escalating error Examples identified: <i>Reinforce the rules of the game (transactional engagement), achieve targets but not durable community partnerships and agency.</i>

Through the PAR activities, the team displayed awareness of these discrepancies in their theories-of-action and they brainstormed several ideas to do things differently. One idea was the sub-study presented in chapter 5, to investigate what the community actors would prefer in terms of collective learning. Besides this, small innovations were proposed towards reframing the partnerships with external actors to focus on mutual learning and responsibility. For example, moving beyond only presenting printed reports, but discussing this verbally, sending out greeting cards as a gesture, co-creating a parent

education curriculum with parents, invite community actors as trainers for volunteers or utilising community-led platforms for dialogue. Small steps were taken on each of these ideas, but none were visibly implemented in the shape of new OLMs. Easter cards, for example, were sent out, but no comprehensive feedback was collected nor was it repeated for other holidays or in the next 2019 cohort. During the closing workshop in 2019, we took stock and the team noted that this trajectory of the PAR displayed learning traps they experienced before.

I remember it was that time where we started developing Easter cards, I don't know where we stopped, (people laughed) and that is our challenge. Ya and that's the challenge, when there is an innovation we just start there and then and then, mid-way it just disappears. [...] But here we are, people are saying they don't know us but we've been here for long. So, I remember that discussion it was a bit tough, it went viral in the organisation and then we came up with actions. So, this year I don't know where the actions.... it is, we didn't, we just concluded our Easter.

Staff member, closing workshop team

In a way, this lack of sustained change puzzled me because the cognitive unfreezing of the mental models happened much more explicitly compared to the volunteer track. Both in the double-column case interviews, as well as the double-loop learning and learning from success workshops, we were able to make explicit theories-in-use and the team recognised that these theories contradicted their espoused aspiration for mutual relationships (also see chapter 6). Moreover, the community mapping exercise not only exposed the team to new insights about what the community preferred (potential value) but also caused some interruption, a unique space where NGOs and the community met. This sub-study debunked several assumptions the team had held on to regarding their education programme. Regardless of this cognitive level unfreezing there seemed to exist circular reasoning that served as a self-sealing process. When confronted with a mismatch in their OLMs and the needs and preferences of the community, the team would refer to systems in place that supposedly prevent such an error. They would then mention that these spaces were not sufficient, and eventually referred to external causes such as budget limitations as reasons why the systems were not sufficient. A refreezing of different mental models underlying the team's interactions with external actors thus

did not seem to happen at the team level. In my analysis of this track, I could identify five factors (besides the absence of the four enabling factors) that disabled the enclaves from sticking or growing.

Factors hindering durable double-loop outcomes

1. *Heightened field dynamics in the border area between the NGO and its external environment* – Whereas the learning trajectory on the volunteer role was predominantly inward-facing, this second learning trajectory focused on the border area between the NGO and the local communities or other external fields. In this border area, members operate in a field where multiple logics clash and power relations become more intricate and multi-directional (also see Anderson & Patterson, 2017; Pot, 2019). The theory-in-use displayed in table 23 hints at this transactional nature of the relationship between actors in this border area, dominated by learning norms resembling Model 1. In the team's (and organisation's) espoused theories-of-action, community engagement and mutual partnerships were valued but in reality, these partnerships were squeezed into a tight mould with a specified number of meetings, interaction formats and agenda items. In chapter 5 we illustrated that communities are highly heterogeneous and that there is no one-size-fits-all approach to collective learning. The team recognised this too and mentioned that they used to interact more frequently with the community and that they had a bigger budget to facilitate such engagements. Unfortunately, this budget was cut.

We are sometimes restricted but we always do what we call risk assessment, before we go to the [community], we have to risk assess those schools. [...] But sometimes we neglect them [the visits to the communities]. [...] they were supposed to be three [visits [...]] that is lacking, the only budget I have is Support and Supervision (S&S), and through S&S I am supposed to do all this which is impossible.

Juliana, generalisation workshop, December 2018

The rationalisation trend did not only affect the relationships with community members, it also created self-sealing and self-fulfilling processes within the team. When a gap was identified, the team often referred to a system that is actually in place to deal with it (for example the needs assessment), but then when the team identified the programme design still does not match the actual needs, change was deemed impossible due to the programme design and reporting processes. The team members started acting towards

the transactional relationship model, even if they saw the discrepancies, they would not report this to the donor explaining it did not fit in the reporting format.

Andrew: I think it's also because ehm, mostly the reports are structured in a certain way eh there is certain information that they are specifically looking out for... which may not give freedom to have a dialogue on a different, that for instance someone is just asking you how many people did you reach? How many sessions did you deliver? [...]

Maureen: And in addition, they say in less than 200 words... So, in less than 200 words you need to prioritise what do you want to eventually change.

Andrew & Maureen, generalisation workshop, December 2018

It seems that the dynamics in the field at the border of the NGO and the community was messier than the other lowlands. This could be the reason why the team and other actors adopted the more simplistic logics of change. Tick-boxes and targets helped create the illusion of rigour and methodical working and provide a sense of control.

2. *Delay in discovering the self-sealing functions of the formalised normative systems* – In chapter 6, I illustrated a second-order error emerging around the value contradictions in the field. The programme team's systems and practices that aimed at helping staff and volunteers talk about value-laden topics did not connect to personal values and norms. Rather, the curriculum or government regulations were used as normative compasses to determine what could or could not be included in the education sessions. And like the formalistic procedures used when engaging external actors, this appeared undiscussable. In terms of critical organisational learning, this second-order error must be addressed but this requires substantial time and careful attention (Argyris, 1999), more than was available in this research. In this case, the self-sealing processes regarding SRHR values only emerged in one of the last double-column interviews when the research was coming to a close. The volunteer, in this case, revealed that he was okay with sharing family planning information, but also that he was doing so out of a 'contractual obligation'. His personal belief was that family planning was not the right thing to do. His explanation shows similarities to the teachers in the research of De Haas (2017) who applied strategies of 'compartmentalisation' to handle conflicting schemas according to

different contexts. Since this issue was discovered late, we could not investigate the role of norms and values in-depth with the PAR team. Even though the difficulty of managing different values was mentioned several times, the self-sealing function of the curriculum and regulations were not questioned in the PAR meetings. It may not be completely preventable, but this delay certainly hindered us in acquiring a full understanding of the relationship dimensions with external actors – and thus we did not unravel the second-order errors affecting the collective learning relationships that existed or could be.

3. *Individual versus collective unfreezing* – In this learning trajectory, staff and volunteers unpacked their theories-in-use regarding relationships with external actors much more explicitly than in terms of volunteer engagement. However, this awareness particularly emerged during one-on-one interactions such as the double-column case interviews. In the space of these interviews, participants were able to run through the full cycle from disconfirmation to indication of guilt-anxiety and reframing the situation to identify new action strategies. Most of the information in table 23 was generated in these interviews. Perhaps because these action strategies were generated at an individual level, they never gained much momentum at the team level. Moreover, only two staff members participated in these interviews meaning this did not become a shared experience between staff and volunteers. The co-analysis workshop did seek to bring insights generated in the interviews to a team level, but at this point, the team picked more interest in innovations around the volunteer roles rather than the external actors.

Moreover, whereas volunteers had a seat at the table in the PAR process, the external actors were mostly involved at the periphery. As a facilitative researcher, I mobilised their voices and fed them into the PAR process, but this created very little pressure to be accountable to change. One participant actually mentioned that the feedback from the external actors that I shared looked sugar-coated and less direct since I would not specify who gave the feedback. I did this for reasons of anonymity, but it was perceived as less clear and actionable. Friedman and Sykes (2014) suggest field theory can help bridge individual and collective learning. Indeed, the first two factors I explained illustrate how big the 'fight' was to institute change, doing things differently and more collectively with external actors could have been too far of a leap. Within the collective, there was no incentive or accountability pressure to act differently towards the external actors. This resistance did not only exist at the organisational level but shows in the wider field of development as mentioned in chapter 2. Unlike the learning trajectory on

volunteers, we did not find similar enclaves in and outside the organisation that we could have connected with to move from unfreezing to refreezing.

4. *Finding satisfactory single-loop strategies* – In some cases, the team may have felt more critical questions did not need to be asked. For example, in the case of external actors expressing expectations about money, the team had a series of strategies that helped them deal with these situations. Most of these could be identified as single-loop strategies. Figure 10 for example illustrates the theories-of-action in relation the 'money issue'. Even though the team realised that some of the dilemmas were caused by their very own actions and internalised assumptions about 'the other', they comfortably navigated the situation using the dominant 'rules of the game'. For example, by organising the events more closely to the participants or increase the transport budget in the next cycle. When discussing the upcoming cohort's volunteer training, the team discussed passing on both the single loop strategies as well as promoting more mutual relationship practices that would circumvent the monetary demands – for example, by networking proactively and actively keeping up relationships outside of activities and events.

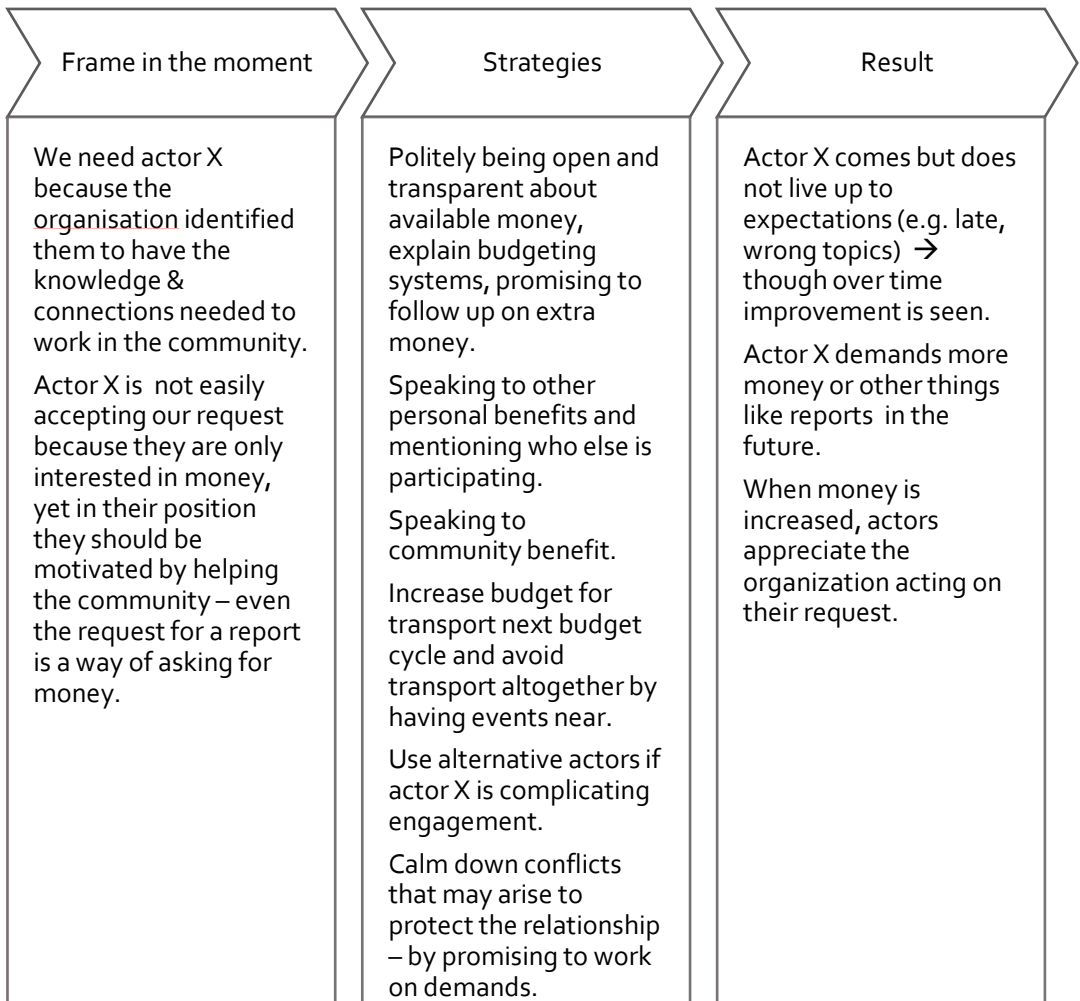


Figure 10 Theories-in-use distilled from double column case interviews

Several PAR participants did acknowledge that some of these strategies could reproduce the persistent challenges they face for themselves, future colleagues or other NGOs.

Like I'm giving this example hmm how did my telling this eh this local leader that [...] maybe you will get some money and in actual sense, it happened he got some money. [...] Does it mean next time when I go back to him of course he will be expecting maybe the same result? So, the question is do we want this to be reproduced that wherever

we go we make these promises and in actual sense we are uncomfortable with it.

Priscilla, volunteer, Learning from success workshop, August 2018

The fact that the team was comfortable with single-loop strategies, however, provides food for thought. Other authors, such as Foldy and Creed (1999) or Simonin (2017) encourage the reader to avoid viewing higher 'loops' of learning as better. Indeed, perhaps a transformation of a field does not require all learning trajectories to reach double-loop learning effects at the same time. Sometimes a single-loop strategy can open the door for bigger changes in the field.

5. *Facilitator's blind spots* – My role as a first-time action researcher undoubtedly displayed blind spots throughout the journey. Perhaps not unique to this track, but I also displayed several Model 1 theories-in-use that certainly did not help in sustaining the insights we gained about engaging external actors. In the PAR I particularly applied the following four strategies to bring our learning spaces to a double-loop level.

1. Make explicit and thereby test possible theories-in-use, either by 1) questioning (e.g., why was that so important to you?); 2) by pointing out a discrepancy between the action strategy and the espoused objective (e.g., you want to facilitate youth engagement but your strategy is to solve a problem for youth not with youth); or 3) by reminding participants of theories-in-use that were uncovered earlier in the process;
2. Feed data, insights and views from various consulted participants into the conversation;
3. Introduce and test conceptual models and metaphors that could help the participants shift perspective and/or test their assumptions;
4. Document, summarise and disseminate insights and findings to keep all participants up-to-date.

When I started writing this thesis and read some of the workshop transcripts I realised that I stepped into some typical learning traps that Argyris (2010) pointed out. Based on the literature, I had developed a mental picture of what counts as double-loop learning, and during the PAR I often felt like something was missing in our conversations. I would sometimes get frustrated by the lack of initiative or follow-through on some of the ideas that in my mind would be ideal double-loop learning outcomes in the education context.

For example, the appointed coordinator for the parent curriculum did not show up for some of our appointments. As a result, I ended up taking some steps without her: choosing a curriculum co-design process and creating a tool for volunteers to interview parents for some initial ideas. I did not want this idea to fail, but I eventually 'gave up' when the coordinator of the activity asked volunteers for feedback instead of the parents themselves. In hindsight, I was able to reframe this. Indeed, it was difficult to find time with the coordinator, but realistically it may not have been possible to conduct a full co-design process, especially not if second-order errors are still preventing staff from working flexibly and adaptively. Moreover, in hindsight, I see that part of the reason why this activity 'failed' was that I had taken steps 'towards unilateral control' to keep things moving and by doing so completely biased the process to how I had defined success.

Besides the feeling of not hitting my own bar of double-loop learning, I also felt nervous to be overly critical and ended up using a few strategies to save face. Especially at the beginning of the research, I felt uncomfortable presenting information or observations that would confront participants with the discrepancies in their theories-in-use and espoused theories. As a result of my Model 1 goal 'to suppress negative feelings', I did not always create the space for people to respond. An example occurred during the double-loop learning workshop where we discussed fictive cases and participants were articulating their proposed action plan and objectives. In one of the scenarios, the team touched on an espoused norm that would recur often in the research process: we value our partners and we want to work on equal grounds. I was eager to unpack this because I had noticed this was not always enacted. After some inquiry, the team revealed that what was actually driving them was the desire to protect the organisation's image – though they did not explicitly acknowledge this discrepancy. Therefore, I concluded that the team was not aware of their theories-in-use. My solution was to share my reading of the actual mental models in use. To soften the confrontational nature of these statements I used a typical 'easing in' approach; I referred to Argyris' research ('it is universal'), my own learning curve, the way aid is set up (your goals are normally not negotiable), and the possibility of unlearning and learning these skills to become more effective as an organisation ('We can learn to take a step back and actually reflect at a deeper level'). I also added a disclaimer that sometimes this deeper type of reflection may trigger discomfort and that we may find instances where we avoid certain critical questions. In the excerpt below you may notice that I try to justify the team's discrepancies – before trying to facilitate disconfirmation. In this scenario, I was

responding to their proposed strategies to deal with a local government leader who complains that the NGO is spreading pro-homosexuality propaganda (a fictive scenario). I was trying to point out that their strategies displayed similarities with common strategies that seek to save face in an attempt to soften the blow of disconfirmation.

But sometimes, many times actually, the situations where we refuse to go here [to double loop learning] is when it's uncomfortable [...] It colours what we do ask and what we don't ask. But ideally, we engage in inquiry not only advocacy. We don't only go to the [local leader] to make a point but also to inquire hmm is it right? First of all is it right I have heard this [rumour] but is it true? Because just because people are saying that doesn't mean it's actually true, so checking that. Allowing the person to also come up with their response to that and then sharing your theory, how do you feel about that? Why is that hard for you to deal with as an organisation? Why wouldn't you say that you mind about your organisational image? Sometimes we feel like we could share half the truth but the other truth is better to remain unsaid...

Marit, double-loop learning workshop, January 2018

I ended up speaking non-stop for five minutes! I remember closing this meeting with a sense of failure, the signs of double-loop learning I anticipated were missing. However, when I reviewed the transcript, I noticed my own blind spots; I did not give the participants a chance to agree nor disagree with my statement. At the moment, I was afraid of being seen as the fault-finder, especially given the solutions the team had thought of made a lot of sense. I could have engaged in inquiry to find out how the team was feeling about hearing such alternative explanations of what they are trying to achieve in an interaction with the district officer. At the end of the workshop, regardless of my own shortcoming, some team members did mention – at a cognitive level at least – an understanding that their mental models play a role and that they are not always sufficiently aware of this. Had I reframed my definition of success earlier, I could have recognised that my approach to the double-loop learning workshop – in which we used conceptual tools, fictive cases and my critical questions and posing my analysis of theories-in-use – did lead to at least some cognitive unfreezing, which for the purpose of the workshop seemed sufficient. In addition, the workshop contributed a shared

language about double-loop learning, helped to conduct a member-check about the relevance of the double-loop learning as a skill to learn and presented me with a status quo – how aware were people and what seem to be the learning norms in their collaboration practices with external actors. However, all in all, my blind spots probably delayed disconfirmation and indication of guilt-anxiety at several points in the PAR. This example shows that reflexivity is an important quality for facilitators of double-loop learning processes. We do not operate in isolation from the field but are equally socialised in this environment that encourages Model 1 theories-in-use.

7.4 Towards a normative double-loop learning theory and practice in the context of lifelong learning for development

At the start of this chapter, I set out to develop a contextual theory of double-loop learning that would best serve the lifelong learning for development practice. I have tried to illustrate, using two learning trajectories, that the basic building blocks of double-loop learning do remain useful in this field. However, we discovered more ingredients to double-loop learning in education NGOs. To conclude this chapter, I present how we might position double-loop learning as a strategy to enhance normative professionalisation and thus critical organisational learning. I should reiterate that the context of this research was one organisation and one programme team specifically. This organisation has a unique history, culture, mission focus, staff and volunteer composition, etcetera. Therefore, I would not suggest the propositions presented below are universal – but they could serve as starting points to investigate and facilitate double-loop learning in similar organisations.

7.4.1 Situating the definition of double-loop learning

Proposition 1: Re-defining double-loop learning

Normative double-loop learning is a collective learning process through which participants examine how their mental models affect their actions and impact the field and commit to beliefs, values, assumptions and norms that guide more just, desirable and productive actions for meaningful results in the life world of learners and communities.

In light of the normative complexity of the work of lifelong learning for development, I propose that values, or the question of what is desirable and to whom, take up a more prominent place in double-loop learning. This position is largely supported by the epistemological premises in chapter 2, however, based on this PAR I would propose another adjustment to the definition of double-loop learning. The search for desirable lifelong learning interventions cannot happen in isolation from the target communities. Therefore, in the definition above I refer to collective learning. As mentioned above, double-loop learning transcends the organisation. Collective learning could happen in spaces within or outside the organisation or in the border area in overlapping fields. By looking at these border areas, we are required to look beyond the theories-in-use of the team or organisation, but also understand the dynamics when different fields meet, perhaps when conflicting theories-in-use 'clash' or where processes of power cause one field to mimic the other. Though I speak of overlapping fields, collective learning can happen in several ways – not everyone may always meet in the same physical space and time. But as demonstrated in pathway 1, it might be more effective to build a community of inquiry that journeys together for a prolonged period, at first perhaps with an external facilitator and then gradually moving into structural mechanisms. Individuals involved in these learning spaces should remain reflexive about the mental models not just in the primary processes of lifelong learning programming but also in these collective learning spaces to ensure that the collective adopts learning norms more conducive to critical learning.

7.4.2 Facilitating normative double-loop learning

Proposition 2: Ambiguity is unavoidable and presents an opportunity for learning

There is an inherent ambiguity involved with normative double-loop learning and therefore, Model 2 theories-in-use should be expanded with the governing variable: view uncertainty and ambiguity as a learning opportunity and intrinsic to good practice.

If we view double-loop learning as a normative practice, to what extent do the ideas of Argyris about model 1 and 2 behaviour and learning environments still apply? As illustrated in tables 21 and 23, we identified the Model 1 theories-in-use in this context and we also identified that these norms hinder transformative change and critical organisational learning. Relatedly, we observed that Model 2 learning norms such as

inquiry and free choice helped sustain transformative changes in learning trajectory 1. This speaks to Argyris' proposition that these organisational models are universal. However, as proposed in proposition 2, I would like to expand model 2 theory-in-use to do better justice to the complex nature of lifelong learning for development. Argyris positions validatable or observable data as a norm in Model 2 theories-in-use. This norm is not necessarily irrelevant in this context but needs to be combined with a tolerance for ambiguity. When we embrace the normative complexity of our work, we embrace that what is desirable depends on whom you ask, and that this answer moreover is shaped by dynamics of power. 'Validatable data' could be hijacked by the same formalistic interpretation of rigour as we have seen happen in trajectory 2 – especially if we use a conventional definition of validity (Lather, 1986).

In this research, some of the self-sealing processes around the ambiguity of values were discovered late – stalling double-loop learning. An intentional effort is required to deal with ambiguity in the organisational context, including the acceptance that some change takes more time and is emergent, unpredictable and requires more flexible programming, including resource allocation. By embracing ambiguity, we accept that participants in double-loop learning spaces will not always adopt uniform theories-in-use. Further research could explore how this pluralism can be leveraged as a force for transformative change (Friedman & Rothman, 2015; Rothman & Friedman, 2001). In light of normative professionalisation, it would also be interesting to investigate the role of formalised structures vis a vis personal reflection (which could lead to more ambiguity in terms of norms and values) in enhancing critical learning spaces. In this case study we have seen that formalised vocabulary and scripts about SRHR issues can be helpful in navigating ethical complexity. However, these could also turn into self-sealing structures whereby the official language makes the complex nature of these dilemmas and one's personal values undiscussable.

Proposition 3: Power dynamics and double-loop learning

Through reflexivity, education practitioners can enlarge their own sense of power to influence undesirable realities, but should also intentionally extend power to the marginalised to exert influence over the way the interventions are shaped.

This third proposition addresses a common blind spot in organisational learning theory: power. Power can no longer be silently assumed in double-loop learning. Rather, power

should become a subject as well as a result area of double-loop learning. As a subject of learning, members conduct an inquiry about how power structures and their positionality hinder or limit change. They also observe how power dynamics shape the spaces for learning and interaction with external actors. As a result, as discussed in proposition 1, normative double-loop learning should lead to new mental models that guide more just, productive and desirable action – this means that one’s actions resulting from this learning process combat problematic power structures. Ideally, this happens at the level of the learning space itself, extending power to those who are normally excluded. At the same time, double-loop learning, because it is reflexive, also opens up the sense of power by opening up the realm of possibility. This is not just abstract reasoning, but something we observed during the PAR. The team realised the influence they have on the field and how they have reproduced the very systems they find problematic and that they have an opportunity to break this cycle. The first part – power as a subject of learning – did not come out as explicitly. Especially given the historical context presented in chapter 2 it could be meaningful to run double-loop learning interventions that seek to deconstruct the influence of northern epistemologies and explore how lifelong learning interventions can be a force of decolonisation of education and learning (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2018; Odora Hoppers, 2001).

Proposition 4: Power and paradigm shift

The learning environment for normative double-loop learning is not only shaped by organisational members but by the entire ecosystem of actors in a field. Therefore, double-loop learning can be further enhanced if there were an overall paradigm shift towards new theories-in-use in the sector of lifelong learning for development including its financing mechanisms.

This, therefore, calls for another proposition about facilitating double-loop learning. Proposition 3 may suggest that practitioners can bring about transformative change just by engaging in critical learning. In chapter 2 I explained how from a relational world view, everyone’s actions and interactions contribute to shaping the structures governing our social reality. This was illustrated in chapter 4 as well; NGO practitioners are enacting alternative epistemologies of practice. However, it is not enough for individuals or single organisations to think deeply and adjust their own mental models. First of all, by viewing the process from the perspective of field theory, one’s mental models are not individually configured. They are shaped over time through processes of socialisation. Some actors

and institutions have more power in determining what is at stake in a given field, in framing meaning, in allocating resources. Therefore, I include proposition 4 to underline the responsibility of those in a position of power to critically review their influence on sustaining problematic paradigms – rules of the game shared by the actors in the larger field. One of the differences established between learning trajectories 1 and 2 is the sphere of influence over the changes to governing variables. When it came to revising volunteer relationships, the team felt much more in control compared to some other aspired changes.

7.4.3 Evaluating normative double-loop learning

Proposition 5: Double-loop learning for normative professionals

Double-loop learning at the individual level is key for educators who will need to engage in skilled improvisation in their unique daily realities. The learning norms of Model 2 may enable this but the outcomes should be framed in a nuanced manner.

Finally, I add two propositions towards a contextualised theory of double-loop learning in the context of lifelong learning for development. Earlier in this chapter, I referred to the five cycles of value created through collective learning (Wenger et al., 2011) and the six trajectories of change (Friedman, 2011). In chapter 5, we showed how these frameworks can help detect nuances shifts in the field as well as bigger changes. Even though I labelled trajectory 1 as a success in terms of double-loop learning and trajectory 2 as incomplete or not durable, both illustrated the various forms of value that were created; a much more nuanced framing of outcomes emerged compared to how Argyris pitches double-loop change. Whereas Argyris defined double-loop learning at the level of actual change being enacted, this more nuanced framing inspired by the authors referenced above acknowledges potential change, time lags in this change being observable and change that sometimes stays at the individual level and sometimes moves beyond this level.

Proposition 6: Double-loop learning effects in time and space

Normative double-loop learning may not have to be evaluated at the implementation stage only, but can be perceived as a trajectory of change over time with milestones such as disconfirmation, guilt-indication and psychological safety, as well as value layers including immediate, potential, applied, realised and reframing value.

Moreover, those changes that result in a more critical and normatively oriented agency result in changes to the field – including the organisational field – but this may take some time. Therefore, the dimensions of reach and time should be added when evaluating double-loop learning interventions.

In this PAR I did not have the opportunity to follow up on changes in the long-term or outside of the boundaries of the organisation. A few changes were observed and documented in the community of the sub-study on community perceptions, but this was only within the research period. In addition, trajectory 1 illustrated the power of multiple enclaves merging together, supporting each other and spreading new learning norms. More research could be done to understand the long-term levers sustaining or enhancing double-loop changes and eventually transformation of a field (also see Friedman & Sykes, 2014). For the lifelong learning for development sector, particular indicators could be used to ensure the double-loop changes are indeed beneficial to the learners and the communities they live in – enhancing critical capabilities. Due to the time constraints and the scope of the study we were not able to observe realised value at the level of the learners and communities (Wenger et al., 2011).

7.5 Conclusion

This research was rooted in the perspective that the way we do things in the field of lifelong learning for development would improve if we embrace an epistemology of practice that does not only revolve around rigour, but also relevance. In this PAR we engaged in various cycles of reflection to understand how our actions shape the field and how mental models are shaped by the field, influencing actions in turn. We explored whether and how double-loop learning could be utilised as a catalyst for a normative practice that is geared towards serving learners and communities. In this final empirical chapter, I answered the overall research question: How can education NGOs in Uganda create space for double-loop learning involving community actors towards meaningful lifelong learning for development interventions? Besides the insights presented in earlier chapters about the methods and ingredients of double-loop learning spaces, in this chapter, I revisited Argyris' theory about why double-loop learning does or does not lead to durable and transformative changes. I reconstructed two learning trajectories to explore what made double-loop learning stick or stall – both in terms of spaces and outcomes. Based on this analysis, I distilled factors that help sustain double-loop learning spaces and those that hinder this sustenance (or breakthrough).

Table 24 Enabling conditions and barriers to sustaining double-loop learning spaces and effects

Enabling conditions	Barriers
1. Direct involvement of external actors in the PAR/learning process	1. Heightened field dynamics in the border area between the NGO and its external environment
2. Timing: feeding into natural opportunities for change	2. Discovering self-sealing processes late
3. An organisational commitment to the issue of inquiry- the presence of similar enclaves in other locations	3. Facilitator’s blind spots
4. Balancing guilt anxiety, disconfirmation and psychological safety	4. Missing connections between individual and collective reframing
	5. Finding satisfactory single loop solutions

As a result, I presented six propositions to contextualise double-loop learning for education NGOs in the field of lifelong learning for development. This can be translated into an adjusted Model 2 theory-in-use to promote normative double-loop learning in this field of work (see figure 11).

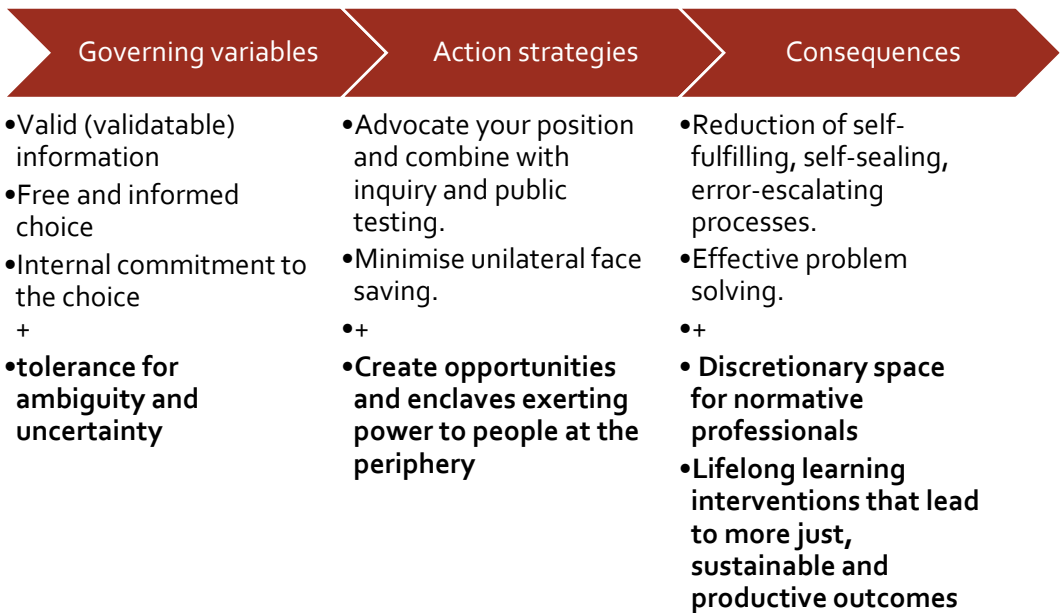


Figure 11 Contextualised Model 2 theory-in-use for education NGOs

This expanded theory of double-loop learning connects the relational view on reality borrowed from field theory and embraces the normative complexity of the field inspired by normative professionalisation. While it may not be easy, hopefully, the conceptual tools and practical recommendations emerging from this research can guide education NGOs in ensuring their organisational learning practices adopt a critical lens towards meaningful lifelong learning for all. And though they may not bring about overnight transformative change, they can help identify why change takes time and which levers can be pushed to make small shifts grow bigger.