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The normative practitioner

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Summary | The normative practitioner: adding value to organisational learning in education NGOs in Uganda

Introduction

In Uganda, the promise of lifelong learning is yet to be fulfilled for many. Despite solid progress in increasing access to formal education, there remain large inequalities in access, completion rates and learning outcomes (Blaak, Openjuru, & Zeelen, 2013; Van der Linden, 2016). Consequently, an excluded majority lacks the possibility of developing those capabilities that help create livelihood development, meaningful civic participation or pursuit of other life projects. By adopting an organisational lens, this research will open the black box of one of the main providers of lifelong learning interventions in Uganda: NGOs. As intermediaries between funders, policy makers and communities, NGOs take up a unique position and have to navigate conflicting interests amidst resource constraints. In chapter 1 of this thesis, I argue that for us to achieve improvement in the field of lifelong learning for development we should find ways to detach ourselves from the risk-adversity and short-term orientation dominating development organisations, which is triggered by the accountability wave in the sector (Edwards, 1997; Ramalingam, 2013). In particular, this research will focus on how organisational learning can be positioned to help NGOs generate knowledge about the complex realities of learners, test innovations and tailor activities to local conditions – and do so continuously and critically of underlying (power) structures. Organisational learning in this context is defined as: “a conscious and critical process of reflection intended to produce new perceptions, goals, and/or behavioural strategies” (Doving, 1996 as cited in Lipshitz, Friedman, & Popper, 2007, p. 16). I draw specific attention to double-loop learning, which I propose could be a critical learning project that could help reposition organisational learning as a transformational process; this form of learning not only changes an organisation’s action strategies, but also the underlying beliefs, assumptions or goals (Argyris, 1999; Bokeno, 2003).

To ensure the research would produce knowledge that helps NGOs strengthen their practice, we used phronetic Participatory Action Research (PAR). This approach enabled us to develop a practical form of knowledge that does also identifies what is 'good' in a given situation (phronesis) (Carr & Kemmis, 2005; Eikeland, 2008; Flyvbjerg, Landman, & Schram, 2012). At the start of this participatory process, research questions were formulated collaboratively with NGO practitioners. The main research question was formulated as: How can education NGOs in Uganda create space for double-loop learning involving external actors towards meaningful lifelong learning for development interventions? Sub-questions were:

- a) Which organisational learning mechanisms are currently applied in education NGOs in Uganda?
- b) What are enabling and limiting factors for double-loop learning in education NGOs in Uganda?
- c) Who are the community actors involved and affected by the work of education NGOs?
- d) What spaces are currently created for double-loop learning involving community actors and how does this influence lifelong learning programmes?
- e) How can education NGOs in Uganda widen the space for double-loop learning to increase the relevance of lifelong learning programmes?

The theoretical foundation, methodology and findings of this research are presented in a series of chapters, (published) papers and intermezzos.

Organisational learning as a normative practice

Chapter 2 – Theoretical Perspectives – puts a spotlight on the 'swampy lowlands' that NGO practitioners operate in and explores which epistemology of practice and conceptual frameworks could help us investigate and shape a critical organisational learning practice. From the perspective of complexity thinking I present a portrait of the contestations, compromises, dynamics and developments that shaped the current field of lifelong learning for development in Uganda. Besides the technical complexity that is acknowledged in contemporary development theory, I argue that the ethical and epistemological complexity should equally be considered if we want to find solutions that offer better and more equal lifelong learning opportunities (Kunneman, 2016; McGrath et al., 2020). Not all NGOs are always dealing with complex problems, but the field in

which they operate does form a complex system. Several authors have criticised that the dominant epistemology of practice – technical rationality or the neo-Newtonian paradigm – inadequately equips practitioners to find relevant and effective solutions in the face of such complexity (Chambers, 2010; Kunneman, 2016; Schön, 1983). Therefore, I extend my call to use an organisational lens towards the transformation of the epistemology of practice governing actors and organisations in the field of lifelong learning for development. I discuss several alternative epistemologies that could offer solace, such as reflection-in-action or adaptive pluralism (Chambers, 2010; Schön, 1983), as well as normative professionalism, which embraces the normative ambiguity of our realities (Kunneman, 2016).

Based on a review of literature on organisational learning in development organisations, I note that despite NGOs embracing organisational learning, the dominant neo-Newtonian paradigm reinforced through the accountability wave has turned this into a mechanical exercise producing insufficient insight into solving complex problems (Ramalingam, 2013; Roper & Pettit, 2003). To help us analyse the interplay between these underlying epistemologies of practice and the way organisational learning is shaped, I introduce field theory as an analytical framework. I highlight concepts such as habitus, positionality, and symbolic and structural order that will guide the inquiry in this PAR to investigate the link between individual and collective learning, the role of power dynamics and the connection between agency and field dynamics (Bourdieu, 1977; Friedman, 2011; Lewin, 1939). Moreover, I point out that field theory can help us monitor the type of change occurring as a result of organisational learning, which may occur in its most critical form as a transformation of the field or more temporarily creating enclaves with alternative rules of the game (Friedman, Sykes, & Strauch, 2014). By illustrating that the mental models being changed through double-loop learning are internalisations of the field, I further support my argument that double-loop learning could be viewed as a critical organisational learning process.

A phronetic approach to Participatory Action Research

Consistent with the epistemology of practice presented in chapter 2, in chapter 3 – Research Methodology – I outline the phronetic PAR approach and methodology used in this research. Aspiring to produce phronesis – practical and contextual knowledge that can guide practitioners in doing the ‘right thing’ – this research facilitated a

communicative space in which practitioners generated new insights through deliberation, inquiry and action. Given the field theoretical foundation of this research and its bias to double-loop learning, action was not only viewed as the visible things people do and say but also the underlying, socially informed mental models (layers-of-depth). The actions in micro-situations were viewed from a field perspective to understand how the historical and current dynamics influence these actions (layers of width).

This PAR took place between 2015 and 2019, during which five stages can be distinguished: orientation, problem diagnosis, entering the case, PAR with the case study organisation and closing. In the research several education NGOs served as cases to learn from and with. In stage 2 a multiple case study approach (Stake, 2006) was used to document organisational learning in seven education NGOs in 2016. In 2017 the layers-of-depth in this research were facilitated with one education NGO that served as a rich case study. We worked with one programme team with whom monthly PAR meetings were held to co-design and co-facilitate the research process. In this stage, three learning trajectories emerged in which double-loop learning methods and other critical organisational learning spaces were tested. The research closed in 2019 with a series of workshops and meeting with the programme team, senior management as well as community leaders involved. Finally, the chapter presents emerging issues when conducting a phronetic PAR, including the ethical task to ensure authentic participation (Angucia, Zeelen, & De Jong, 2010; Boog, Preece, Slagter, & Zeelen, 2008).

A portrait of organisational learning in seven education NGOs

Chapter 4 – Normative Practitioners in Action – presents outcomes of the orientation and diagnostic stages of the research. The findings presented in this chapter are derived from three main data sources: the orientation dialogue, semi-structured interviews in seven diverse education NGOs and a collaborative co-analysis workshop. This chapter confirms that practitioners view organisational learning as part and parcel of their educational practice. Practitioners highlighted various rationales for organisational learning, but a recurring theme was that organisational learning should help the organisation understand the realities of their learners and align their education programmes to address emerging needs. The wide plethora of organisational learning mechanisms (OLMs) mentioned by research participants suggests that education NGOs are very

intentional about organisational learning. By unpacking the learning requirements and dimensions shaping organisational learning (Shani & Docherty, 2003), we further investigated the interaction between agency and the field. From the profiling exercise we identified several learning requirements posed by the field, such as the need to remain critical about who determines what is at stake, navigating the tension between supporting locally held values with advocacy goals and ensuring there are sufficiently shared learning spaces between departments amidst fragmentation. Amidst these challenging requirements, the findings also illustrate that practitioners are able to enact normative professionalism. Actively shaping organisational learning spaces, they consider creating conversational space, diversifying the knowledge base, balancing formal and informal spaces and negotiating programme terms and conditions with funders to open space for critical learning. Whilst analysing the organisational learning practices together, practitioners concluded that single-loop learning was dominant and that more spaces are needed to authentically and critically learn with external actors.

The community's perspective on collective learning with NGOs

In chapter 5 – Towards Collective Learning Between Communities and NGOs – we turn to the communities in which NGOs operate. Collective learning is often presented as a panacea to tackle complex problems, however, collective learning is a delicate practice and facilitators should be mindful of the situated nature of learning, the role of power and the heterogeneity of communities (Anyidoho, 2010; Cornwall, 2002). To find out from a community perspective how NGOs could shape collective learning, I worked with external research assistants using one village in rural Central Eastern Uganda as a learning site. Through interviews and a community dialogue we established that besides a variety of community initiatives, eighteen NGOs were active in the village. Participants noted that these NGOs do not always offer programmes relevant to the needs of youth or tend to leave out those who need it most. Based on these insights, community participants proposed to invite the NGOs and give them feedback towards more effective collaboration. Together with community representatives we invited the NGOs to participate in the community-NGO meeting. Eight NGOs and the district NGO network participated and listened to feedback from youth and engaged in a dialogue. Community members shared suggestions such as working with youth farther away from the village centre, using sports to bring people together, and starting up a community-NGO coordinating committee. Though most issues remained unresolved, the enclave

emerging in this sub-study provided critical insights into the dynamics of collective learning. By viewing this research journey spatially, we observed that although the different learning spaces were all temporary and quite formal, over time the spaces started showing different locations of impetus and included a growing and more diverse number of participants (Cornwall, 2002). As a result, the series of small and fleeting spaces showed signs of generating immediate, potential, applied and reframing value (Wenger, Trayner, & De Laat, 2011). The chapter presents several pointers for NGO practitioners who are seeking to facilitate authentic collective learning. Though it may be difficult and messy, if used reflexively, collective learning provides an opportunity for NGOs to find keys to unexplored, closed doors.

Trying out new double-loop learning methods

Chapter 6 – Pushing the Limits of Adaptiveness through Double-loop learning – zooms in on the lived realities of the PAR team members delivering Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights education. A detailed portrait is offered of four dilemmas faced by the team around: value-contradictions in this culturally sensitive domain, the complex nature of change, programme targets and community expectations. In this PAR we used several methods of double-loop learning to reflect on the mental models and strategies the team adopted in engaging external actors. This chapter particularly focuses on the personal-case interviews which were based on the double column case method developed by Argyris (1982) and further adapted by Action Design (Rudolph, Taylor, & Foldy, 2001). These interviews either focused on reframing dilemmas (Razer & Friedman, 2017) or deriving principles from success experiences (Schechter, Sykes, & Rosenfeld, 2004). The interviews and analysis workshop revealed how inventive staff and volunteers already were in balancing programme targets, budget constraints, conflicting expectations and value contradictions. Moreover, the programme already had carved out spaces for adaptiveness, such as community dialogues and research with elements of social accountability. In this PAR, the team further pushed the limits to adaptiveness through reflexive thinking. Bravely entering a space for double-loop learning, the team examined their own beliefs and actions and identified how they could change the way things are done. As a result, the team learned to redefine success, foster shared responsibility and mutual relationships and balance private value systems and that of the organisation. Regarding the space for learning we gained insights into the self-sealing processes and

defensive routines that sustained certain rigid approaches to implementing SRHR education programmes.

Chapter 7 – Double-loop learning Towards Adaptive Lifelong Learning Programming – builds on previous chapters by exploring how double-loop learning cannot just be facilitated, but also sustained. The chapter starts by outlining Argyris' approaches to analysing, facilitating and evaluating double-loop learning and how a shift from Model 1 theories-in-use (aimed at self-protection) to Model 2 theories-in-use (aimed at effective problem solving) is key to sustaining double loop learning (Argyris, 2010). In this PAR I also discovered that in all learning trajectories emerging in the PAR, Model 1 learning theories-in-use were dominant. In this chapter, I illustrate that in one of the learning trajectories – volunteers as catalysts of double-loop learning – we were able to facilitate double-loop learning and make a shift towards Model 2 theories-in-use. This seemed to be enabled by direct involvement of volunteers in the PAR process, planning innovations around natural moments of change, packaging insights into a transferable product, organisational commitment to youth engagement and rethinking the volunteer role. The same was not visible in the second learning trajectory on mutual relationship building with external actors. Factors that hindered double-loop learning from sticking in this case were: generally turbulent field dynamics in the border area between the NGO and its external environment, delay in discovering the self-sealing functions of the formalised normative systems, individual level unfreezing that did not translate to collective unfreezing, finding satisfactory single-loop strategies and finally my own blind spots as a facilitator. Based on these experiences I revisited double-loop learning theory and connected it with the relational view on reality offered by field theory, and complemented it with elements of normative professionalism. This yielded five propositions to expand double-loop learning theory and contextualise it for the case of education NGOs. Based on these propositions a Model 2 theory-in-use was presented that could support NGOs in ensuring double-loop learning indeed becomes a platform for normative professionalism.

Reflecting on the value added to organisational learning in education NGOs

This thesis started by proposing that organisational learning, and double-loop learning in particular, could enable NGOs offer more meaningful lifelong learning opportunities

that could close the gap. In chapter 8 – Conclusion and Discussion – I revisit the main research question and review whether this organisational lens has indeed proven meaningful. I further present several practical and theoretical implications for NGO practitioners, funders, policy makers and researchers. I conclude that organisational learning in education NGOs is not the only lens we should use as we seek to facilitate more meaningful learning opportunities for all, but it is surely a meaningful lens. The concept of organisational learning repositions organisations and their members as knowers and could operationalise epistemologies of practice that could help solve complex problems. However, this process should not naively be viewed as automatically benevolent. This research has illustrated that it is not always the interests of the learners that drive day-to-day decision making in NGOs. The accountability paradigm still has its tentacles on the practice of NGOs, even though new adaptive management approaches are trending and critique is rising about problematic power imbalances between the global North and South, black and white, men and women, able-bodied and disabled (Odora Hoppers, 2001). To push organisational learning as a critical learning process, double-loop learning is a practice to aspire for. However, this should not only be focused on technical solutions or debunking routines that hinder effective performance. These spaces for reflection should also include the value lens – is what we are doing right? And to whom? This research has presented a variety of methods that could facilitate this reflection in organisations, within communities and between various actors, as well as lenses to detect the changes as a result of learning that goes beyond realised value but also considers relationships and meaning.

Samenvatting | De normatieve professional: over het toevoegen van waarde aan organisatieleren in onderwijs ngo's in Uganda

Introductie

Voor velen in Uganda is de belofte van een leven lang leren nog niet uitgekomen. Ondanks gestage groei in toegang tot formeel onderwijs blijven er grote vormen van ongelijkheid bestaan in onderwijsdeelname, succesvolle afronding en behaalde leerresultaten (Blaak et al., 2013; Van der Linden, 2016). Dit heeft tot gevolg dat een uitgesloten meerderheid de kansen mist om die *capabilities* te ontwikkelen die hen kunnen ondersteunen in het levensonderhoud, betekenisvol burgerschap of het vervullen van andere levensprojecten. Dit onderzoek gebruikt een organisatie-lens om te kijken naar een van de voornaamste aanbieders van interventies voor een leven lang leren in Uganda: niet-gouvernementele organisaties (ngo's). Vanwege hun unieke positie tussen donoren, beleidsmakers en lokale gemeenschappen moeten ngo's zien te schipperen tussen tegenstrijdige belangen en een schaarste aan middelen. In hoofdstuk 1 van dit proefschrift stel ik dat ngo's zich los zouden moeten maken van het kortetermijn denken en risico ontwijkend gedrag dat dominant is geworden in de ontwikkelingssector als gevolg van een algehele verantwoordingsdruk (Edwards, 1997; Ramalingam, 2013). Dit onderzoek kijkt in het bijzonder of en op welke manier organisatieleren ngo's kan helpen in het ontwikkelen van kennis over de complexe leefwereld van deelnemers, alsmede het testen van innovaties en continu aanpassen van activiteiten naar aanleiding van nieuwe inzichten of omstandigheden – en met name hoe dit op een manier kan die kritisch rekening houdt met (machts) structuren. Organisatieleren in dit onderzoek is gedefinieerd als: "een bewust en kritisch proces van reflectie met als doel nieuwe percepties, doelen en/of actiestrategieën te ontwikkelen" (Doving, 1996 zoals geciteerd in Lipshitz et al., 2007, p. 16). Ik breng in het bijzonder *double-loop* leren onder de aandacht, een proces dat ik zie als kritisch leerproject met een potentieel transformerende opbrengst. Deze vorm van leren verandert namelijk niet

alleen actiestrategieën, maar ook de onderliggende normen en opvattingen, aannames of doelen (Argyris, 1999; Bokeno, 2003).

Om ervoor te zorgen dat dit onderzoek kennis oplevert die ngo's helpt om hun praktijk te versterken hebben we een phronetisch participatief actie onderzoek (PAO) gebruikt. Deze benadering heeft ons geholpen om een praktische vorm van kennis te ontwikkelen die ook inzicht geeft in wat 'goed is' in een bepaalde situatie (phronesis) (Carr & Kemmis, 2005; Eikeland, 2008; Flyvbjerg et al., 2012). Aan het begin van dit participatieve proces hebben we in samenwerking met ngo-professionals onderzoeksvragen geformuleerd. De hoofdvraag was: Hoe kunnen onderwijs ngo's in Uganda ruimte creëren voor *double-loop* leren in samenwerking met externe actoren ten behoeve van betekenisvolle interventies op het gebied van leven lang leren voor ontwikkeling? De deelvragen waren:

- a) Welke mechanismen worden tegenwoordig gebruikt voor organisatieleren in onderwijs ngo's in Uganda?
- b) Welke factoren hinderen *double-loop* leren of maken dit juist mogelijk in onderwijs ngo's in Uganda?
- c) Wie zijn de actoren uit lokale gemeenschappen die betrokken zijn of getroffen worden door het werk van onderwijs ngo's?
- d) Welke ruimte bestaat er voor *double-loop* leren met actoren uit lokale gemeenschappen en welke invloed hebben deze leerprocessen op interventies voor een leven lang leren?
- e) Hoe kunnen onderwijs ngo's in Uganda de ruimte voor *double-loop* leren vergroten en zo de relevantie van hun leven lang leren programma's versterken?

De theoretische fundering, methodologie en bevindingen van dit onderzoek worden in dit proefschrift gepresenteerd in de vorm van een serie van hoofdstukken, (gepubliceerde) artikelen en intermezzo's.

Organisatieleren als een normatieve praktijk

Hoofdstuk 2 – Theoretische Perspectieven – brengt de moerassige laaglanden onder de aandacht waarin ngo-professionals opereren en verkent welke praktijk-epistemologie zou kunnen helpen in het onderzoeken en verbeteren van kritisch organisatieleren binnen dit veld. Geïnspireerd door complexiteitsdenken, presenteer ik een portret van de

conflicten, compromissen, dynamieken en ontwikkelingen die het veld van een leven lang leren voor ontwikkeling in Uganda hebben gevormd. Gebaseerd op deze achtergrond, stel ik dat als we betere en meer gelijkwaardige kansen willen bieden voor een leven lang leren, we niet alleen moeten kijken naar de technische complexiteit – welke vaak al wordt erkend in hedendaagse ontwikkelingstheorieën – maar ook naar de ethische en epistemologische complexiteit in deze praktijk (Kunneman, 2016; McGrath et al., 2020). Het is niet zo dat alle ngo's met complexe problemen te maken hebben, maar het veld waarin ze opereren is wél een complex systeem. Verschillende auteurs hebben bekritiseerd dat de dominante praktijk-epistemologie (namelijk de technische-rationele epistemologie of het neo-Newtonian paradigma) professionals onvoldoende toerust om relevante en effectieve oplossingen te vinden binnen deze vorm van complexiteit (Chambers, 2010; Kunneman, 2016; Schön, 1983). Daarom stel ik in dit hoofdstuk voor dat een organisatielens voor het verbeteren van een leven lang leren ook moet kijken naar de onderliggende praktijk-epistemologie. Hiervoor presenteer ik verschillende alternatieve vormen van epistemologie, zoals *reflectie-in-actie* of *meerzijdige adaptatie* (Chambers, 2010; Schön, 1983), alsmede *normatieve professionalisering* dat niet alleen om alternatieven vraagt maar ook de ambiguïteit van onze leefwereld erkent (Kunneman, 2016).

Naar aanleiding van een literatuuroverzicht van organisatielers in ontwikkelingsorganisaties, constateer ik dat ondanks dat ngo's organisatielers hebben omarmd dit vaak tot een mechanistisch proces blijkt te leiden dat onvoldoende inzicht oplevert voor het oplossen van complexe problematiek. Dit proces wordt sterk beïnvloed door het neo-Newtonian paradigma en de verantwoordingsdruk die ngo's ervaren (Ramalingam, 2013; Roper & Pettit, 2003). Ik introduceer vervolgens *veldtheorie* als een analytisch kader dat ons kan helpen in het analyseren van deze wisselwerking tussen de praktijk-epistemologie en de manier waarop organisatielers wordt vormgegeven. Hierbij bespreek ik concepten die leidend zullen zijn in de analyse binnen dit PAO om de relatie vast te stellen tussen individueel en collectief leren, machtsdynamieken en het samenspel tussen agency en de dynamiek van het veld. Deze concepten zijn: *habitus*, *positionaliteit* en *symbolische en structurele orde* (Bourdieu, 1977; Friedman, 2011; Lewin, 1939). Vervolgens leg ik uit dat *veldtheorie* ons ook kan ondersteunen bij het identificeren van de resultaten van organisatielers. Deze veranderingen kunnen in de meest kritische zin leiden tot een transformatie van het veld of het vormen van tijdelijke *enclaves* waarbinnen andere spelregels en normen gelden (Friedman et al., 2014). Verder toon ik

ook aan dat *double-loop* leren als kritisch organisatieleerproces kan worden gezien omdat de mentale modellen die in deze leervorm worden aangepast in wezen een internalisering van het veld belichamen.

Een phronetische benadering voor participatief actieonderzoek

In lijn met de praktijk-epistemologie die ik heb geïntroduceerd in hoofdstuk 2, leg ik in hoofdstuk 3 – Onderzoeksmethodologie – uit hoe ik in dit onderzoek een phronetisch participatief actieonderzoek heb uitgevoerd. Met het doel om phronesis te ontwikkelen – of contextuele praktische kennis die professionals kan ondersteunen in ‘juist handelen’ – heb ik in dit onderzoek een communicatieve ruimte gecreëerd waarbinnen professionals nieuwe inzichten hebben ontwikkeld door middel van conversatie, onderzoek en actie. Gezien de *veldtheorie*, die leidend is geweest in dit onderzoek, en de speciale focus op *double-loop* leren heb ik actie niet enkel gezien als de zichtbare handelingen van mensen maar ook mijn aandacht gericht op de onderliggende, sociaal gevormde mentale modellen (lagen-van-diepte). Deze handelingen die in micro-situaties plaatsvinden, werden in dit onderzoek ook bestudeerd vanuit het perspectief van het bredere veld om te begrijpen hoe historische en huidige dynamieken het handelen beïnvloeden (lagen-van-breedte).

Dit PAO heeft plaatsgevonden tussen 2015 en 2019. In deze periode hebben we vijf fases doorlopen: oriëntatie, diagnose van het probleem, toegang tot de caseorganisatie, PAO met de caseorganisatie en afronding. In het onderzoek waren verschillende ngo’s betrokken die als case hebben gediend om van én mee te leren. In 2016, in de tweede fase, hebben we organisatieleerpraktijken in kaart gebracht van zeven onderwijsngo’s door middel van een multiple case study (Stake, 2006). In 2017 zijn we ons gaan richten op één organisatie en daarbinnen door verschillende lagen van diepte gegaan. In die context hebben we samen met een programmateam het onderzoek ontworpen en uitgevoerd, gecoördineerd middels maandelijkse PAO-bijeenkomsten. In deze fase zijn uiteindelijk drie leertrajecten ontstaan waarin we *double-loop* leren en andere kritische vormen van organisatieleren hebben uitgetoetst. Het onderzoek werd in 2019 afgesloten met workshops met het programmateam, senior management alsmede de actoren uit lokale gemeenschappen die bij het onderzoek betrokken waren. Hoofdstuk 3 eindigt met een aantal belangrijke zaken over hoe onderzoekers moeten

navigeren in een phronetisch PAO, zoals omgaan met ethische verantwoordelijkheid om authentieke participatie mogelijk te maken (Angucia et al., 2010; Boog et al., 2008).

Een portret van organisatieleren in zeven onderwijs ngo's

Hoofdstuk 4 – Normatieve professionals in actie – worden de uitkomsten gepresenteerd van de eerste twee fases van dit onderzoek: de oriëntatie en probleemdiagnose. De bevindingen die hier worden getoond zijn gebaseerd op drie databronnen: de oriëntatie dialoog, semigestructureerde interviews in zeven diverse onderwijs ngo's en een collaboratieve analyse workshop. In dit hoofdstuk wordt bevestigd dat professionals organisatieleren als centraal onderdeel zien van hun onderwijspraktijk. Professionals belichtten verschillende doelen die zij nastreven door middel van organisatieleren. Een terugkerend thema is dat organisatieleren de organisatie zou kunnen helpen inzicht te krijgen in de situatie van deelnemers en daardoor kunnen zorgen voor een betere aansluiting bij hun behoeftes. Gezien het brede scala aan organisatieleermechanismen (OLMs) dat door onderzoekdeelnemers werd genoemd, lijkt het erop dat onderwijs ngo's erg bewust bezig zijn met organisatieleren. Door de leer-voorwaarden en leer-dimensies verder uit te pluizen hebben we onderzocht hoe het veld en agency op elkaar inwerken. Met behulp van de organisatieprofielen hebben we verschillende leer-voorwaarden geïdentificeerd, zoals de voorwaarde om kritisch te blijven over wie bepaalt wat van waarde is, de tegenstrijdigheden tussen lokale waarden en vernieuwing, alsmede het voorzien in gedeelde leer-ruimtes tussen organisatieafdelingen in sterk gefragmenteerde organisaties.

Ondanks deze uitdagingen laten de bevindingen ook zien dat professionals al handelen als normatieve professionals. Ze creëren actief ruimte voor organisatieleren en overwegen daarbinnen hoe conversationele ruimte mogelijk te maken, kennisbronnen te verbreden, balans te zoeken tussen formeel en informeel leren en hoe te onderhandelen met donoren over programmavoorwaarden zodat er meer ruimte ontstaat voor kritisch leren. Door de praktijken van organisatieleren samen te analyseren hebben we gevonden dat single-loop leren dominant blijft en dat meer ruimte nodig is om authentiek en kritisch te leren met externe actoren.

Het gemeenschapsperspectief op collectief leren met ngo's

In hoofdstuk 5 – Richting collectief leren met gemeenschappen en ngo's – richten we ons op de gemeenschappen waarmee ngo's werken. Collectief leren wordt vaak gepresenteerd als een gouden oplossing om complexe problemen op te lossen. Echter, collectief leren blijkt een delicate praktijk en facilitators moeten zich bewust zijn van het gesitueerde karakter van leren, de rol van macht en de heterogene samenstelling van lokale gemeenschappen (Anyidoho, 2010; Cornwall, 2002). Om te ontdekken hoe de gemeenschap zelf aankijkt tegen de manier waarop ngo's handelen en hoe volgens hen collectief leren het beste kan worden vormgegeven, heb ik samengewerkt met externe onderzoeksassistenten om een sub-onderzoek uit te voeren in een dorp in centraal-oostelijk Uganda. Door interviews en een gemeenschapsdialoog hebben we ontdekt dat naast een scala aan gemeenschapsinitiatieven er ook niet minder dan achttien verschillende ngo's in het dorp actief waren. Deelnemers gaven aan dat de ngo-programma's niet altijd goed aansluiten bij de behoeften van jongeren ofwel er niet in slagen de juiste deelnemers te mobiliseren. Gebaseerd op de verworven inzichten kwamen de deelnemers van de lokale gemeenschappen met het voorstel om ngo's uit te nodigen in het dorp zodat ze persoonlijk feedback konden delen ter ondersteuning van een meer effectieve samenwerking. Samen met vertegenwoordigers uit het dorp hebben we ngo's uitgenodigd voor een dorps-ngo-bijeenkomst. Acht ngo's en een netwerkorganisatie hebben deze uitnodiging gehonoreerd, hebben geluisterd naar feedback van jongeren en gingen de conversatie aan. Dorpsbewoners deelden suggesties, zoals het betrekken van jongeren die verder uit het centrum wonen, meer gebruik te maken van sport voor het mobiliseren van jongeren alsmede het opzetten van een commissie welke de samenwerking tussen ngo's en de gemeenschap kan helpen coördineren. Hoewel de meeste kwesties niet direct opgelost werden heeft deze deelstudie wel inzichten opgeleverd in de dynamieken van collectief leren. Door dit onderzoekstraject in een ruimtelijk perspectief te plaatsen hebben we kunnen zien dat gedurende het onderzoek, hoewel de ruimtes voor leren formeel en tijdelijk waren, toch een steeds meer diverse groep mensen participeerden (Cornwall, 2002). In de conclusie, geeft dit hoofdstuk verschillende suggesties voor ngo-professionals die collectief leren willen faciliteren op een authentieke manier. Hoewel dit moeilijk zal blijven en niet zelden rommelig kan zijn, kan collectief leren deuren openen die normaal gesproken gesloten blijven, mits dit op een reflexieve manier gebeurt.

Het uitproberen van double-loop leermethodes

Hoofdstuk 6 – Het verzetten van de grenzen van adaptief werken door *double-loop* leren zoomt in op het werk van de PAO-teamleden op het gebied van onderwijs over Seksuele Reproductieve Gezondheid en Rechten (SRHR). Het hoofdstuk biedt een gedetailleerd portret van vier dilemma's waar het team tegenaan liep: waarden-conflicten in dit cultureel gevoelige domein; de complexe natuur van verandering; programma doelen en het omgaan met de verwachtingen van lokale gemeenschappen. In dit PAO hebben we verschillende methodes uitgetest om *double-loop* leren te faciliteren en zodoende te reflecteren op de mentale modellen en strategieën die het team gebruikt in de samenwerking met externe actoren. Dit hoofdstuk focust op de persoonlijke case interviews die waren geïnspireerd door Argyris (1982) en de versie van Action Design (Rudolph, Taylor, & Foldy, 2001). Deze interviews doelden ofwel op het *reframing* van dilemma's (Razer & Friedman, 2017) of het vaststellen van principes die hebben geleid tot succes in het omgaan met dilemma's (Schechter, Sykes, & Rosenfeld, 2004). De interviews samen met een analyse workshop hebben aangetoond hoe creatief personeel en vrijwilligers zijn geweest in het balanceren tussen programmadoelen, budgettekorten, conflicterende verwachtingen en waarden-conflicten. Overigens had het programma zelf al ruimte ingebouwd voor adaptiviteit, zoals gemeenschapsdialogen en onderzoek met elementen van sociale verantwoording. In dit PAO ging het team een stapje verder om de grenzen van adaptiviteit te verleggen door middel van reflexiviteit. Moedig zijn ze de ruimte van *double-loop* leren ingestapt en hebben zo hun eigen opvattingen en handelen onderzocht en op basis daarvan geïdentificeerd wat anders zou kunnen. Als resultaat heeft het team succes opnieuw gedefinieerd, hebben ze opnieuw vormgegeven aan gedeelde verantwoordelijkheid met de gemeenschap en hebben ze meer balans gevonden in het gebruik van hun privé waardensysteem en dat van de organisatie. In termen van de ruimte voor leren hebben we inzicht gekregen in de zelf-indekkende en defensieve routines die vormen van rigiditeit in het SRHR-onderwijs programma's in stand hielden.

Hoofdstuk 7 – *Double-loop* leren richting een adaptieve manier van leven lang leren programmering – bouwt verder op de vorige hoofdstukken door te verkennen hoe *double-loop* leren niet alleen kan worden gefaciliteerd maar ook kan worden onderhouden. Het hoofdstuk start met Argyris' benadering voor het analyseren, faciliteren en evalueren van *double-loop* leren en hoe we kunnen verschuiven van Model

1 actie-theorieën (gericht op zelfbescherming) naar Model 2 actie-theorieën (gericht op probleemoplossend werken) waardoor *double-loop* leren wordt onderhouden (Argyris, 2010). In dit PAO heb ik ontdekt dat in alle leertrajecten van dit onderzoek, Model 1 actie theorieën dominant waren. In dit hoofdstuk legt ik uit dat in één van de trajecten – vrijwilligers als katalysatoren van *double-loop* leren – we erin zijn geslaagd *double-loop* leren te faciliteren en daarmee een shift te maken richting Model 2 actie-theorieën. Dit leek mogelijk te worden gemaakt door directe betrokkenheid van vrijwilligers in het PAO-proces, het plannen van innovatie rondom natuurlijke momenten van verandering en het feit dat de organisatie betrokkenheid van jongeren als een belangrijke prioriteit zag. Hetzelfde was niet zichtbaar in het tweede leertraject over de gelijkwaardige relatie met externe actoren. Factoren die de duurzaamheid van *double-loop* leren in dit traject hebben verhinderd waren: het algehele turbulente veld rondom ngo's; vertraging in het ontdekken van de zelf-indekkende functie van formalistische normatieve systemen; individuele inzichten die niet leiden tot collectieve inzichten; het vinden van geschikte single-loop strategieën en mijn eigen blinde vlekken als facilitator. Naar aanleiding van deze bevindingen heb ik opnieuw naar de theorie van *double-loop* leren gekeken en heb deze verbonden aan het relationele perspectief van de *veldtheorie*. Daarnaast heb ik de *double-loop* leertheorie verder aangevuld met elementen van normatieve professionalisering. Dit heeft geleid tot vijf proposities die *double-loop* leertheorie verbreden en contextualiseren voor onderwijs ngo's. Gebaseerd op deze proposities presenteer ik een Model 2 actie-theorie die het verduurzamen van *double-loop* leren in ngo's kan ondersteunen zodat dit een platform biedt voor normatieve professionalisering.

Reflectie op de waardetoevoeging aan organisatieleren in onderwijs ngo's

Deze thesis begon met het voorstel dat organisatieleren, en *double-loop* leren in het bijzonder, onderwijs ngo's in staat kan stellen om meer betekenisvol leven lang leren mogelijk te maken alsook ongelijkheden weg te nemen. In hoofdstuk 8 – Conclusie en discussie – blik ik terug op de hoofdvraag en verken ik of de organisatielens inderdaad waarde heeft toegevoegd. Ik presenteer verscheidene praktische en theoretische implicaties van dit onderzoek voor ngo-werkers, donoren, beleidsmakers en onderzoekers. Ik concludeer dat organisatieleren in onderwijs ngo's dan wel niet de enige lens is die we moeten gebruiken maar het is zeker een betekenisvolle lens. Het idee van

organisatieleren positioneert organisaties en hun leden als kenners en kan een alternatieve praktijk-epistemologie realiteit maken om zo complexe problemen op te lossen. Hoe dan ook, organisatieleren moet niet als automatisch goed worden bestempeld. Dit onderzoek heeft namelijk ook geïllustreerd dat organisatieleren niet altijd gebeurt met het oog op de leerlingen en hun werkelijke, complexe behoeften. De verantwoordingsdruk heeft nog steeds veel invloed op de praktijk van ngo's ook al is er een nieuwe trend zichtbaar gericht op adaptief management alsook een toenemende kritiek op problematische machtsdynamieken tussen het noorden en zuiden, zwart en wit, mannen en vrouwen, gezond van lijf en leden en gehandicapt (Odora Hoppers, 2001). Om organisatieleren kritischer te maken is *double-loop* leren een belangrijke route. Hoewel, dit niet enkel gericht moet zijn op technische oplossingen of barrières die effectief handelen voorkomen. Deze ruimtes voor reflectie moeten ook een waardenlens opnemen – doen we het juiste? En voor wie is dit juist? Dit onderzoek heeft verschillende methodes gepresenteerd die kunnen helpen met het faciliteren van deze reflectie in organisaties, binnen gemeenschappen en tussen verschillende actoren, alsook lenzen om leerresultaten in kaart te brengen, niet enkel in de vorm van direct zichtbare resultaten maar ook verandering in relaties en betekenis.

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About the author

Marit Blaak (Hoogezand-Sappemeer, 1987), completed her bachelor's degree in Educational Sciences at the University of Groningen in 2008. In her master's programme in Educational Sciences (2008-2010), she investigated the lived realities of early school leavers in Uganda and their perceptions of effective non-formal education programmes. Since 2010, Marit has held various positions with education NGOs focusing particularly on programme design, research and learning. Marit has co-created various education programmes such as the Skills for Effective Entrepreneurship Development (SEED), the Educate! Experience 2.0, the Skilled Learning Programme and the VIP Bootcamp, reaching tens of thousands of youths in East Africa. In her work she has operated especially at the intersection between NGOs, governments, academia and communities. Rooted in these experiences, Marit embarked on a PhD trajectory in 2015 which has resulted in this thesis. Her research and learning interests include lifelong learning, educational exclusion and organisational learning for adaptive programming. She is driven by finding educational solutions that offer just and meaningful opportunities for all.



Annex – UNCST Ethical clearance



Uganda National Council for Science and Technology

(Established by Act of Parliament of the Republic of Uganda)

Our Ref: SS25ES

13th December 2016

Ms. Marit Blaak
Principal Investigator
C/o Gulu University
Gulu

Dear Ms. Blaak,

I am pleased to inform you that on **13/12/2016**, the Uganda National Council for Science and Technology (UNCST) approved your study titled, **Learning for Change: Promoting Organisational Learning in Education Non – Governmental Organisations in Uganda**. The Approval is valid for the period of **13/12/2016** to **13/12/2020**.

Your study reference number is **SS25ES**. Please, cite this number in all your future correspondences with UNCST in respect of the above study.

Please, note that as Principal Investigator, you are responsible for:

1. Keeping all co-investigators informed about the status of the study.
2. Submitting any changes, amendments, and addenda to the study protocol or the consent form, where applicable, to the designated local Research Ethics Committee (REC) or Lead Agency, where applicable, for re-review and approval prior to the activation of the changes.
3. Notifying UNCST about the REC or lead agency approved changes, where applicable, within five working days.
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6. Providing any new information which could change the risk/benefit ratio of the study to the UNCST for review.
7. Submitting annual progress reports electronically to UNCST. Failure to do so may result in termination of the research project.

Please, note that this approval includes all study related tools submitted as part of the application.

Yours sincerely,

Hellen Opolot
For: Executive Secretary

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