Ensuring meaningful lifelong learning opportunities for groups at risk

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Dedication

To the students who ensured my lifelong learning process

Preface

When can I expect that glossy of yours? A colleague of mine took me by surprise with this question. I had always considered writing a PhD thesis as not my piece of cake. My 'mental model' of this exercise was something like submerging in a theme with books and a computer after saying goodbye to family and friends only emerging again after four years or more. After my appointment as a lecturer at the University of Groningen, which normally presupposes a PhD, I even made a presentation under the title *PhDo or PhDon't*? sharing my doubts with colleagues. Some of them had already obtained their PhD long ago, others were on the way to earning this title.

What I began to enjoy though, was conducting research, writing articles, even rewriting them after getting reviews. So, at some point I asked myself if perhaps the format of a special issue of a scientific journal could help me to accomplish the final job. The journal would contain contributions from different perspectives and an editorial serving as the theoretical framework, all written by myself with or without co-authors. I elaborated this into a content proposal and launched it among my colleagues. This provoked one of them to exclaim: *this seems too nice to be a PhD* and another one to suggest the idea of a glossy.

As it appears now, it is neither a special issue of a scientific journal nor a glossy. The possibility of joining different perspectives in one thesis has certainly helped me to accomplish the work. In this way I could do justice to many meaningful experiences throughout my working life and many people who have become dear to me, especially during my ten African years. I understand that I have been fortunate to live and work in conditions different from those to which I was previously accustomed. Although I cherish the memories, I have also taken up the challenge to bring them together with experiences in the less disadvantaged context of the Netherlands. The differences, although they were interesting and sometimes peculiar, were not the most impressive aspect of the study. The moments of shared feelings about all kinds of large and small life events were what stood out.

Thus, before this thesis is read, the background, which is my personal life story, should be sketched. After working in different positions in Higher Education and Adult Education in the Netherlands, I lived and worked first for five years in Sudan, where I worked as a lecturer at Ahfad University for Women (1996 – 2001) and later for four years in Mozambique, where I contributed to the establishment of a new Faculty of Education in Eduardo Mondlane University as a lecturer on adult education (2002-2006). After returning to the Netherlands, I became a lecturer on maths education for primary school teachers at the University of Applied Sciences iPabo in Amsterdam/Alkmaar and a lecturer on lifelong learning at the University of

Groningen. Research as a way to reflect on and develop teaching and learning has always accompanied my work as testified by this PhD thesis which includes various publications on lifelong learning and groups at risk written in the last ten years.

The publications brought together in this document have been written over a number of years and the research, on which they are based, has been carried out in different stages of my career, in different circumstances with different co-researchers. They bear the characteristics of the theoretical, political and social debate in which they played a role. The terminology used has developed over the years. The challenge of 'squeezing out' the lessons learned may have distracted my attention from small changes or subtle shifts in meaning, which I took for granted. On the other hand, I hope that the diversity will arouse interest and that the connecting texts in this document will help to overcome confusion caused by the different contexts.

Conditions have been created for me to work on my PhD in the two institutions that employ me. The University of Applied Sciences iPabo in Amsterdam/Alkmaar granted me one day a week for three years and the University of Groningen provided a stimulating academic environment in which to work on the thesis. Many people have accompanied, encouraged and supported me in the process of writing this thesis. From Sudan I mention Fayza Hussein and Alawiya Ibrahim; from South Sudan Florence Aate Andrew and Karar ElDin; from Mozambique Alzira Manuel, Rosalina Rungo, Agneta Lind (originally from Sweden) and Arlindo Sitoe; from South Africa Makgwana Rampedi; from Uganda Margaret Angucia, Cuthbert Tukundane, Peace Tumuheki, Alice Wabule, Max Ngabirano and Kennedy Amone; from the Netherlands Max van der Kamp (deceased too early in 2007), Hans Schoenmakers, Marit Blaak, Frank Elsdijk, Maaike Zijderveld, Maaike Smulders, Cootje Logger, Linda Greveling, Ronald Keijzer, Pieter Boele van Hensbroek, Julia Swierstra, Meindert Slagter and Paul Wabike (originally from Tanzania).

My first supervisor Jacques Zeelen encouraged me to work out my own way of tackling a PhD; I am grateful for the encouragement and also for the friendship. Astrid von Kotze joined later on as a second supervisor and made me look critically at my texts again. Thanks for that. Many thanks but also apologies go to my family and friends to whom I have said 'no' so many times when they asked me to join them. For fear of forgetting someone, I will not mention names. It is not a glossy that I offer to you now, but I hope to share glossy moments with all of you after finishing this undertaking.

Josje van der Linden, May 12, 2016

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General introduction: Lifelong learning and international cooperation

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1.1   Introduction

The world of today is full of uncertainties. Without studying one will die of poverty.

It was not a well-known scholar or a leading politician, who said this, but a lady selling vegetables at one of the markets of Maputo, the capital of Mozambique. I spoke with this lady in the framework of a research project on perceptions of literacy (Van der Linden & Rungo, 2006; Van der Linden & Manuel, 2011) in July 2004. I quote her words here to introduce the theme of this thesis which is about development and education. Instead of increasing opportunities, current developments cause risks for many world citizens (Beck, 1992) affecting their livelihoods and their chances of survival. These risks can be reduced if one gets educated. Education, in the perception of this lady, supports people in coping with the unpredictable. This touches on the interaction between development and education, which is the gist of this thesis and of this introductory chapter.

Three assumptions are important in this framework: one about development, one about education and the third about the relationship between the two. The first assumption is that development in itself, usually only meaning economic development, does not increase chances for everybody to live a worthwhile life (see Nussbaum, 2011). Thus, development should not uncritically be transferred from the so-called 'developed' world to the so-called 'developing' world[1]. Genuine development cooperation presupposes interaction and mutual learning as explained later on (Zeelen & Van der Linden, 2009). The second assumption is that education for children as well as for youth and adults is, or should be, about creating learning opportunities that support people in coping with the world of today. In terms of the relationship between education and development, this means (third assumption) that education should be structured in a way that enables people to engage in development and

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[1] It is with reticence that I use the terms 'developing' and 'developed' and sometimes 'global North' and 'global South' to refer to respectively the generally more powerful regions as opposed to the less powerful in terms of economy and politics. As much as possible, I will be more specific than this generalisation allows.

benefit from it in the way they choose. Lifelong learning opportunities are only meaningful to the learners when they add to this perspective.

The intention of this thesis is to bring to the fore how lifelong learning programmes and professionals strive to provide lesser educated learners, like the lady in the market and other groups at risk, with appropriate learning opportunities. The title *Ensuring meaningful lifelong learning opportunities for groups at risk* refers to one of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), agreed on by the United Nations in New York in September 2015. Goal 4 reads: *Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all* (Tang, 2014). Striking in the formulation is that quality education must be ensured, but lifelong learning opportunities should ´only´ be promoted. In the next paragraphs, I will explain why I prefer the word 'ensure' and add the words 'meaningful' and 'groups at risk'. Although the thesis also touches on lifelong learning policies and organisations, the ultimate focus is on the programmes, participants and the professionals. The main research question is: *How can lifelong learning programmes serve groups at risk?* This question is broad. Groups at risk exist all over the world in a diversity of conditions. Without denying the influence of the different contexts, it is hoped that discussing learning opportunities for vulnerable groups in different conditions will lead to mutual learning and valuable insights. The bottom line is that people like the lady at the market, living in precarious circumstances, will benefit from these opportunities.

Like an editorial to a special issue of a journal, this introduction contains a preview of the collected articles. Unlike an editorial, it will dive deeper to satisfy the general requirements of a PhD thesis. As such, it will explain the theoretical background, justify the research methodology and elaborate on the general research question with several sub-questions before presenting the outline of the contents.

1.2   Development, international cooperation and transnationalism

This paragraph will elaborate on the first assumption regarding development. The context of the research for this thesis was international cooperation. Before focusing on lifelong learning, this context will be discussed. Shifting concepts of development and international cooperation will be related to contemporaneous realities and to the possible benefits of this type of cooperation as an opportunity to reflect on policies and practices of lifelong learning in a

global perspective. This will lead to the identification of key issues for the elaboration of the thesis.

Since the decolonisation in the sixties, which marked the start of 'development aid' as it was called at the time (De Haan, 2013), a lot has changed in the world order and also in the approach to the so-called developing countries. The UNDP primer on capacity development describes the changes in approach as moving from 'development aid' via 'technical assistance' and 'technical cooperation' to 'capacity development' (UNDP, 2009a). Whereas development aid focused on lending and granting money, capacity development focuses on empowering and strengthening endogenous capabilities. Development aid policies viewed developing countries as countries in financial need and money was lent which lead to those countries accruing enormous debts. With a different approach, according to the UNDP primer, capacity development policies view developing countries as the owners of their developing process and build on existing resources in terms of people, skills, technologies and institutions. The still widely used term 'capacity building' preceded the term 'capacity development'. A common pitfall in implementing capacity building according to the OECD (2006) is the lack of contextualisation. The advantage of speaking of capacity development is that it acknowledges the potential of existing capacities to be further developed within their context.

Reflecting on our experiences in what were then called 'capacity building missions' in Southern Africa, my colleague and I went a step further and characterised our cooperation with the term 'joint knowledge production' (Zeelen & Van der Linden, 2009). More than capacity building and even capacity development, this term stresses the equal position of the cooperation partners and takes into account that knowledge is developed in interaction. In our case this led to a joint publication on early school leaving as a phenomenon threatening the future of the young population in many countries in Africa as well as in Europe (Zeelen, Van der Linden, Nampota & Ngabirano, 2010) and to a flourishing international cooperation practice, first under the name of Early School Leaving in Africa and later on Youth, Education and Work (Blaak, Tukundane, Van der Linden & Elsdijk, 2016).

´Joint knowledge production' refers to the pooling of forces for a common goal: a continuous debate on knowledge which serves to analyse and solve social problems. Of course, power issues do not vanish with the use of a new word. One still has to be aware of power issues that play a role. They play a role between developed and developing countries, also called the global North and the global South, but also within the North and the South (Zeelen & Van der Linden, 2009). Migration, increased mobility and increased communication

between people have blurred national borders and changed international relations in the world of development. Transnationalism is the term used to describe long-term cross-border relationships (Vertovec, 2009; 2010). Jarvis (2007) points at the power of transnational corporations, which national governments find difficult to control. Power relations have become more and more complex as development cooperation is no longer cooperation among countries, but includes non-governmental organisations, the private sector, charities, and the diaspora sending remittances (De Haan, 2013; Ferrier, 2013). The term 'international cooperation' is becoming a disputable concept. Who is cooperating with whom? Are nations cooperating with nations? Are partners cooperating across national borders? Should we speak of transnational cooperation instead of international cooperation?

Adding to the fading national borders is the development that governments are retreating. In the Netherlands, the national government is promoting a 'participation society' in which initiatives of citizens to take responsibility for each other are applauded (RoB, 2012). This is a similar trend as observed by Martin (2003) in the United Kingdom; his analysis is that the promotion of citizenship is accompanied by the deconstruction of welfare. The importance of citizen initiative also extends to private initiatives in international cooperation. A study by Van den Berg (2012) discusses these initiatives as becoming more and more important next to established large charities. They are characterised by their small-scale and by the high feelings of engagement of initiators and the group around them. The question is whether the private initiatives benefit from the lessons learned in international cooperation. Can they be characterised as 'development aid' or 'capacity development' in terms of the UNDP primer (UNDP, 2009a)? The study mentioned includes projects by the diaspora from developing countries, living in the Netherlands, but does not pay specific attention to this 'transnational' aspect. As capacity development focuses on empowering and strengthening endogenous capabilities (UNDP, 2009a) and the lack of contextualisation is a common pitfall in implementing capacity development (OECD, 2006), members of the diaspora with their knowledge of both South and North would be excellent partners in developing capacity (UNDP, 2009a; 2009b) and joint knowledge production. A topical realisation of international cooperation as joint knowledge production should take contemporaneous realities into account in the establishment of new partnerships.

What do citizens of so-called developing countries gain by international cooperation? If it is not money, as was the idea at the start of the history of development aid, what is it? The capabilities approach of Nussbaum (2011) and Sen (1999) offers an answer. Nussbaum

severely criticises the way of judging the quality of people's lives by the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita in a certain country. According to Nussbaum, the Gross Domestic Product is an economic measure that does not reflect the inequality in the distribution of wealth. Also, it does not show if and how each individual succeeds in living a life worthy of human dignity. The capabilities approach looks at each person as an individual, entitled to freedom, choice and basic social justice. Nussbaum lists ten central capabilities, including life, bodily health, bodily integrity, using one's senses, imagination and thought guided by education, emotions and play, among others. Governments have to guarantee a minimum of these capabilities, meaning that their citizens have to have the freedom to develop internal capabilities, which combined with the necessary conditions, lead to the realisation of capabilities, which Nussbaum calls 'functionings'.

This is what citizens have to gain: capabilities combined with the conditions to realise them. They should possess freedom of choice, opportunities to make use of this freedom and be able to trust that they can count on this in the future. The latter is called capability security and is especially at stake in conflict situations (Wolff & De-Shalit in Nussbaum, 2011). Nussbaum assigns an important role to governments. They must secure a threshold level of the ten central capabilities. This means that, for governments, there is a limit to how far they should retreat. They may leave initiative to citizens, but they have to guarantee basic social justice in the country they are responsible for. This is in line with the critical remarks of Drenth, Frissen and Janssens (2012) on the participation society as promoted by the Dutch government and with the critical remarks of others on lifelong learning (Van der Kamp, 2000a; Martin, 2003). Withdrawal of the government must not result in putting responsibility on people without supporting them to shoulder this responsibility. A specific kind of functioning is 'fertile functioning'. This is a functioning that plays a fertile role for other capabilities or functionings. Education plays the role of 'fertile functioning', when it develops existing capabilities into internal capabilities. It opens options and chances in different areas and on different levels. In other words, getting educated means getting empowered. This concept could shed light on lifelong learning and capacity development, as learning can be viewed not only from the perspective of the existing reality in which people live, but also from the perspective of opening up new possibilities.

From this brief overview, we can derive some key issues related to development, international cooperation and transnationalism to expand on the development assumption presented above. Development is not one-way traffic from the 'developed' to the

'developing'. International cooperation in the framework should include a dialogue to produce joint knowledge. The actors involved in international cooperation have changed due to migration and the rise of citizen initiatives. 'New' actors should be acknowledged as partners in development. The critical questions to be asked are: who are the beneficiaries and how do they benefit in terms of expansion of their capabilities?

1.3   Lifelong learning, adult education and non-formal education

As mentioned before, lifelong learning has (re)appeared on the international agenda. Number 4 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) agreed on recently by the United Nations in New York in September 2015, reads: *Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all* (Tang, 2014). In the following paragraphs the current attention to lifelong learning is discussed. The revitalisation of lifelong learning policies and practices is appreciated, but in line with the assumption concerning education one should take care to avoid a narrow interpretation which does not really serve groups at risk. Approaches oriented to the needs of these groups will be presented to support the identification of key issues in this area.

The perspective of the new SDG4 on education is much broader than the perspective of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the Education for All (EFA) goals. Two of the MDGs, established in 2000 by the United Nations relate to education: MDG2 focuses on access to primary education and MDG3 on gender parity in education. Although these goals certainly merit attention, it is striking that lifelong learning or adult education was not mentioned. Of the six EFA goals that were agreed on in Dakar, also in 2000, two goals explicitly referred to adults: one to youth and adult skills (goal 3) and another one to adult literacy (goal 4). In the process leading to the formulation of the new SDGs, the Major Group of Workers, Trade Unions, Women, Children and Youth, and Indigenous Peoples seems to have felt the urge to put pressure as they proposed replacing the word 'provide' with the word 'ensure' in SDG4 (Major Group of Workers, Trade Unions, Women, Children and Youth, and Indigenous peoples, 2014). Although this advice was only partly accepted, the new SDG4 will hopefully provide a better base for people to claim their right to be educated throughout their lives.

In the Netherlands, the Ministers of Education and Internal Affairs already heralded the attention to lifelong learning in the SDGs. In a letter to the Dutch parliament (Ministry of

Education, Culture and Science, 2014), they wrote that lifelong learning would be a spearhead for the Dutch government in the coming years. Their motivation is that initial education does not sufficiently qualify people for their whole lifespan. The dynamic labour market demands higher qualified labourers and asks for a stronger learning culture. Several measures are proposed to stimulate people to engage in learning at a later stage in life and to go on learning while working. How can these developments be understood? Is the time ripe for lifelong learning in the sense of Jarvis (2007), who defines lifelong learning as:

> The combination of processes throughout a lifetime whereby the whole person – body (genetic, physical and biological) and mind (knowledge, skills, attitudes, values, emotions, beliefs and senses) – experiences social situations, the perceived contents of which is then transformed cognitively, emotively or practically (or through any combination) and integrated into the individual person's biography resulting in a continually changing (or more experienced) person (p. 1).

The definition presents lifelong learning as an enriching experience involving the person as a whole and incorporating the changing demands of the surrounding society. Is that the type of lifelong learning promoted? History makes us cautious. Although not on the forefront, there was talk of 'lifelong learning for all' in the slipstream of the discussion on the millennium goals at the end of the twentieth century. UNESCO, OECD and several countries published reports and strategies to promote adult learning. Van der Kamp (2000a) critically discussed the Dutch National Action Plan for lifelong learning of 1998. The action plan, according to Van der Kamp's analysis, focused on learning for employability, which meant learning for the labour market. To retain the interest of employers in a world in which skills and knowledge are rapidly outdated, people have to maintain their employability continuously. Van der Kamp showed with figures of participation in adult learning programmes that most of those who participated were highly educated people. Lesser educated groups at risk of losing work opportunities did not and would not participate without supporting measures. Hake (2000) speaks of an 'accumulation hypothesis' in this respect: the level of initial education predicts the participation in adult education activities. According to Van der Kamp, the Dutch National Action Plan was biased in two senses: lifelong learning seemed only to serve the labour market and only those who were used to learning. Men participated more than women, working people more than jobless people, young people more than older people, native people more than migrants. 'Lifelong learning for all' as outlined in the plan would simply be rhetoric, concluded Van der Kamp (2000a).

Dutch policy makers are not the only ones to be accused of bias and rhetoric. Further reading (Martin, 2003; Borg & Mayo, 2005; Stenforth-Hayes, Griffith & Ogunleye, 2008)

reveals similar issues in other countries. As already mentioned, Martin (2003) states that in the United Kingdom the promotion of citizenship as a central value goes hand in hand with the deconstruction of welfare. According to him, lifelong learning is a 'fig leaf' to disguise the elimination of the critical potential that once characterised adult education. Borg and Mayo (2005) are even more critical, contending that the old UNESCO discourse on lifelong education has been distorted to accommodate the needs of capitalism in the Memorandum on lifelong learning of the European Commission (CEC, 2000). Stenforth-Hayes, Griffith and Ogunleye (2008) introduce yet another group that is excluded from lifelong learning: mental service care users. Evaluations concerning the two EFA goals, that are linked to lifelong learning, show similar findings. Access to appropriate learning and skills programmes is still a challenge for (working) youth and migrants (UNESCO, 2015). And although women in developing countries are, contrary to what Van der Kamp found in the Netherlands, the ones benefiting more from adult literacy programmes than men (UNESCO, 2014), the progress in adult literacy has been slower than progress towards other goals (UNESCO, 2015). Commenting on the new SDG4, Regmi (2015) considers the fact that lifelong learning is mentioned, an important breakthrough, but he is very critical about the implementation. He outlines the benefits of the new lifelong learning development goal for the Least Developed Countries, a group of 49 countries that are off-track in achieving most of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the Education for All goals. He argues that *the perspective of lifelong learning envisaged as the post-2015 education agenda for the poor countries is a narrow economistic approach based on neoliberal interpretations of human capital theory* (p. 563). To serve the 'least developed countries', the interpretation of lifelong learning should not be dominated by the global North, but by the governments of these countries.

In their book on 'Adult Education at the Crossroads', Finger and Asún (2001) depict the history of adult education as a history of beautiful stories and disappointing practices, thus highlighting the tensions between good intentions and poor delivery. They characterise the current bias of adult education and lifelong learning towards the labour market as 'learning for earning' and lament that the human values that once inspired the establishment of UNESCO and the promotion of lifelong learning, nowadays only serve to 'humanise' economic development. They extensively quote Illich to show how institutionalisation leads to de-humanisation. In the field of education this means that people learn for the school and not for themselves and their lives (Illich, 1971). The critics agree that adult education, which used to be embedded in a humanist discourse, belongs to the past and is replaced by 'lifelong learning', which almost inevitably is dominated by the demands of the economy.

Contradicting his broad definition of lifelong learning, also Jarvis (2007) points at the interest of the labour market in capable human resources as the main motor for lifelong learning instead of the needs of the learners. The joy over the inclusion of lifelong learning in the new SDGs thus has a shadow side, both in the 'developed' as in the 'developing' countries (Regmi, 2015). Words like economic development, human capital and neoliberalism continue to pop up in the debate about lifelong learning.

The question then is how can people like the woman in the market benefit from the promotion of lifelong learning? Is there a way to implement lifelong learning that would support people like her in her struggle to meet the demands of contemporary society? How can the disadvantages and pitfalls of lifelong learning be avoided? UNESCO (2015) calls for education alternatives beyond formal schooling for youth and adults who are no longer in school. According to Regmi (2015), lifelong learning in a humanist sense recognising the specific realities and unique challenges of 'least developed countries' could be an alternative. That would come close to the definition by Jarvis (2007) as presented before. Finger and Asún (2001) follow Illich's critical analysis and see the alternative in small-scale learning initiatives like Participatory Action Research (PAR). PAR is grounded in concrete social problems, keeps a human scale, and develops knowledge and technology in context (see also Participatory Rural Appraisal, as described by Chambers, 1997). The inspiration comes from Freire (1970), who developed a teaching and learning approach for illiterate farmers in Brazil, not only to get educated, but also to become empowered. His denouncement of 'banking' education is famous; this is the term he uses to characterise the dominant form of education. 'Banking' means that the teacher deposits knowledge in the learner as if he or she is depositing money in a bank. The learner can only accept the ready-made knowledge; he or she cannot change or modify it to his or her own living conditions. In this way, both teachers and learners are de-humanised. A pedagogy of the oppressed is needed to overcome the phenomenon of oppression both for oppressors and oppressed. Through dialogue they can become conscious of their situation (Portuguese: conscientização) and become co-creators of knowledge. This position has interesting epistemological consequences as it challenges the way knowledge is commonly conceived.

Street's writings (1984) on literacy and literacy learning can be viewed as expanding on this perspective. Street labels the predominant approach to literacy as 'autonomous'. Reading and writing, in this approach, is viewed as a neutral or technical skill, without any relation to the context in which it is used. Contrary to this approach, Street contends that the skills of reading

and writing are embedded in a context and in a context-related ideology, which is most often a Western dominated ideology. The 'ideological' model, which Street prefers, takes into account the prevailing literacies (plural!) in a certain context and the way these literacies are embedded in social practices. Learning to read and write should be a collective practice related to the social value of literacy rather than an individual process of acquiring skills, which are presented as neutral, but in fact culturally biased. On a similar note, Finger and Asún (2001) speak of 'exogenous knowledge transmission' versus 'endogenous knowledge creation'. In exogenous knowledge transmission education is a tool of the system (education about the world for all), whereas in endogenous knowledge creation learning is a tool of the people (learning from the world by all).

Whereas learning is usually viewed as an individual activity of diligently acquiring what is already known, another concept of learning as a collective activity emerges, in which new knowledge is created, appropriate to the context. Uncritically following the slogans of Education for All and Lifelong Learning for All could lead to promoting the first type of learning instead of the second. In the first world conference on Education for All in Jomtien in 1990 basic education, to which children, youth and adults all over the world are entitled, was defined not as primary education, but as education fulfilling the basic learning needs (Torres, 2003). These basic learning needs include: *surviving, developing one's full capacities, living and working in dignity, participating fully in development, improving the quality of life, making informed decisions and continuing to learn* (Jomtien, 1990 as quoted in Torres, 2003, p. 89). Torres explains that these basic learning needs extend beyond perceived learning needs and new basic learning needs may develop in the learning process. In other words, the learning needs of lesser educated people (children, youth and adults) may change, when they engage in learning and develop their perceptions of learning in interaction with other learners and supervisors or teachers. Torres' way of discussing the basic learning needs could be of help in the view of groups at risk, who are not used to learning and who will have difficulty in formulating learning needs. Learning, viewed from the perspective of learning needs that are continuously developing, may gain by a non-static definition of knowledge.

The development of lifelong learning programmes that are meaningful to the learners, also to those who stem from groups at risk, may be oriented by the pointers as formulated by writers such as Freire, Jarvis, Torres and Street. However, these pointers cannot be translated straightforwardly into programme level. The dynamics at programme level encompass first of all the learners, but also the contents, the methods, the teachers and the context. How can

they be combined to form a powerful learning environment that engages the learners in knowledge production? In their publication on hybrid forms of learning, Van der Kamp and Toren (2003) elaborate on this. They identify three types of barriers for non-learners: attitudinal, physical and material, and structural barriers (see also Cross, 1981). A powerful learning environment should overcome these barriers by way of its learning contents, teaching and learning methods, counselling and supervision, and organisation. Instead of 'banking' education as Freire (1970) termed this, experiences of the learners in life and work should be the starting point for learning processes. This will promote self-confidence in the learners to engage in ways of learning that are new to them and support them to overcome barriers to learning, which sometimes are related to their previous experiences in school.

In the words of Van der Kamp and Toren (2003), groups at risk benefit from 'creative combinations of formal, non-formal and informal learning' in which learning encompasses the whole person and is not limited to the needs of the labour market. Practices and programmes beyond formal education have special potential for lifelong learning as they take place outside school (non-formal learning) or even in everyday life (informal learning) (Van Dellen & Van der Kamp, 2009). As non-institutionalised practices, they are open to accommodating the needs of learners in a flexible way, demanding great creativity from organisations and facilitators, who have to look for appropriate and feasible ways to meet changing demands (see also Rogers, 2010). The tribute to the teacher of the Global Monitoring Report (GMR) of 2013/4 (UNESCO, 2014) is to be appreciated, but should not be limited to professionals in formal education. Where the next GMR report (UNESCO, 2015) asks for non-formal education alternatives, professionals working in these alternatives merit attention just as much.

From the above, some critical key issues concerning lifelong learning, adult education, and non-formal education, can be identified to elaborate on the assumption related to education. Lifelong learning should not only focus on employability and work related competencies, but be oriented by the learning needs of the learner acknowledging that these needs may develop in the learning process. The participants of lifelong learning should not only be those who are used to learning and already equipped with a learning attitude, but also groups at risk who do not have a clear-cut wish to learn, but would need to learn nevertheless. Teaching and learning methods and organisation should be tuned towards these 'learning poor' learners. Lifelong learning professionals play a crucial role in organising a powerful learning environment which opens new possibilities for groups at risk.

1.4   Globalisation, lifelong learning and development

For the purpose of the argument, I have so far discerned the two perspectives: development, international cooperation and transnationalism on the one hand and lifelong learning, adult education and non-formal education on the other hand. The next step is to combine the two perspectives (see Figure 1.1). Acknowledging that some of the authors already discussed have not limited their writings to one of the perspectives, I will start by discussing other authors who have explicitly combined the two perspectives. Firstly, I place lifelong learning in the perspective of the worldwide trend of globalisation, in which the influence of multinationals and their need of human capital is inescapable. Secondly, I try to view lifelong learning from the perspective of the global South. This will lead to key issues combining both perspectives.

Development, international cooperation and transnationalism

Lifelong learning, adult education and non-formal education

Lifelong learning and development
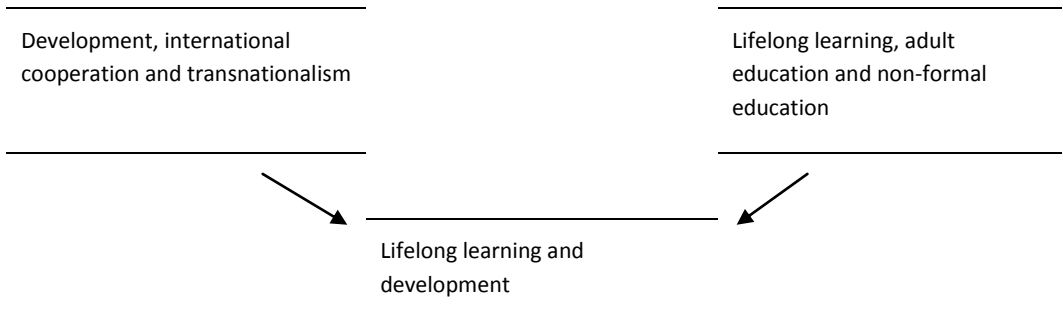
Figure 1.1 Lifelong learning and development

In his book on 'Globalisation, lifelong learning and the learning society', Jarvis (2007) reflects on the relationship between globalisation and development. We already quoted his broad definition of lifelong learning, expressing how people continuously learn from experience in different ways and different settings. In Jarvis' view, the feeling that new situations cannot be faced based on what had already been learned, triggers learning. Jarvis calls this 'disjuncture'. Overcoming the feeling of 'disjuncture' is a holistic process in the sense that it involves the whole person. Unfortunately, due to globalisation and the influence of the social economic structure, the dominant type of learning is not holistic in this sense. It is rather functionalistic, serving the capitalist system and only including the part of the learner that is of interest for the system instead of including the person as a whole. The last type of learning is only possible

in local communities that form a niche to globalisation. Jarvis' social criticism comes close to Finger and Asún (2001); what he adds, is the holistic perspective.

Also Preece (2009a) criticises the narrow, functionalistic approach of lifelong learning. She gave her book on 'Lifelong Learning and Development' the subtitle 'A Southern perspective' and starts off by approvingly quoting Torres, who criticises international cooperation agencies that *prescribe narrow basic education ceilings for poor countries* (Torres, 2003 as quoted by Preece, 2009a, p. 1). According to Preece, international aid policies, based on the Millennium Development Goals, impose a straightjacket on educational policies of countries in the South, forcing them to focus on primary education and only on lifelong learning in terms of skills for economic, human capital purposes. Like Jarvis, Preece is in favour of a more holistic view on lifelong learning. Unlike Jarvis, who is influenced by symbolic interactionism and the Judean-Christian tradition, Preece is inspired by philosophical traditions from the South like Nyerere's *Ujamaa*. She describes these traditions with concepts like connectedness, communalism, interdependency and subjectivity that, according to her, are common in African and Asian societies. She claims that it must be possible to *embrace indigenous philosophical worldviews, (...) in a way that also recognises the hybrid nature of the contemporary world* (p. 1). Preece refers to Pant (2003) to show how gender equality can be promoted in an integrated literacy and skills training approach. Key components of this approach are: a participatory approach, mobilisation of community resources, partnerships with local organisations and capacity building of the local community. Although these components are useful for analysing existing practices and Preece presents some other examples, it is not quite clear how the integration of indigenous world views with the demands of the global reality of today work out at programme level. Is there an African way of organising a powerful learning environment? I am afraid the scope of Preece' work is too general to answer this question.

To move from policies and concepts to the implementation of meaningful lifelong learning programmes, we need to look at specific programmes that go beyond skills training in a narrow sense and place them in their specific local conditions and the way they are linked with the global world. In this respect, Von Kotze (2013) developed the concept of 'pedagogy of contingency', when she discusses skills development training for urban informal workers in precarious situations in South Africa. In Von Kotze's words, the training *reflects the dynamics and dynamism of micro-differentials within the forces of macro power environments* (p. 90). This means on the one hand, that skills development training is contingent upon the trainees in terms of language, cultural identity, the specific capabilities and knowledge they already

possess etc. On the other hand, it does not stop at that. The micro components of a well-organised training go hand-in-hand with activities to bend macro policies in a favourable direction. Policies should be supportive of the livelihood strategies of informal workers instead of undermining them. In the words of Nussbaum (2011), apart from internal capabilities, favourable conditions are needed for capabilities to become combined capabilities and 'functionings'.

These words get a special weight in (post-)conflict situations. Conditions are almost by definition adverse for internal capabilities to become 'functionings'. Yet, this is needed in order for people to take charge of their own lives and their own environment. Also, for youth this provides alternatives from taking up arms. In situations of crisis, education for internally displaced persons and refugees should be on the humanitarian agenda. In situations of reconstruction, long-term partnerships are needed to rebuild education systems contributing to sustainable peace (UNESCO, 2011a). In both situations, appropriate strategies to meet learning needs of different groups call for careful deliberation to prevent people who are most in need from missing out in learning opportunities, as the GMR report of 2015 (UNESCO, 2015) found. Capability security should mostly be rebuilt from scratch and a pedagogy of contingency should be developed, viewing the learning needs of vulnerable people from their perspective and ensuring education as fertile functioning.

Key issues combining the perspectives on development and lifelong learning concern the interaction between both. Starting from the perspective of development, the issue at stake is to encourage new partnerships which will result in powerful learning environments to produce new knowledge. Starting from the perspective of lifelong learning, the question is how learning needs can be met and developed contingent to the experiences and situation of a group at risk in a holistic perspective. Also in relation to the combination of lifelong learning and new partnerships, the role of the professional, which will be discussed in the next paragraph, is pivotal. This could be considered the fourth assumption.

1.5   Professionals in lifelong learning and development

Up to this point the role of professionals or practitioners has remained implicit as if there are invisible powers that call for participants, negotiate organisations, decide on contents, conduct trainings, carry out evaluations and make new plans. In the preceding text I hope to have made clear that all these tasks require careful deliberation when working with groups at

risk. Sensitive and responsible practitioners are needed to design and implement meaningful learning opportunities for groups at risk. Because of the skills and knowledge required, I call them professionals regardless of remuneration. I will refer to the authors discussed and add some new ones to extract views on the role of the professionals as Figure 1.2 shows.

Development, international
cooperation and transnationalism

Lifelong learning, adult
education and non-formal
education

Lifelong learning and
development

Professionals and their
interventions
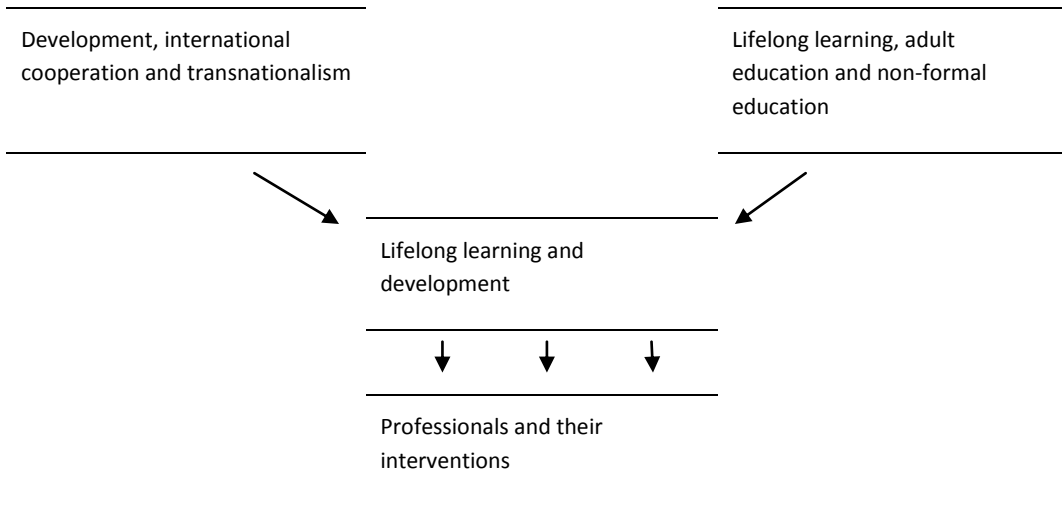
Figure 1.2 Lifelong learning professionals and their interventions

The Global Monitoring Report of 2013/4 (UNESCO, 2014) discusses the role of the teacher. Four strategies to provide the best teachers are presented: attracting the best teachers, improving teacher education, allocating teachers fairly and providing incentives to retain teachers. While the implementation of these strategies is indeed badly needed to raise the number of teachers and their quality, enlisting these strategies does not touch the 'heart' of the job. Teacher quality is said to be derived from teacher education and ongoing training. What then should teachers learn during their training? Although the report touches on subjects such as gender, teaching in conflict zones, and the importance of internships, it does not go into detail about the challenges of the teaching profession, in particular in developing countries. Will teachers learn what Freire called 'banking' educational strategies (Freire, 1970) and oppress the learners, who are already oppressed, even further? This could be compared to Chambers' (1997) fierce criticism on the development professional, whom he accuses of *normal professionalism*, referring to *the concepts, values, methods and behaviour dominant in a profession or discipline, often positivist and placing high value on measurement* (p. XV).

Chambers explains that 'normal' development professionals 'extract' information to justify the actions they planned.

The tendency to count and control described by Chambers also extends to social work (Tonkens, 2008). Tonkens locates the professionals between citizens and the government. In the 'participation society' citizens are pressed to become assertive and the government tends to withdraw leaving room for citizen initiative (RoB, 2012). It seems that professionals hardly play a meaningful role in citizen initiatives. Studies on family group conferencing, which is promoted as a way to involve citizens and develop the strengths of those who are vulnerable, do not pay much attention to the changing role of professionals (see, for example, De Jong, 2014). Yet, professionals such as social workers, teachers and clergymen are involved and the government asks for output figures. The combination of the two trends hardly leaves room for professionals to manoeuvre. Different solutions are proposed: professionals should develop into a new type of professional (Van der Lans, 2010; De Boer & Van der Lans, 2011) or act on the knowledge and skills gained as a ´silent forces´ of the welfare state, which preceded the participation society (Spiers, 2014). (Re)defining the position and tasks of the professionals working directly with people who run the risk of getting socially excluded, is not a straightforward job. Elaboration on what makes or breaks the work is needed.

Chambers (1997) to start with, delineates the characteristics of a 'new professionalism' based on experiences in Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA):

1. Shift from didactic teaching to participatory learning (...)
2. Shift from classroom and things to field and people (...)
3. Learn through empowering lowers (...)
4. Stress the personal and interpersonal (...)
5. Value diversity, creativity and dissent (...) (p.231)

Chambers' list touches upon some sacred cows and seems to turn them all upside down. His approach is interesting in that he connects PRA, which is a research approach, to the learning of the professional. With the term 'lowers', Chambers means *people who in a context are subordinate or inferior to uppers* (p. XV). This comes close to 'oppressed' and 'oppressors' as in Freire (1970), while Freire adds that also the oppressor is oppressed in certain ways and both oppressor and oppressed can only be freed from their restricting roles through genuine dialogue.

Spierts (2014) positions the social worker in a historical perspective. Social workers combine what is professional and what is personal in a way that makes them internally strong. This internal strength however, does not give them external strength. As activators and specialists in people's participation, social workers contributed substantially to the welfare state, but they never claimed that contribution. As the welfare state is being turned into a participation society, they are indispensable with their knowledge and skills, but they are not consulted. In the terms of Torres (2003), they should know how to assess basic learning needs; in the terms of Van der Kamp and Toren (2003), they should know how to create a powerful learning environment; in the terms of Nussbaum (2011), they should be able to turn education into fertile functioning; in the terms of Von Kotze (2013) they should be the contingent pedagogues and there are more qualifications to make. In fact, there is a list of competencies for adult learning professionals (Buiskool, Broek, Van Lakerveld, Zarifis & Osborne, 2010). But adding another qualification or competency will not solve the gap between internal strength and external vulnerability. The reasons why professionals keep their knowledge and skills to themselves should be investigated. They may need powerful learning environments themselves to discuss, develop, conduct, evaluate in dialogue with meaningful others involved.

To conclude the fourth assumption to be added to the previous three would be that the professional has a meaningful role to play. The key issue at stake in this respect is that this role needs recognition, but also support to live up to expectations and cope with sometimes conflicting demands. Lifelong learning professionals themselves can probably not do without lifelong learning.

1.6   Methodological justification

After discussing the theoretical background to this thesis, I will briefly justify the research methodology used throughout the research projects reflected in this thesis. A more thorough methodological discussion will appear as chapter 5. As a kind of metaphor for the way I have constructed the methodological justification of this thesis, I would like to refer to the Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL). APEL will be discussed in this thesis (in chapter 3) as a way of recognising the importance of experiential or informal learning for people who need a headstart when entering formal education (Van der Linden, Burema & Renting, 2010). In an APEL procedure, a certificate is awarded based on the evidence collected from experience. This certificate exempts the participants from following courses they do not

need any more. As we will see, this is a tricky device for lesser educated people. How can they show what they learned in terms with which they are not familiar? And does a certificate sufficiently recognise the experience they gained? I empathise with these people as I started conducting research on lifelong learning long before I decided to go for a PhD. The first article presented in this thesis was published in 2006, but I started years before. What makes me deserve a (virtual) certificate? The easy answer to this question is that this volume contains five articles, of which I was the first author, published in international peer reviewed journals, each of them related to lifelong learning, a book chapter and two articles to which I contributed as a second or third author. These publications stood up to the scrutiny of other researchers in the field and their content was considered to be valid. A more thorough answer would look more closely at these contents. Which research approach and research methods were used that justify my acknowledgement as a researcher? To answer this question I will identify some principles that have guided the different research projects, and the way they were implemented in practice. Also, I will reflect on the way the research approach has developed throughout the different projects.

First of all, all the research is about subjects that are very close to my experience as a lecturer on lifelong learning in Africa and the Netherlands. I was fortunate to experience both worlds. After having worked in Dutch higher and adult education for more than ten years, I worked in two different universities in Africa. For five years I worked as head of the Teachers' Research and Resource Unit and as a quality assurance officer in Ahfad University for Women in Sudan and for four years I worked as a lecturer on adult education in Eduardo Mondlane University in Mozambique. After returning from Africa I worked as a lecturer in lifelong learning at the University of Groningen and as a primary school teacher-trainer in Amsterdam/Alkmaar in the Netherlands. The research for the first article that is presented in the first chapter was conducted when I was a lecturer in the Faculty of Education of Eduardo Mondlane University in Mozambique aiming to contribute to the improvement of the Master programme of the faculty (Van der Linden & Mendonça, 2006). Not all the articles come that close to the lecturing experience, but they can all be viewed as related to these experiences. In my view, a good lecturer is interested in the background of the students, in the contextualisation of the contents to be taught and in the teaching method used to optimise the learning process. All the articles are undertaken with the desire to do the (teaching) job well - to use the words of Sennett (2008). Research questions came up when reflecting on the work and discussing it with colleagues, who often acted as co-researchers and co-authors. The

results were fed into our work as lecturers as a kind of 'action science' which Schön (1983) describes as follows:

> An action science would concern itself with situations of uniqueness, uncertainty and instability which do not lend themselves to the application of theories and techniques derived from science in the mode of technical rationality (p. 319).

Being knowledgeable about issues in the field and the background of the learners would make my colleagues and me, in Africa and the Netherlands, better lecturers. Is the conclusion then that I speak and write as a 'reflective practitioner' in the words of Schön (1983)? Yes, with the additional remark that reflection calls for distance, more than the reflection-in-action discussed by Schön. Sometimes one should look at experiences as an 'engaged outsider' as Van der Kamp (2002) called this. The researcher as an engaged outsider is able to bestow meaning on experiences, placing them in the context of earlier research, relating them to experiences of others, making sense of them. For this purpose, the research is presented and validated in the academic context.

Secondly, the research methods used relate to the interest in bestowing meaning on experiences, not only of the researcher but also of the researched. Mainly qualitative research instruments were used, such as interviews, focus groups, document analysis and observations following the rigour required as described in Hennink, Hutter and Bailey (2011) and Flick (2006). The specific methods used for each research project are explained in the articles. The contexts range from rural areas to university campuses, from developing to developed countries and from post-conflict to relatively stable societies. Discussing the role of lifelong learning in different contexts adds to the process of discovering its meaning. Special attention is paid to contextualisation in terms of getting to know the environment, going beyond face value, taking into account power differences between the researcher and the researched (Smith, 2012). The latter do not disappear easily. What helped was carefully choosing a co-researcher who could help to translate and interpret and sometimes was as surprised as I was about the people and their observations. Also, my co-researchers and I tried to organise feedback sessions or reflective interviews as a kind of 'reciprocal adequation'. Boog (2014) uses this term to express the validation of research findings with the researched in 'exemplarian' action research. Although I do not claim the research projects presented are examples of 'exemplarian' action research, this type of validation is indispensable in joint knowledge creation, as discussed before (Zeelen & Van der Linden, 2009).

To conclude this paragraph, I would like to share how the research approach developed during the process. Looking from the perspective of the empirical practice, the research methods used became more and more informed by qualitative research methods. The fixed questionnaire with pre-formulated questions used in the first research project resembled a questionnaire used in quantitative research (Van der Linden & Mendonça, 2006). In later research projects lists of topics (Creswell, 2007) were used as a checklist to ensure that no questions were forgotten but also to maintain the natural flow of conversation. The challenge is to combine curiosity and flexibility on the one hand with scientific rigour on the other, that is to say, to handle the dilemma of distance and proximity: interviewing is not possible when there is no personal relationship, but some distance is needed to interpret the data (see Van der Kamp, 2002). From a more theoretical point of view, I gained more insight into on-going theoretical debates in lifelong learning and became more confident to take a stance myself. I had to remind myself constantly not to let this stance turn into a political bias that would blur my view of reality and of the people involved. It is not theory in itself or practice as such that is most important; constantly commuting between theory and practice is what makes research interesting and tests its usefulness and validity (see also Van Strien's contribution on practice as science, 1986).

Coming back to APEL as Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning, or Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) as it is also called (see, for example, Andersson & Harris, 2006), I would like to adjust the acronym slightly and change the wording into Recognition of the Priority of Experiential Learning. Experience in the sense of actively taking part comes first. This includes the risks involved, as Biesta points out in his book *The Beautiful Risk of Education* (2013). In this project it is followed by reflection and learning to give meaning to the experiences of the researcher and the researched. Validity was sought in dialogue with the researched, with co-researchers and peer researchers. It is hoped that the knowledge gained will contribute to global EFA, MDG and SDG strategies on lifelong learning, not so much in terms of policies, but rather in showing the way to promote activities on the ground by dedicated professionals taking risks to serve groups at risk.

1.7   General research question and sub-questions

The general research question for this thesis - *How can lifelong learning programmes serve groups at risk* – is split into five sub-questions as stepping-stones to the final conclusion

rethinking the ways in which lifelong learning programmes can support the living and working conditions of groups at risk. The sub-questions read as follows:

1. What is the background against which meaningful lifelong learning programmes can be developed in the context of international cooperation? This question refers to international cooperation: joint knowledge production is needed to overcome barriers and to learn from knowledge developed in different contexts.

2. Which factors play a role in the development of meaningful lifelong learning programmes oriented towards the multiple needs of the learners? This question relates to the challenge of developing appropriate lifelong learning opportunities (programmes in a broad sense) and is fundamental to the whole thesis.

3. What kind of professional involvement is needed to encourage and facilitate learning by groups at risk? This question puts the spotlight on the professionals and their interventions. Drawing on the first two chapters of this thesis, the role of these professionals, without whom there would not be any lifelong learning for groups at risk, will be described and analysed.

4. Which research approach could be instrumental in the development of meaningful lifelong learning programmes for groups at risk? This question triggers reflection on the methods and approaches used in the research projects discussed in this thesis and their relevance for the development of lifelong learning programmes/opportunities.

5. What lessons can be learned regarding approaches to lifelong learning and international cooperation? The lessons learned throughout the thesis will be discussed in order to answer this question.

In this thesis I use the word 'lifelong learning programmes' in a broad sense encompassing not only formal educational programmes, but also situations, activities and arrangements which encourage learning. These can also be denominated as 'opportunities' as in the title of this thesis.

1.8   Preview of contents

The following five chapters will each allude to one of the five sub-questions underlying the thesis. The first four start with a short intermezzo highlighting the subject of the chapter as it appears in practice, followed by an introduction to the articles in the chapter. Then two articles related to the topic are presented and the chapter concludes with statements, which I

call pointers, to answer the sub-question and to be taken on board for the final conclusion, which is presented in the last chapter.

Chapter 2, on partnerships and capacity development, reflects on the university cooperation projects that form the backdrop against which this thesis is written: cooperation between a university in Sudan and one in the Netherlands; cooperation between a university in Mozambique, one in South Africa and a university in the Netherlands and finally cooperation between a Dutch university and different universities in the South. The chapter opens with an intermezzo in the form of a short story on quality assurance in Ahfad University for Women in Sudan. The story is based on an unpublished article I wrote in 2002 together with my colleague at the time Fayza Hussein (Van der Linden & Hussein, 2002). The story sets the scene for the first sub-question: *What is the background against which meaningful lifelong learning programmes can be developed in the context of international cooperation?* The background is a certain type of development cooperation, characterised by combining different contexts, jointly working on knowledge production and acknowledging power differences. Two articles are presented which reflect on experiences of partnerships and capacity development for lifelong learning and adult education in a globalised context (Van der Linden & Mendonça, 2006; Zeelen & Van der Linden, 2009). Both articles have been published in international peer reviewed journals. The chapter concludes with a paragraph discussing the pointers to be taken on board referring to partnerships and capacity development as the background against which meaningful lifelong learning can take place.

Chapter 3 discusses the core issue of this thesis: The challenge of developing appropriate lifelong learning programmes. It kicks off with an intermezzo presenting a short story on lifelong learning and APEL in the Netherlands. This is based on an article, which I wrote together with two students who conducted research on APEL in the Netherlands in 2010 (Van der Linden, Burema & Renting, 2010). The story serves to introduce the second sub-question: *Which factors play a role in the development of meaningful lifelong learning programmes oriented towards the multiple needs of the learners?* APEL is taken as an example of the way in which groups at risk in the Netherlands are attracted to lifelong learning. Then two articles on different contexts are presented, one focusing on expectations of the learner, the content and the implementation of literacy and non-formal education programmes for adults in a developing context and the other on the reconstruction of education in (post)conflict situations. Both articles have been published in international peer reviewed journals (Van der Linden & Manuel, 2011; Van der Linden, Blaak & Andrew, 2013). The pointers arising from this

chapter refer to the critical questions to be taken into account in facilitating meaningful learning for groups at risk.

Chapter 4 is about the role of the professional and professionalisation. The introductory intermezzo is based on interviews with newly-qualified professionals in Dutch primary education. One of them characterises her experience as *I love to try new things*. The article in which the results of the interviews are discussed, is published in a peer reviewed Dutch journal (Van der Linden, 2013). The intermezzo introduces the third sub-question: *What kind of professional involvement is needed to encourage and facilitate learning by groups at risk?* Developing and accompanying lifelong learning programmes for groups at risk presupposes a certain involvement of the people who are professionally involved (with or without remuneration). It demands a certain type of professionalisation that is closely linked to the lifelong learning practice in which the professional interacts with voices that usually remain unheard. Again I link practices in the Netherlands with practices in Africa, including a (post-)conflict situation, to show how much good (or damage) the professional can do by connecting with and encouraging groups at risk. One of the articles presented under this denominator has been published in an international peer reviewed journal (Van der Linden, 2015); the other one in a Dutch peer reviewed journal (Van der Linden, 2016). A preview of the pointers in this chapter includes: human dedication, commitment, curiosity, initiative, courage and more skills and attitudes needed to oppose dominant trends and support voices from within. How professionalisation can connect to this will be discussed.

Chapter 5 reflects on the research process needed to prepare lifelong learning programmes and opportunities. A short story on a fieldtrip to northwestern Uganda serves as an intermezzo. It is based on a field report, written to share preliminary findings with different stakeholders shortly after the trip and used as material for the article on non-formal education in (post-)conflict situations included in the previous chapter (Van der Linden, 2015). The story of the fieldtrip serves to illustrate the question: *Which research approach could be instrumental in the development of meaningful lifelong learning programmes for groups at risk?* How can unheard voices be brought to the fore and can people be supported to formulate their interest in lifelong learning? It reflects the difficulty of grasping and understanding multiple voices on the ground. How to build a research programme which is useful for the researched? Both articles in this chapter reflect on research conducted with this purpose and identify good practices and dilemmas. The first article to be presented in this chapter appeared as a book chapter (Van der Linden & Zeelen, 2008) and the second one as

an article in an international peer reviewed journal (Zeelen, Rampedi & Van der Linden, 2014). The pointers will highlight dilemmas for further reflection on research approaches.

In the sixth and final chapter it will be harvest time. The sub-question to be answered is: *What lessons can be learned regarding approaches to lifelong learning and international cooperation?* The chapter will draw from the articles presented, make use of the pointers identified after every chapter, and refer to the theoretical framework presented in this introduction. Under the title *Ensuring meaningful lifelong learning opportunities for groups at risk* the lessons learned throughout the different chapters will be gathered and presented in a coherent text to provide an answer to the main research question: *How can lifelong learning programmes serve groups at risk*?

Chapter 2

The context of partnerships and capacity development

Chapter 2 The context of partnerships and capacity development

2.1   Intermezzo: Quality Assurance in Ahfad University for Women in Sudan

For three days the main hall of the administration building of Ahfad University for Women was occupied by an external assessment committee. People, mainly women, but also men, went in and out in small groups. Seated in comfortable chairs behind a large wooden table, the committee received representatives of the university management, the five schools and support units and also the students. Window blinds and air conditioning kept the Sudanese heat outside. The location is Omdurman, near the capital Khartoum at the junction of the Blue and White Nile, where a narrow strip of fertile land contrasts with the surrounding desert. At the time (March 2001), the university accommodated around 2000 students in five schools: Family Sciences, Rural Extension and Educational Development, Psychology and Early Childhood Education, Organisational Management, and Medicine. Contrary to what might be expected in a country which is usually not considered to be an example of good governance, Ahfad University for Women (AUW) has a clear vision to educate women to play a role in the development of their country (Bedri, 1984) and implements a curriculum accordingly.

Quality Assurance was a new phenomenon in Sudan (Quality Assurance Task Force, 2000a). The reasons for engagement in a quality assurance process were two-fold: it was a cry for recognition and also a wish to develop. The Vice-President for Academic Affairs, Dr. Amna Badri, explained:

> I hope it will be positive. According to previous assessments and to the performance of our graduates in international programmes we may be confident. But also I hope the weaknesses will be pinpointed and I look forward to getting suggestions for improvement. The university is in a learning process and will go on changing to satisfy its main customers, the students (Quality Assurance Task Force, 2000b).

Encouraged by the university management and supervised by the Quality Assurance Task Force, 13 self-assessment reports were compiled, by the schools, the units and the university management, for the visiting external assessment committee to prepare its work. This committee consisted of the former Vice-Chancellor of the *Vrije Universiteit* in the Netherlands, who acted as chairperson, and two committee members: a senior lecturer of Khartoum University, the oldest university in Sudan and a former technical assistant to the university,

also from the Netherlands. As the quality assurance officer of the university, I acted as a secretary to the committee.

At the end of the third day, the committee presented their observations and recommendations to a gathering of university staff members, paying attention to all the schools and support units. The observations about the university management were quite critical. The report reads:

> It is a well-known phenomenon that fast growing universities may get out of balance. The number of students rises fast. New degree programmes are started, the academic staff extends and the university enters into a new phase of its history. But very often other elements of the university remain as they were in the earlier phase of that history and lag behind in development and extension. … When a small organisation grows in size and complexity, it will have to adapt itself, particularly by becoming a more formalised organisation. … This does not mean that they (students and staff) cannot also rely on a culture of trust, easy accessibility and communication within the university organisation (Brinkman, ElTom, Groenendijk & Van der Linden, 2001, p.20-21).

The university management decided to distribute the report to all Ahfad staff members. This was an exceptional decision for a university in which each department usually only got one copy of a document because of a paper shortage. By doing so, transparency of the quality assurance exercise in the institution was achieved. General staff meetings and meetings in the schools were held to discuss the recommendations in the report and prepare action plans. Unfortunately, the interest of the staff in attending meetings gradually declined.

In the framework of this thesis this story serves as an example of university development cooperation. Just as the other Dutch member of the external assessment committee, I was appointed as a 'technical assistant' to Ahfad University for Women in Sudan by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs. My assignment was to support the teaching staff to improve the quality of teaching and learning in the university. Quality Assurance had just been implemented in Higher Education in the Netherlands and the fact that Ahfad University engaged in a quality assurance process can be viewed as the export of a policy from the global North, even as a kind of 'disciplinary power' (CHEPS/QSC, 1999). Instruments like the ISO (International Organisation for Standardization) quality certificate and concepts like Total Quality Management with its origin in business and industry were indeed discussed in the university (Vroeijenstein, 1995; Van der Linden & Hussein, 2002).

Still, the enormous enthusiasm revealed by people working to improve the quality of their university can be considered to be an investment in ´social capital´, here *understood as social*

networks and horizontal mechanisms of communication, (which) *can powerfully affect the performance of social organisations* (Dill, 1995, p. 99). The quality assurance exercise engaged the university staff in the development of their university. The process was carried by their opinions and ideas. The quality assurance concept, which could be viewed as imported from the global North accompanied by 'disciplinary power' elicited a vibrant process of voicing opinions and elaborating ideas. On a critical note, one could point at the high expectations raised that could account for disappointment and loss of interest, as it took time for actions to be taken.

2.2   Introduction to the articles in this chapter

The intermezzo shows how policies and practices of the so-called developed countries meet policies and practices in the so-called developing countries, embodied in people joining hands towards change for the better. In chapter 5 on research and lifelong learning the issue of engagement, expectations and disappointment will come back. The two articles presented in this chapter are also reflections of development cooperation in universities. They form the basis for answering the first sub research question, which is: *What is the background against which meaningful lifelong learning programmes can be developed in the context of international cooperation*?

The first article is written on the basis of research carried out in the Faculty of Education in Eduardo Mondlane University in Mozambique, where I worked after finishing my assignment in Ahfad University for Women. The research focused on the implementation of generic competencies as part of the curriculum of the Master programme in this faculty. This Master programme is meant to produce professionals who could take the lead in the continuously developing field of education in Mozambique. An important outcome was that such a programme needs recurring evaluation involving different stakeholders. There is an ever-present danger of creating a gap between educational policies on paper and practice in the classroom and between knowledge and skills needed in professional practice and what is taught in the classroom (see Kruss, McGrath, Peterson & Gastrow, 2015, for a contemporary reference on this problem). Marta Mendonça, co-author of the article, still working in the Faculty of Education, states that the conclusion is still valid: *the country still lacks skilled graduates.* She comments on the motivation of the growing number of Master students: *They think that studying nowadays is a way to solve their economic problem, financial problem,* while she thinks that *these people could be also at schools to improve their work, the quality of*

work, etc. etc. because our main concern now is to fight against this low quality of teaching and learning, from primary school to university. The faculty's mission to train professionals in order to improve the quality of education is at stake. According to Mendonça,

> there is a big gap from policy to practice. A big, big gap. It needs a control, a follow up. And also follow up to see what is happening. Is what is written being applied? How is it being applied? It is important, this follow up. It is the main concern now. Our policies, you can read, are beautiful. What is written is beautiful, but what you see in practice is a mess (interview, November 2014).

This observation may also be informed by Mendonça´s PhD research publication on student-centred-learning, where the back cover reads:

> Research about student-centred learning has increased over the last few decades all over the world. However, few studies have focused on teachers' and students' perceptions in developing countries where this revolutionary paradigm is being imposed by donors in exchange for the funding of educational systems (Mendonça, 2014, back cover).

Surely, the donors mentioned by Mendonça should also be partners in the curriculum evaluations to take into account how other stakeholders, such as students and teachers, experience the content and teaching and learning strategies. It makes the article, written in 2006, still worth reading.

The second article is based on my experience in Eduardo Mondlane University as a contributor to the establishment of an adult education department. In Sudan I was appointed as technical assistant; in Mozambique as 'capacity builder'. Implementation of the concept of capacity building did not prove to be an easy job. The new term brought my colleague Jacques Zeelen, 'capacity builder' in the University of the North in South Africa at the time, and me to reflect on its background and consequences in practice. The main issue in this article is how to overcome power imbalance in development cooperation. Differences in background and position were large at the start and were only bridged by working and spending much time together in which mutual learning processes took place. As already pointed out in the introduction, we concluded that 'joint knowledge production' is a better description of our experiences, even better than 'capacity development', which currently replaces 'capacity building'. This article is important in that it discusses the background of international cooperation on which this thesis is built: international cooperation in which equal partners join forces in developing knowledge that is useful for the improvement of educational practices.

The two articles on Mozambique and South Africa, combined with the intermezzo from Sudan lead to 'pointers' answering the first sub research question - *What is the background against which meaningful lifelong learning programmes can be developed in the context of international cooperation*? - referring to the theoretical framework in the introduction. These pointers will be taken along in answering the main research question of this PhD project: *How can lifelong learning programmes serve groups at risk?*

2.3   From competence-based teaching to competence-based learning: The case of generic competencies in the Faculty of Education at the Eduardo Mondlane University in Mozambique[2]

Abstract

The article explains how a formative evaluation in the context of a university in a developing country involving different stakeholders contributed to the development of proposals to improve ongoing educational practices. The case to be discussed is the implementation of generic competencies in the Faculty of Education at the Eduardo Mondlane University in Mozambique. The evaluation was carried out when the first group of Master students of the faculty was about to finish their studies. It shows how the evaluation of a competence-based curriculum can bring university staff, their students and representatives of the world of work together. The common goal is the improved training of competent professionals, taking into account the learning process of the students, their professional practices and the specific difficulties they encounter.

Introduction

This article discusses a small-scale research project (Van der Linden, Chevane, Mendonça, Lúrio & Seifane, 2004) evaluating the implementation of generic competencies in the Master programme in the Faculty of Education of the Eduardo Mondlane University (UEM) in Mozambique. The general aim of the research project was to contribute to the improvement of the Master programme, especially the component of generic competencies. These are competencies such as communication, information management and reflective competencies, which form an integral part of the curriculum of the Master programme. Taking into account the experiences of the first group of students, who started in 2001, the project focused on identifying the generic competencies developed by the students during the Master programme and their experiences in the professional practice. The research questions of the project were:

- Which generic competencies are required in the workplace of the graduates of the Master programmes in education?

- Which generic competencies did the graduates develop during the Master programmes?

An extensive needs assessment was carried out in 1999 before the Master programme commenced (Kouwenhoven, 2003; Kouwenhoven, Howie & Plomp, 2003). It was not considered necessary to re-do this work, but the Faculty of Education wanted to check the validity of the competencies being taught based on the experiences of the first group of students. The responses to the research questions would help to develop proposals for programme improvements, based on a comparison of the generic competencies required in the working environment and those developed during the Master programmes. In the next chapter the relevance of the concept of generic competencies will be supported with theories on changes in the world of work and their consequences for education. Subsequently there is a summary of the development process of the Master programmes of the newly established Faculty of Education. Then the chosen research approach will be described, followed by a description of the sample and research techniques used. Finally the article will discuss the results of the project and the ongoing development activities of the faculty in this area.

Generic competencies and the world of work

Workplace personnel requirements are changing worldwide. The globalisation process and the intensification of technologies force profit and non-profit organisations and institutions to change the way they organise their work in order to gain or maintain their position in the market (Martins, 1999). The new organisation models are flexible and need workers with new qualities. Organisations want their employees to learn and think for the organisation, to be flexible, quality conscious, always oriented towards improvement and able to work in teams (Onstenk, 1992). Generally speaking, *a change is taking place from a qualifications-based working environment, concentrating on 'jobs', to a competence-based one, focusing on the 'individual'* (Kouwenhoven, 2003, p. 39).

In Mozambican higher education efforts are being made to change the education offered in line with the demands for a new type of professionals. In 1999 the Eduardo Mondlane University, as a whole, initiated a curriculum reform process to redesign the existing curricula in accordance with graduate profiles containing competencies, attitudes, and dispositions besides the theoretical and practical knowledge relevant for the Mozambican reality (Kouwenhoven, 2003). The idea, later also advocated in the strategic plan of the Ministry of

Higher Education is to *satisfy the demand of the labour market and the national needs with flexibility and reaction capacity* (Ministério do Ensino Superior, Ciência e Tecnologia, 2000, p. 71, translation by the authors), that is to say to create more flexible programmes in which the students would not only acquire knowledge, but also skills, attitudes and dispositions to cope with the requirements of the workplace. Unfortunately in most university faculties these efforts did not go very far beyond workshop talk and written plans and reports. This may reflect the international debate on the role of higher education in developing countries, which includes pleas for a more academic orientation besides development and practice approaches (World Bank, 2000).

The discussion on academic and professional learning also played a role in the preparatory committee for the Faculty of Education. There was a stream in favour of a more theoretical approach with much attention for philosophy and sociology of education and a stream arguing for a more pragmatic, profession-oriented approach (Kouwenhoven, 2003). The latter, supported by the university-wide curriculum reform, won. In fact, the curriculum developed by the faculty, was praised by the academic council of the university and recommended to serve as an example for other faculties. According to one of its first documents, the Faculty of Education intends to meet the needs of the education sector in Mozambique. This sector, already very poorly developed during Portuguese colonisation, was heavily damaged by an enormous decrease in the morale and the professionalism of its personnel during the armed conflicts, which beset the country from almost immediately after independence in 1975 until the General Peace Accords of 1992 (Comissão para a Reabertura da Faculdade de Educação, 1999).

The mission of the new faculty is the *initial and in-service-training of educational professionals and the realisation of scientific studies, which contribute to the improvement of the educational practice in the schools, the formulation of educational policies and well informed decision making* (Comissão para a Reabertura da Faculdade de Educação 1999, p. 10, translation by the authors). Thus the Faculty of Education tries to make amends for the problems in Mozambican Higher Education concerning the gap between the university curricula and the labour market and society in terms of content as well as methods of instruction (Ministério do Ensino Superior, Ciência e Tecnologia, 2000; United Nations Development Programme, 2000). Referring to Schön's work (1983) on the 'reflective practitioner', one may conclude that learning cannot be limited to the initial training period. A professional needs to 'reflect-in-action' in order to deal with the challenges of the professional

practice. Following this line of thinking, university education should prepare its students for lifelong learning, equipping them with the skills and attitude needed.

Competence-based education in the Faculty of Education

In 2001 the Faculty of Education of the UEM started Master programmes in the three following areas: Curriculum and Instruction Development, Adult Education and Education in Mathematics and Sciences (in 2005 another programme commenced in Educational Management and Administration). The basic aim of the faculty is to educate professionals who are able to execute their tasks with expertise and ability in an ever-changing working environment. Its claim is that competence-based education is most appropriate for this type of education. This implies the acquisition and development of competencies. Competence and competencies can be defined as follows. Competencies form:

> the link between professional practice and personal intention. They involve the interplay between knowledge, skill and attitude attributes and the meta-cognitive capacity to apply them at the right time when required. Competence is the totality of (core) competencies required to perform as a competent professional (Kouwenhoven, Howie & Plomp, 2003, p. 135).

As described by Kouwenhoven (2003), as a first step in the development of the curriculum of the Master programmes a needs assessment has been carried out to identify the most important competencies of competent educational professionals (see Figure 2.1). The needs assessment involved academics and professionals in the areas of the three Master programmes, both in the public and private sector, and others representing the Mozambican society, like the Mozambican Radio and Television Broadcasting Company and the Bank of Mozambique. These formed a purposeful, 'information rich' sample to verify and rate predefined lists of occupational tasks and competencies in highly structured interviews with room for comments from the interviewees. The whole process of the needs assessment is described in more detail in the article by Kouwenhoven, Howie and Plomp (2003) and by Kouwenhoven in his PhD Thesis (Kouwenhoven, 2003). Based on the results of the needs assessment the installation committee defined professional profiles in the areas of the three Master programmes of the Faculty of Education identifying key occupational tasks.
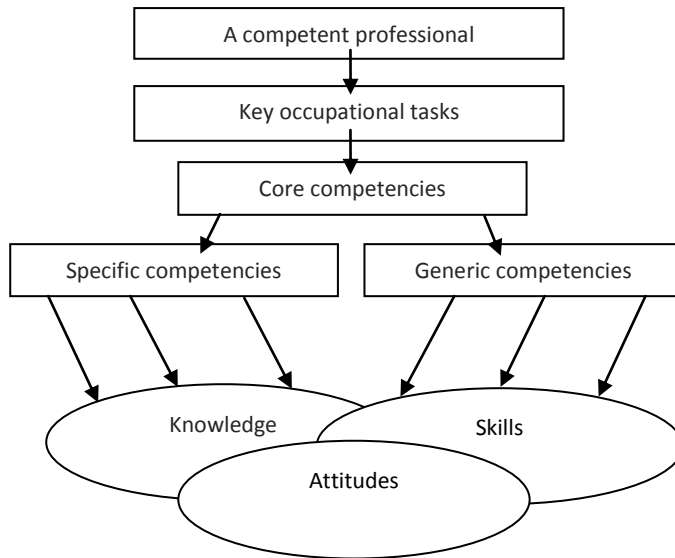
Figure 2.1 The relation between professional competence, key occupational tasks and constituting competencies (adapted from Kouwenhoven, 2003, p.73)

The professional profiles of the three programmes (see Table 2.1) with their key occupational tasks were presented in an internal document justifying the importance of the Master programmes to the Academic Council of the university (Faculdade de Educação, 2001). Apart from differences in the contents, the different wordings reflect the various realities and traditions in the three areas as reported in the needs assessment. Following Figure 2.1 the key occupational tasks, which are part of the professional profiles, were elaborated into core competencies. These include both specific and generic competencies. Specific competencies are capabilities in a specific domain related to the profession; generic competencies are capabilities needed in every domain and useful in new professional situations (by transfer) (Faculdade de Educação, 2001). The two types of competencies constitute the graduate profile, which indicates the necessary competencies of a graduate who starts working and developing him-/herself as an educational professional. In this article we will not elaborate on the graduate profile, but proceed directly to the curriculum profile, which relates to the implementation of the competencies (knowledge, skills and attitudes) in the educational programme.

Table 2.1 Professional profiles and key occupational tasks of the three Master programmes

	Curriculum and Instruction Development (CID)	Adult Education (AE)	Education in Mathematics and Sciences (EMS)
Tentative description of possible professions	Design, elaboration, implementation and revision of curricula for education in schools, higher education, adult education, and community development, industry and trade, ministries and others	Trainer of literacy workers, trainer of trainers/facilitators/ animators, coordinator/ supervisor/programme manager, consultant, curriculum planner, policy evaluator	Trainer of teacher trainers, producer of didactical materials, instructional design
Key occupational tasks	Design and development of curricula, including materials Applied research and evaluation Distribution and implementation Planning and management	Research Design Training Material production Management	Vision and reflection Didactics: research, didactics, training, material production Instructional design: management, research, training, material production

Adapted from Faculdade de Educação, 2001, 10-13.

Whereas the generic competencies are the same for the three profiles, the specific competencies are partly different, for example concerning adult learning and the didactics of mathematics and science. To accommodate both the specific and the generic competencies, the curriculum of the Master programmes consists of two phases: a common core phase and a specialisation phase. The common core phase is equal for all the students and forms the base of competencies necessary to enter the specialisation phase. As Table 2.2 shows, the common core consists of nine modules with themes of relevance for the students of all three specialisations. Attention is paid to the generic competencies throughout the modules, elaborated for example in group work, presentations and portfolios. Sometimes there is an extracurricular workshop to focus on a specific competency like ethics. Thus the faculty intends to create an environment for the acquisition of this type of competency and its evaluation (proof of competence).

Table 2.2 Curriculum plan

	Modules		Generic competencies
Common core phase (30 weeks)	Learning and Instruction (Multi)media, Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in education Sociological and anthropological aspects of education in Mozambique Adult learning Research methodology Statistics Curriculum theory and development Design methodology Educational administration and management		Communication Information management Leadership Project management Social Interaction Reflective competencies Ethics Design methodology Research methodology Multimedia and ICT
Specialisation phase (50 weeks)	Curriculum and Instruction Development Modules and research project	Adult Education Modules and research project	Education in Mathematics and Sciences Modules and research project

Adapted from Faculdade de Educação, 2001, 25-27.

All students in the Master programmes have working experience and most of them combine working and studying. As such, they already possess professional competencies, which are (further) developed during the programme. The development of generic competencies is emphasised in the common core; their application and further development take place in the specialisation phase, which consists of modules related to the specialisations and a research project.

Monitoring and evaluating generic competencies

Up to now the planned or intended curriculum has been discussed, that is to say the curriculum as conceived by the curriculum developers. This is not necessarily the same as the curriculum as enacted, in the meaning of being taught, by the lecturers and educational planners neither as the curriculum as experienced by the learners (Marsh & Willis, 1999). The phases of the development of a competence-based curriculum are shown in Figure 2.2.

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┌─────────────────────────────────┐
│       Needs assessment          │◄─────────┐
└─────────────────────────────────┘          │
                │                             │
                ▼                             │
┌─────────────────────────────────┐          │
│       Curriculum design         │◄────────┐│
└─────────────────────────────────┘         ││
                │                            ││
                ▼                            ││
     ┌──────────────────────┐               ││
     │    Implementation    │◄──────────┐   ││
     └──────────────────────┘           │   ││
                │                        │   ││
                ▼                        │   ││
     ┌──────────────────────┐           │   ││
     │      Evaluation       │          │   ││
     └──────────────────────┘           │   ││
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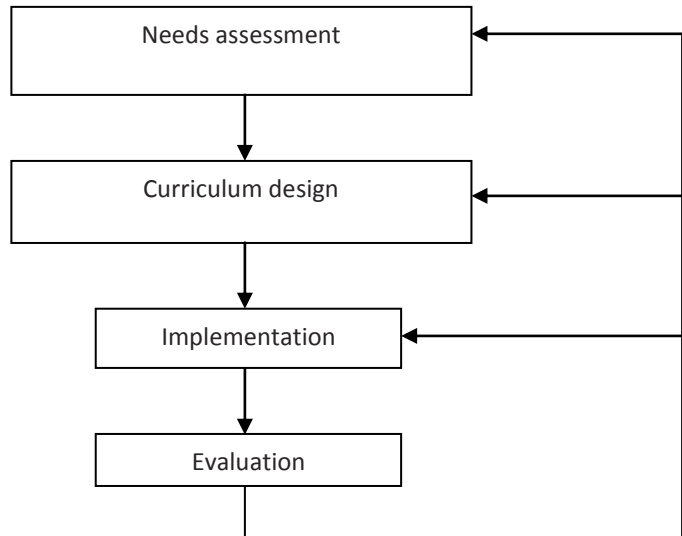
Figure 2.2 Developing a competence-based curriculum (adapted from Diamond, 1998, p. 125-126)

The model in Figure 2.2 illustrates that a competence-based curriculum is never finished. In order to live up to its aim of preparing adequate professionals, it requires constant evaluation and improvement. Referring to the different kinds of curriculum, the planned curriculum relates to the curriculum as designed; the enacted curriculum and the curriculum as experienced by the students to its implementation. The curriculum as observed by stakeholders from outside (Ribeiro, 1999) comes into the picture when evaluating the curriculum.

According to Kouwenhoven (2003) there are different dimensions to a competence-based curriculum: the identification of the competencies, their organisation into a curriculum and the strategies of teaching and learning. The research project aimed to contribute to improvements in the Master programmes at different levels. Firstly, there is a need to know and to constantly refresh the knowledge about which competencies are needed in the changing world of work. The first research question about the competencies required in the working environment refers to this aspect. Then there is a need to evaluate which competencies the students actually did acquire and develop during their studies, referring not only to the learning process as it was planned, but also to the implemented (enacted) and experienced learning process. The second research question about the competencies acquired

and developed during the Master programme refers to this aspect, including both the organisation of the competencies into a curriculum and the strategies of teaching and learning.

To ascertain the implementation of generic competencies in the curriculum the faculty established a task force, the Working Group on Generic Competencies (in Portuguese, the official language in Mozambique: Grupo de Trabalho de Competências Genéricas, GTCG), with the following terms of reference:

- To monitor the implementation of generic competencies in the curriculum of the various courses of the common core;
- to evaluate the experiences of lecturers and students in the development and assessment of generic competencies;
- to provide assistance to lecturers during the implementation process;
- to formulate proposals for improvement of the conditions for the development of generic competencies.

The terms of reference relate to the different phases of curriculum development: the activities of the working group include design activities such as the design of tools for acquiring and developing generic competencies to be used by the lecturers, implementation activities such as the organisation of workshops for the students as well as evaluation activities. After carrying out several small-scale evaluation activities, in which the students evaluated their own acquisition of generic competencies using a self-evaluation questionnaire, the working group considered it appropriate to initiate a more comprehensive evaluation project, which included the first graduates, their employers and lecturers. This was at the time when the first group of Master students was about to finish. The research, carried out by a team consisting of two members of the GTCG and three students, was part and parcel of the work of the working group and as such was a formative evaluation resulting in proposals for improving the curriculum as far as generic competencies are concerned (Herman, Morris & Fitz-Gibbon, 1987; Caffarella, 2002).

Research approach and design

As previously discussed, the rapid changes in society oblige educational institutions to review their curricula regularly, if these institutions want to keep pace with the constantly changing

competencies required in the workplace. The research project with its general objective to contribute to the improvement of the Master programme, focusing on the aspect of generic competencies, fitted into the renovation cycle of the curriculum. The planned and enacted curricula as described by Kouwenhoven, Howie and Plomp (2003) were already in place. This research investigates the validity of the planned and enacted curriculum and the experienced and the observed curriculum with the purpose of revising (if needed) the planned and enacted curriculum. As such it was a formative curriculum evaluation involving lecturers, students and employers of the students and including the following phases: first setting the boundaries of the evaluation, followed by selecting appropriate evaluation methods, then collecting and analysing data and finally reporting the findings (see Herman, Morris & Fitz-Gibbon, 1987; Caffarella, 2002).

The general research objective and the two main research questions guided the phases of the evaluation process. The first phase included a study of the documents available on the development of the curriculum of the faculty and an exploration of critical areas via a workshop with the staff of the Faculty of Education. The workshop consisted of a preliminary consultation of the lecturers of the modules of the Master programme to make a first inventory of the problems encountered related to generic competencies (Workshop 1). In other words, the planned curricula and the curricula as enacted by the lecturers were being revisited. Setting the boundaries and focus of the research in this phase served as a background for the development of research instruments. The preliminary observations from the workshop were explored in interviews with students and employers. The population of the research consisted of the first group of students of the Master programme, who started in August 2001. In total there were 31 students in the first group. As Table 2.3 shows the sample consisted of just over half the number of students and five of their employers. The students to be interviewed have been chosen by purposive sampling based on an analysis of the competencies required in their profession compared with the competencies implemented in the curriculum. For practical reasons only five employers have been included in the sample. They represent four important areas of educational professions.

Table 2.3 Sample of students and employers

Programme	Number of students starting in 2001	Number of students inter-viewed	Professions of interviewed students	Number of employers inter-viewed	Professional areas of interviewed employers
Curriculum Development and Instruction	10	5	Curriculum developer, Pedagogical Director, Teacher – distance education, Teacher – Commercial School and Distance Education, Officer Ministry of Education	1	National Institute for Education related to the Ministry of Education
Education in Mathematics and Sciences	10	5	University lecturer (2x), Secondary school Teacher(2x), University staff officer and Secondary School Teacher	1	Higher Education
Adult Education	11	6	University Lecturer (2x), Director Adult Education Centre, Journalist and Manager Resource Centre, Special education officer Ministry of Education, Human Resources Manager	3	Higher Education (private), Non-Governmental Organisation, Human Resource Department of a company
Total	**31**	**16**		**5**	

To respond to the first research question on the generic competencies required and applied in the professional context information from the workplace was needed. General information on the requirements for educational personnel was obtained from documents of the Ministry of Education. This information needed to be complemented with experiences from the workplace, which extended beyond the institutions of the Ministry of Education. Interviews were carried out in the working environment of the students for the interviewers to complement the information of the interview with their observations. To complete this information the employers of the students were asked about their views on the competencies required in the area of education. Regarding the second research question on the competencies developed during the Master programme, faculty documents provided some idea of the competencies selected and inserted in the curriculum. On the other hand the real learning process could only be explored in discussion with the students themselves as they could speak about the experienced curriculum. So the students were also asked to talk about their experiences during the study and their suggestions for improvement. The students' employers confirmed their observations by giving their opinion on the observed curriculum.

Table 2.4 Data collection techniques

General research objective	Research question	Data collection techniques
	Preliminary consultation	Workshop 1
Contribute to the improvement of the Master programme, especially to the component of generic competences	Which generic competencies are required in the workplace of the graduates of the Master programmes in education?	Document study, semi-structured interviews with students and their employers
	Which generic competencies did the graduates develop during the Master programmes?	All the above and classroom observations
	Validation and discussion	Workshop 2

An interview guide was developed, including questions for the students and their employers, related to both research questions. Trying not to let the competencies of the planned curriculum dominate the answers of the interviewees, it was considered useful to opt for open questions in semi-structured interviews. After a first trial interview the guide has been

improved. The interviews were complemented by classroom observations (these could only be carried out with a next generation of students who were still taking lectures and attending classes). Table 2.4 indicates an overview of the main data collection techniques used.

The responses of the interviewees were recorded by the interviewers, summarised and analysed comparing them with the document analysis and with the experiences of the student members of the research team. The research team met regularly to evaluate the progress of the research and to discuss the next step to be taken to complement the information. A discussion document was developed discussing the preliminary findings in the perspective of the general research objective to improve the curriculum. The discussion document formed the basis of a discussion in a workshop including not only the lecturers, but also the students and the employers in the sample. In this way the process of gathering data was also a process of sharing and discussing information and opinions. The results have been validated by triangulation, that is to say the information obtained from different sources using different methods has been compared and attuned to one other. The final workshop, attended by staff, students and employers, played an important role in this respect (Workshop 2).

The competencies required in the workplace and those developed in the Master programmes

Table 2.5 contains a resume of the answers of the students and employers regarding the most important competencies required in the workplace and those developed during the Master programmes. The answers of the employers, though few, are added to provide a general overview. As mentioned earlier, the sample consisted of one employer of a Curriculum Development and Instruction student, one of a Science and Mathematics Education student and three of Adult Education students. The answers in key words in the table are close to the words chosen by the students and employers (translation by the authors). With reference to the first research question, Table 2.5 shows that the competencies required in the workplace according to the students relate to a diverse collection of competencies such as teamwork, research, communication and problem solution. Considering the list of generic competencies in the curriculum plan (see Table 2.2) all of them appear in the words of the students. The urge to view educational issues from a certain distance in order to be able to analyse what is going on before taking action, appears to be a general feature of the research.

Table 2.5 Competencies required in the workplace and developed during the Master programme

Programme	Competencies according to student		Competencies according to employer	
	required in workplace	developed during Master programme	required in workplace	developed during Master programme
Curriculum Development and Instruction (CDI)	Analyse a situation to intervene with a general vision Respect other people's opinions, work in teams Improve relation between the school's curriculum and the workplace Plan lessons, work with different student groups, handle different people and situations Select appropriate strategies for educational problem solving	How to approach curriculum questions on a theoretical level Design teaching and training programmes (2x) Analyse, reflect, use literature (2x) Understand and analyse; Student-centred teaching; Communication, ICT	Leadership for change	Analyse a curriculum problem, think of a solution and give guidance to colleagues
Education in Mathematics and Sciences (EMS)	Work efficiently in relation to lecturing Work systematically Know how to teach while learning Do research Teamwork	Student-centred teaching (3x) Problem solving in the teaching and learning process Formulate a vision Do research (2x) ICT (2x)	Research for innovation in education	Develop student-centred teaching and learning materials
Adult Education (AE)	Communicate, elaborate curricula and training materials Plan, coordinate and solve educational problems in a coherent way Execute research in the workplace Cope with different people: students, colleagues and superiors Know and apply educational policies Analyse problems and propose solutions	Design adult learning programmes (3x) Leadership and thinking systematically Elaborate a vision, contextualise general paradigms and models Do research (2x) Problem solving ICT	Initiative and entrepreneurial qualities Do research and plan educational processes Strategic thinking	Reflection and creativity Design appropriate course outlines Investigate a human resources problem and propose a solution to different stakeholders

The interviews with the employers confirm this. As a competency required they mentioned research for problem solution. In the words of one of them:

> The area of education needs professionals with quality, who can pay attention to the problems in primary education, people with their feet on the ground who can develop solutions for problems, professionals knowing how to do research and produce solutions... The students should not study to become employed, but to be aggressive, able to create self-employment.

The employers talked about management of change, leadership, communication and planning. A professional in the field of education should know *how to manage change and how to handle leadership and communication* and *how to plan an educational process*. Statements like this show that organisations in the educational sector in Mozambique experience similar developments as companies and organisations worldwide. Being in the phase of construction, expansion and reorganisation, the Mozambican educational organisations need sound problem solvers and change implementers just as much as organisations everywhere else in the world. In general the strategic plan for the education sector in Mozambique signals the lack of capacity and expertise in the sector, which hampers the decentralisation of planning and management and stifles creativity and innovation at local levels (Government of Mozambique, 2004). There is a need for educational professionals who are creative and innovative enough to solve problems where they occur, but can also plan and manage to avoid problems in the future. As a tentative conclusion the list of generic competencies may remain as it is, with an emphasis on the generic competencies regarding reflection and research.

Regarding the second research question, Table 2.5 shows that in accordance with their specialisation students mention specific topics such as curriculum development (mostly mentioned by Curriculum Development and Instruction students), teaching and learning methods (mostly mentioned by Education in Mathematics and Sciences students) and the adult learning process (Adult Education students). Secondly, they mention more general topics such as developing a vision, conducting research, analysing problems and problem solving as important skills developed during the Master programme. One of the students working in curriculum development, said: *I improved above all my capacity to analyse and develop innovative proposals. My colleagues have been consulting me on this*. Another one working in human resource development, said:

> I learned a lot to solve problems and to work systematically in the analysis of problems. The management assigns me to analyse a case, collect information and propose a solution.

According to themselves, the students improved other competencies such as the use of communication technology. A student from the field of secondary education reflected: *I acquired new competencies like using ICT* (Information and Communication Technology) *and improved others like leadership and systematic thinking*.

Moreover the employers state that their subordinates benefited from the programme in terms of competencies. One of them said, speaking about his subordinate: *he is able to propose solutions based on research. I think he grew a lot in this sense*. Another employer showed a study plan for a higher education course, developed by one of the students, commenting that it was an outstanding plan. Changes in the positions and tasks of the students, for example obtaining a position as a university lecturer, acquiring more responsibility in their current positions, and additional assignments also indicate growth in their performance. Based on the interviews one may conclude that the Master programmes contribute to the strengthening of the educational sector in Mozambique by building the capacities of its human resources, both in terms of specific and generic competencies.

Improvement of the Master programmes regarding generic competencies

The general research objective was to contribute to the improvement of the Master programmes, especially to the component of generic competencies. During the interviews the students were asked to reflect on this aspect. They would like to see improvements in the teaching and learning of especially those generic competencies they saw as the most important competencies required in their work. They affirmed that research is necessary to solve the problems of education. Several of them would like *more attention to be paid to research methodology*. One of the students remarked he would have liked to *do research in the place where we are working, make an in-depth analysis related to other developments*, but he did not feel ready for this task. Some students spoke of reflection in the sense of using theories to analyse current practice in Mozambican education. A student stated: *I felt the lack of practice. I would like the programmes to be more concrete* and another one: *Theoretical issues should be elaborated with documents from here* (meaning documents such as strategic plans and curricula developed in Mozambique). Although they have learned a lot in this respect, the students would prefer to get more guidance and support to use the educational theories to reflect on and analyse Mozambican educational practices.

A classroom observation was illustrative of the students' difficulties. The session observed is part of a course on Educational Administration and Management for one of the following generations of students. The course aims at enhancing the reflective and analytic competencies of students, and their competencies in the field of assessing, diagnosing, evaluating and improving schools and their functioning.

> Two groups of Master students are presenting their work in the late afternoon of a hot summer day in Maputo, Mozambique. The first presentation is about coordination and control in education. The group gives an interesting review of reports and articles on the problems in controlling the Mozambican schools, ranging from logistic problems to bureaucracy and lack of decision-making power for the local educational authorities. The main problem according to the group is lack of resources. The second presentation discusses the primary process from an organisational point of view. The group put a lot of effort into understanding the English text and presenting it in an understandable way to their colleagues. In Mozambique English is a foreign language. The presentation consists of 53 power point slides. The audience struggles not to fall asleep (classroom observation, Faculty of Education, 2005).

What happened in the presentations observed? The lecturer stated that the students did not succeed in reflecting on and analysing existing school organisation problems within their working context using the theories and concepts discussed in the course literature. The first group missed a chance to link problems in the schools with the theoretical notions of the course on coordination and control in the perspective of the organisational characteristics of schools. The second group missed the opportunity to relate the theory to the everyday experience of the primary teaching and learning process of the students, who are mostly teachers themselves. In both cases there was no link between theory and practice. This is in line with the opinions of colleague lecturers as expressed in the workshops. According to them students find it very difficult to reflect on practice using theory and taking an analytical stand. The lecturers themselves are searching for ways to train students to develop this. Issues concerning analysis, reflection and combining theory and practice to solve problems keep emerging: they are mentioned as essential in the workplace and as learning results, but at the same time they are mentioned as difficult to develop by the students and as difficult to teach by the lecturers.

According to the results of the interviews and the workshops it is not necessary to reformulate the curriculum plan, but it is the teaching and learning process that needs to be improved with a focus on the most important generic competencies of reflection and analysis. In other words attention should move from the planned curriculum to the enacted, experienced and even observed curriculum. As the (former) dean of the faculty said at the

closing ceremony of the second workshop: *The faculty has a curriculum plan, but it also needs a methodological plan and an institutional plan* (Saúde, 2004, p. 5). Future evaluations should switch to the question how students can acquire the necessary competencies and what kind of support is appropriate. Relevant in this respect is also the education history of the country, as reflected in the students. The majority of them merely learned to reproduce theories instead of applying and discussing them. This should be taken into account when implementing teaching and learning strategies that presume a critical and analytic attitude to the surrounding reality. Hofstede (2001) discusses dimensions such as power distance and uncertainty avoidance, which result in highly structured teaching situations strictly led by the teachers as common practices in certain cultures. These certainly inhibit the acquisition of more analytical and reflective competencies, which require an open and independent mind.

More research is needed to analyse the problem and design strategies to overcome it. The workshop in which the preliminary results were discussed in the presence of lecturers, students, employers and the dean of the faculty (workshop 2), generated the following recommendations:

- It is necessary to clarify the tasks of the Working Group on Generic Competencies and to establish a cooperation between the lecturers of the modules and this group to elaborate and implement a programme of generic competencies integrated in the modules.
- Emphasis and even priority should be given to competencies of reflection, analysis and research studying the learning process of competencies related to these competencies. Which are the assumptions? How does one learn these competencies? Which are the phases in learning them? All this to develop methods, which support the learning process.
- To facilitate the acquisition process of generic competencies one should create learning opportunities such as action research projects and authentic environments, for example in the National Institute for the Development of Education (INDE), the Institute for Teacher's In Service Training (IAP) and other institutes in the field of education. The GTCG could help and stimulate the lecturers to develop this kind of learning opportunity and elaborate evaluation instruments for generic competencies.

The recommendations were not entirely new, but the workshop created a broader base of ownership for proposals discussed among lecturers earlier on. For example, employers got

interested in the idea that students – before beginning on their Master research project – should do a kind of development project to obtain a first experience in linking practice and theory, and to design and develop a solution to a real life problem. As a follow-up of the workshop the Working Group on Generic Competences is developing guides to be used by lecturers and students to support the development of generic competencies, for example a guide on how to write a dissertation (Mendonça, Buque, Mutimucuio, Van der Linden, Bonifácio & Buque, 2006).

From competence-based teaching to competence-based learning

The research contributed to the ongoing evaluation and improvement of the Master programmes. The Faculty of Education is still young. It only reopened in 2001. The faculty itself and its surrounding community of professionals in education is in a learning process. The participation of employers and student-professionals in the research proves that the Faculty of Education is able to create and maintain a learning community (Wenger, 1998) in the field of education.

The research has been presented in a university seminar (Encontro de Apresentação dos Resultados de Investigação 2004) and received positive reactions of representatives of other faculties of the university. This shows that the professional orientation is winning ground in the Eduardo Mondlane University. It is a concrete implementation of the affirmations in the strategic plan for higher education and the missions of the university and the faculty, which state in different wording that university graduates should possess the necessary skills and knowledge to contribute to the development of the country. It shows that it is worthwhile to speak with professionals and their employers about university education. Well-prepared workshops are a good method for this. To encourage this kind of research activity leading to improvement of educational strategies, a fixed percentage of the research carried out in the university could be dedicated to its own education and ways to improve it. In this way the outside world will gain confidence in the flexibility of university education to answer the needs of society and participate in a genuine learning community working on the improvement of the quality of teaching and learning.

2.4 Capacity building in Southern Africa: experiences and reflections: towards joint knowledge production and social change in international development cooperation[3]

Abstract
The intent of capacity building in international development cooperation is to enable people to control their own development. Important premises are ownership, choice and self-esteem. The authors analyse the dynamics of the enabling process in practice, based on their own experiences working for several years in universities in developing countries, specifically in South Africa and Mozambique. The analysis highlights the importance of the primary process between the partners to develop joint knowledge production strategies and stresses the challenge of less favourable institutional conditions in both the North and the South.

Introduction

Capacity building has been promoted to the centre of development initiatives due to the conviction that good governance, citizen empowerment and civil society development were the key to poverty alleviation and a more just world. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) defines capacity building as the *process by which individuals, organisations, and societies develop abilities to perform functions, solve problems, and set and achieve goals, premised on ownership, choice, and self-esteem* (World Bank, 2005, p. 6). As such, capacity building is a logical complement to budget support and the sector-wide approach in development cooperation. In short, more funds and more responsibilities require more capacities.

Evaluating its support for capacity building in Africa, the World Bank concludes that it is a *long-term process that requires a systemic approach and attention to demand for improved public services as well as the supply of well-structured organisations and skilled personnel* (2005, p. 43). The admission that capacity building is a long-term process involving services to the public, organisations and personnel, is important. Elaborating on this process, the World Bank describes three levels of capacity: human capacity,

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organisational capacity and institutional capacity. Human capacity refers to individuals and their skills related to development; organisational capacity concerns groups of individuals bound by a common purpose; and finally the framework within which organisations and individuals operate is reflected in the institutional capacity. Recognising the fact that organisations and institutions also involve humans, we prefer the term 'personal' capacity to 'human' capacity.

The experiences discussed in this article are a result of capacity-building projects in adult education departments in South Africa and Mozambique. Insider perspectives of Dutch development workers in these projects will add to the outsider (mostly Northern) perspective on the value of capacity building. In the University of the North (now called University of Limpopo) in the South African Limpopo Province, a former black university in a former homeland, a Department of Adult Education has been established in cooperation with the University of Groningen. The cooperation included, along with other agreements, funds for research methodology training and Master and PhD studies, and students and staff exchanges (Rampedi & Zeelen, 2000; Van der Kamp & Zeelen, 2005). In the framework of the latter, one of the authors, at the time staff member at the University of Groningen, was appointed professor of adult education at the University of the North in 1998. He (and his family) lived and worked in South Africa for six years, returning to the Netherlands in 2004.

The need for an adult education department had also been identified in neighbouring Mozambique (Sitoe, 2004; Smulders, 2004). There too, a department was established in cooperation with the Department of Adult Education in Groningen (Faculdade de Educação, 2001). The cooperation agreements included the same elements as those in South Africa, except for the staff exchange. The University of Groningen supported the development of the department in Eduardo Mondlane University in the area of curriculum development and research capacity. The other author of this article, also Dutch, worked as a senior lecturer, in the Mozambican department, on a capacity building mission of a Dutch development organisation. From 2002 she helped to build the department for four years, returning to the Netherlands in 2006.

Approaches towards capacity building

As indicated in the UNDP definition (World Bank, 2005), the intent of capacity building in development cooperation is to enable people to control their own development, acknowledging that these people are part of an organisational and institutional environment. As noted, ownership, choice and self-esteem are considered essential enablers. Four key aspects for implementing 'capacity building', based on these enablers, are:

- Contextualisation: the challenge of dealing with the Northern and Southern contexts;
- Social learning: the learning concept used in the process of capacity building;
- Interactive knowledge production: the perception of knowledge transfer;
- The development paradox: the balance between the interests of the North and the South.

Contextualisation

Talking about capacity building triggers the questions: who is building what, for what purpose and where? The history of development cooperation has, sometimes painfully, shown us how important it is to take the local conditions into account. This counts not only for well-known examples whereby technology transferred to the South deteriorates because of the unfavourable physical climate, the lack of capacity to maintain it or simply due to the technology not fitting into the social and economic realities of the developing context (see, for example, Grammig, 2003). It is equally important to give the specific historical, cultural and, more specific, colonial legacies a more prominent place in the process. For example, to build capacity in education in Southern Africa without having a grasp on the specific history, especially Bantu Education, the Portuguese educational legacy and the armed conflicts in Mozambique, will hardly be productive (see Rampedi, 2003; Sitoe, 2004, 2006).

Social learning

Capacity building, seen as a learning process, involves different configurations of actors with different dynamics. The first configuration concerns the collaboration process between experts from the North and the South working in a specific capacity building project, in this case the development of adult education programmes in universities in

South Africa and Mozambique. The second dynamic involves the learning processes in the wider context of the local situation with actors such as staff, students, practitioners, participants in adult education programmes and policy makers. Proper contextualisation demands that actors pay attention to the educational legacies and the personal epistemological beliefs and constructions of participants to give room to their *ownership*, *choice* and *self-esteem.* In terms of the landscape of learning approaches (behaviourist, cognitive, psycho-dynamic and experiential) in our view the new approach of *social learning* (which differs from Bandura's concept of social learning) seems to be appropriate (see for an overview Illeris, 2002).

Using the social learning approach in capacity building implies that in learning situations the backgrounds, opinions and views of all participants should be put forward for discussion through a dialogue. Moreover, all participants are seen as competent actors who are able to connect reflections with interventions in their own environment (see, among others, Freire, 1973; Holzkamp, 1993; Wenger, 1998; Wildemeersch, Finger & Jansen, 1998; Illeris, 2002; Wals, 2007). Finally, social learning is, in principle, interdisciplinary. Addressing the social problems demands the participation of diverse actors including people who are often not considered experts and who have learned not to consider themselves as such. People who have life experiences in the context of a particular social problem, such as members of youth organisations and groups of rural women, can make important contributions towards the development of innovative strategies in the field.

This approach is important both for our partners in the South and for us. Capacity building is seen as a collective learning process where academics from the South and the North, students, practitioners and learners in the adult education field treat each other as competent actors. The collective learning process helps to reduce the *cultural distance* between the actors involved, a factor which has been considered by many to be a significant obstacle to successful capacity building (see Grammig, 2003).

Interactive knowledge production

The approaches of contextualisation and social learning imply a certain position in the debate about knowledge production in the social sciences. In line with authors such as Reason and Bradbury (2001) and Boog, Preece, Slagter and Zeelen (2008), the approach of action research can be used as an epistemological framework for mutual knowledge production

(see also Van der Kamp & Zeelen, 2005; Kibwika, 2006). This approach states that human beings are considered to be competent actors who have their own interpretations of the social world. In terms of capacity building this means that it should not just be understood as transfer of knowledge from the North to the South but as a dialogue, or maybe better as a space for a plurality of voices, where different types of knowledge, including indigenous knowledge, can meet, leading to the possibility of creating new knowledge and innovative interventions on the basis of combined global and local perspectives.

The creation of a dialogue, however, is not something that can be arranged just by idealistic agreements between those involved. It is often a very time-consuming activity, with a number of essential requirements. First, before people feel free to articulate their opinions and views they should feel at ease, confident, respected and recognised. Snakes hiding in the grass might be the existing power relations, the dominance of a certain language, the role of gender, race, age and social status, and the presence of certain epistemological and ontological beliefs held by the participants.

Dealing with different interests: the development paradox

Since the 1990s the trend in international development cooperation has been to make sure that the ownership of the development agenda of the South should be enhanced as much as possible. International consensus holds that the traditional paternalistic dominance of the North over the South should be avoided at all costs. The Dutch social-philosopher Lolle Nauta argues that this trend has a paradoxical character (Nauta, 1994). The powerful party from the North appears to 'give' power to the South, but at the same time, in terms of capacities and resources, the North continues to be the more powerful and wealthy. In the words of Nauta: *In fact, developing countries play a subordinate role in the development process they are now expected to determine!* (1994, p. 12). This hidden paradox should be made more explicit to overcome disparities in the development cooperation. Moreover, Nauta states that *It is well and good to allow the underdeveloped South to establish the priorities, but can the difficulties related to setting these priorities for their countries be solved?* (Nauta, 1994, p. 13). Another remark he made is that in avoiding a paternalistic attitude towards the South, the North often assumes the existence of political consensus in countries where this is not the case. This counts for government departments, regions and institutions such as universities. The voices of the South, as well as the North, are

polyphonic. In dealing with capacity building we have to take these paradoxes and contradictions into account.

In our view the four approaches of *contextualisation*, *social learning*, *interactive knowledge production* and *awareness of the development paradox* could be used to ensure that *ownership*, *choice* and *self-esteem* – the three important elements of capacity building formulated by the UNDP (World Bank, 2005) – will have a chance to flourish. Ownership, choice and self-esteem imply processes in which the partners interact in a dialogue at an equal level. The approaches will help to analyse factors hindering and enabling the establishment of such a process. In the following chapter we discuss our experiences in Southern Africa to investigate to what extent these approaches can be put into practice and to what kind of outcomes, constraints and perspectives this may lead.

Issues of capacity building emerging from experiences in South Africa: a Dutch professor of adult education at the University of the North

> Every day we can see the university buildings. We always wonder if this big institution with all its knowledge cannot help us! But we do not know how to ask and we are afraid that they will send us away.

This comment was made by a man from Ga-Mothapo, a settlement a few miles away from the University of the North (UNIN). He was interviewed in 1994 by Hetty Stevens, the first exchange student at UNIN of the University of Groningen (RUG) in the Netherlands, during her research into the needs for adult education in the communities in the vicinity of the university. His statement articulates the immense distance from the university, despite it being so near, as well as the urgent desire of people in the communities for help (see Stevens, 2000). At the same time it reflects on the role of this university in the Apartheid era. As indicated by White (1997, p. 1) *the University of the North was created as a political, not an educational, necessity*. It served mainly as an ideological legitimisation for a sort of higher education of an inferior level for black people and the education of civil servants for the homeland administration. Second-class white professors were, in most cases, good enough (Rampedi, 2003). The quality of teaching and research was questionable and the curricula were not tailored to the urgent needs of the communities. In that context it was hardly surprising that for many years no adult education curriculum or research programme existed at UNIN, despite the dramatic problems of illiteracy, poverty and unemployment in the Northern Province (now called Limpopo Province). With this legacy in mind, after a long

period of academic boycott, UNIN and RUG representatives decided to explore a possible collaboration in 1992. Adult education became one of the priority areas.

Capacity building processes in and of the Adult Education Department

In the first stage of the collaboration post-graduate students from the RUG came to the UNIN to conduct research together with UNIN colleagues and students. A few years later, to improve the sustainability of the adult education initiative, a senior lecturer of the RUG was appointed as the first full professor of adult education at UNIN (September 1998). The main aims were the establishment of a new department of adult education, including teaching, training and research programmes, as well as capacity building. The idea was that eventually a South African professor of adult education should take over.

From the beginning the enhancement of personal (human) capacity of individual staff members was linked to organisational capacity building, in the context of building a department and its programmes. To enhance social learning, the first steps taken were to establish the Adult Education Resource Centre where staff, students and practitioners could meet, work, discuss and have access to relevant national and international literature. This centre became a powerful learning environment which functioned as the heart of the Adult Education Department. Both the local staff members and the students were stimulated in their studies. At the same time, the research activities were not regarded as exclusively private activities but as part of the collaborative work in the research programme. Topics for Bachelor, Master and PhD studies preferably had to be related to the overall theme of the research programme called 'From Social Exclusion to Lifelong Learning'. In the team, but also in the contacts with the students and adult education practitioners, much attention was paid to the legacy of Apartheid and Bantu education as well as traditional beliefs (see Rampedi, 2003; Zeelen, 2003). This legacy is still very much alive at formerly disadvantaged universities like UNIN. For example, some years ago, one of the staff members mentioned in a research workshop that for him, and many other black lecturers, *research is still a monster that can only be tamed by intelligent white people*. Such inferiority feelings and status differences between (black and white) professors, lecturers and students were extensively discussed and challenged. Moreover, there was a strong focus on the role of the university in combating social exclusion in the rural areas. An attempt was made to put the principles of action research into practice by

working closely together with practitioners, educational institutions, social movements and non-governmental organisations.

Looking from an insider perspective, it was helpful for the Dutch staff member, especially concerning cultural and political issues, to live with his life partner and children on the campus of the university. Being part of the daily life of the university community, and establishing informal contacts with a diverse group of students and staff, created the opportunity to bridge cultural divides. These experiences made clear that it takes time, a lively degree of curiosity and quite a lot of perseverance to understand the dynamics of the institution and the variety of ways staff and students dealt with it. Often things turned out to be different from the way they looked at first sight. Early judgements proved not to be very helpful and had to be adjusted the hard way. Another important lesson was that cultural distance is not just a matter of race, tribe, position or political preference. The dynamics of (sub)cultural realities are often surprising and always diverse. People are not just a reflection of the cultural conditions. Individuals develop their own life story and deal in their own way with the tensions between tradition and modernity (Zeelen, 2002). Colleagues and students, who struggle to balance family obligations and university requirements at the same time, often form a good example of these kinds of tensions.

Despite the rich intercultural learning processes between the participants helping to reduce cultural divides, a few differences in opinion appeared to be almost insurmountable. A prominent one was the considerably different yard sticks used to look at work ethics and productivity. From a 'Northern' perspective things were often perceived as too late, too slow and too little. A related problematic point was the way local staff dealt with family and community obligations during working hours. The strict, more 'Northern', separation between the private and the public domain was locally often seen as rather artificial and sometimes even irresponsible. Academic efforts of local staff members were often disrupted by responsibilities towards members of their extended family. Furthermore, to secure a decent education for their children, nieces and nephews, local staff had to pursue other paid activities outside the university. This appeared to be a huge contrast to the position of the Dutch staff member, who could focus entirely on academic activities.

As indicated, during Apartheid the University of the North was a typical homeland institution with mostly low-quality teaching programmes, hardly connected with the needs of the communities and with an almost non-existent research capacity (White, 1997;

Rampedi, 2003; FitzGerald, 2006). From that perspective it was not surprising that on the institutional level, the envisaged capacity building was difficult to implement. The start of the innovation, though, was well prepared by the UNIN management with a central role of the dean of the Faculty of Education, who was also planned to become the new head of the Adult Education Department. However, in the first phase some staff members in the Faculty were quite hostile towards the innovation. Psychological factors such as jealousy, settling old scores and feeling threatened by new ways of teaching and research played a role. All kinds of hidden activities were undertaken to undermine the development of the new department. Not very helpful either was that the top management of the university changed about seven times in six years. Looking back it was almost a miracle that most of the objectives concerning the intended programmes were achieved by the small team. For example, 15 Masters and around 20 Bachelor students completed their degrees in the new programmes. New learning materials were developed and relevant regional research was conducted. However, due to the unstable institutional situation the sustainability of the innovation was extremely fragile.

The sometimes hostile environment was not always easy to bear for the Dutch staff member, but the sacrifices for the local staff members were often much more painful. Some of them felt socially excluded by their colleagues, because they were seen as a threat to their own comfort zones of poor academic functioning. The university as a whole is still part of an ongoing, sometimes troublesome, transformation process from a homeland institution to a university, effectively involved in the development of the Limpopo Province (see White, 1997; Rampedi, 2003; Zeelen 2004; FitzGerald, 2006).

Reflection on key issues

Overall it is clear that on the personal and organisational level a considerable degree of capacity building could be achieved, including the enhancement of choice, self-esteem and ownership. However, at the institutional level, capacity building was rather weak due to a very unstable and often not very enabling institutional environment. Dealing with the development paradox was rather difficult as well. Although the local staff member, who defended his PhD dissertation in 2003 successfully, was indeed appointed as the new head of department and took over from the Dutch professor in 2004, the sustainability of the department is still in question. Over the years the role of the North in the partnership, especially in the planning, implementation and in driving the capacity building process, had

been prominent. After the phased withdrawal (in half a year) of the Dutch staff member, the capacity building process slowed down, despite different support activities. Setting the priorities and steering from the South fell short partly as a result of daily struggles of survival in the individually difficult institutional conditions. To conclude, the issues here support Nauta's (1994) remarks about the often missing conditions in the South for steering and setting priorities. As indicated, the collaboration started at the level of the institutional partnership between the two universities; assuring continuity and further development of the innovation eventually lies in the hands of the university in the South.

Issues of capacity building emerging from experiences in Mozambique: a Dutch lecturer of adult education at Eduardo Mondlane University

Although Mozambique is a neighbour to South Africa, its history is quite different. Until 1975 the country was ruled by the Portuguese, who did not invest much in education of the Mozambicans. They only established one university, which mainly served children of the Portuguese colonists and rarely accepted Mozambican children. When Mozambique became independent in 1975, the country was left with an illiteracy rate of more than 90 per cent among the adult population. An enormous effort was made to provide education all over the country. The University of Mozambique was transformed into Eduardo Mondlane University. Adult education policies and practices focused on literacy campaigns and programmes. Due to the armed conflicts and the World Bank preference for primary education, there was a lapse in adult education for some decades, but towards the end of the twentieth century adult education was again recognised as important for the development of the country (Mário & Nandja 2006; Van der Linden & Rungo, 2006).

Adult education in Eduardo Mondlane University in Mozambique

In 1998, Eduardo Mondlane University organised a seminar about lifelong learning in cooperation with the National Institute for the Development of Education. Key practitioners from the field of adult education expressed the need for a post-graduate course on this subject. Needs assessments, carried out by the preparatory committee and a Dutch Master student from the University of Groningen (Faculdade de Educação, 2001; Smulders, 2004), confirmed this. In cooperation with the adult education departments of the University of Groningen and the University of the North in South Africa, a Master programme in adult

education was developed with a broad perspective on the value of adult education for development. The adult education programme was part of a newly established Faculty of Education, also supported by the University of Twente and the 'Vrije Universiteit' of Amsterdam. In August 2001 a group of enthusiastic students, the majority of whom were active practitioners, started in the first Mozambican Master programme in adult education. Actually this was one of the first master programmes in Mozambique. Given the educational situation at the time of independence this should not be a surprise (UNDP, 2000).

The Faculty of Education applied for technical assistance from a Dutch development organisation. The organisation agreed on the condition that the technical assistance would not be used to compensate for non-existent Mozambican staff, but serve as capacity building to train Mozambican intellectuals to take over. The second author of this article was recruited as a senior lecturer in adult education. She moved to Maputo early in 2002 and was assigned duties in teaching modules and supervising students' research. Contrary to the intentions of the development organisation, the faculty hiring the Dutch lecturer appeared to need a colleague to 'fill a gap', that is to say to teach, to do research and, occasionally, to help out in administration and extension activities.

'Gap filling' or capacity building?

Whose capacity can and should be built at a personal level? The capacity of three types of individuals was targeted: colleagues, students and professionals in the field. The colleagues were trained to take over teaching and research functions. The students, most of them already working as professionals, developed their competencies, both on a specific and on a general level (Van der Linden & Mendonça, 2006). Also the professionals in the field got exposed to international strategies and practices and learned to evaluate their own experience from that perspective (see, for example, Van der Linden, Saúde & Seifane, 2005).

At this level, capacity building was not a one-way stream. Working together on common goals and reflecting on difficulties encountered and progress achieved is essential to getting to know the other. Differences in academic traditions and educational careers can easily result in a seemingly unbridgeable distance: for example, a student will not dispute a Master or PhD holder in Mozambique (on culture and power distance see also Hofstede, 2001). Showing interest in the rich local traditions, taking part in cultural gatherings, surprising people with some knowledge of the local language, proved to be the key to mutual

appreciation. This also meant sharing hopes and anxieties concerning family and friends. For instance, the HIV/AIDS pandemic is not a distant phenomenon in this part of the world; it is a reality in every family and every group of friends. Singing in a Mozambican choir, participating in breath-taking performances, but also witnessing the deterioration and death of its conductor, was a way to be part of the community and to come closer to understanding colleague singers, but also students and university colleagues. The result was increased capacity on the individual level, not only of the Mozambicans. As in the case of UNIN, building mutual confidence, respecting differences and similarities, and breaching cultural distance (Grammig, 2003) needed time and genuine interest in the other and his or her background. Clearly, capacity building does not mean the transfer of ready-made knowledge in such a setting. It is an interactive process of constructing tools appropriate for the problems and challenges in the environment, thus generating new knowledge. Contextualisation, social learning and joint knowledge production are again keys to success.

At the organisational level, the preparatory studies (Kouwenhoven, 2003; Smulders, 2004) were a good starting point to build a department that would support the development of adult education practice in Mozambique. In reality, however, different interests emerged in the Faculty of Education and the university as a whole. For example, expectations on the goals of a research programme were different. Based on the needs assessments, research should have been oriented towards building field contacts and delivering a relevant contribution to development practices and policies. However, the main interests of the Mozambican staff and students were to get higher degrees and to earn extra income through consultancy research. Although these interests do not exclude a contribution to development, they were hardly ever viewed in this perspective. A similar observation can be made about the preferred research methodologies. The wish to contribute to development would logically lead to practice-oriented and action-centred research approaches, but the faculty scientific committee preferred a quantitative research approach. Instead of university-wide discussions on the contribution of the different departments to the development of the country in line with the mission of the university, people tended to hide behind their titles and avoid open discussions. Colonial hierarchy, together with bureaucracy, seems to have survived. The Dutch 'capacity builder' encouraged and supported colleagues and students to explore situations in the field, to analyse problems, carry out practice-oriented researches and design educational programmes. The capacities gained in these activities, however, were left with a fragile base and limited possibilities to be put

in practice. In this context acquiring a higher educational degree seems to be associated with status and authority rather than with social responsibility and strive for excellence. This tendency endangered joint knowledge production.

At the institutional level of the university as a whole and its position in Mozambique it is interesting to have a look at the position of development workers from abroad, or *cooperantes* as they are called. They are the ones who have come after independence in 1975 to help (re-)build the university and other Mozambican institutions. They came from all over the world (western European countries, but also eastern European countries and the Americas) and worked with much vigour filling all sorts of gaps and occupying all sorts of positions in education. In Eduardo Mondlane University the administration found a way to control the *cooperantes*: they have a different status and limited rights, for example they are not allowed to submit research proposals for funding or to become head of a department. Thus, Eduardo Mondlane University, in its own way, has a capacity building strategy for its own staff to take over important posts in the university. Other (newer) universities in Mozambique do not have a policy like this: *cooperantes* fill the gaps in the university as directors of faculties, heads of departments or pedagogical directors. In both cases the cooperantes are 'filling gaps' and their capacity-building mission is not taken seriously by the 'receiving' university.

Key issues in Eduardo Mondlane University appear to be similar to those in UNIN. The Adult Education Department is certainly strengthened by the capacity-building mission in terms of a practice-oriented curriculum, completed Master studies, papers and articles by staff and students, and field contacts (see also Sitoe, 2008). A question, however, remains: who has the power to set the agenda? Put bluntly, is it the international development organisations, rigorously trying to implement their capacity building mission or the Mozambican universities trying to get recognition in the academic world and to run their educational programmes in a satisfactory way using the 'capacity builders' as 'gap fillers'?

Results and discussion: what can we learn from these experiences?

What can we learn from these experiences, on the levels of personal, organisational and institutional capacity building, taking into account the importance of ownership, choice and self-esteem and making use of the approaches of contextualisation, social learning, interactive knowledge production and awareness of the development paradox?

The primacy of the primary process between the partners from the North and the South

Genuine capacity building is not a matter of figures and models. Cultural distance, positional barriers and historical differences can only be bridged by genuine communication, genuine inter-cultural dialogue, mutual trust and human exchange. This means accepting the other as a human being with his or her interests and beliefs. However, it also means allowing space for debates on (ethical) issues like doing consultancy work in the working hours of the university, responsibilities for family and work, research for a university degree with development relevance, and the university hierarchy. Long-term investments in the primary process are the basis for professionally sound capacity building. This is hardly possible within the constraints of short-term consultancies, missions and training programmes. A sound mix of long-term and short-term connections, with a substantial element of continuity of individuals involved, is essential.

In the process it is important that the partners from the North are open about their struggles in their own universities. The universities in the North are far from being a perfect role model for the universities in the South. The current working conditions for academics are often poor in terms of space for creative and socially relevant research, not to speak of investing in time-consuming capacity-building activities in Africa. This is especially true in this period where Northern academic work often stays far from standing social and educational dynamics, even in their own country. They are being pushed to concentrate on writing articles and organising networks to get them published, preferably in the 'right' academic journals. Being open about such issues helps to deconstruct the aura of *omnipotence* and *superiority* of the white academic and will enhance the ownership, choice and self-esteem of the academics in the South.

Creating new knowledge by joint research programmes

As Reason and Bradbury (2001) speaking for the Participatory Action Research tradition have claimed, knowledge is produced in interaction; knowledge is only knowledge when it works in a certain context (see also Boog, Preece, Slagter & Zeelen, 2008). This has proven to be valid in the cases of the adult education research programmes in South Africa and Mozambique, developed with the support of the University of Groningen. New knowledge has been produced around social exclusion, lifelong learning, citizenship and participation. The South–South link was very helpful in this respect. The newly produced knowledge

resulted in paper presentations; conferences with participation of practitioners, non-governmental organisations and social movements; articles, booklets, university degrees and contributions to provincial and national policy initiatives; and 'good practices' in the rural communities (see Rampedi, 2003; Boele van Hensbroek & Schoenmakers, 2004; Zeelen, 2004; Sitoe, 2006; Van der Linden & Rungo, 2006). Accountability, as an essential aspect in this approach, comes in here: the primary process has its own value, but should lead to products for the world outside to facilitate new insights, with a prominent place for the developing context. And, as indicated, these outcomes should not be reduced to the 'produced' numbers of PhDs and Masters, which tends to be the main focus of many market-oriented universities. 'Who benefits?' is still a legitimate question to continue asking. PhDs and Masters will help to build universities in the South, but capacity building should not just go for the degrees as such, but lead to cooperation in relevant research programmes and also focus on retaining high-calibre staff in the South. In this respect, issues around ownership and choice need to be discussed openly.

Creative dealing with institutional realities

The two examples have shown that capacity building projects are very much dependent on the existing institutional realities. In the beginning of joint capacity building projects it is vital that the sustainability issue is a prominent element of the agreements between the universities involved. During the process the governing boards of the universities from the South and the North should defend and protect the innovation against negative influences, as much as possible. This point was also emphasised by academics from the South at a recent European Union conference in Belgium (see Brito, 2005; Matos, 2005). Indeed, *avant garde* practices are always vulnerable to marginalisation, because of feelings of exclusion and jealousy of those who are not directly involved. If possible this threat should be anticipated by developing incentives for the institution of which the department or project is part, to enhance participation and at the same time sustainability of and support for the new practices. However, the reality is also that the organisational structures, mentalities and cultures of universities, in the South as well as in the North, are difficult to change in the short run. Participating in inspirational local, national and international networks, building on long-term *communities of practice* (Wenger, 1998), is often an important source for positive energy. These networks derive their sustainability from human involvement and social movements and are indispensable for institutional development viewed as a dynamic process of learning organisations.

Capacity building revisited

In fact, what we can learn from the experiences in South Africa and Mozambique is that there is an immense potential for joint knowledge production between the North and the South and that special attention has to be paid to South–South connections. In this context the contribution of Lídia Brito, professor in the Eduardo Mondlane University and former Minister of Higher Education of Mozambique, is relevant. She emphasises the necessity of developing networks of excellence between academics from the South and the North, which have to go further than only sharing of knowledge but should work towards common research agendas (Brito, 2005). Also, alternatives like southern academics to be deployed in northern universities to 'capacity build' northern academics could be studied. As a start, southern PhD candidates staying temporarily in northern universities could be asked to contribute in this respect.

We opened quoting the World Bank definition of capacity building as a *process by which individuals, organisations, and societies develop abilities to perform functions, solve problems, and set and achieve goals, premised on ownership, choice, and self-esteem* (World Bank, 2005, p. 6). Four approaches (contextualisation, social learning, interactive knowledge production and the development paradox) lead us in reviewing our capacity-building experiences at the individual, organisational and societal level. The three main lessons learned concern the primacy of the primary process, the creation of new knowledge, and the institutional realities. These lessons should guide the implementation of the premises ownership, choice and self-esteem so as to avoid them turning into vain slogans. Thus, capacity-building processes at all three levels will be enhanced from a multidimensional view. At the same time the harsh reality of the development paradox and the asymmetric relationships between the North and the South should not be concealed and should be at the forefront of discussions and reflection. Realism and openness about institutional conditions on both sides could lead to finding common ground, inside and outside the university.

2.5 Reflection with pointers on the context of partnerships and capacity development

With the question *What is the background against which meaningful lifelong learning programmes can be developed in the context of international cooperation*?, this chapter sets the scene for the context in which the main research question of this PhD project - *How can lifelong learning programmes serve groups at risk?* - will be answered. The intermezzo and the first article are both based on evaluation projects in universities. In the evaluation teams professionals from different backgrounds, stemming from the global North and the global South and from inside and outside the university worked together. This proved to be fruitful especially to conduct formative evaluation projects directed at improvement of the university programme. As the second article speaks of 'primacy of the primary process', differences in culture and history were bridged by working together, not only for the duration of the evaluation, but also preceding that evaluation. In the introduction this was phrased as 'recognition of the primacy of experiential learning'. The experiences of working together created openness to learn together. This touches on the subject of the next chapter, which will also retake the subject of the first article concerning competencies and skills required in the workplace as opposed to those learned in university. Three pointers summarise the main lessons regarding the background against which meaningful lifelong learning programmes are developed. They concern joint knowledge production, partnerships 'on the ground' and institutional responsibilities.

From capacity building to joint knowledge production

The pointers that can be derived from the two articles presented, refer in the first place to the key issues related to international cooperation and partnerships, as discussed in the introduction. The first article shows capacity building in practice: participating in a working group, carrying out joint research on the improvement of the programmes offered. The second article puts this experience in the broader framework of development cooperation (World Bank, 2005; OECD, 2006; UNDP, 2009a), comparing it with the experiences of a colleague in South Africa. This leads to new perspectives on what was then called capacity building. The concept of capacity building seems to imply a power imbalance as it presupposes a capacity builder and someone whose capacity is built. Joint knowledge production, based on cooperation in the primary process of teaching and research, offers a better starting point.

Working together towards a common goal of improving quality or implementing change facilitates social learning and the genesis of social capital, which generates commitment and can, at least temporarily, keep power imbalances under control. Still, ultimately it is the global North that draws up the agenda in international cooperation in universities, as Mendonça discusses in her PhD Thesis (2014). When it comes to joint knowledge production, the influence of power issues cannot be denied. These issues should be put on the table for a collective discussion about ways to counterbalance them.

Partnerships and gaps to be bridged

A university can have beautiful missions and strategies for playing a role in (further) developing the country on paper without really implementing them, as Mendonça remarked. She is not alone in observing a gap between policies and implementation (see also Rampedi, 2003). The gap may partly be caused by donor requirements and government obligations, which in their turn may reflect Northern dominance instead of ownership, choice and self-esteem of the development partner (World Bank, 2005). The strategy of 'window dressing' is counterproductive as problems are not openly stated, discussed, analysed, and solved. To live up to the ambitions stated, universities should produce meaningful knowledge through their research and useful graduates through their education. That is where partnerships come in, in terms of North-South cooperation and South-South cooperation, but universities should also open up to their environment, link with actors in the sectors of their research and teaching programmes to establish partnerships 'on the ground'. The latter would contribute to reducing the gap between the skills and knowledge needed and the skills and knowledge taught (see Kruss, McGrath, Peterson & Gastrow, 2015). An increasing number of people go to university, either of their own choice or as obliged by their employers, just to get a diploma without a strategy of how to use what is learned. As the Faculty of Education, discussed in the first article, was established to provide the field of education with qualified professionals (Kouwenhoven, 2003), this challenges its right to exist and prejudices the education sector.

Communities of practice and institutional responsibilities

It becomes clear that the purpose of universities is at stake in university cooperation. Who are the ultimate beneficiaries and how do they benefit? Is this about the numbers of PhDs and Masters obtained? Or is the role of the university in society at issue and the capabilities or

'functionings' (Nussbaum, 2011) of its graduates? Communities of practice as suggested by Wenger (1998) may help to overcome institutional realities. In many cases these institutional realities are limitations in the sense that the pressure to produce publications and diplomas results in inward-looking institutions, whose employees are not encouraged to look beyond the walls of the institution. The word 'practice' is very important here: the communities should be oriented towards problems as they appear in practice and involve stakeholders from practitioners to politicians to facilitate meaningful learning. In many cases, this may imply a reorientation at university level to the production of knowledge that improves the quality of living, working and learning and the training of professionals who are equipped to use this knowledge. Thus, (university) education will play its role as 'fertile functioning' (Nussbaum, 2011), creating capabilities for people to live a life of dignity (Tumuheki, Zeelen & Openjuru, 2016). Also universities have a responsibility to work towards sustainable development goal 4, as discussed in the introduction. I repeat the wording: *Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all*. 'Bowling together', as Zeelen proposes in his inaugural lecture (2015), in the sense of forming communities of practice which breach institutional limitations, is the only way to meet this goal.

Chapter 3

Meaningful lifelong learning programmes for groups at risk

Chapter 3 Meaningful lifelong learning programmes for groups at risk

3.1 Intermezzo: *I have been driving the forklift truck for 23 years without any damage! What is left to teach me?* Lifelong learning for employees in the industrial sector

The forklift driver voicing his opinion in this statement was proud of what he had achieved during his working life. Indeed, manoeuvring a forklift in between the piles of products in the logistics department of the large international company in the North of the Netherlands where he worked, should be called an accomplishment. Unfortunately for the man, the company was about to computerise his department. Forklifts were to be replaced by robot-driven vehicles in the near future. The work, of which he was so proud, was going to be redundant and he himself ran the risk of losing his job after 23 years of loyal service to the company. He was not the only one running this risk. The trade unions had been involved in negotiations and forged a deal including an Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL) procedure for the employees of the company. Through this procedure the knowledge and skills gained by the forklift driver and his colleagues would be assessed and awarded a certificate which would in its turn facilitate the entrance to (formal) education to acquire the knowledge and skills needed in the light of the technological innovations.

During the assessment process it turned out that many employees had great difficulty in compiling an experience profile in the software programme used by the assessor. Some of them were not able to read short texts nor write about themselves. The assessors had to invest a lot of time assisting these employees. In the end, most of the lesser educated people were given an experience certificate indicating that their level was below the basic qualification level. *They have only learned one trick* was the illustrative remark about this harsh reality in one of the Dutch newspapers at the time (Van den Breemer, 2010, translation by the authors). The employees uttered different comments on the procedure (Van der Linden, Burema & Renting, 2010). Experience outside the workplace was not taken into account: *They did not look at my hobbies. My work as a treasurer was not reflected in the assessment report*. Workplace visits, although promised, did not take place: *I could not show my performance in practice.* The human resource officer of the company also criticised the procedure as school-oriented instead of work-oriented meaning that the assessors viewed the employees as potential students rather than skilled workers.

Surprisingly, most of the workers appreciated the assessment: *It clarifies where I am now*, one of them said. The project manager observed: *They appreciate the opportunity to talk about themselves and the attention given to their personal development*. Some welcomed the chance they got: *Further training is beneficial. There are not many chances for us anymore. We should grab the opportunities the organisation offers*, stated one of them. And another one commented on his colleagues, relating:

> There is a lot of anxiety on the shop-floor. My slogan is: Do your best. Try to get where you can get. I am positive about the APEL process. I think it is a chance for everybody. I am interested in ICT and computerisation and am happy that I am already working in this area. I am willing to participate in a short training or course to grow with the company as an employee in logistics. I would like to quit shift work. It is too hard on me and on my body.

As a consequence of this experience, the organisation responsible for the process, decided to adopt the following procedure: people whose experience profile would lead to a qualification below basic level would be given advice on further education/training before engaging in the APEL procedure.

3.2   Introduction to the articles in this chapter

The experience discussed in the intermezzo precedes a lifelong learning programme which will only start after completion of the APEL procedure. It is not so much about lifelong learning programmes as about the conditions for these programmes. Still, it tells us a lot about the circumstances in which lifelong learning programmes are offered. Many lifelong learning programmes focus on work and employability. They serve to ensure employers of a labour force with the right knowledge and skills to be of use to them. Borg & Mayo (2005, p. 215) speak of *a strategy that ensures the availability of an 'army of workers' that is constantly updating itself*. That is not against the interests of the employees as the example shows, but it is a limited focus (Glastra & Meijers, 2000). The example also reveals how difficult it is to attract the people who most need learning to actually engage in it. Mostly, previous school experience and shame about not having succeeded earlier, play a role (Van der Kamp, 2000a; Illeris, 2006). The idea of Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL) is that it contributes to levelling the threshold to lifelong learning for lesser-qualified people through certification of the skills and knowledge gained in practice, such as 23 years of damage-free driving. The certificate would enable people to show evidence of their competencies in order to (re)enter education (or the labour market) smoothly. The example shows that there is still a

long way to go before this will really work smoothly. This example can be qualified as reflecting the 'Western' or 'Northern' reality in which the need to learn is imposed on employees; they can consider themselves lucky because there is a trades union that has spent time and claimed money to invest in them and convince them of the importance of further education. It highlights the challenge to organise appropriate lifelong learning programmes for lesser educated or 'low-skilled' people as Illeris (2006) calls them. In different guises, this challenge also exists in countries in the 'global South', where the imposed need to learn is also felt. That is why I use this example to pave the way for two articles containing material to reflect on the question: W*hich factors play a role in the development of meaningful lifelong learning programmes oriented towards the multiple needs of the learners?*

The first article is about the development of appropriate and sustainable literacy and non-formal education programmes for adults in the Mozambican context. The article is based on research into the perceptions of literacy and on an evaluation of non-formal vocational education programmes accompanying literacy programmes. The combination of the two studies allowed the writers to confront the perceptions of literacy learners on the importance of literacy and learning in general with the (learning) experiences in the non-formal education programmes. The article discusses two key questions that also play a role in the example on lifelong learning in the Netherlands: the first one is related to the content of such programmes and the second one to their implementation. The issue at stake in the Netherlands and also in Mozambique is how school-oriented these programmes should be. In the example, the basic qualification yardstick used to assess prior experiential learning is derived from the Dutch school curriculum. The literacy level of adult learners is measured against the Mozambican school curriculum. Are the programmes meant to make up for shortcomings by compensating for chances lost during schooling or should lifelong learning programmes serve the participants in another way? Although the studies on which the article is based are conducted in 2005 (Van der Linden & Manuel, 2006; Van der Linden & Rungo, 2006), Nussy in the volume recently compiled by McCowan and Unterhalter (2015) mentions the same issue as a point of discussion in adult education. Powerful learning environments are needed consisting of a creative combination of formal and non-formal learning (Van der Kamp & Toren, 2003). Foundation skills like reading and writing should not be overlooked but combined with vocational and transferable (generic) skills to allow for social progress of the groups at risk (UNESCO, 2015).

The second issue is about the teaching strategies and the teachers implementing the programmes. In the non-formal education programmes in Mozambique student-centred approaches were used in the courses, but they were limited to the classroom. The full potential of the learners was not used, as the article will show. As for the professionals involved, in the example from the Netherlands they tried to help the employees as much as possible within the boundaries of their assignment. Also, the Mozambican non-formal education teachers were clearly dedicated, yet their potential was hardly tapped into or acknowledged. One may suppose it is not for lack of goodwill that they use the methods they know from their own schooling experience, but for lack of skills and lack of materials. Nussy (2015) refers to Freire who, in 1970, already criticised education for considering students as 'empty vessels', which the teacher fills with predefined knowledge (Freire, 1970). Instead, students and teachers should both be learning. This calls for other conditions than those currently available. Alzira Manuel, co-author of the article and currently conducting research on vocational education programmes for adults in and around Maputo, testifies that the issue is still valid. She stresses that not only is the learning content taken from formal schools, but also the teaching approach. The experience of adults is not taken seriously:

> The teachers read out the book for the participants to copy the information into their notebook. Even in vocational courses on car mechanics and refrigerator repair theory prevails over practice. (Interview, October 2014).

One wonders what knowledge and skills will be learned in this way and what will be the effect on self-esteem and independent thinking. *Non-formal education courses should be more participative and more student-centred*, Manuel states.

The second article also touches on the issue of appropriate educational programmes in situations in which one cannot refer to ready-made schooling programmes developed on the basis of long traditions. Where the context of Mozambique demanded clever solutions to the educational deficit, more than a decade after the General Peace Agreement of 1992; the situation in South Sudan which only gained its independence from Sudan in 2011, requires them even more. The educational sector had to be built from scratch after the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in 2005. There were no trained teachers, there was no infrastructure, there was no curriculum; only some *islands of education* were left (Sommers, 2005; Lako, Van der Linden & Deng, 2010). The article looks into the attempts to rebuild the educational sector from the angle of the contributions made by members of the South Sudanese diaspora. Generally spoken, members of the diaspora managed to gain a better education than their

compatriots who stayed behind. That is why they are sometimes promoted as the much needed professionals who will rebuild the educational sector or as preeminent capacity developers because of their global knowledge (Newland, 2004; Ionescu, 2006; DRCMGP, 2009). Still, they face many difficulties, when they (re)enter their country of origin. This reflects how volatile the infrastructure still is, in terms of material resources but also in terms of conflicts playing a role under the surface. The latter became clear in December 2013 when armed conflicts between rivalling tribes destroyed the little that had been rebuilt. The article follows the progress in the establishment of three projects which, in terms of content, range from formal education to education combined with housing and non-formal education. One project, based in the relatively safe environment of northwestern Uganda where many South Sudanese fled, focuses on vocational training for youth and adults. This project succeeded in tapping into local resources and implementing short vocational courses related to local needs. It will be discussed in more detail in chapter 4.

Reflection on the two articles combined with the intermezzo taken from the Dutch context will lead to 'pointers' highlighting the factors playing a role in the development of meaningful lifelong learning programmes oriented towards the multiple needs of the learners (the second sub-question). The pointers will be incorporated into the answers to the main research question of this PhD project: *How can lifelong learning programmes serve groups at risk?*

3.3   Beyond literacy: non-formal education programmes for adults in Mozambique[4]

Abstract

Thirty-five years after independence the Mozambican illiteracy rate has been reduced from 93% to just over 50% according to official statistics. Although this indicates an enormous achievement in the area of education, the challenge of today still is to design appropriate adult basic education programmes including literacy, numeracy and life skills. Studies carried out in the framework of the research programme of the Adult Education Department of Eduardo Mondlane University in Mozambique reveal the dilemmas encountered in designing such programmes. By uncovering these dilemmas this article aims to display critical issues regarding the content and the implementation of literacy and non-formal education programmes for adults relevant to their context. As the Mozambican research programme was part of a cooperation with universities in South Africa and the Netherlands, the issues will be discussed against the background of this international cooperation.

Introduction

Before, being the son of a poor family, you just worked on your 'machamba' (land) and did not need to study, but nowadays, if you do not study, you do not find work.

A young man in Marracuene, a rural area in Mozambique, speaks about the need to study and find a job instead of working on the land as his ancestors used to do (Rungo, 2004). The statement reflects the social and economic changes in Mozambique in the last decades. On the one hand it shows comprehension of these changes and the new requirements; on the other hand it also points to the belief that education will automatically lead to a salaried job. It is one of the many statements collected in the framework of the research programme of the Adult Education Department of the Eduardo Mondlane University in Mozambique. This research programme was set up in collaboration with the Adult Education Departments of the University of the North (now known as the University of Limpopo) in South Africa and the University of Groningen in the Netherlands.

This article discusses the development of appropriate and sustainable literacy and non-formal education programmes for adults in the Mozambican context. It will concentrate

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on two aspects: the content of such programmes and their implementation. We will start by briefly discussing the research programme, its short history, the cooperation with South Africa and the Netherlands and the involvement of the authors. This will be followed by a review of relevant literature on literacy, education and development to build a framework for discussing the Mozambican research in relation to the South African and Dutch. The state of the art of adult basic education policies and programmes in Mozambique will be described to contextualise the research and its findings. Then two studies will be discussed as examples of the research carried out by the Mozambican adult education department: one on perceptions of literacy and one on non-formal education programmes. Finally, the dilemmas encountered in the two studies will be highlighted against the background of the studies carried out in the framework of the other research programmes. This will lead to the identification of critical issues in relation to both the content and the implementation of the programmes.

Collaborating adult education departments

In December 2001 the University of Groningen hosted a seminar under the title 'Lifelong Learning in Southern Africa: research, policies and cooperation' (Boele van Hensbroek & Schoenmakers, 2004). The seminar took stock of the cooperation of the University of Groningen with the University of the North (currently: University of Limpopo) in South Africa and Eduardo Mondlane University in Mozambique. The cooperation started around a decade before, but its focus had only recently shifted to staff development for lifelong learning. Dutch Master students had carried out research in South Africa and Mozambique and a visiting professor was seconded to the University of the North to lead the newly created adult education department there. The adult education departments of both the University of the North and the University of Groningen supported the preparation of a Master programme on adult education in Mozambique. The first batch of Master students started in August 2001. Alzira Munguambe Manuel (one of the authors of this article) was one of these students; Josje van der Linden (the other author) moved to Maputo in 2002 to support the implementation of the Master programme as a lecturer (Zeelen & Van der Linden, 2009). After finishing her Master thesis Alzira joined the department as a lecturer for teaching and research. Josje left Mozambique in 2006, but still continues the cooperation from her post in the University of Groningen.

The three departments aimed to contribute to the development of appropriate and sustainable adult learning programmes in their respective context and oriented their research programmes to this end. Professor van der Kamp in the Netherlands focused on revealing the rhetoric of the lifelong learning debate, in which groups at risk were not taken into account (Van der Kamp, 2000a). Professor Zeelen led a research programme under the title 'From social exclusion to lifelong learning' in the University of the North, situated in a former homeland, a historically disadvantaged area in South Africa (Zeelen, 2004). Mozambique was still rising from the ashes of armed conflicts that destroyed the public sector as Waterhouse (1996) described it. Governmental adult learning programmes focused on literacy, but the adult education department tried to go beyond that, following a needs assessment describing different forms of adult education in the country (Smulders, 2004). Action and intervention research approaches were adopted to make sure the research would contribute to the practices of adult educators in the context (Van der Linden & Zeelen, 2008). The Mozambican department benefitted from several visits from South Africa and the Netherlands to strengthen the development of a coherent research approach.

Literacy, non-formal education and development

Many adult educators were relieved when the World Conference on Education For All in Jomtien (WCEFA, 1990) included youths and adults in their vision on education. The participants of this conference agreed to seven areas of basic learning needs for children, as well as youths and adults: surviving, developing one's full capacities, living and working in dignity, participating fully in development, improving the quality of life, making informed decisions and continuing to learn. The specific patterns of actual learning needs may vary with context and time. It is to this listing of learning needs that Torres (2003) refers, when she promotes an expanded vision on literacy and adult basic education. Adult learners should be enabled to satisfy and develop their basic learning needs, which are functional to their context. Also Lind (2002), who has extensive experience in Mozambique, elaborates on this formulation of the learning needs.

The wish to satisfy basic learning needs leads to the question of what kind of programmes will serve to do this. Van der Kamp (2004) and Zeelen (2004) warn for a 'schoolish' approach in which adults are taught as if they are in primary school. Adults need a different approach and a different learning content. On a similar note, Street (1984) outlines an 'autonomous' model of literacy, in which literacy is regarded as a simple set

of technical skills, related to a certain level of formal education. His counteroffer is an 'ideological' model of literacy, which contends the existence of different literacies functioning in concrete social practices and embedded in specific contexts. Street's approach has led to many interesting ethnographic studies describing various social practices, in which literacy is involved (Barton, Hamilton & Ivanič, 2000; Street, 2001; Robinson-Pant, 2004; Bartlett, 2010). Equally interesting is a study on Mozambican local languages by Draisma (2005), in which he discusses how counting in those languages (up to the number five and from five onwards) can support children's learning processes in numeracy.

Kanyandago (2010) raises this perspective discussing school-based education as opposed to community-based education in Uganda. He argues that school-based education, introduced by the colonisers, does not recognise and even suppresses community-based education. As a result school-based education lacks relevance for the learners, frustrates learners and wastes their resources, whereas community-based education connects to life in the communities and values African languages and cultures. Kanyandago does not plead to eradicate school-based education, but to 'endogenise' it, meaning that education should be influenced by the values and experiences of the beneficiaries to improve the livelihoods in the communities.

The foregoing makes it interesting to have a look at the concept of non-formal education (NFE). Will this offer a solution in our search for a non-school-like approach to adult basic education fulfilling the basic learning needs and honouring existing experiences and competencies? Well known is the definition of non-formal education by Coombs and Ahmed (1974) in their study for the World Bank:

> Any organised, educational activity carried on outside the framework of the formal sys- tem to provide selected types of learning to particular subgroups in the population, adults as well as children (p. 8).

Thus defined, non-formal education is defined as opposed to formal education. Preece (2009b) also discusses this phenomenon:

> Its practice has often been characterised by what formal education was not. So, words like flexibility, informal, part-time, learner-led curriculum are often associated with NFE, though these terms are nowadays frequently employed as best practice in formal education (p. 3).

Non-formal education seems to have everything that formal education does not have, but should have. This makes the distinction between the two unclear (see also Blaak 2010).

Noticing the confusion about formal and non-formal education, Rogers (2004) proposes a continuum starting from formal education through non-formal and participatory education to informal learning. This positions non-formal education closer to the learning process of the participants than to the institutional system. In this line, the term does not only refer to the organisational lay out, but also to the learning content (see also Rogers, 2010). Without solving the definition problem, but opening up for different forms and content of learning, Van der Kamp and Toren (2003) speak of creative combinations of formal, non-formal and informal learning programmes for groups at risk. Crucial is the way in which these programmes succeed in creating a powerful learning environment for low-educated adults, who often have a negative attitude towards (classical) forms of learning. The current debate in the United Kingdom about embedded literacy and numeracy also reflects the anxiety to create appropriate learning environments for groups at risk (see, for example, Casey et al., 2006).

After discussing literacy and non-formal education, we turn to the developing context and the concept of 'development'. Is there an 'autonomous' model of development, just as there is an 'autonomous' model of literacy, as Rogers suggests (in Street, 2001)? This would mean that development is something alien to the context of the learners, dominated by Western values. In a later publication about lifelong learning, Rogers (2006) discerns two paradigms: the deficit paradigm (in simple words: people lack education) and the disadvantaged paradigm (again in simple words: the system lacks opportunities for the people to get educated). He promotes a third paradigm to accommodate both: the diversity paradigm. Lifelong learning should create the space for others to be and act differently, according to Rogers.

In our view, this links to freedom as a social commitment, which Sen (1999) propagates. The freedom to be different presupposes space and agency. This is only possible if a person is capable of relating to the surrounding world, which may be dominant and oppressive, but exists as a reality. Sen claims that human capabilities play a crucial role in development. Human capabilities are broader than human capital, which serves as a skilled workforce. Human capabilities could *help us to lead longer, freer and more fruitful lives, in addition to the role they have in promoting productivity or economic growth or individual incomes* (p. 295). Education should contribute to the development of human capabilities and thus serve both productivity and individual freedom of individuals and communities.

Decades before, Paulo Freire, a well-known authority of adult education, stated that only a certain type of education would lead to freedom. Freire views the education introduced by the colonisers as *banking* education, which reduces the role of the learners to receiving, filling and storing deposits (Freire 1970, p. 53). Contrary to this, Freire proposes education in which:

> people develop their power to perceive critically the way they exist in the world with which and in which they find themselves; they come to see the world not as a static reality, but as a reality in process, in transformation (p. 64).

Freire has noticed the lack of confidence of many low-educated adults and he stresses the importance of them perceiving themselves as actors in the surrounding world. This is the only way in which change can be sustainable. Without having solved the question of the definition once and for all, we have developed a framework, built on theories of literacy, non-formal education and development. Equipped with this framework we will have another look at our central question and the two aspects we want to elaborate on. The central question is about the development of appropriate and sustainable literacy and non-formal education programmes for adults in the Mozambican context. In terms of content we have seen the importance of linking with existing competencies, without denying power issues in the surrounding world. In terms of implementation, we have seen the importance of agency and involvement of the learners themselves. We will continue depicting the Mozambican context regarding adult education.

Adult and non-formal education in Mozambique

At the proclamation of independence in 1975, Mozambique was left with a very high illiteracy rate among adults due to the limited access to education during the Portuguese colonisation. As a result of literacy campaigns combined with the massive growth of primary education, the illiteracy rate dropped from 93% in 1975 to 72% in 1980. This rate is calculated based on pass rates for the exam taken after three years of the official Adult Education curriculum. Although it may be considered a weak base to judge the relevance and use of literacy skills, it does indicate an enormous improvement. Sadly, the trend came to a halt in the 1980s. There was a significant reduction of adult education activities, mainly due to the destabilising effects of the armed conflicts in the country. A study evaluating the literacy programmes (INDE, 2000) revealed other factors leading to the dropout of participants like the language of instruction, the strict timetables and the school-oriented approach of the

programmes (see also Lind, 1988). The study presented a proposal to introduce more flexible courses in local languages, clearly related to the social economic circumstances of the participants. Unfortunately, in the structural readjustment programmes imposed by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund in 1987, adult education and literacy lost political priority and there was no budget for the proposed courses (Mário, 2002).

Only years later, after the signing of the peace agreements in 1992 and the first democratic elections in 1994, literacy was again considered as an indispensable instrument for the economic and social development of the country and initiatives were taken to revitalise the adult education sector (Mário & Nandja 2006; Van der Linden & Rungo, 2006). The infrastructure with literacy classes in all the districts with facilitators and supervisors was re-established. Also, non-governmental organisations and members of civil society intensified their efforts. A new literacy curriculum, in which besides literacy, numeracy and life skills were included, was developed and presented (DNAEA, 2003). This curriculum maintains the equivalence with the formal school curriculum, but creates space besides that for a more flexible approach adapted to the needs of learners. The term 'Adult' and 'Non-Formal Education' (NFE) came into use with the following definition of NFE:

> Each type of educational activity, based on the needs of a certain group, organised and implemented outside the formal educational system. It differs from formal education in terms of flexibility in time and place and of the adaptation of the learning content for the group concerned (p. 41).

This definition conforms to the one by Coombs and Ahmed (1974). It shows how the curriculum designers tried to meet former criticisms about adult literacy programmes being too much school-oriented and inflexible.

To promote the implementation of the curriculum including non-formal education adapted to the needs of adults, pilot non-formal education courses for literacy learners were introduced in some provinces with the support of the German development organisation GTZ (see Van der Linden & Manuel, 2006; Lind et al., 2008; Manuel, 2008). The courses were evaluated and continued, but stopped in 2007. The most recent census of 2007 indicated that the illiteracy rate is down to 50.4% (INE, 2009). Still, the implementation of sustainable and appropriate adult education programmes, including literacy and numeracy as well as life skills is not yet completed. The struggle to define the concepts of literacy and non-formal education appropriate to the developing context is reflected in the Mozambican practice. Policies are formulated. A curriculum is there. There

are training programmes for adult educators and supervisors. But the practice is fragmented. The adult education department of Eduardo Mondlane University carried out several studies and seminars to support the design, implementation and evaluation of policies and programmes. In the following we will discuss two of the studies as examples to identify central issues for the way forward.

Perceptions of literacy programmes

The first study to be discussed focused on 'Perceptions of Literacy Programmes' (Van der Linden & Rungo, 2006). This study was set up to explore the differences in perception between adults who participate in literacy programmes and those who would need to do so, but do not. We called the latter 'potential' participants. The objectives were to:

- identify the perceptions of participants in literacy programmes;
- identify the perceptions of potential participants in literacy programmes;
- analyse the differences between participants and potential participants in relation to gender;
- formulate recommendations to increase the access to the literacy programmes.

The idea was that more insight in the perceptions would help to understand the reasons why people join literacy classes or why they do not do this. The study was carried out in 2003 by two Master students, who were also practitioners in the field, and Josje van der Linden (one of the authors of this article). The subject of the study and the wish of the researchers to contribute to the actual practice of literacy programmes called for a participatory research design. Semi-structured interviews, observations of literacy classes and feedback sessions, in close collaboration with local authorities and workers, were the main techniques used. A total of 112 semi-structured interviews have been held with participants and potential participants, both men and women, in the provinces of Maputo (including the capital Maputo itself) and in Nampula in the North. Three areas were selected in both provinces. These were an urban, a semi-urban and a rural area. In each area about 10 interviews were held with participants and, when possible, also with potential participants. Participants were found in governmental adult education centres. Potential participants were found through local leaders, via participants and just by asking around at the local market. Surprisingly it was not that difficult to find potential participants. It proved to be more difficult to find men, especially in the role of potential participants. When people

could not speak Portuguese, they were interviewed in their mother tongue. In the Province of Maputo two of the researchers could do this. In Nampula Province we got help from Adult Education students and district officers.

In both provinces a preliminary content analysis of the interview results and observations has been presented and further elaborated in a feedback session. In Nampula this session was held in the university, where students, teachers and literacy workers gathered to discuss the results and comment on them. In Maputo Province the session was organised in the village of Marracuene. Officials, literacy teachers and community leaders, working in literacy programmes were invited to attend and indeed appeared to give their opinion in a very lively session. These sessions provided an opportunity to check the validity of the results and to explore recommendations for improvement of the programmes and of the access. Also, they gave us more insight in the ambitions and working conditions of the professionals.

The findings of the perceptions study show four categories why literacy is important in the eyes of the participants: actual family life, increasing family income, participation in society and personal development. The basic learning needs defined in Jomtien (WCEFA, 1990) have been clustered into these categories. Unless otherwise indicated, the quotations are taken from the perceptions study (Van der Linden & Rungo, 2006). Actual family life is the first issue that appears when talking about the importance of literacy, mainly in the answers of women, but also in those of men. The interviewees say that *literacy helps to understand things of life* and to *solve problems of daily life*. They give examples like: understanding children's homework, speaking with the teacher of the children, speaking with the doctor, writing one's name, reading and writing letters, reading the destination of the bus, and checking change in the market. *In the past I was ashamed, when I had to sign something, now I already know how to write my name* said a woman in Maputo City. Near to the answers related to actual family life come those that speak about increasing family income. In general, this is about *having a better life*, *quitting poverty* and *stopping the suffering* in the words of the interviewees. They mention different strategies to realise this: by getting a job (*work in an office*), by improving business (*check the weight of my products when I am selling them*) or by increasing the quality and quantity of products to be sold (*know new production and cultivation techniques to make good use of what the community has* (Rungo, 2004).

Participation in society is the third category. Literacy is important to *understand what the others say*. As the others are those who do not speak the same maternal language,

this communication wish refers to the Portuguese language. The participants of literacy classes have ambitions: they want to *teach others*, *explain to others*, *help others*, *solve social problems* and *help to fight crime*. In Nampula people literally speak about the wish to be 'somebody', which means as much as being respected, being listened to, being valued: *Literacy is important to be somebody* (woman in a market). The fourth category of answers has to do with personal development in a broader sense. Interviewees spoke about *learning new things*, *having knowledge of the things one does*, and *increasing my level of knowledge, even if I do not manage to get a job*. A female participant in Nampula said: *Literacy is opening the mind of people, who for a long time have been living isolated*. A link with the previous category appears: the literacy learners want to be part of the actual knowledge society. A woman selling vegetables on one of the large markets of Maputo plainly said: *The world of today is full of uncertainties. Without studying one will die of poverty.* This woman showed insight in the knowledge society, of which she is part, and in the necessity of staying updated. *Someone who knows how to read and write, does not need help*, said one of the participants in Marracuene, summarising the ideas of many others (Rungo, 2004).

Strikingly, the perceptions of participants and potential participants did not differ much. There are small differences between women and men. In the interviews women show more concern with family life and child care, which in a way restricts their world, while men are more mobile in their quest to earn a living. The finding that the perceptions of participants and potential participants are similar, made us wonder what causes the potential participants not to attend. What are the barriers to participation? We found factors like the economic situation, the social environment, but also school itself and factors internal to the person creating barriers to attend classes. A young woman in the market of Maputo said: *all my time is occupied looking for something to sustain my family*. Also, there are people, who think that studying is for children and that older people have old brains in which new things hardly enter: *I do not want to participate, I cannot learn any more* (woman, Maputo). There were cases in which men did not allow their wives to attend classes. We understood this from answers like: *my ex-husband did not want me to go.* As for men, it seems that a classroom full of women prevents them from attending. A young male participant in Nampula said he knew many others who could not read and write, but *they feel ashamed*.

At the same time there are people who overcome these difficulties: *I was not sure of myself. I did not know what to do in school at my age, but now I know, I can read and write* (woman, Maputo Province). A helpful environment makes all the difference. Participants, especially women, speak with pride of their husbands and children, who help them: *My children help me, explain my homework and remind me when it is time to go to class*. We witnessed elderly women, determined to learn to read and write, even when it took them weeks only to write their name.

For us, the findings from the field were revealing about the ambitions and dreams of the low-educated adults and about the barriers they had to conquer. On the one hand, without mentioning the term, they described their situation as a situation of social exclusion. On the other hand, they also seem to overrate the role of education in improving their living conditions like the young man in the beginning of this article who wants to find a salaried job instead of working on the field. In Street's words (1984) they think within an 'autonomous' model of literacy, which hardly connects to the life they are leading at the moment. We can imagine that the fact that the inter- views were held by Master students from Maputo, influenced the way people expressed themselves. Further study including ethnographic observations, could reveal how people relate to literacy in their everyday life. Still, that does not take away that there is some truth in their observation of school-based education, including Portuguese as the language of communication, as a tool of exclusion.

Following the suggestions of the participants and our own critical evaluations, we plead for an approach in which the needs as perceived by the participants and potential participants are the starting point to negotiate a creative combination of formal, non-formal and informal learning in a powerful learning environment for both women and men (Van der Kamp & Toren, 2003; Van der Linden & Rungo, 2006; Modiba & Zeelen, 2007). The concept of gender should not be misinterpreted and just focus on women, whereas men also need basic education (Borges Månsson, 1995; Lind 2008). The South African research programme also looked at ways to improve the participation of men in adult education classes (Zeelen, 2004). The new adult education curriculum (DNAEA, 2003) is in line with these views as it combines basic education skills with a needs orientation. So, we were happy, when in 2005, a year after finishing the perceptions study, the department was asked to evaluate pilot courses in the implementation of the new curriculum. This will be the second study to be discussed.

Implementing non-formal education programmes for adults

The second study to be discussed is about pilot non-formal education NFE programmes, which offered vocational skills to literacy learners, in the framework of the implementation of the new curriculum. In 2005 the authors of this article were asked to carry out a formative evaluation before the format would be rolled out in more locations (Van der Linden & Manuel, 2006). Interesting for this article is how the findings may help in designing appropriate adult learning programmes regarding content and implementation. In line with the previous study we could evaluate whether these programmes meet the needs of the learners as perceived by themselves and whether they constitute a learning environment which helps to overcome the barriers to participation.

The objective of the pilot projects was to identify learners' needs and available resources in the area of NFE in the provinces in order to design training programmes for self-employment and the labour market for the target group, consisting of youth and adults with low educational level. The evaluation included a broad variety of issues including the learning content of the courses, the logistical and organisational arrangements, the effectiveness of the learning, the effectiveness of the project management, the cost effectiveness of the courses, and the capacity of the Ministry of Education and Culture at national and provincial level. It took place at the time when the majority of the participants already developed the activities, for which they were trained. To conduct as much as possible a participatory evaluation the participants, literacy trainers, trainers and project managers have been interviewed, meetings and interviews have been arranged with provincial and district government officials, and the sites where the projects were conducted, have been visited. Semi-structured individual and group interviews allowed for a more profound analysis of data, especially regarding opinions and feelings of the people involved. The results obtained through triangulation of the data have been analysed and discussed in a workshop in the capital of Mozambique, Maputo, attended by district officers and policy makers of the government.

The topics for the pilot courses have been chosen, based on the results of a participative diagnosis. In the coastal province of Inhambane organic horticulture was chosen to support people in their struggle for family subsistence and also produce for the market. In Sofala province, which is a transit area with a lot of building activities, construction was the topic, and in Manica province, near the Zimbabwe border, it was small business. The format for each course was the same: two to three weeks training of trainers, directly

followed by three to six weeks training of literacy learners in adult education centres, six weeks being necessary for organic horticulture to allow the crops to grow. In the summer and autumn of 2005, a training of trainers courses was conducted in each province. After that, a total of eight pilot courses (three on organic horticulture, two on construction and three on small business) have been carried out with a total of 145 participants. All of the participants were literacy learners, 103 of them women and 42 men. With some minor difficulties the organisation ran smoothly, the training process being continuously accompanied by district and provincial officers, who used mechanisms like observation, questionnaires and interviews.

Referring to the content of both the training of trainers and the courses, participants and trainers were generally satisfied. It seems that the right topics were selected according to the reality of each province and district. Most of the participants were familiar with the activities they were trained for. They had a clear idea about their learning needs: *we had an idea of trading, but we did not have knowledge: how to go about buying and selling, how to serve the clients, how to deal with competition, how to offer a product with quality* (participant small business). The necessary resources, especially for horticulture and small business, are easily at hand. Regarding construction, this was a bit more complicated, due to the use of a brick-making machine and cement. The courses consisted of a combination of theory and practice, allowing the participants to really acquire the skills taught. The theory was supported by images, games, exercises and, when necessary, by explication in local language. The learners themselves confirmed that they learned a lot that was useful to them: *We learned a lot. When an engineer appears, we can work with him* (participant construction).

So far, we might conclude that the courses met the needs of the participants and succeeded in creating a powerful learning environment. Some answers given by participants made us suspicious though. It turned out that almost all of the participants looked at themselves as being dependent on others to offer them a job or funds to start a business, and in general to create opportunities for them: *We are still waiting to receive our 'enxada'* (hoe) (participant horticulture), *The association should start building and give us work* (participants construction), and *We do not have the money to start a real business* (participant small business). We wondered where the ambition which the participants showed in the perceptions study, had gone. In spite of the objective of self-employment, the whole exercise seemed to encourage an attitude of dependency instead of

entrepreneurship. Illustrative is that the boards of the associations established to take care of the brick-making machines consisted of the head of the school and local government officials without any representative of the course participants.

In conclusion, this study taught us some lessons about the development and implementation of adult learning programmes, adapted to the needs of the learners, but at the same time discouraging their own initiative. The whole process, which started so participatory, turned into a top-down one, where many opportunities to involve local actors, both governmental and non-governmental, were lost. Striking is what happened afterwards. To benefit from the expenses already made for the production of materials and training of trainers, the pilot courses were repeated and expanded to other provinces during 2006 and 2007. They were renamed 'professionalising' non-formal education courses, but they had basically the same content. A total of nearly 1000 (952) participants in six provinces was reached. Again an evaluation was carried out by the Adult Education department of Eduardo Mondlane University. The conclusion was that continuation under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education and Culture was not feasible because of high costs and required teacher capacity. The recommendation was to cooperate with institutions and organisations equipped for this kind of training (Manuel, 2008; Lind et al., 2008).

Challenges concerning content and implementation of adult basic learning programmes

The central question of this article was how to develop appropriate and sustainable literacy and non-formal education programmes for adults in the Mozambican context. The theoretical framework already showed there is no easy answer to this question. Research on policies and practices in Mozambique reveals the struggle from another perspective. We think there are two main issues to be taken into account when designing adult basic education programmes, which support learners to improve their livelihoods. They derive from the above description complemented with experiences in South Africa and the Netherlands.

The first issue relates to the content of these programmes. The dominant approach seems to be 'autonomous' in the sense that it is deducted from school instead of connecting with experiences and competencies of (low-educated) adults. Opposed to this

approach there is an approach based on the learning that takes place in communities, trying to value local (literacy) practices. The dilemma is which approach to use. The introduction of non-formal education programmes for literacy learners in Mozambique can be seen as an attempt to overcome this dilemma by reconciling the two approaches. School-based skills like literacy and numeracy are complemented with components based on the needs of the learners. Conversations with the learners, however, make us doubt if they see it that way. They seem to be drawn into the dominant approach, in which the content of educational programmes is not related to them, and the organisational lay-out of the programme does not encourage them to change their attitude. In a previous study Manuel (2004) concluded that empowerment of the participants should be a component of the learning programme.

Research in South Africa and the Netherlands shows similar deliberations. The term 'shadow-schooling' is used to criticise adult learning programmes that are pale shadows of formal school programmes. The South African colleagues developed the concept of needs-oriented programmes to counter this (Zeelen, 2004; Modiba & Zeelen, 2007). In the Netherlands most low-educated adults have developed a negative attitude towards school, particularly because their efforts did not get any recognition in school. So, learning programmes for them should not look like school at all. They have to be convinced to join powerful learning environments, which value the competencies they gained outside formal education as Van der Kamp and Toren (2003) explain. Perhaps, the small business course, which tries to 'sophisticate' the way in which people already engage in small business, is nearest to a conciliation of the two approaches. Also, Draisma's (2005) analysis of local numeracy practices leads to interesting options for numeracy education. It seems there is not a final solution to the question. The challenge is to carefully balance school demands and learners' needs taking into account the characteristics of the learners and the context.

The second issue relates to the implementation of adult learning programmes. The Mozambican reality shows officially formulated strategies, policies and even a curriculum. The implementation, however, lags behind. The study of Rampedi (2003) enlists many so-called South African 'white papers', in which promising policies and strategies are defined. But also there, the implementation still fails. In the Netherlands Van der Kamp (2000a) speaks of the 'rhetoric' of lifelong learning, meaning that the debate on lifelong learning passes over the problems of low-educated adults in silence. Of course implementation problems are often

related to the allocation of a budget and human resources. But we would like to add to this. Firstly, in line with the first issue discussed, the courses should be a shared responsibility of the organising agency (government or otherwise) and community: from the acquisition of the materials, to the timetables and the selection of the participants. Perhaps we could learn from the examples of vocational training programmes, which are only offered to previously created associations (see Grierson & McKenzie, 1998; Skinner, 1998). Secondly, in both research studies in Mozambique we were impressed by the dedication and enthusiasm of literacy teachers, supervisors and officials at district and village level. This made us wonder why competencies and experiences of these professionals were not really valued in designing programmes and policies. The dilemma of today is how to create enough space for them to adapt programmes to local needs without over-asking them with the little schooling they have. The challenge is to develop capacity-building programmes equipping them with the necessary competencies without denying the competencies they already possess. One cannot empower the participants without empowering their teachers. In this respect Rampedi (2003) introduced the term 'bottopdown' to express the necessity of combining top-down and bottom-up approaches in partnerships between universities and adult education professionals.

Although the research studies have been conducted some years ago, our discussion of the findings still reflects the actual situation regarding adult education in Mozambique. One of the main topics in the research programme of the adult education department of Eduardo Mondlane University nowadays is the existing and required competencies of professionals in the adult education sector. The findings will contribute to the formulation of a capacity-building programme for the sector. Also, they will enrich and will be enriched by the evolving cooperation projects of the Adult Education Department (now called the Lifelong Learning Department) of the University of Groningen with universities in Eastern and Southern Africa (see Zeelen, Van der Linden, Nampota & Ngabirano, 2010). A key component of all these cooperation projects is the development of partnerships between universities, professionals and communities to improve adult education policies and practices.

3.4 The contribution of the diaspora to the reconstruction of education in South Sudan: the challenge of being involved from a distance[5]

Abstract

Conflicts all over the world result in people living in diaspora, usually maintaining strong ties with their countries of origin. As many of them are well educated and dedicated to their country, expectations of the role they can play in the development of their home country are high. This article reflects on the contribution of the South Sudanese diaspora to the reconstruction of the education system, which was badly affected by over 40 years of civil war. Theories of capacity development, human capabilities and transnationalism are used to build a framework to analyse micro-development projects in the education sector initiated by the South Sudanese diaspora. Case studies and in-depth interviews led to the identification of opportunities and challenges as experienced in these projects. The conclusion points to the need to rethink partnerships in the reconstruction of the education sector in South Sudan.

In May 2012, a picture of South Sudanese refugees (Internally Displaced Persons) travelling by boat from North to South appeared in one of the Dutch newspapers (Broere, 2012). The boat was packed with young adults, all of them male, standing upright and looking into the distance. The title of the article accompanying the picture, read: 'Better life in free South Sudan remains an empty promise after one year'. One of the reasons given was:

> Jobs are given to ex-combatants who have not received any education. Well educated youth from the diaspora have no chance and hardly contribute to the reconstruction of their country of birth' (Broere, 2012, p. 17, translation by the authors).

The news article reflects the topicality of the dynamics of diaspora involvement in the reconstruction of the education sector in South Sudan addressed in this article.

From 1955 onwards, there was a civil war between North and South Sudan, interrupted by a decade of relative peace after the Addis Ababa Peace agreement was signed in 1972. The second phase of the war lasted until 2005, when the Comprehensive Peace Agreement was signed. In July 2011, South Sudan became an independent country. Most of the children who grew up during the war missed out on an education (Lako,

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Van der Linden & Deng, 2010). As a result, recent population statistics show a literacy rate of only 27% for the population aged 15 years and above, 40% for men and an alarming 16% for women (NBS, 2012). School attendance and violent conflicts are strongly interrelated. Violent conflicts force children to leave school at an early age. And those out of the school system are easy targets for army recruitment (Deng, 2006; Angucia, 2010; Breidlid, 2010). In South Sudan, the conflict between North and South forced a great number of young people to leave their country. Some walked for hundreds of miles in an attempt to escape the violence around them. The strongest of these 'lost boys' made it to Uganda, Ethiopia, Kenya and, finally, to the USA or other Western countries (see the story of Valentino Achak Deng in Eggers, 2006, also mentioned in UNESCO, 2011b). They joined the diaspora, witnessing the independence of their country from a distance and, according to the news article cited, got hardly any chance to help in the rebuilding of their country (see also Walzer, 2008).

This article explores the phenomenon discussed in the news article from the perspective of the diaspora, focusing on the education sector. The lead question is: What opportunities and challenges do the South Sudanese diaspora meet in their efforts to contribute to the reconstruction of the educational sector in their country, and how can they be partners in developing this sector. Below, we explore the concepts of capacity development and human capabilities, while transnationalism will serve to position the diaspora as a phenomenon in a broader development perspective. We then consider the challenges and barriers for the reconstruction of the South Sudanese education system that have been identified in previous studies in the framework of the Early School Leaving in Africa Project[6] (Zeelen, Van der Linden, Nampota & Ngabirano, 2010). The research methodology and main findings will be discussed, finally leading to rethinking partnerships in the reconstruction of education in South Sudan.

Partnerships, capacity development and human capabilities

Following recent trends in development theories, local ownership, agency and human capabilities are concepts that have become the main focus in development strategies.

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[6] The Early School Leaving in Africa (ESLA) project is a joint research project of scholars from Africa and the Netherlands, carrying out research on causes, prevention and intervention strategies of early school leaving, leading to scientific publications and recommendations for policies and practices.

Capacity development is defined as, *the process by which individuals, organisations, and societies develop abilities to perform functions, solve problems, set and achieve goals over time* (UNDP 2009a, p. 5). Strong partnerships imply capacity development to enable local stakeholders to take control over their development and to absorb other technical and financial support.

Although many organisations have acknowledged the importance of capacity development, its implementation still does not seem to be leading to sustainable local capacity (OECD, 2006). In a study of best practices in capacity development, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development described lack of contextualisation as the main pitfall in implementation. The study concluded that capacity development is, *a necessarily endogenous process of unleashing, strengthening, creating and maintaining capacity over time* (p. 39). Ownership, choice and self-esteem are vital values to processes of capacity development. Discussing their experiences in southern Africa, Zeelen and Van der Linden (2009) state that contextualisation, social learning and interactive knowledge production are pre-requisites for these values.

The concept of human capabilities as presented by Sen (1999) and Nussbaum (2011) gives insight into the human capability to be an agent of development through a wide range of skills, freedom and mindsets. While Sen explains how capabilities serve individuals as well as organisations and nations, Nussbaum elaborates the importance of capabilities for each human being to lead a life worthy of human dignity. Capacity development should create and sustain capabilities in order for people to be able to organise their own development within the environment in which they live. Although capacity development is an urgent need in fragile states, the context makes it hard to implement capacity development programmes. The capacity to build on is limited, as there is little trust and social capital (Brinkerhoff, 2010; USAID, 2010). Because of their education, their experiences and their connection to their home countries, diaspora communities should be excellent partners for this type of capacity development, as is often assumed in diaspora involvement programmes (see, for example, Newland 2004; Ionescu, 2006; UNDP, 2009b; OECD, 2010; Obamba, 2013).

The diaspora, their resources and transnationalism

While the definition of diaspora can be determined by indicators such as citizenship, length of stay, feelings of identity, perceptions and trust, this article adopts Ionescu's (2006) flexible definition of diaspora: *members of ethnic and national communities, who have left, but maintain links with their homelands* (p. 13). According to Faist (2010), the concept of diaspora is commonly used to indicate *religious or national groups living outside an (imagined) homeland* and the concept of transnationalism to refer to *migrants' durable ties across countries* (p. 9). Because of their potential for social change and agency in a transforming world, Faist tried to bring together the two *awkward dance partners* (p. 9), as he called them. The edited collection 'Diaspora and Transnationalism' (Bauböck & Faist, 2010) discussed the two concepts as related but not interchangeable. Reviewing the literature (Vertovec, 2009, 2010; Bauböck & Faist, 2010; Faist, 2010; Guo, 2013), we conceive transnationalism as the social phenomenon that comes with migration and mobility, increased communication possibilities, and results in *sustained cross-border relationships, patterns of exchange, affiliations and social formations spanning nation-states* as Vertovec (2009, p. 2) puts it. The concept of diaspora can be understood as the people living the social phenomenon of transnationalism – they are agents with experiences, feelings and plans.

The position of diaspora is often characterised by their knowledge of local needs, cultural awareness and language, as well as their commitment and loyalty to their home country (Newland, 2004; Van Naerssen, Kusters & Schapendonk, 2006; Oucho, 2009). The African Diaspora Policy Centre (2008) added the unique value of their networks, accumulative experiences and insights. Ionescu (2006) summarised the different types of resources diaspora could contribute in homeland development as follows: human capital, financial and entrepreneurial capital, social capital, and affective and local capital. These different types of capital indicate the unique capabilities that the diaspora possess by virtue of their familiarity with home and host countries. Pre-eminently, they are the ones who know how to support their people in developing their capabilities. The main feature in their resources is related to their transnational background – a background of both local and global knowledge and experience. Likewise, the UNDP (2009b) report on 'Overcoming Barriers: Human Mobility and Development' stressed the gains of mobility for human development.

From a transnational point of view, migration is not a singular journey but an integral part of life, which causes the disappearance of the distinctions between home and host country, origin and destiny, sending and receiving countries. Measures for structural inclusion like legal status, voting rights, dual citizenship and free movement should support this development (Newland, 2004; Ionescu, 2006; DRCMGP, 2009). Besides structural inclusion, Ionescu (2006) also recommended symbolic inclusion, acknowledging diaspora's local grassroots knowledge. In the long term, this could lead to a globally shared cosmopolitan future (Vertovec, 2009). As this future has not materialised yet, we will continue to refer to home and host countries.

Diaspora involvement in development

Diaspora members contribute in different ways to the development of their home countries. First, and by far the most discussed type of diaspora involvement, is the transfer of financial remittances, investment and business enhancement. The influence of remittances is highly acknowledged as they constitute a major source of external capital for developing countries (Newland, 2004; Ionescu, 2006; Mohamoud, 2006; DRCMGP, 2009; Oucho, 2009). Besides financial and entrepreneurial capital, diaspora also share their human, social and local capital (Newland, 2004; Ionescu, 2006; ADPC, 2008; OECD, 2010). This means that diaspora share knowledge accumulated in their host countries with communities in home countries (OECD, 2010; Sinatti, 2012). Using their local capital, they influence role models, gender roles and demographic and familial behaviours and perceptions of successful life. Moreover, they can assist new governments in drafting treaties, agreements and constitutions (Mohamoud, 2006). To conclude, diaspora affective capital leads to contributions, not only in the home country but also in the host country, by providing a platform for promotion of their culture and advocacy (Newland, 2004; see also Diaspora Forum for Development in the Netherlands (www.d-f-d.org)). Combining the different forms of capital, many diaspora members have initiated micro-development projects, mostly targeting their home communities at the local and sub-national levels (Newland, 2004; Ionescu, 2006; Mohamoud, 2006; ADPC, 2008).

In spite of all the resources and subsequent expectations, the reality on the ground shows that not all activities fit easily into the programmes of the receiving communities. The agendas of the diaspora are not always consistent with the agendas of the population of the home country (DRCMGP, 2009). Besides failing to identify local needs, some

diaspora members lack the capacity to successfully implement projects, some of which are isolated efforts and lack a long-term strategic vision. Returning diaspora members find it hard to re-adjust to local norms, as local counterparts often have poor infrastructure, weak administrative, financial and technical capacity and sometimes show resentment to national expatriates (MPI, 2003, as cited in Ionescu, 2006; OECD 2010). Diaspora involvement is influenced by trust, which should be built up as many diaspora members suffer from feelings of suspicion, resentment, stigmatisation or even discrimination against them (Newland, 2004; Ionescu, 2006). Newland (2004) stressed that, *Diaspora communities often reproduce the divisions of class, ethnicity, religion, political affiliation, language, and region that are found in their countries of origin* (p. v). In all this, local ownership remains of paramount importance. Initiatives are usually successful when they are led by local demand, achieve observable results, are professionally organised and match the diaspora's expertise (Van Naerssen, Kusters & Schapendonk, 2006). In relation to education, UNESCO propagated the building of partnerships between private organisations and other stakeholders in the Education for All campaign to optimise the effect of private funding and activities (OECD, 2010, UNESCO, 2012).

De Haas and Rodriguez (2010) stated that concrete case studies are needed to understand how development and migration interact in particular contexts (see also De Haas, 2005, 2010; Kleist, 2008a, 2008b). This is why the focus of this article is on micro-development projects. In micro-development projects there is no personal return on investment, activities are usually small-scale and vary from short-term to organised and durable efforts (Newland, 2004). Moreover, micro-development projects reflect the different types of capital the diaspora possess (Ionescu, 2006) and provide insight into the ability and possibilities to make use of this capital. A study among migrant organisations in the Netherlands found that most of the diaspora initiated micro-projects relate to education, health and micro-economic activities reaching dozens to hundreds of people (Van Naerssen, Kusters & Schapendonk, 2006). Mohamoud (2006) established that the impact of such activities goes beyond the direct beneficiaries as they have a broader impact on peace and political stability in the homeland. In many cases these types of projects are organised by migrant organisations based in host countries, in cooperation with local counterparts in home countries. Micro-development projects are sometimes funded through partnerships with other non-governmental organisations (NGOs) or through private foundations, but overall structural funding is lacking (Van Naerssen, Kusters & Schapendonk, 2006). The progress of these projects shows how diaspora and local

partners interact and negotiate in practice and reveals the dynamics of migration and development in their context. Besides this, the case studies give insight into the educational challenges in South Sudan and the diaspora's perspective on the way forward.

Reconstructing education in South Sudan

Although the war in South Sudan ended in 2005, and independence from North Sudan was gained in 2011, access to basic education is still a considerable challenge in this new country. The General Education Strategic Plan (2012–2017) declares that its context is:

> not only challenging, it is daunting. Decades of neglect and years of civil war have left the country with a shattered infrastructure, a large diaspora of some of its best talents, and generations of youth who never had the opportunity to attend school. (Ministry of General Education and Instruction, 2012, 13)

The Education for All Global Monitoring Report for South Sudan declared that the education system in South Sudan is, *close to the bottom of the global league table for educational opportunity, especially for young girls* (UNESCO, 2011b, p. 1). While the delivery of basic services, like education, should be a peace dividend, the reality is still grim. People are re-migrating from North Sudan and neighbouring countries to South Sudan. Many young people need education and training. A total of 58% of the population in South Sudan is less than 20 years old (NBS, 2012). At the moment education is mainly provided through donors and international agencies and NGOs, which, to a great extent, fail to provide flexible solutions (UNESCO, 2011b). Yet the long-term vision of the Republic of South Sudan is to build *an educated and informed nation* by 2040 (Kiir Mayardit, 2011, p. 1).

Previous studies of the Early School Leaving in Africa project (Zeelen, Van der Linden, Nampota & Ngabirano, 2010) identified the barriers to rebuilding the educational system in South Sudan as: political barriers, poverty-related barriers, culture as a barrier to education and barriers related to the quality of education (Lako, Van der Linden & Deng, 2010; see also Sommers, 2005). The political barriers relate to the history of Sudan, where the North dominated the South and took the benefit s of its rich resources like the oil revenues. The political domination by the North is also reflected in the imposition of Arabic as the language of instruction and in a curriculum biased towards Arabic culture and history, neglecting South Sudanese history, traditions and culture

(Breidlid, 2005, 2010). Regarding poverty, Deng (2006) explains that the gaps in the development of South Sudan originate from the British colonisation before the war. These gaps contributed greatly to the neglect of education and other parental priorities being chosen (Ibrahim, 2008). Education became a less urgent priority than the short-term requirement to maintain livelihoods. Generally, boys were given priority over girls when it came to attending school. In livestock-owning communities with a semi-nomadic lifestyle, culture formed a barrier to formal education as parents preferred their children to learn informally while working (Van Beurden, 2006; see also Farag, 2012, who studied this phenomenon in Kordofan province). In spite of all this, some communities managed to maintain schools, sometimes supported by NGOs. These schools operated in a rather isolated way (Sommers, 2005) and support by NGOs was fragmented (UNESCO, 2011b).

The Global Monitoring Report on Education for All (UNESCO, 2012) drew attention to the oil-wealth of the country as a potential means for building an education system. The report identified capacity constraints as the main barrier to the expansion of the system. The priorities of the Ministry of General Education and Instruction include: promoting adult literacy, building institutional and human capacity and promoting partnerships among stakeholders (Ministry of General Education and Instruction, 2012). According to the ministry, significant emphasis is given to improving quality. Two major issues are threatening the quality of education in South Sudan: the implementation of the new curriculum and qualified teachers. Without the necessary teaching materials and teacher training, the implementation of the South Sudanese curriculum remains a big challenge and schools refer to the curriculum of neighbouring countries instead (Deng, 2006). Second, basic working conditions and low salaries are unlikely to attract trained teachers, especially in rural areas. Facing the immense challenges ahead, the education sector needs partnerships at different levels to improve the situation (NGO Forum Southern Sudan, 2009; Lako, Van der Linden & Deng, 2010; see also Bieckmann, 2012). To face capacity limitations, the Government of South Sudan (GoSS, 2011) speaks of, 'a continued effort to attract the diaspora and to train existing staff to enhance capacity' (p. xxii), thus stressing the potential of the diaspora. UNESCO (2011b) also refers to the potential of diaspora, proposing a results-oriented pooled fund to avoid fragmentation.

The concepts discussed point to three key issues for this research. First, theories on capacity development and human capabilities draw our attention to the resources of the members of the diaspora. Secondly, transnationalism builds on this and adds the

perspective of increased mobility around the world. Thirdly, the challenges of the education system make us wonder how the diaspora set their priorities and how they engage in partnerships with the government and other stakeholders.

Research into diaspora involvement in development

The aim of our research was to analyse the opportunities and challenges faced by diaspora development initiatives to contribute to the reconstruction of education in South Sudan and to reflect on ways for partnership cooperation in this sector. Studying pro-active and creative forms of diaspora involvement in the form of micro-development projects would provide insights into the day-to-day challenges of diaspora members trying to make a change. Qualitative research revealed not only the experiences of the diaspora in executing their activities, but also the ways in which they evaluate these experiences (Flick, 2006; Hennink, Hutter & Bailey, 2011).

To get an overview of the ways in which diaspora members are encouraged and received in South Sudan upon their return, we made an inventory of existing policies, practices and problems involving the diaspora in South Sudan. This was done through the study of policy documents, papers and NGO reports. To explore the perceptions and initiatives of the South Sudanese diaspora living in the Netherlands towards rebuilding education, we used participant observation, attending seminars, meetings and celebrations of the South Sudanese diaspora in the Netherlands. In this way we got to know different diaspora activities and we established contacts and trust, which enabled us to conduct in-depth interviews with active diaspora members[7]. Three micro-development projects were identified to be followed more closely by way of a tracer study. The first is still in its starting phase, the second project has considerable working experience in northern Sudan and has now moved to the South, and the third project was established some years ago in northern Uganda and has recently started working in South Sudan.

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[7] Examples of events attended by one or more of the authors are: Sudanese- Dutch family day, September 2010, organised by a group of Sudanese and Dutch people; documentary *Hinterland* on South Sudan, November 2011 in International Documentary Festival of Amsterdam; seminar on perspectives for South Sudan, March 2012 by Dutch NGO; workshops on micro-development projects, in April and July 2012 by the Diaspora Forum for Development.

The projects were chosen because of their different perspectives on education. Furthermore, it was expected that the different phases of conception and implementation would give an insight into the interaction between development and migration on the ground. In each case, semi-structured interviews with the main initiators of the projects were conducted[8]. Information from the interviews was enriched by field reports and documents to gain an in-depth view of the progress of the projects and the challenges experienced. Sharing the experiences in the three projects provided the opportunity to get an understanding of the challenges on the ground. The findings presented below mainly reflect the experiences and reflections of the diaspora in their expatriate position. An exploratory field visit to South Sudan gave a first insight into the views of the receiving development partners. The next field visit to South Sudan will add to this, leading to a more nuanced view of the interaction between diaspora and the local community, grounding the theory on migration and development in the realities as experienced (Creswell, 2007; Baarda, De Goede & Teunissen, 2009).

Initiatives to support diaspora involvement in the development of South Sudan

The GoSS expressed great interest in involving professionals from the diaspora in public service, in order to 'Sudanise' employment. In 2007, the Minister of Regional Coordination emphasised a specific need for diaspora support in the decentralisation of governance, which resulted in the establishment of a directorate in charge of diaspora issues in the Ministry of Regional Cooperation (GoSS, 2005; USAID, 2009a). Several programmes ran to use the diaspora's skills for (government) employment and diaspora members have legal rights such as dual citizenship and participation in elections and referendums (Njoka, 2007; USAID, 2009b).

Although the programmes provided quite a number of diaspora members with opportunities to share their knowledge with local counterparts, USAID (2009c) concluded their feasibility study for a second phase of Diaspora Skills Transfer Programme, a return programme in the education sector, with strong doubts. Reasons not to return to South Sudan were commitments, such as student loans and family responsibilities, and

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[8] Pseudonyms are used for the organisations as well as for their initiators.

constraints related to the situation in South Sudan, such as access to quality education, health care and security (see also Ionescu, 2006; OECD, 2010). On the organisational side, diaspora members often encountered problems adjusting to an underfunctioning administrative culture. These experiences are in line with constraints in previous studies discussed (see for example, Ionescu, 2006) and make us wonder whether micro-development projects in education encounter similar opportunities and challenges for the involvement of the diaspora.

South Sudanese diaspora and the reconstruction of education

The year 2011 was a turbulent one for South Sudan and also for South Sudanese living in the Netherlands. In January 2011, the South Sudanese voted for secession from the North and in July their independence was a fact. In the Netherlands this was reflected in meetings and discussions organised by a variety of stakeholders, both South Sudanese and Dutch. Apart from the general situation of South Sudan and the perspectives for development, the contribution of the South Sudanese to the development of their country came to the fore. The documentary *Hinterland*, for example, shows how former child soldier Kon Kelei graduated in international law, managed to raise money and returned to South Sudan to teach law and to build a secondary school in his home town Cuey Machar (www.cmsf.nl). One of the diaspora members interviewed, stated:

> This is a must for the country. It has to prioritise public services in order to be able to establish the institutions which are the backbone for the nation building because an educated and healthy work force is necessary for the development of sustainable livelihoods. … Last year I made a proposal to open a school, a secondary school in Jonglei state. The idea of having such a school is to have a boarding school for various tribes in the region, to provide them with good education, giving them that culture of living in peace and accepting each other. (David Chau, August 2012)

After independence, the two major issues for South Sudanese living in the Netherlands were their involvement in the development of their home country and their personal decision to return to their country or not. Interviews and conversations with members of the diaspora reveal how education plays an important role in both these issues: the state of education in South Sudan is a challenge for interventions, but securing a good education for their own children is a reason not to return to South Sudan.

Three micro-development projects in education

We turn now to consider three micro-development projects in the education sector – one that offers support to primary education, another that aims to provide education and housing for street children and a third that develops vocational training for women and youth. They are three among many other projects (UNESCO, 2011b) supporting the reconstruction of the education sector in South Sudan. The overview in Table 3.1 summarises details on the founders, the aims, the motivations, the stages and the funding (derived from project documents and interviews).

Table 3.1 Overview of the three micro-development projects discussed

	Supporting Primary Education	Education and home for street children	Vocational training for women and youth
Founders	Two male students, refugees, living in the Netherlands	Female refugee, living with her family in the Netherlands	Female refugee (health reasons), grown-up son in South Sudan
Aim	To rebuild a school for primary education in Bor region	To provide shelter and education for street children in Wau	To train women and youth in vocational and life skills for self-sufficiency in northern Uganda
Motivation	To prevent manipulation of children becoming child soldiers	To support the children to be able to help themselves and others	To support a women and youth Community Based Organisation
Stage	Planning and fundraising phase	Planning and fundraising phase in South Sudan (activities already carried out in North Sudan)	Centre is established; sustainability is a challenge; expansion to activities in South Sudan
Funding	Private sponsors	Private sponsors, Church	Private sponsors, Church, Dutch NGOs

Before describing the opportunities and challenges facing these three projects, we supplement the information in Table 3.1 with some background information on the motivation and experiences of the three project founders (derived from interviews). The first

project, 'Supporting Primary Education', was deeply influenced by the personal history of its initiators:

> When the war came, we in the villages became the victims. Because of lack of education we were easily manipulated to join the army. So it is best to educate these villages, so they are aware of what is going on in the whole country. (Bol Deng, May 2011)

In spite of this strong motivation, the project had not yet started. After our first meeting in May 2011, Bol Deng paid a visit to South Sudan. Family matters kept him from initiating his project. He returned to the Netherlands to study for his Master degree, but later decided to break off to return to South Sudan permanently. There, he found the school he wanted to support further dilapidated by the rains. Ibtisam Aymen, the founder of the second project, 'Education and Home for Street Children', saw an important role for education:

> During the war we started in North Sudan, in Khartoum. Southerners who fled the war in the South, were living in camps around Khartoum in very bad conditions. We had a financial adoption scheme for children in those camps to provide them with food, education and healthcare. Some of them made it to university with our help. Now we are moving to the South. I come from Wau. When I visited my home town some years ago I saw many street children. We want to build an orphanage for the smaller children and let them go to school.… We have to look to the future. The new generation should be prepared for the future. Education is important. It makes people independent. They can help themselves and others. (Ibtisam Aymen, June 2011, translation by the authors)

In spite of the visit she paid to the project area in February 2012, Ibtisam did not succeed in starting her project because she did not manage to get her piece of land registered. She connected this disappointing experience to the post-conflict situation of the country: 'Look, the country is new and the system there is complicated' (Ibtisam Aymen, August 2012, translation by the authors). The third project 'Vocational Training for Women and Youth' seemed to have a more pragmatic vision on the role of education. Amy Flynn whom we interviewed followed an appeal by an already existing group:

> We started by supporting the Sudanese refugee orphans who were living in the camps or at home in northern Uganda, in vocational training. We managed to support about 15 students in vocational training, both girls and boys in car mechanics, electricity, carpentry, and bricklaying and construction work. When I went there in 2003, I met a group of women who were organised, but did not have a place to do their activities. They were selling groundnuts, oil and other food products in the open market. Most of them went for literacy classes, because they were

illiterate. So we decided to build a vocational training centre for women and youth in northern Uganda. (Amy Flynn, May 2011)

The three projects reflect the general characteristics of diaspora development projects as identified by Van Naerssen, Kusters and Schapendonk (2006). The 'Vocational Training Centre for Women and Youth' was the only one of the three projects that already had a considerable history. When South Sudan was a war zone, the project started in northern Uganda to support Sudanese refugees and the surrounding community. The founder, Amy, stressed the importance of a strong group on the ground consisting of women and youth, who are the owners of the project. This came close to ownership as a success factor for capacity development (OECD, 2006). Following the first interview, Amy also visited the project locations. She commented:

> The only worry and challenge now, is the sustainability of the centre. … If they could get a visionary leader or an experienced development worker, I think the centre could rise to a higher level. (Amy Flynn, May 2011)

Amy's foundation has now expanded its activities to a health centre and a nursery school in South Sudan, also in cooperation with active communities.

Opportunities and challenges for diaspora micro-development projects

Regarding opportunities, the discussion of theories on capacity development and capabilities raised expectations to find capabilities for the implementation of capacity development and partnership in the members of the diaspora. Indeed, the three founders of the development projects displayed their strong Involvement and context knowledge of their home regions. Bol for example viewed his project as a kind of compensation:

> The war distorted us, set many families outside, disconnected all the families. The peace will now reunite them back again, we will focus. I had a bad experience, but now the experience that I have, good positive ones I want to bring them back, to compensate for the bad experience that I had before (Bol Deng, May 2011).

Ibtisam reiterated: *Yes, I am from Wau and for me it is easier to start something there, to get into contact with people and to build the project.* Although Amy's project was not situated in the town where she was born, her contacts in the region led her to identify active groups of people:

> It is easy to use already established structures or organised groups on the ground. … We are just a bridge between the donors and groups in the South, who really need help.

Local knowledge and social and family ties in the home country gave easy access to responsible people in the community and to cooperation with local organisations, even going beyond family ties. In line with Ionescu's (2006) term 'local capital', the strong ties with the home region were an asset for the projects.

Ibtisam's position in the diaspora was also an advantage:

> Yes, our being here has a purpose: to help people here and to do something there at the same time. While I am here, I am, so to say, the source of the work there. She said this with some hesitation though: We as people in the West are able to do something there, but, who knows, if there will come a time when we will go there.

In the host country, the founders of the projects learned new skills and gained new insights, which they wanted to share. Also, they were part of new networks in churches, neighbourhoods, schools and social media, which gave them the opportunity to raise funds. The words of Bol (*bring back*), Amy (*bridge*) and Ibtisam (*source*) refer to their transnational position. Although they combine capabilities from different backgrounds, the words also show that the distinction between home and host country had not disappeared as theories on transnationalism suggest (compare Vertovec, 2009, 2010; Faist, 2010; Guo, 2013).

When it comes to discussing the challenges for diaspora micro-development projects, it is important to notice that none of the three projects was firmly established in South Sudan. We observed the same situation in education projects of other diaspora members: they were either still in the phase of planning or in a rudimentary phase. What was keeping them from moving ahead? Previous studies pointed to different views about the needs on the ground (DRCMGP 2009). In South Sudan, we found these needs to be so overwhelming that any help fell short. Bol Deng described the enormous task ahead as follows:

> So we really need to do a lot as diaspora to support the people on the ground there. Because many things, they are in need of everything, clean water, they need medical treatment; they need houses to be built, roads construction, housing and schools. But education is the first important priority in the country. (Bol Deng, May 2011)

Ibtisam stressed how little an organisation can do compared to the needs in South Sudan:

> It is not easy to help everybody. If you can only help two, three or five people, then that is also good. Because the country is big and the need is very high.

One year later, emerging tribal conflicts caused persistent feelings of insecurity and discrimination. According to Bol, people who were in power were excluding others: *So a monopoly is going somewhere around those who take the power … it is not good, it is very dangerous*. Alongside the emerging conflicts at the border with Sudan and volatile negotiations on oil revenues, these are characteristics of the post-conflict situation of South Sudan (see also GoSS, 2011; Ministry of General Education and Instruction, 2012). The limited capacities of the local community also related to this situation:

> The problem is the distance. You can get into contact with them, but the African way: they talk nicely on the telephone, but they never send a report. And here in the West, without a report you do not get support. That is really a big problem. … People have to learn to work administratively, and make plans. That is the problem … maybe because of the war, the long lasting war, when they only thought about fleeing and taking care of their families. This has to be developed in the people. They have to learn. (Ibtisam Aymen, June 2011, translation by the authors)

It seems that diaspora members feel the urge to act, confronted with the post-conflict situation of their country. Since the needs are enormous, they resort to micro-development projects, but even for these projects, it is difficult to get started. Is this the way to rebuild the educational system? Below we consider the different perspectives on education taken by each of these projects.

Perspectives on education

When talking about the 'Supporting Primary Education' project, Bol Deng stressed the importance of education for peace building to promote independent thinking and prevent manipulation:

> In Africa children are taught just to copy what the teacher explains to them. In Holland, there is always a debate in the class. Children learn an independent way of thinking, interpreting what they are learning. That is what we have to train the teachers (Bol Deng, May 2011).

A year later, he referred to tribal clashes, stating: *We have to build a country. We should not think about this is Dinka. This is … that way of thinking has to go* (August 2012). Just as Breidlid (2010) wanted school to play a role in correcting biased attributions between North and South Sudan, school may also play a role in combating

tribalism in the South. Ibtisam thought education alone would not provide the right learning environment for children and youth. For example, she criticised one of the international NGOs thus:

> They have a beautiful school. The children go there every day, but at the end of the day they collect the books and notebooks and the children go back to the street. What is that? It is better to have a space for the children, where they stay, where they will not sniff glue as they do now, and where they can do their homework. (Ibtisam Aymen, August 2012, translation by the authors)

In contrast, Amy Flynn's project works on vocational skills, with the objective of creating self-sufficiency amongst the participants. A locally formed group was in charge of the project and decided on the exact content, as Amy explained:

> There are literacy classes for the women; computer is more for the youth and in a way also for the women for their own computer. The courses on tailoring and crops are also for the women. But how they do it, the teaching, the materials and everything, I cannot tell. I do not know. (Amy Flynn, May 2011)

The three projects displayed different views on the role of education: education for peace, education to grow up in a safe environment, education to generate an income and independent living conditions. The projects and their founders seem to operate in quite isolated ways, running the risk of replicating history by creating 'islands of education', as Sommers (2005) called them (see also UNESCO, 2011). The comment of a spokesman for the Ministry of General Education and Instruction is interesting in this respect:

> Why do they not come and do the dirty work with us together? We would be very grateful. There are thousands out there. … If they all came back, let us see what we can do together. … We do not know what they are doing. We have been fighting over 20 years and they were over there, doing training. … They have great ideas. … They think everybody would be given a white collar job, but we have no money. (Director General Budgeting and Planning, Ministry of General Education and Instruction, personal communication, Juba, January 2013)

In the view of the government officer responsible for educational planning, members of the diaspora benefited from their time in exile and got trained, but they refused to come back now the conflict had finished or, if they were to come back they would do so with unrealistic ideas and demands.

These data indicate how views on the strategy for the reconstruction of education differ among the diaspora members and the Ministry of General Education and Instruction.

Although they are operating in the same area with the same ultimate goal, there seems to be a lack of communication between them, which stands in the way of them becoming partners working for development. Below we discuss the necessity of rethinking partnerships to overcome this situation.

Rethinking partnerships

We started by creating a picture of youth who are travelling to their new country, probably filled with mixed feelings of hope and anxiety about the future in a country that is new to them. Most spectators will experience similar mixed feelings. Is the country ready to receive these newcomers? When she came back from visiting the project locations in northern Uganda and South Sudan, Amy wrote:

> I am not sure if I can survive in Uganda or South Sudan. To some extent, I now do understand why some of the people, especially the young ones, do what they are doing – drinking, marrying etc. – desperation and not knowing what to do, makes some of them turn to drinking as a coping mechanism. … There is a big gap between the elderly and the youth, who are supposed to be the future leaders or heirs, in handling responsibilities and life style. I may be wrong, but I believe that these are some of the prices people pay due to the prolonged impact of wars, refuge, displacement etc. (Report on fieldtrip to South Sudan and northern Uganda, January 2012).

This observation illustrates the 'daunting' context discussed in the General Education Strategic Plan (Ministry of General Education and Instruction, 2012). Partnerships of all stakeholders involved are badly needed to provide basic services like education to the growing population of the new country. The diaspora are a group of promising partners (GoSS, 2011; UNESCO, 2011b). Theories on capacity development and partnerships, which were originally developed to understand and improve North–South cooperation, stress the importance of contextualisation and ownership. This is where the members of the diaspora come in with their unique capabilities, which can be described by the concept of transnationalism. Our interest in studying the diaspora micro-development projects in education in South Sudan was to find out how this works in practice. Micro-development projects could be regarded as laboratories for new kinds of cooperation, which can inform partnerships on different levels. As De Haas and Rodriguez (2010) suggest, the study of the interaction between migration and development on the ground may contribute to the knowledge base on which effective partnerships for the reconstruction of education in South Sudan can be built.

The exploration of opportunities, challenges and perspectives on education concerning the micro-development projects led to three tentative conclusions regarding: (1) the position of the diaspora, (2) the receiving society, and (3) the interaction between the two. Firstly, the small-scale projects do not have a firm base in South Sudan yet. The only well-established project is in northern Uganda, where an active group on the ground is taking responsibility. In South Sudan, the diaspora have trouble finding partners with whom they can cooperate on an equal level. The projects run the risk of becoming isolated efforts without long-term effects, unacknowledged by the government, getting close to Deng's (2006) characterisation of the situation during wartime. Secondly, the people leading the reconstruction of the educational sector profess in their policy papers that they need the diaspora, but also complain about their attitude, the lack of communication and commitments abroad which keep them from returning to their country. The hesitation about diaspora support is understandable from these experiences. Although further study of the receiving society remains to be done, we may already sense that the statements in the policy papers run the risk of only paying lip service to the potential of the diaspora. The result is that both sides seem to feel disappointed in the other and do not feel tempted to communicate. Finally, there is so much to be done in reconstructing education: capacity development of teachers and other professionals, addressing educational needs of society, caring for war-affected groups and more. Discussion and dialogue are badly needed to identify common priorities. Meanwhile it seems there is hardly any communication between those who should work alongside each other to (re)build the educational sector in South Sudan.

Reviewing these three preliminary conclusions, one may say they reflect the 'old' way of thinking of two sides, the home and host country, the giving and receiving community. The concept of transnationalism would help to overcome this, referring to the effects of human mobility and pointing at the variegated people on both sides. At the same time, this concept seems to be of limited help in relation to capacity development and partnership building. It blurs differences, while the only way to build genuine partnerships is to discuss different backgrounds and experiences, especially in a post-conflict situation. Social learning and interactive knowledge production (Zeelen & Van der Linden, 2009) are as indispensable in South–South partnerships as they are in North–South partnerships. Without these quality standards, partnerships run the risk of reproducing the same mistakes as in North–South cooperation, where one side is supposed to develop the other without leaving its comfortable base. Deng (2006) even speaks of 'paternalism' in this respect.

Broadening the horizon, participating in international forums and studying lessons learned in other parts of Africa (see for example, Zeelen, Van der Linden, Nampota & Ngabirano, 2010) may help to avoid a standoff and initiate a dialogue.

The challenge of being involved from a distance

Finally, we would like to question our own research question, which reflects an optimism that is also found in the literature on human mobility, development and transnationalism (UNDP, 2009b). This is to be appreciated as it counterbalances the negative tone of publications on multiculturalism, but it should not conceal the human side of combining different worlds in one person. Throughout our research, we observed that, in spite of their rich resources, the activities of the diaspora do not necessarily flourish as one would expect them to. Although they are supposed to be able to implement capacity development in an endogenous way suiting the culture and traditions of the people on the ground, in-depth interviews give an insight into the challenge to experience transnationalism as a person.

The ideas of human mobility and transnationalism as a force for development should not be discarded, but should be complemented by studies on how migration and development interact on the ground. The resources and difficulties of the diaspora are reflections of what is happening in a changing world, where people move around, either by force or voluntarily. The personal involvement of the diaspora, which is undeniably present in each project, is a strength, but it can also be a weakness, leading to efforts in isolation. Partnerships connecting people and strategies are needed to retain the strength. Similarly, the boatloads of young people moving from North to South in Sudan can be regarded as additions to the worries of the country or as a potential for rebuilding the country, once their capabilities are strengthened in an appropriate way.

3.5 Reflection with pointers on meaningful lifelong learning programmes for groups at risk

The groups at risk discussed in this chapter are as diverse as their contexts. The low-skilled employees in the Dutch industrial sector run the risk of losing their jobs because of technological developments and outsourcing. Some grasp the new opportunities; others are well-nigh insulted by the suggestion that they would need training. The lesser educated youth and adults in Mozambique require foundational (literacy) and vocational skills to generate an income. Whether they participate or not, they view education as a way of getting employment in a country which is *rising from the ashes* (Waterhouse, 1996). South Sudan may serve as an example where 'capability security' (Nussbaum, 2011) is at stake. Any attainment may be lost the next day. This may explain why the only successful diaspora project out of the three investigated is located in neighbouring Uganda, where capability security is not guaranteed, but a little less endangered. Even in these precarious circumstances, where priorities have to be set, adults and their learning needs, should not be overlooked. These needs are closely linked to the needs of the community requiring skilled leaders to bridge gaps and encourage peace and development (Davies, 2012).

After reading this chapter, it seems hardly possible to answer the second sub-question: *Which factors play a role in the development of meaningful lifelong learning programmes oriented towards the multiple needs of the learners*? However, this is the challenge faced in this thesis. Without denying differences and wanting to bring together what cannot be combined, the pointers will pinpoint some dilemmas which play a role throughout the different contexts, concerning:

- The contents of lifelong learning programmes;
- The teaching and learning approach in these programmes;
- The relationship with the broader context of the programmes.

The contents of lifelong learning programmes

In spite of the differences between the various settings, the primary focus of the lifelong learning programmes discussed in this chapter seems to be work and employability. The Dutch employees are encouraged to get additional training to maintain their employability. The Mozambican literacy learners are given short non-formal education courses for self-

employment and the labour market. The women and youth in northern Uganda join forces to offer vocational training in self-sufficiency. The one-sidedness of lifelong learning programmes has already been pointed out in the general introduction and the introduction to this chapter (Glastra & Meijers, 2000; Borg & Mayo, 2005) and the programmes discussed in this chapter do not seem to form an exception. Yet, when we focus on the needs of the learners, the image gets more complex. The Dutch example reminds us of the fact that skills for a certain job may become outdated and that foundational skills like literacy and numeracy, although they may be called 'schoolish' are a basic requirement for people to avoid dependence on one type of work. From the Mozambican case we may understand the importance of self-esteem and initiative. For the mostly female literacy learners the ability to read and write brings pride and self-confidence. It is this sense of self-reliance that they need besides vocational skills to succeed in being self-employed or getting a job. In the post-conflict situation of the Sudanese-Ugandan example vocational and life skills cater for the most urgent needs of the learners. Learning there goes hand in hand with building an organisation and community development.

Thus, the needs of the learners that must be incorporated in the programmes, extend beyond school and work. The article on Mozambique shows that school and work oriented programmes do not do justice to the needs and perceptions of the learners, whose perceptions of literacy ranged from the relation to family life to family income to participation in society and personal development. But even in school- and work-oriented programmes there is more at stake as the learning goes beyond the official objectives. *Being literate means being somebody* is what we heard in different wordings. Being able to read and write gives self-esteem and acknowledgement as a citizen of the world. The capabilities approach of Sen (1999) and Nussbaum (2011), which views human beings as entitled to quality of life, may lead to assessment of the needs of the learners in a broader perspective than work and income and may guide the design of comprehensive programmes including the multiple needs of the learners (see also Wheelahan & Moodie, 2011).

The teaching and learning approach in these programmes

Apart from the contents, the approach used is a very important issue in lifelong learning programmes. The experiences of the learners as active citizens, like the treasurer in the Dutch example, should be taken seriously. Even if they do not think so themselves, people are knowledgeable and this should be recognised (Freire, 1970). Finger and Asún call for 'endogenous knowledge creation' instead of 'exogenous knowledge transmission' in this

respect. This means there must be a great deal of interaction when discussing the content to be learned and linking what is already known to everyday practice; negative school experiences should not be repeated (Van der Kamp & Toren, 2003). The use of the 'banking' pedagogy of the oppressed (Freire, 1970), will not encourage them to speak for themselves and get organised. Language is important: which language will serve the learning process? Students should be able to express themselves, but should also get the opportunity to learn the language that they need to make progress in their lives whether in work, education or daily life. This goes for the Mozambican context where learners usually start learning in their mother tongue and switch to Portuguese later and also for the South Sudanese context where English is commonly used although many South Sudanese grew up with other languages including (Juba) Arabic. The empowerment of the learners will be achieved through active student-centred learning methods but should not stop at that. Student participation should stretch to responsibility in the organisation of the programme including the follow-up. The Mozambican experience clearly demonstrates this. Also the Ugandan-Sudanese case shows how important a locally embedded organisation is, in terms of sustainability, capacity development and making use of what is learned (Brinkerhoff, 2010). It may be considered as an example of community-based education (Kanyandago, 2010).

The relationship with the broader context of the programmes

It goes without saying that education cannot disengage from its context. In terms of employability, this means that educational programmes for low-skilled employees have to be functional for them to get or maintain a job. Skills training in Mozambique, Uganda and South Sudan has to relate to the labour market. But if there are no jobs and hardly any opportunities for self-employment, training for employability may just fob off the learners. The environment itself may have to change for people to get access to better livelihoods. In terms of Nussbaum (2011), internal capabilities need certain conditions to enable their use as combined capabilities or functionings. The educators can play a role as activists for better conditions as Von Kotze (2013) promotes using the term 'pedagogy of contingency'. Also learners themselves can get organised and influence the way things are run as the women and youth in Uganda show.

Conditions in the so-called 'developed' world are different from those in the 'developing' world. War and conflicts are detrimental to the educational infrastructure and increase the need for lifelong learning as many children and youth miss school. Capability security is lost.

Fortunately, the conviction is gaining ground that education should also get attention in conflict situations to avoid running the risk of whole generations missing out on education and to maintain peace and encourage reconciliation (UNESCO, 2011a; Paulson, 2011; Davies, 2012; Martinez, 2013). But although policy objectives and strategies are changing, practice may lag behind. The implementation of education in these circumstances requires a careful assessment of the needs of the learners and of the resources available both locally and further away. Everything must be brought into play. The challenge is to overcome differences for a joint future in a situation which is still thwarted by old tensions and conflicts. New partnerships are needed, but are not easily established. Processes on the ground should be reflected in policies on education and lifelong learning to avoid the 'implementation gap' between policy and practice (Rampedi, 2003).

Chapter 4

The role of the professional and professionalisation

Chapter 4 The role of the professional and professionalisation

4.1   Intermezzo: *I love to try new things*. Primary school teachers with a research oriented attitude

> Yeah yeah. I love to try new things. ... Many of my colleagues did not care about joining the working group on care. I did not have to join a group, because I am in my first year at this school. But when they asked me to come and tell about my experience in other schools, I was happy to meet their wish. And when they asked me to stay, I stayed. … At a certain point things work and then I do not have to do anything extra. That does not feel good. I think it is super fun, because it is something new. That is what I like. (Brenda, primary school teacher)

This is Brenda speaking (translated by the author). I visited her in her classroom at a school in a big Dutch city, where she found a permanent job after freelancing at different schools in different places. Two years earlier she had graduated as a primary school teacher from the University of Applied Sciences where I work. These universities have the assignment to train their students in research skills. These skills should turn them into professionals who are able to collect and interpret data in a sensible way to improve their practice. For this purpose, most study programmes include the design and implementation of a practice-oriented research project in the final year. Students specialising in evidence-based education at the iPabo, a teacher training college, conduct design research with the aim of raising the learning outcomes in maths (or Dutch language). In the framework of an evaluation of this approach, I interviewed graduates about the way they put their research skills into practice (Van der Linden, 2013). One of them is Brenda, whom I have already introduced. She works in an 'experience-oriented' school, where experience is taken as the starting point for the learning process of the children. The 'new thing' Brenda referred to is the organisation of the children's learning processes into four different tracks according to their learning needs. This includes a lot of administration and paper work, but Brenda claims:

> I think that talking with the children is most important. It seemed to be a lot of paperwork (showing a folder with overviews of the division of the children over the four tracks), something you just do for school inspection. But I think it creates clarity for the children as to what you expect of them.

For Brenda, who conducted research on the implementation of a new maths method in her final year, research in everyday practice means pioneering, implementing new ways of teaching, and adjusting them in interaction with colleagues and children. It reflects the kind of

teacher she wants to be: actively involved both at classroom and at school level. For other newly-qualified teachers, this was still something for the future. Bianca explains:

> We are just beginning and I am still a freelancer … So, we cannot do a lot. I hope this will come later, when I work somewhere permanently and have a say in how things go.

On the other hand, Bianca states:

> I am always on the alert to improve or change things. For example, if children are not able to concentrate and work quietly, I investigate what is behind this. What can I improve to solve the problem behind this kind of behaviour?

Thus, in her position as a freelancer, Bianca limits her research activities to the children in the classroom. For fresh graduate Anouk, this is still a future intention. Based on her experience as an intern in 'development-oriented' education, she relates:

> I connect my research attitude to the zone of proximal development. What can a teacher do to help a child in his or her development? You need to look at children in a focused way … What do you need to do for the child to reach a higher level? I would like to work in this way at another school.

The stories of these young practitioners reveal their agency and enthusiasm and also the challenges they face. It is striking that 'research' is interpreted in a broad sense as a constant search for improvement at different levels. Research in this sense does not lead to static knowledge but to dynamic knowledge supporting the pedagogic and didactic practice. In this way evidence-based education, which includes systematic use of data and observation of children with a focus on learning outcomes, strengthens school practice. Child centred schools, called 'experience-' or 'development-oriented', also benefit from this approach (Keijzer, Van der Linden, Vos-Bos & Verbeek-Pleune, 2012). Diagnosis and teaching go hand in hand as Oonk, Keijzer, Lit and Barth (2013) describe:

> Not a standard approach, but continued attention to a cyclical process of gathering information by observing and talking to children, noticing and analysing problems, interpreting and identifying learning needs and responding to them (translation by author, p.149).

4.2   Introduction to the articles in this chapter

What can we learn from this intermezzo if we look at lifelong learning professionals and the involvement needed to encourage and facilitate learning by groups at risk? If not properly tended to, children can easily turn into members of groups at risk, who lose the appetite for

learning and turn their backs to education or, worse still, education turns its back to them. Children need professionals who are not satisfied with a standard approach, but combine the courage of a pioneer attitude with a dedication to the gathering of information in order to continuously improve the education offered. Young people and adults who are at risk of losing out on education, particularly need this kind of professional. Developing and accompanying lifelong learning programmes for groups at risk presupposes creativity, flexibility and a willingness to investigate how these programmes can satisfy a variety of learning needs as discussed in the previous chapter (Torres, 2003). It certainly requires active involvement of the people (paid or unpaid) who are professionally involved. This goes for different lifelong learning practices in formal and non-formal education, in the Netherlands, but also in Africa, where (post-)conflict situations and others of dire need demand immediate action but also careful deliberation. That is why the sub-question for this chapter is formulated: *What kind of professional involvement is needed to encourage and facilitate learning by groups at risk?*

The first article in this section reports on a visit to a non-formal education project in the (post-)conflict situation of northwestern Uganda. This project is one of the projects supported by members of the diaspora described in the previous chapter (there it is called ´Vocational training for women and youth´). The region suffered from war and instability for a long time and this resulted in school dropouts, youth and adults who never learned to read and write as well as a mismatch between skills needed and skills learned at school. Non-formal education tries to amend for these problems but has few resources. One could say there is no time for research in an emergency like that, but one could just as well say that research is needed continuously because there is no standard solution and much depends on the creativity and flexibility of the people involved, as this article will show.

The second article reflects on the lifelong learning professional in a more general way, capitalising on the preceding articles and encompassing the different realities and contexts discussed. What kinds of skills are demanded from lifelong learning professionals in current society? Where standard approaches fail, professionals need courage to face challenging situations (Kunneman, 2013). They have to run the risk that this is held against them. How to prevent being left on their own to solve urgent social problems? How can they be supported? The article outlines an approach on professionalisation and research oriented to their needs and those of the groups they serve. As the previous chapters this chapter concludes with pointers alluding to the sub-question of this chapter.

4.3   Non-formal education and new partnerships in a (post-)conflict situation
Three cooking stones supporting one saucepan[9]

Abstract
The conviction is gaining ground that education, not only for children, but also for youth and adults, is vital in conflict-affected areas to (re)build a strong society. This article discusses the constructive role of non-formal education in a post-conflict situation. Concepts of international cooperation and partnerships on the one hand and non-formal education and lifelong learning on the other hand are used to build a framework for analysing a micro-development project in a conflict-affected area in northwestern Uganda. The analysis highlights the dynamics that play a role when people collaborate in rebuilding their communities.

Introduction

The conviction is gaining ground that education is vital in conflict-affected areas to (re)build a strong society capable of sustaining itself (UNESCO, 2011a; Paulson, 2011; Davies, 2012; Martinez, 2013). Not only children, but also youth and adults are in need of education in these areas, as many of them have missed their chance to go to school. The education offered in these situations should not only meet the needs of the individual learners, but also the urgent needs of the community suffering from reduced or stagnated educational development (Jones & Naylor, 2014). In this way education becomes constitutive of development involving community empowerment and agency in human development as discussed by McCowan and Unterhalter in their recent volume ´Education and International Development´ (2015). Human capacity to rebuild societal structures is an indispensable requirement in conflict-affected areas. Aside from the quantitative knowledge on the impact of armed conflict on education (see or example Jones & Naylor, 2014), this article aims to contribute to understanding the relation between education and conflict and fragility (see Shah & Lopes Cardozo, 2015) by discussing the constructive role of non-formal education for youth and adults in a post-conflict situation.

Due to the vulnerability of most post-conflict situations the word 'post' has been put between brackets in the title of this article. Concepts and developments in international cooperation and partnerships on the one hand and non-formal education and lifelong learning on the other hand are used to build a framework for the analysis of a micro-development project in a conflict-affected area as a case study. The micro-development project to be analysed is a non-formal education project in Koboko district in West-Nile Province in northwestern Uganda, jointly organised by a women's group and a youth group from the area and supported by some members of the South Sudanese diaspora living in the Netherlands. This case study highlights the dynamics playing a role when people collaborate in rebuilding their communities. The leading question is directed at the implementation of non-formal education in a (post-)conflict area from two perspectives:

- What kinds of partnerships support the supply of education in this (post-)conflict situation?
- How does the education offered relate to the needs of the learners and the surrounding society?

This article will start with the construction of a theoretical framework, subsequently the context of Koboko district and the research design will be discussed. The data will be presented from the two perspectives and the conclusion will return to the leading question to identify issues that are of interest in rethinking the role of partnerships and non-formal education in (post-) conflict situations.

International cooperation and partnerships in a changing world

As depicted by the UNDP primer on capacity development, the approach of international cooperation has evolved from the transference of aid to the empowerment and strengthening of endogenous capabilities (UNDP, 2009a). In the search for symmetry instead of dependency in cooperation relations, capacity development and knowledge-sharing became vital issues (King, 2009). To stress the equal position of the cooperating partners and take into account that knowledge is developed in interaction, Zeelen and Van der Linden (2009) prefer to use the term ´joint knowledge production´. This term does not only refer to North-South cooperation, but also to South-South cooperation at all levels of society. Migration, increased mobility and ever-increasing possibilities of communication of people have blurred national borders. Transnationalism is the term used to describe long-term cross-border relationships

(Vertovec, 2009). Although power-relations have shifted, they still exist. In fact, they have become more and more complex as development cooperation is no longer only cooperation between countries, but also includes non-governmental organisations, the private sector, charities, and members of the diaspora sending remittances (De Haan, 2013; Ferrier, 2013). For example, King and Palmer (2013) uncover the dominance of Northern agencies in the discourse on the post-2015 agenda for the Millennium Development goals as a 'northern tsunami' against a 'southern ripple'.

In addition to the fading national borders, there is the development that governments are retreating in favour of citizen initiative in the so-called participation society (see for example Rob, 2012). A recent Dutch study (Van den Berg, 2012) discusses the fact that private initiatives in international cooperation are becoming more and more important next to established large charities. The study includes projects of diaspora from developing countries living in the Netherlands, but does not pay special attention to this 'transnational' aspect. This may be a lost opportunity if we look at the way the views on development cooperation have changed. As the lack of contextualisation is a common pitfall in implementing capacity development (OECD, 2006), members of the diaspora with their knowledge of both South and North would be excellent partners in developing capacity and joint knowledge production. The contribution of the members of diaspora may thus stretch substantially beyond sending remittances (UNDP, 2009a; 2009b). The way in which these new partnerships succeed in avoiding the pitfall mentioned is a critical issue to be tackled in this article.

Non-formal education, lifelong learning and development

In his book 'Globalisation, lifelong learning and the learning society', Jarvis (2007) discusses lifelong learning as the ongoing process by which people learn from experience in different ways and in different settings. In Jarvis' view, what triggers learning is the feeling that new situations cannot be understood and negotiated, based on available knowledge. Jarvis calls this 'disjuncture'. Overcoming the feeling of 'disjuncture' is a holistic learning process in the sense that it involves the whole person. In this respect Van der Kamp and Toren (2003) point to the importance of a powerful learning environment for groups at risk, acknowledging the learners as human beings with valuable experience in the way Freire (1970) proposes. Unfortunately, due to globalisation and the influence of the social economic structure, the dominant type of learning is not that holistic. It is rather functionalistic, serving the capitalist

system and only considering the part of the learner that is of interest to the system instead of including the person as a whole (see Nussy, 2015).

Also Preece (2009a) criticises the narrow, functionalistic approach of lifelong learning. She gave her book ´Lifelong Learning and Development´ the subtitle ´A Southern perspective´ and approvingly quotes Torres (2003), who criticises international cooperation agencies that *prescribe narrow basic education ceilings for poor countries* (p.20). According to Preece, international aid policies, based on the Millennium Development Goals, put a straightjacket on the educational policies of countries in the South, forcing them to focus on primary education and only on lifelong learning in terms of skills for economic, human capital purposes. Inspired by philosophical traditions from the South like Nyerere's Ujamaa, she claims that it must be possible to *embrace indigenous philosophical world views, (...) in a way that also recognises the hybrid nature of the contemporary world* (Preece, 2009a, p. 1). Preece refers to Pant (2003) to show how gender equality can be promoted in an integrated literacy and skills training approach. Key components of this approach are: a participatory approach, mobilisation of community resources, partnerships with local organisations and capacity building of the local community. Apart from formal education in schools and informal learning in everyday life, non-formal education is pre-eminently suited for this kind of education (Preece, 2009b). Non-formal education includes non-institutionalised practices, which play an important role in lifelong learning practices, especially in developing countries (Van der Linden & Manuel, 2011).

To shed more light on how indigenous worldviews can be integrated with the demands of global reality at a programme level, the concept of 'pedagogy of contingency' (Von Kotze, 2013) could be useful. Von Kotze uses this concept analysing skills development training for urban informal workers in precarious situations in South Africa. The pedagogy of contingency contends that training should be contingent upon the trainees and their backgrounds and should go hand in hand with activities to bend macro policies in a favourable direction to support the livelihood strategies of the trainees. In the words of Nussbaum (2011), apart from internal capabilities, favourable conditions are needed for the realisation of capabilities, which she calls 'functionings'. The capabilities approach looks at each person as an individual, entitled to freedom, choice and basic social justice. According to Nussbaum, this is a better measure for development than the Gross Domestic Product. Education, in the view of Nussbaum, plays the role of 'fertile functioning' because of its fertile role for other capabilities or functionings, opening options and chances in different areas and on different levels. From a

social justice perspective quality education could then be defined as developing capabilities valued by individuals *and* societies (Tikly & Barrett, 2011). In this article we look at how non-formal education can fulfil these expectations, maintaining its flexibility, without losing the connection with formal education.

Non-formal education and new partnerships in a (post-)conflict situation

In (post-)conflict situations conditions are almost by definition adverse for internal capabilities to become functionings, using Nussbaum's words (2011). Yet, this is needed for people to take charge of their own lives and of their environment. Also, for young people this provides alternatives to taking up arms. Davies (2012) reports on education in conflict-affected areas: *physical destruction of infrastructure, negative impact on access, retention and learning outcomes and damage to the teaching force, as well as exacerbation of gender inequity* (p. 5). She proposes a combination of community participation, provision of resources and incentives and training for teachers to repair the damage. According to UNESCO (2011a) both in situations of crisis and reconstruction, education is of vital importance. Education for internally displaced persons and refugees in conflict situations should be on the humanitarian agenda. In situations of reconstruction, long-term partnerships are needed to rebuild education systems contributing to sustainable peace (UNESCO, 2011a). Appropriate strategies to meet learning needs of different groups require careful deliberation, always strongly related to the surrounding society and its 'learning needs'. As Thompson points out, collaboration with community groups promotes tailoring to the context and sustainability of initiatives (Thompson, 82 – 92, in GCPEA, 2014). In a post-conflict situation the tasks of peace building and reconciliation are often added to the agenda of education. In line with the research agenda proposed by Shah and Lopes Cardozo (2015), the volume compiled by Paulson (2011), shows what a challenging task this is in situations where the school population itself played a part in the conflict.

In summary, looking from the perspective of development cooperation, one could ask how new partnerships can result in new powerful learning environments to produce new knowledge in post-conflict situations. And looking from the perspective of non-formal education and lifelong learning, the question would be how learning needs can be met and developed contingent to the experience and situation of a group at risk in a holistic perspective, including an interpretation of the learning needs of the conflict affected society as a whole.

Koboko and the other 'cooking stones'

Salia musala are the Kakwa words for the three cooking stones that are used to support a saucepan. The expression refers to the Kakwa people, who are united although living in three different countries, namely South Sudan, Congo and Uganda. It shows the artificiality of national borders as related to peoples. People cross borders for security and economic reasons (UNDP, 2009b). During the long war between northern and southern Sudan, many South Sudanese fled from Sudan to neighbouring Uganda. The Lord's Resistance Army of Joseph Kony moved up and down committing its atrocities on both sides of the border (Angucia, 2010). Only a few 'islands of education' were left in southern Sudan (Sommers, 2005). The war ended with the peace agreement of 2005 which was followed by secession from the North and the establishment of South Sudan in 2011. The new nation had to build the education sector from scratch (Lako, Van der Linden & Deng, 2010). Unfortunately armed conflicts tore apart new-born South Sudan in December 2013. This went with the confiscation, damaging and looting of schools (GCPEA, 2014), thwarting achievements reached so far. The conflicts show the lasting fragility of the new nation. Our research on the reconstruction of education in South Sudan shows how refugees living in the diaspora, with backgrounds in different educational systems, struggle to lend a hand in building the new system (Van der Linden, Blaak & Andrew, 2013).

In the 2013 index of failed states, which was made up before the armed conflicts started in South Sudan in 2013, South Sudan appears fourth after Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo appears second after Somalia (Failed States, 2013). Herbst and Mills (2013) contend that even the status of failed state is overrating the Democratic Republic of Congo as there is no sovereign power outside the urban areas. They mention the activities of the Militia 23 rebel group, active in Eastern Congo on the border with West-Nile Province in Uganda. Van Reybrouck (2010) shows how bordering nations and also multinationals take advantage of the situation in Eastern Congo, which is rich in mineral resources. Especially in this area children miss out on education for lack of schools and teachers and risk recruitment into armed groups (GCPEA, 2014).

Of course the ranking of failed states may be corrected from day to day. Still, it is clear that the cooking stones are hot in more than one sense and the three countries share a history of interrelated conflicts, which cannot be discussed in detail here (Van Reybrouck, 2010). Especially in Congo and South Sudan, security and livelihoods are still endangered by unstable

conditions. Uganda, appearing as number 22 on the list of failed states of 2013, had its share of violence in the past and is still struggling to overcome the consequences (Broere & Vermaas, 2005; Angucia, 2010). It had to accommodate an influx of refugees due to unstable conditions in the neighbouring countries. In West-Nile Province, they settled particularly in the districts of Arua and Koboko. The already meagre (educational) resources had to be shared with newcomers of various origins, such as Kakwa, Maadi, and Dinka people from South Sudan. Thus the district of Koboko, as it is so near conflict areas in eastern Congo and South Sudan, is affected in more than one way by the nearby conflicts and sadly merits to be called a (post-)conflict district. A report written by Ukuonzi (2013) identifies an overwhelming number of school dropouts, as high as 73.4 per cent for girls and 49.8 per cent for boys, poverty and limited income among the youth, limited participation in reproductive health services and nutritional deficiencies. At the same time, the education sector is subject to poor or limited school facilities and equipment, poor terms and conditions of service of the staff and a limited number of trained and qualified personnel.

Research design

The joint initiative by women and youth in the post-conflict context of Koboko, supported by members of the diaspora living in the Netherlands, serves as a case study (Flyvbjerg, 2001; 2006) to discuss the leading question posed in this article directed at the implementation of non-formal education in a (post-)conflict area. As Shah and Lopes Cardozo call for research showing the complexities of the field (Shah & Lopes Cardozo, 2015), the 'power of example' (Flyvbjerg, 2001) applies here.

For the case study, I make use of data collected in the framework of a larger research project on the contribution of the South Sudanese diaspora to the reconstruction of education in South Sudan (Van der Linden, Blaak & Andrew, 2013). This research started off in the Netherlands by accompanying members of the South Sudanese diaspora in their efforts to support the education sector in South Sudan. Three projects with different target groups and locations were followed more closely to identify their strengths and weaknesses. Although the involvement of the diaspora was certainly a strength, the initial phase proved to be very hard. Due to unclear procedures and security problems members of the diaspora did not manage to get started in the intended areas. As this was also the case with initiatives of other South Sudanese living abroad, it probably reflects the fragile state of the country. The only education project of the three that actually started, was a project in northern Uganda. This was the

Youth and Women Community Development Organisation (YWCDO), supported by an organisation of South Sudanese diaspora (Van der Linden, 2014).

When southern Sudan was still at war, the project started in a relatively safe and stable region to which many South Sudanese had fled. A reason for this choice was that there was contact with an apparently strong local group. The members of the diaspora were not the initiators; they were the supporters involved at a distance. This makes the project interesting in terms of new ways of development cooperation and motivated me to pay a visit to YWCDO to complement the research in the Netherlands. In terms of Flyvbjerg (2001; 2006) one could call it a 'critical case', because what is valid for this case may also be valid for other cases in similar circumstances, or even an 'extreme' or 'deviant case', because it succeeded where others failed. The aim of the visit was to find out how the members of the organisation and the participants of educational activities viewed the added value of the organisation, its activities and the role of the diaspora. The study of this (critical or extreme/deviant) case will add to the understanding of the relation between education and conflict and fragility (Shah & Lopes Cardozo, 2015).

At the time of the visit, the organisation facilitated a two-week full-time training course for women on leadership and entrepreneurship skills. This provided the opportunity to gain insight into the operational strength of the organisation using research instruments such as classroom observations and interviews with organisers, trainers and participants, as well as reading documents on the organisation and its activities. The visit was also used to get to know the living conditions and educational challenges of a border province in a war-torn area through informal conversations, observation in the local market, a visit to the South Sudanese border town Kaya, and meetings with district officials. Thus, after familiarising myself with the experiences of the members of the South Sudanese diaspora and their contribution to the educational development of the region, the visit to YWCDO provided an opportunity to get the 'other side of the story'. To check on my first impressions I shared a field report with key persons right after the fieldwork (see intermezzo chapter 5 of this thesis). Later on I transcribed the interviews and tried to get a deeper understanding of the partnerships in practice and the benefits of the educational activities by identifying transversal themes and corresponding and conflicting views against the background of the (post-)conflict context (Hennink, Hutter & Bailey, 2011). As described before, I adopted two perspectives:

- What kinds of partnerships support the supply of education in this (post-)conflict situation?
- How does the education offered relate to the needs of the learners and the surrounding society?

The two themes to be discussed are related to these perspectives: partnerships in practice and non-formal education and skills training. I call them transversal because all parties involved have their view on them. Most of these views are derived from the interviews, combined with information from documents, personal observation and informal conversations. Thus, I arrived at the identification of interesting patterns that can be valuable for joint knowledge creation and 'making social science matter' (Flyvbjerg, 2001; Zeelen & Van der Linden, 2009). To live up to the claim of joint knowledge creation, I checked the views presented with their 'owners' as well as the patterns they form together in terms of 'reciprocal adequation' in conversations (presential, by mail, by phone)(Boog, 2014) .

Partnerships in practice

In Koboko the two community-based organisations that joined forces, were: a women's group offering courses on literacy and income generating skills, and a group of young university graduates offering computer courses. After some discussion about the order of youth and women in the name, they formed the Youth and Women Community Training Centre. They were lucky to run into a member of the South Sudanese diaspora, who was able to raise funds from private persons, churches and non-governmental organisations in the Netherlands. With these funds they bought land and built a centre with two classrooms and a conference hall, and managed to set up activities such as the women's leadership and entrepreneurship course which will also be discussed in this article. After building the centre, the name was changed in Youth and Women Community Development Organisation to express the involvement in community development as an outreaching organisation rather than a centre. Under the title 'partnerships in practice' the views of the partners in the organisation will be discussed in this paragraph; in the next paragraph the focus will be on the leadership and entrepreneurship course.

Table 4.1 Views on the origin and added value of the organisation

Views on the origin and added value of the organisation	
Women	**Youth**
Chairperson (Ruby): We came and we started this thing under a mango tree… Amy, she got us when we were learning there. She picked interest: ´Eh, you are learning here?' 'We are here. We learn here.' We told her ABCD: 'We do not have a pen, books, house for learning, what what, very many things there. Amy, when you go back to Holland, please, remember us'.	Coordinator (Donald): We had six members ... graduates from Makarere University. So, we tried to open up a computer centre. ... So, we are running, teaching people, computer skills and what. ... Then the women came... they were also having their organisation. It was headed by Ruby. They were operating adult literacy. How these organisations came together? That is through Amy.
Founders: We started like this. The saying was going around that we should be in groups and then our chairperson madam Ruby would get a donation. Then the group started progressing. We started with farming, things like greens, khudra, durra, piripiri and other greens. ... Then we realised that there was a problem. We should make bricks for building a place where we could gather. We laid the bricks. We even carried them from where they were and used them for raising this building. Then we built this place and we adapted a section also for teaching.	Volunteering youth: We felt, in the Ugandan situation, we were really suffering. You go to school, you finish and no job. What do we do? Let us join hands and see what we can do. So we decided to come together and form this group, fight for a common cause. ... We, as youth or the graduates, we have to give back to our communities, our parents what they have imparted on us and it is very important for us … to help our community to change their ideas which are there from long ago to present.
Diaspora organisation (Amy): They were selling groundnuts, oil, whatever, in the market and most of them were illiterate. So they used to go for literacy classes and they used to sell these things. So they said: all we want is a piece of land to do our own activities. ... We bought the piece of land for them, and okay, so now what? Now we came out with the plan that, okay, since these women most of them are semi-illiterate and they will not understand development … it is better to bring these youth to work together. So we decided to have a youth and women´s centre. The youth have their own activities; the women have their own activities but we have one coordinator who is managing the centre.	Local government (Education officers): The majority population of the youth after primary 7, they just remain. They have no jobs ... here. You see some of them just playing cards, what what. It is a very big problem, but there is a youth centre, only it cannot be maintained, there is no funding for them to be at least kept busy in that youth place. … The centre on Kaya road? That one was initiated by the women, as a kind of FAL Centre. So women are just there. There are very few there and I have not known much what activities they are exactly doing. It is a FAL, which means Functional Adult Literacy. ... There are very few women who are organised and make something for themselves.

To get an understanding of the partnerships in this context, it is interesting to have a look at the views of the different groups involved. The views of the women's group are presented by Ruby[10], leader of the group and literacy teacher, and by the ladies who started the group who are still honoured as the 'founders'. The views of the youth are given by the coordinator of the centre, who started the computer courses using his own computer and is currently leading the organisation, and by the youth who joined the organisation later on and have positions in the board now. Amy is the chairperson of the diaspora organisation. Because of the war in southern Sudan, she spent part of her youth in Koboko District and some of her family members still live there. She gives the view of the diaspora organisation. To provide insight in societal needs and governmental priorities I include the view of the district officials (see Table 4.1).

A closer look at Table 4.1, which gives the views of the partners involved in their own words (taken from interviews), shows how inventively these different partners came together. The interest of the founding women is to grow crops for their own subsistence and for the market. For these Kakwa speaking ladies literacy seems to come second, while for their teacher and leader it came first. She saw the advantage of cooperating with the youth:

> Now we got a partner in the Netherlands. We do not know how to operate computer. Why can´t we work together with the youth? We called Amy: 'We have two groups here, youth and women.'... So, we said: 'Okay, let us work together, so that they can help us.' And right now we work together. They have their computers there. We have adult literacy here, we have ... tailoring here. We are doing tailoring, agriculture and adult literacy. So, we are now together... And our work is going on well. (Ruby, chairperson)

The coordinator of the centre acknowledges Amy for getting the two groups to cooperate. The youth are happy that they can pay back the efforts of their parents: *We help them, typing, typing their memos. Trying to develop for them some documents. When they want letters out, we develop for them.* The combination of these two groups gives the organisation a strong base, as Amy testifies:

> The group is the most active and organised group in Koboko. They have affiliations with different groups. … So much effort has come from the group of women. ... They have done a tremendous work given the instability in those areas. (Amy Flynn, diaspora organisation)

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10 Pseudonyms are used for the respondents.

The local government officers are included in the table, although they explained their priorities are somewhere else:

> This district became a district in 2005. By then, we had only 39 primary schools, … but today as we talk we have 68 primary schools, government plus ten private, which means there is a total of 78 primary schools. UPE (Universal Primary Education) encouraged this. It made more children to come to school ... And there were only two secondary schools in 2005, but now we have six government secondary schools plus ten private. (District education officer)

The way the district education officer discusses the problems of the youth and the few active women (see Table 4.1) shows that YWCDO is filling a gap left by the government, but hardly acknowledged for it. YWCDO not only keeps the young graduates busy, but also reaches out to the youth in and outside school: *We had a programme of visiting youth. We visited all the secondary schools in Koboko district... to try to give them guidance and counselling at secondary schools* (youth member YWCDO board).

It seems there is a need for this organisation and its position in society joining two groups, gives it a strong base. How strong is this base? Will it keep its strength? What views do the partners have of the future? Which hopes and dreams do they have and which challenges do they see? Table 4.2 gives the views of the partners for the future. The view of the local government is taken from the speech made by the Local Councillor at the graduation ceremony of the Women's Leadership and Entrepreneurship course. From Table 4.2 it is clear that the people involved have different views of the future. This shows that sustainability of the organisation is not a matter of course. Efforts are needed to keep people together, accommodating different views and interests. The founders, for example, feel it is their turn to 'harvest'. Jacob, who translated what they said from Kakwa to English, explains their feelings:

> Actually, the main point here is that the founder members are complaining of being weak, old age and sometimes they are also breadwinners at home. Some of them are widows. (Jacob, translating the words of the founding women)

Donald, the coordinator, refers to the claims of the founders: *We have challenges in the organisation and one of the things is ... when funding comes like this* (for the course), *people expect a lot.* During the course, the funds can be used in a creative way to help the women:

> The only thing that we can do to help, when we get a funding like this, we can create some activities … We said: 'Okay, instead of buying food, eating in a hotel, we have a budget for food. You people come and cook the food, we pay you for cooking.' (Donald, coordinator)

Table 4.2 Views on the future of the organisation

Views on the future of the organisation

Women	Youth
Chairperson (Ruby): I want this centre to be bigger and more recognised. But I do not know whether I will live (5 years more) I am only remaining with few years (laughing).	Coordinator (Donald): Sometimes when you have a structure like this, you find that the money cannot be enough and we cannot raise money. We have to wait, write a project, explain, sit until those things are taken. So those are some of the challenges in the organisation. ... Also members, we are looking: how can they be motivated?
Founders (through translator Jacob): They are saying as the founder members, they do not want to regret, they do not want to leave the institution as they started it, they want it to continue, they want a nursery section, a primary, a secondary where their children can come. They want the place to progress. … They founded it and they do not want it to die and secondly, as they are growing old, their children are supposed to benefit. Then the other question is: you come here, they are getting old, how will you help them?	Volunteering youth: I think we are doing well, because through Amy we are being receiving communication from (mentions organisations). Amy can discuss with them and write back to us. ... There should also come people like you and (mentions people). They should come and see for themselves. They cannot depend on photos, emails. ... They can come here and we have a chat with them. We discuss developmental issues. How we can develop the organisation. What are their experiences there, which can be transferred to our organisation?
Diaspora organisation (Amy): The only challenge is now, the sustainability of the centre. Because one, they need trained people to train them, and then these people need to be paid. They cannot do all that thing only voluntarily. And then in terms of expanding the place and an outlet market, for their crafts. … And for the youth, actually it is the first ever kind of training centre in Koboko itself. … If they could get a visionary, or a development worker I think it could take it to a higher level.	Local government (From speech of local councillor on graduation ceremony Women Leadership and Entrepreneurship Skills course): We should look forward. You do your best and we shall also do our best. The women in the sub-counties (graduates of the course) should not work in isolation. Koboko as a district is an enabling environment. We welcome more donors, if they use the rightful procedures to access the community, support activities that are of our need and do not promote ideas and ways of living that go against our traditions.

As there is no structural funding for the organisation itself, the only financial benefits are payments received by those who perform tasks in a funded activity. One of the trainers states:

> As an organisation we lack the structural funding from where you can be able to pay salaries, the running costs of the organisation, utilities like electricity and so forth. This funding we do not have and all of us, we are just working as volunteers. Actually we do not have permanent employees because we do not have structural funds. (Trainer and former board member)

This makes the organisation vulnerable: people invested a lot and expect returns, though not necessarily returns in the sense of salaries and payment. The youth mention the importance of exchange of experience and knowledge:

> Knowledge is very, very important. How much you have money and you do not have knowledge of bringing up, developing the organisation, those moneys can vanish. And as youth we consider knowledge to be a valuable asset in life. (Youth of YWCDO)

In their own words, they refer to the concept of joint knowledge production (Zeelen & Van der Linden, 2009). In contradiction to the attitude of the youth, the speech by the local government official shows reluctance and even distrust to accept what the Local Councillor called 'donor' involvement. The background to this remark is probably that donor influence has, in the past, been difficult to control (see UNDP, 2009a). In this case, it was experienced as almost an insult for the diaspora organisation involved. Amy hurried to stress that she was not a donor, but a Kakwa like them, struggling to collect funds to support the region that once accepted her and her family as refugees from southern Sudan. The tension remained. Conversations with Amy and others revealed a world of conflict and conflicting interests behind this incident, as explained by Paulson (2011). It shows how difficult it is to establish genuine partnerships for joint knowledge production in a conflict-affected area, also for diaspora led organisations. Apart from the time factor and other priorities, this may be one of the reasons why the possibilities of cooperation between the local government and diaspora organisations and other small development projects are not fully utilised.

Trying to combine the interests of the different groups involved, the strategic plan of the YWCDO states as its comprehensive goal:

> To realise all skilled and empowered youth and women in Koboko Town Council, while the purpose is advocating for skilled, talented and empowered youth and women with positive attitudes, cultures and practices in Koboko Town Council by 2016 (YWCDO Five Year Strategic Plan 2012-2016, p. 3).

This goal contains a flexible interpretation of education and training, including skills and empowerment, contributing towards sustainable peace in the region. It is the youth who stressed the necessity of a change in attitude as implied here (see Table 4.1). The YWCDO ascribes itself an important role in society and people in the organisation seem to have the potential to hold on to its stakeholders, but maintaining and embedding the organisation in local government and educational structures is still a challenge.

Non-formal education and skills training

The training of leadership and entrepreneurship skills connects to the second perspective. It fits into the framework as described above. The training would support the women in Koboko district as follows:

> Training of women in entrepreneurship and leadership puts real power and decision making at the disposal of women. Training women in these skills will not only help the women to start their own enterprises (both profit and non-profit making), but will put them in a better position to have influence, compete with men favourably, manage and lead effectively and ultimately exercise control over those enterprises (Proposal for the training, p. 5).

One should note the attention to women, not only as objects of education because of their educational deprivation (compare Davies, 2012), but also as subjects of education because of their potential as leaders. This contradicts the way in which women are viewed in the region, as one of the trainers explained:

> So, first of all, economically these women are very poor. They do not own the means of production such as land. Capital, they do not have this. They actually depend on their spouses. They are called names such as a goat keeper. They are just there to wait. They are looked down on by men. Our women do not want to take on leadership roles. There is that local custom. They fear. Our cultures are generally against women leadership. Actually here in our cultures, when a woman is a leader, men think this woman is almost becoming a hook, because they associate leadership with a lot of exposure. Many men do not want their women to take on leadership roles with this kind of exposure. ... Then we said: this evil must be fought. One, making the women economically disempowered, we are against that. Two, making them not leaders, we are against that. It is based on these problems the women face, that we decided to come up with this project, training women on entrepreneur and leadership skills. (Trainer and former board member YWCDO)

The trainers made a programme with the following topics: legal, institutional and policy frame for women entrepreneur- and leadership; leadership and leadership styles; entrepreneurship in the local business environment; identification, selection and management of income

generating activities; communication skills and group dynamics; management of change and action planning. The programme could be characterised as 'Western knowledge with a Ugandan twist'. The topics could be copies from any Western handbook on leadership and entrepreneurship; the 'Ugandan twist' comes in with the legal framework, the local business environment and the selection of income generating activities. Sitting in on classrooms, I witnessed how the Ugandan trainers related to the Ugandan reality, often with a humorous undertone, making the women laugh. The programme, seemed quite knowledge oriented, with few possibilities for the women to participate and digest the knowledge. At some moments the word 'banking education' meaning the one way traffic of depositing knowledge from trainer to learner came to mind (Freire, 1970). One of the trainers stated:

> They understand very good. ... If they would get the daily evaluation, the project presentation and so on, you see that they are really understanding. They are very happy about the training. The most interesting session was when they were trying to identify the various income generating activities, which they would be engaged in (Trainer Women Leadership and Entrepreneurship Skills course).

The women were selected for the course because of their educational background, command of the English language and position in the community. Six of the seven sub-counties of Koboko district were present, totalling 25 women. To prepare for their role as leaders in the sub-counties, the women were asked to develop action plans for each sub-county and present them on the last day. Table 4.3 shows the personal benefits of the course and the objectives of the action plans for four out of the six sub-counties as examples. The table reveals a mix of personal and community benefits. Referring to personal benefit, Rebecca, a business woman in the local market, explained how she would benefit:

> I will use phones. I will use my phone to advertise. I call: 'This is madam Akuya calling from market, at the entry of the market. So, you come and buy beans from me. Yeah, I have new beans, I have fresh beans.

Each of the participants had her own story and her own way of using what she learned. Anna, headteacher of a nursery school, said: *I will make sure that I have good contacts with the teachers and I will make sure that the children perform better.* Leah, who moved to Kuluba bordering South Sudan in a resettlement programme, started farming on a small-scale because of lack of labour and capital. She was the secretary of a group of farmers. She wanted to use what she learned to improve her organisation.

Table 4.3 Participants of the Women's Leadership and Entrepreneurship skills course: personal benefits and action plans

Sub-county/ Position of participant(s)	Personal benefits mentioned (interview)	Action plan (poster)
Koboko Town Council Head teacher nursery school and owner of small business	Improving administration and communication in school and in the family, increase income from gardening	Share training experience with authorities at the Koboko Town Council, the women's group, the church audience
Midia Tailor in the market	Planning business in agriculture	Share experience with group members in Midrabe village, groups in Lurunu parish, women in Dricile parish, women and men in Godia parish, groups in Midia parish, groups in Degiba
Kuluba Crop farmer and secretary of farmers' association in new settlement	Improve farming and improve organisation	Share training experience with sub-county officials, the village executives, women and men of the sub-county, formation of sub-county women group, share training experience with youth
Ludara Tea seller and chairperson of women group; fish trader and leader of women farming group; farmer and chairperson of women group	Setting up business in agriculture	Share training experience with authorities at the sub-county, believers, women in Ludara sub-county, the community at large

Studying Table 4.3, the first column shows how the personal lives of women are linked to the community. Most of them hold positions in the social structure of their sub-county, contrary to what might have been expected from the words of the trainer. The column on the action plans in Table 4.3 reflects the women's knowledge of formal and informal structures which can be used to reach as many women as possible. Unlike the words of the district education officer, who hardly knew of the centre, the YWCDO itself is part of a vast network in the

district of Koboko. The closing ceremony of the training course, at which the certificates were awarded, was attended by local councillors, the mayor and several other district officials. They praised the course and the centre. The mayor even promised to repair the road to the centre.

Thus skills development, reviled by several Western writers on lifelong learning and non-formal education (among others, Preece, 2009a), is embraced by these women and their trainers in Uganda. The women highly appreciate the knowledge they get, not only to improve their own lives, but also to improve the lives of people in their communities. Of course, one has to be careful here. This is not an effect or impact study. Whether all the plans are or will be implemented, one does not know. Still, it is apparent that the women are capable of producing their own blend of Western knowledge and local expertise, even challenging local traditions regarding the position of women in Ugandan society.

Conclusion

Reaching a conclusion about the contribution of this project to knowledge on non-formal education in a (post-)conflict situation, I will firstly discuss the partnerships at stake and secondly the type of education offered. Finally, I will reflect on the project as a case study for highlighting the dynamics when people collaborate in rebuilding their communities. It is remarkable that in Koboko two different community-based organisations joined forces: a women's group offering courses on literacy and income generating skills, and a group of young university graduates offering computer courses. The partnerships as exposed, when analysing the project, reveal a network of groups and interests that come together in the organisation as it is: women and youth of Koboko with many links with other organisations in the district, capable of mobilising women from nearly all the sub-counties. This is even more remarkable as the danger of this network falling apart is imminent. The cooperation of the different groups increases the organisational strength, but continuous efforts are needed to maintain this strength. It needs people handling conflicts, coming up with creative solutions to prevent participants from getting discouraged. It needs human activity of people who look beyond their own situation and take the lead in getting people to cooperate. This is strongly developed in YWCDO, but seems to be less developed in the local government. Thus, the strength of people in dire circumstances is complemented by the vulnerability of their initiatives in terms of sustainability. Structural embedding is at stake. Collaboration involving people valuing each other's efforts and being open to communication is a challenge in post-conflict conditions where each person, family and group has its own conflict history (compare

Paulson, 2011). Joint knowledge production (Zeelen & Van der Linden, 2009) is an attractive perspective, which needs practical conditions as Nussbaum (2011) explains: internal capabilities need conditions to become functionings.

What do the data collected in Koboko teach us about the role of non-formal education in post-conflict situations? In the district of Koboko, the educational infrastructure is limited and people are still struggling to get the education they need. As in many other post-conflict situations, the government focuses on formal education; flexible, non-formal need-oriented education is left to non-governmental organisations (see Zeelen, Van der Linden, Nampota & Ngabirano, 2010; Van der Linden & Manuel, 2011; Zeelen, Rampedi & Van der Linden, 2014). The YWCDO identified the need for a training course on leadership and entrepreneurship skills for women, raised the required funds, advertised the course and took care of its implementation. Although one may comment on the orientation on skills enhancement and the Western concepts that were taught, the seeds fell on fertile soil: many women applied to the course. All of them made plans to use what they learned to their own benefit, but also to the benefit of the surrounding community. Thus, the course seems to be an example of community oriented quality education, in which education and development are closely related. On the other hand, good intentions do not necessarily lead to good practice. Whether these women will succeed in using what they learned and in transferring it to others with a minimum of support from the organisation, remains to be seen. Affiliations and plans to make use of them were recorded, but we could not look beyond the level of education to assess the impact on the community.

Although a 'Northern' perspective on skills enhancement prioritising 'Western' knowledge may be recognised (Preece, 2009a), in the case of this course, there is certainly a link to community development and there is a strong orientation towards the needs of the learners in their own context. The women testify that they benefit from the contents offered and that they will put it to use in their own businesses, families and communities. Thus, the women in the course make their own 'blend' of Western and local knowledge, strengthening their roles as leaders. It is this mix of knowledge that they may need to achieve freedom of choice and autonomy (compare Nussbaum, 2011). Strikingly, the Southern perspective in the context of this course is related to the role of women leaders in maintaining peace and initiating entrepreneurship in the region. This perspective goes against traditions in the region as the trainers stated. Flyvbjerg (2001; 2006) could consider it a phenomenon worth studying as an extreme or deviant case. It complements the Western discussion on women in post-conflict

situations being deprived and disadvantaged (Davies, 2012): women are not only victims; they take the lead too.

Reflection

Taking stock, reflecting on the role of non-formal education in a (post-)conflict situation, I would state that quality education from a social justice point of view (Tikly & Barrett, 2011), should enable learners to adapt knowledge to their own needs and living conditions. Both the participating women and the youth in the centre show eagerness to acquire knowledge. This calls for reflection. Why would we deny people the knowledge that has been developed in other contexts? Who is going to decide which knowledge is suitable in a certain context and which knowledge is not? How can we develop a 'pedagogy of contingency' that views the learning needs of vulnerable people from their perspective and develops fertile functionings in dialogue?

Dialogue and interaction on contents and conditions are essential components of an approach to non-formal education and partnerships acknowledging and supporting people in (post-)conflict areas. The study of the non-formal education organisation in Koboko District reveals the importance of human activity to bring people together, to think of creative solutions, and to act as a leader in embedding the organisation in governmental structures. In line with the Global Monitoring Report 2013/4 (UNESCO, 2014), that pays tribute to the teachers involved in primary education and lower secondary education, we conclude that it is the professional who, either paid or unpaid, plays a crucial role in implementing non-formal quality education. It needs a professional with dedication and involvement to secure partnerships and create powerful learning environments (see also Nussy, 2015).

The metaphor of the cooking stones and the saucepan refers to the partnerships and to the conditions for maintaining these partnerships. Private initiatives and micro-development projects require a minimum of collective responsibility, embodied in national and local governments, just as Nussbaum (2011) discusses the responsibility of governments to guarantee a threshold of social justice. To form a firm base for a saucepan, cooking stones need even ground and an occasional hand to keep the saucepan in its position.

4.4 *This one is stronger*
Spotlights on the lifelong learning professional-in-action[11]

Abstract
Around the world, lifelong learning is being promoted as a strategy for coping with the changing realities of life and work. The fourth Sustainable Development Goal, agreed in September 2015, reflects this: *Ensure equitable and inclusive quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.* Despite its importance, doubts remain about the implementation of this goal in practice (Van der Kamp, 2000a; Regmi, 2015). This article looks at the practice of lifelong learning from the point of view of the professionals, their actions and the way these actions are challenged, supported and further developed. Following Schön's 'reflection-in-action' (1983), the term 'professional-in-action' is used to stress the role of the professional as making the difference on the ground. The leading question is: How can lifelong learning professionals be supported in their contribution to the surrounding society and its citizens? The professionals-in-action featuring in this article encompass professionals based in the Netherlands as well as in other, less privileged contexts. Meaningful experiences are used to build a story about challenges, the right to exist, commitment, recognition and room to manoeuvre. The experiences reveal the importance of interacting with the learner and the professional space needed to realise this. Professionalisation in professional learning communities and practice-oriented research should accompany this professional space.

Introduction

This one is stronger, concludes a little boy in Kindergarten, looking at the scales. It is autumn and the children have collected chestnuts, pinecones and acorns. They put them on the scales and look, estimate, try out and discuss. They discover that, if there is a pinecone on one side, then one chestnut on the other side is not enough to balance the scales. The observation *This one is stronger* is brought forward by one of the children, whose command of the Dutch language is still weak. The teacher reacts with an encouraging *Well done*! The classroom situation is taped and when we view the tape in class, the teacher, who is also my student, explains: *The boy should have said 'heavier', but I did not want to correct him, because he expressed the right idea*. (Haarlem/Alkmaar, The Netherlands, 2014).

This story reflects an everyday situation in a Dutch Kindergarten. There is a boy with a certain background, there is teaching material enriched with materials from the environment, there are children interacting, there is a student teacher and, of course, there is the setting of a classroom in a school in the Netherlands. The action of the student teacher supported the

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learning process of the boy and the other children as she explained later on. The presentation of this primary school classroom situation may appear out of place at the start of an article on lifelong learning. Yet the learning process of the children is one of many learning processes at the start of their lifelong learning career, which will extend throughout lives both inside and outside educational settings (see Jarvis, 2007). The actions of the student teacher can influence this career in a decisive manner. That is why I present this story in the framework of lifelong learning and why I regard this student as a lifelong learning professional-in-action. The details of the action count. As a professional, the student teacher interprets the boy´s statement, appreciates its value and acts accordingly. All this happens in seconds. She brings knowledge to the situation about mathematics, physics, language learning, classroom management and child development. This knowledge helps her to make judgments, but it does not tell her how to act. The situation does not allow for much time to reflect on the action to be taken. The action needs to be immediate to encourage the boy to continue to discover the world, find words for what he encounters and join in the game with the other children.

This example stems from my experience as teacher educator[12]. It is included here to show the importance of moments like this one for learning processes and the good (or bad) a professional can do in the heat of the moment. The student teacher could have corrected the words of the boy, discouraging him to express his thoughts on subsequent occasions and placing him outside of the group. Instead, she gave meaning to the boy's observation in the context of the group's activity. Doing so, she not only contributed to the learning process of the boy and his classmates, but she also took a stance in the theoretical and political debate on teaching and learning. Unlike the common interpretation of evidence-based education, in which test results are promoted as almost the only basis for action, the student uses data generated by observation and knowledge of the context to inform her action (Keijzer, Van der Linden, Bos-Vos & Verbeek-Pleune, 2012). Expanding on the notion of evidence-based education, she creates her own professional space to act in the way she deems appropriate for that particular child in that particular situation (Hooreman, 2015).

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[12] From 1993 until 1996 and again since 2006 I (have) worked as a teacher educator, training teachers for primary education in Amsterdam and Alkmaar in the Netherlands. Examples in this article are taken from this experience and from my experience as a lecturer/trainer in Ahfad University for Women in Sudan from 1996 until 2001 and as a lecturer/researcher in Eduardo Mondlane University in Mozambique from 2002 until 2006 and in the University in Groningen in the Netherlands, since 2007.

Worldwide, lifelong learning is cited as a strategy by which to cope with changing realities in life and work. Following Jarvis (2007), lifelong learning processes are understood as:

> The combination of processes throughout a lifetime whereby the whole person ... experiences social situations, the perceived contents of which is then transformed cognitively, emotively or practically ... and integrated into the individual person's biography resulting in a continually changing ... person (p. 1).

The formulation of the fourth Sustainable Development Goal (SDG4), which was agreed in September 2015, reflects this topicality (https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org). The goal reads: *Ensure equitable and inclusive quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all*. Although the importance of lifelong learning is recognised, there is doubt about its implementation in practice. Authors such as Van der Kamp (2000a), Martin (2003) and Borg and Mayo (2005) have identified a gap between lifelong learning policies and practices in the past. Referring to the new SDG4 and its significance for what he calls the 'least developed countries', Regmi (2015) points at a similar phenomenon. This leads us beyond policies to practices in which teachers and other professionals encourage people to engage in learning. Authors like Biesta (2013) claim teachers play a crucial role in creating learning opportunities. At the same time, Tonkens (2008) describes the hurdles that teachers and other professionals encounter, pointing out the challenges facing them, such as bureaucracy and marketisation.

This article will have a closer look at the role of lifelong learning professionals, their actions and the way these actions are challenged, supported and further developed. Lifelong learning professionals support lifelong learning processes in the broad sense of Jarvis' definition (2007). Their professionalism is based on training and experience. As the opening story shows, they bring knowledge to the situations they supervise, but they need to use their virtuosity in the terms of Biesta (2013) to deal with the complexity of each situation (Kunneman, 2013). Profession wise, they are teachers, trainers, educators, social workers, coaches or the like. Their actions are always social in the sense that they relate to learners in their context. Thus, they may be regarded as social interventionists, whose actions are connected with values and views on education and knowledge development (Kunneman, 2013). Following Schön's 'reflection-in-action' (1983), this article uses the term 'professional-in-action' to stress the role of the professional in making the difference on the ground. The leading question is: how can lifelong learning professionals be supported in their contribution to the surrounding society and its citizens? This implies that we firstly must understand what the contribution of these

professionals entails and secondly how this contribution can be supported and further developed.

Throughout my working life I have witnessed many professionals-in-action such as the student teacher described at the opening of this article. After discussing the challenges facing the professional-in-action, I will present some inspiring meaningful experiences to build a story about coping with these challenges, the right to exist, commitment, recognition and room to manoeuvre. The experiences vary in terms of context, perspective and description. They can be regarded as 'snapshots', each preceding a step in answering the leading question. The professionals-in-action featured include professionals based in the Netherlands, but also in other, more strained contexts. As lifelong learning professionals they are not only working in formal education, but also in other types of education and learning including social work. The focus on their actions when interacting with learners will lead to the identification of key factors in their contribution to society and ways to support and develop this contribution.

Challenges facing professionals-in-action

Lifelong learning professionals are in action all around the world working with more or less vulnerable children, youth and adults in more or less strenuous circumstances. Because their position is challenged in different ways, they continuously have to invent new ways of carrying out their work and keeping going like the student teacher applying her own interpretation of evidence-based teaching. Firstly, professionals have to account for the choices they make in their work. One of the challenges of these days is how to approach accountability. As evidence-based teaching is about sustaining teaching with data, this is a way of accounting for the choices teachers make (Keijzer, Van der Linden, Bos-Vos & Verbeek-Pleune, 2012). Teachers should be able to explain why they choose certain teaching strategies, social workers have to sustain the methods they use and development workers have to account for their approaches and results. Unfortunately, nowadays, the administrative work for accountability can take the form of 'heaps of data' to be collected, forms to be filled in and reports to be written. This creates the feeling that there is hardly any space and time left for the 'real' work with students, clients and other citizens, who become like numbers for the professional. Teachers have to document their plans and progress, care workers have to account for every telephone call made and development workers have to spend their time writing reports. Authors like Tonkens (2008) and Spiers (2014) even speak of the logic of bureaucracy taking

over professional work. This first challenge is how to satisfy control and accountability, while maintaining professional responsibility for the 'real' action.

'The world has changed' is what we hear when budget cuts are defended (f.e. Minister Ploumen in de Volkskrant, Van Es, 2015). There is some truth in these words. Civil society is growing in importance and taking initiatives in different domains of life. Citizens have become active citizens. Movements like 'Family Group Conferencing' originating from New Zealand (De Jong, 2014) take over tasks of the professionals in youth care and related fields. Private initiatives in development cooperation are valued as valuable additions to the work of development organisations (Van den Berg, 2012). In the Netherlands, the government promotes the 'participation society' (Troonrede, 2013). Government funding is limited, citizens have to take their responsibility and 'participate' and institutions and organisations have to market their products and services. Tonkens (2008) and Spiers (2014) call the latter the logic of the market, in which market mechanisms reduce citizens to consumers. The participation society and marketisation are taken together as the second challenge facing the professional. Both can be viewed as the consequence of budget cuts under a hostile austerity regime. On the other hand, withdrawal of the government may also be appreciated as a form of democratisation in which citizens have a say in the services they demand and may hold professionals to account. Also in the global South, there is a growing civil society taking its responsibility for lifelong learning (Preece, 2009; Van der Linden, 2015). This creates a form of accountability influencing the space to manoeuvre for the professional from another angle. This second challenge is about finding new ways of working acknowledging citizens' right to participate and take initiatives.

In line with budget cuts, but also with the growing importance of citizen's initiatives, the professionals' right of existence is questioned. Is the action of professionals still needed in a world full of active citizens? Do professionals form a threat to citizens' activities? Would it not be better if citizens took care of their own social and educational needs? This touches on the third challenge, which is the right to exist of professionals. Spiers (2014) argues they built up knowledge and experience in activating people in the welfare state which preceded the 'participation society'. He calls them 'silent forces' because the knowledge they gained remained 'tacit', meaning that it was developed almost unconsciously during the professionals' working life. The answer to current challenges would be to claim the knowledge and experience gained during the past years as an indispensable contribution to the society of today. Professionals have to (re)define their position, claiming space for the 'professional

logic' of activation (Spiers, 2014). That is not an easy task, considering the complexity of the work where old values and norms do not guide the right action anymore (Kunneman, 2013). That is why I view this as the third and main challenge to be explored. How can a professional express what he or she learned almost unconsciously? What is the core business of the (lifelong learning) professional and how does this relate to the surrounding society, including its active citizens?

The concern over the professional, the competencies needed to face current changes in society and the ways to acquire these does not stop at the national borders. 'Research voor Beleid', together with the universities of Glasgow, Thessaloniki and Leiden has developed an overview of the key competences for adult learning professionals (2010). In their editorial to a special issue of the European Journal for Research on the Education and Learning of Adults, Jütte, Nicoll and Olesen (2011) refer to this overview and discuss professionalisation in relation to quality. Also, they remind the reader that adult education has its roots in social and cultural movements and grass roots developments. In line with this origin, Von Kotze (2013) contends that educators and trainers working with people in precarious circumstances should interpret their role in a holistic way, not only educating but also striving for the improvement of the living conditions of the learners. Concerning formal education, the Global Monitoring Report of 2013/14, dedicated to teaching and learning, made the connection between teachers and quality stating that *An educational system is as good as its teachers* (UNESCO, 2014, p.1). Also Steiner-Khamsi (2015) pleas for more attention to teacher education in a contextualised way appropriate to local traditions and conditions. These are just a few examples of international literature paying tribute to the important role of the teacher/educator in achieving quality in (adult) education. All of them can be understood as sustaining the attention paid to the lifelong learning professionals-in-action and the ways to support them, which is the focus of this article. In the next section, we start our journey in a rural area of Mozambique in southern Africa and discuss professional potential and the difficulty of developing this potential.

Control, accountability and responsibility

In 2005 I sat in on a class on small business and entrepreneurship for adult learners, in the hills of Manica Province, Mozambique. The participants, all literacy learners, were squeezed into children's desks at a primary school. One by one they presented the product or service they wanted to sell, referring to the niche in the market they had discovered. The products ranged from arts and crafts to crops and retail on a small scale; the services offered were fridge repair, tailoring and welding. The

educator asked critical questions and guided the participants into developing their business plans. He used learning materials developed by international organisations but adapted them to the local conditions in this province of Mozambique, connecting to the experiences of the learners. During the break, the district officer dropped by on his motorcycle and discussed the necessary adaptations to the programme with the educator (Manica Province, Mozambique, 2005).

The session described above was part of a vocational skills training course complementing an adult literacy course. Most of the literacy learners in Manica Province, which borders Zimbabwe, were already engaged in small business to generate income for their families. The training course was meant to improve on what they were already doing and to strengthen the strategies they had chosen. The materials for the course had been developed by an international organisation and purchased at high price. The educators were taught how to use them in a so-called 'training-of-trainers'. Together with a Mozambican colleague I was involved in the project as an evaluator. I witnessed the difficulties of the participants of the training-of-trainers in mastering the content of the materials. It was decided that only those who were adult educators by training, would conduct the course with the literacy learners as a pilot. All the more surprised I was by the knowledgeable dedication of the educators in Manica. As evaluators, my colleague and I observed that these professionals had a great deal of knowledge of the environment, the infrastructure, the people, and the local market and yet they were approached as if they were merely there to apply pre-developed materials. 'Decentralisation' was the slogan of the Mozambican government and of many other African governments at the time. Our recommendation to take this slogan seriously and build on the capacity of the local professionals was accepted by the Ministry of Education and Culture, but did not lead to further action. The energy and dedication of the educators could have been put to better use by enriching the learning materials, developing new materials on related subjects and reaching more literacy learners. But the small business course was repeated in the same way in other provinces. The same costly materials were used for small groups of people without making use of the available human and social resources and without building on the experience gained (Van der Linden & Manuel, 2011).

The use of pre-developed materials in this example can be seen as evidence-based practice: both learners and professionals benefit from the experience of others. For the (inter)national bodies in charge the use of these materials was a way to exert control. This is understandable in a country where most teachers lack proper training. On the other hand, the potential of the professionals involved was not fully utilised nor developed for use in the future. The complexity of each situation must be acknowledged (Schön, 1983), and

professionals should be acknowledged for taking their responsibility and not shying away from this complexity (Kunneman, 2013). The use of pre-developed materials is not to be avoided altogether, nor is filling out forms, writing reports or following procedures, but when these dominate the professional-in-action, the complexity of the situation is denied. This may be characterised as the logic of bureaucracy under which professionals are merely executing what others have thought of. The logic of bureaucracy may exert control on the work of professionals to the extent that they do not feel trusted to do their job according to their own judgment anymore (Tonkens, 2008; Biesta, 2010; Spierts, 2014). Professionals may feel pressure to mould every child, client or participant to the same frame. This pressure decreases their freedom to manoeuvre and endangers the professionals' engagement with the learners in their specific context.

The solution is not to get rid of bureaucracy or control procedures, but to make use of these on a human scale (compare the professional bureaucracy of Mintzberg, 2013). Functional bureaucracy must be combined with professional responsibility. This is quite challenging balance to achieve as Lipsky (2010) describes in relation to 'street level bureaucrats' in public service. In Lipsky's analysis street level bureaucrats must negotiate the pressure of the bureaucracy to which they are accountable and the demands of the citizens they serve (see also Schout, 2007). The first key factor is to acknowledge the way professionals are taking responsibility to act in complex situations and to search for appropriate ways to support them. Referring to the example at the start of this paragraph, recognition of the experience of the adult learning professionals could have resulted in enriching the pre-developed materials with local knowledge and they themselves could have become the supervisors of new training courses expanding on what they learned in the pilot. The next example takes us to a girls' secondary school in a rural area in western Sudan and will help us understand more about the nature of the complexity on the ground.

Citizens, consumers and context

Why do children in Holland not learn Arabic as a second language? a girl asked me. I was accompanying a rural extension fieldtrip to a remote area in western Sudan and had been invited to give a guest lecture on the importance of learning English at a secondary school for girls. I thought I could demonstrate the importance by drawing a map of the world on the blackboard, then speaking Dutch while pointing at the Netherlands and speaking Arabic while pointing at Sudan. *Do not you think we need an international language to communicate*? I asked. The girl took me by surprise with

her out-of-the-box solution and made me reconsider my own assumptions and biases (Northern Kordofan, Sudan, 1997).

That girl was bright! She considered my question from her point of view without going for the obvious answer. Arabic was probably already a second language for this girl, and she wondered why Dutch children would not go through the same effort of learning Arabic as a language of instruction at school. This would facilitate communication, just as English as a common international language would do. The girl was much more knowledgeable about her situation than I was and taught me a lesson I will never forget. Her question drew my attention to her perspective and to the difficult job of expressing oneself in an unfamiliar language. The complexity in this case could be interpreted as an example of the way in which the global 'North' imposes a 'northern' perspective on development, ignoring the perspective of the global 'South' as Preece (2009a) states. The bright girl voiced the struggles of the students in her classroom and those of so many other students who are forced to express themselves in another language. The language issue, as a power issue, also plays a role for the boy in the first example and for the literacy learners in the second example who have to learn Portuguese in addition to their mother tongue.

While the first two examples concerned the actions of professionals, this example puts the spotlight on a learner (and a blundering professional). It teaches us how important it is to listen to the participants and to learn from them. Participants deserve to be treated as a citizens expressing the realities of the context in which they live, rather than as consumers who only process ready-made 'bites' of education or other services as the logic of the market contends (Van der Laan, 2006). The use of standard methods, standard approaches and standard views can easily blind the user to the realities experienced by the learners. The story about this clever girl reflects the importance of identifying 'the question behind the question', placing the learners in their context in order to understand their background and the way they cope with this background. In this case, the context was a secondary school in a remote area in western Sudan. At the time, there was a war going on between southern and northern Sudan, adversely affecting the western region due to reduced investments in education and other essential goods (Lindijer, 2015). This context contrasts with that of the primary school in the Netherlands of the first story, where the blackboard is a digital whiteboard and resources such as scales are available to illustrate the subjects taught. The challenge for professionals is to familiarise themselves with the context from the perspective of the 'other' (see for example Kapuściński, 2008).

While Preece explores the southern perspective and promotes it almost exclusively, I would take up the challenge of a dialogue bridging different contexts (Zeelen & Van der Linden, 2009; Zeelen, 2015). The voice of the South is polyphone. Different contexts call for different actions and interventions. In (post-)conflict situations, rebuilding the educational system demands appropriate policies and strategies, which make the most of the existing human and natural resources (UNESCO, 2011a). More stable conditions, in which people and institutions are on their way to recovering from past conflicts, demand fine-tuning and implementation. Everywhere, in the global 'North' as well as in the global 'South', the challenge is not to take things for granted, unintentionally speaking the language of the ruling power. As Freire (1970) stated, the power balance can only be corrected, if the mainstream view is identified as dominant, and makes way for the view 'from below'. What counts is how the perspective of the learners as citizens is sought and taken into account. Instead of approaching the learner as a consumer according to the logic of the market, the 'logic of the learner' must be followed in a similar manner to the logic of the client as discussed by Van der Laan (2006). The second key factor relates to dealing with assertive citizens and market oriented customers. It points at the perspective of the learner: learning from the learners is imperative to genuinely account for actions and interventions. The following story takes us again to Sudan to explore the role of professionals promoting learning processes by individuals and communities.

The professional's right to exist

> While my companion went to seek help, I sat beside my car waiting for it to be repaired. A makeshift shed protected me from the heat of the Sudanese sun. A young boy appeared to keep me company under my shed. He said he had heard the whack of a burst tyre. We chatted a bit. I told him I worked at Ahfad University for Women in the Sudanese capital. The boy replied: *I know that university. The girls came to our village to talk about female circumcision*. I felt proud of the students of my university playing that role. Although I did not know the students who went to that particular village, I had accompanied many students on rural extension fieldtrips to villages near and far from the capital. The harmful practice of female circumcision was always one of the themes to be discussed. This was done with role-plays, discussions and other methods, prepared at the university, but finalised in the field (Northern Kordofan, Sudan, 2001).

The boy in this short story articulates the impression left by the visiting students on the closed society of a village, where a boy is sent to accompany a woman sitting beside her car. The students had the courage to discuss the topic of female circumcision taking a stance against this harmful practice deeply rooted in tradition. The wording 'female genital mutilation'

supported their message in the language used. Although the girls, being university students, were regarded as coming from outside, they were only relative outsiders concerning harmful traditional practices. Most of the students at Ahfad University had been circumcised themselves and were experts by experience. They were highly motivated to fulfil the mission of Ahfad University to act as change agents in Sudanese society (Ahmed, 2006; Bedri, 2007). The university acted as a collective memory, building on the experiences of the girls and improving strategies and methods.

As professionals, the students interacted with the villagers and left an impression on the boy. Follow-up was needed to really change practices. In 2015 my former colleagues told me that cooperation with the villagers and their organisations had become a much stronger element in the fieldtrips. In this example we see how the professionals' right to exist lies in connecting with the context and the power for change in that context, while continuously reflecting on and improving the interventions carried out. In the repressive Sudanese context, Sen's (1999) argument that people's quality of life not only benefits from economic development, but even more from freedom, is all the more valid. Each individual has the right to live a life worthy of human dignity. Elaborating on this argument, Nussbaum's (2011) capabilities approach stresses that each individual is entitled to freedom, choice and basic social justice. She lists ten central capabilities, including life, bodily health, bodily integrity, emotions, playing and others. In the case of female circumcision, bodily integrity is at stake and also bodily health, as many women suffer from the complications of this operation, often performed without proper hygiene and care. Sometimes even the capability of life itself is at stake. The capabilities list has universal value. Although female circumcision is tradition in some parts of the South, bodily integrity, bodily health and life cannot be bargained with.

While Nussbaum holds governments, laws and regulations, which indeed form an important base, responsible, the interventions of professionals are still needed. They strengthen the actions of citizens breaking with harmful traditions and gaining capabilities combined with the conditions to realise the integrity of their body. The right to exist of lifelong learning professionals lies in the way they contribute to availing citizens with freedoms and capabilities, always in cooperation with the people involved, making their voices heard, intervening and withdrawing when necessary. This comes close to what Spierts (2014) calls 'activation', but where activation is easily associated with inactivity and passivity of the people concerned, the role of the professional starting from the logic of the learner is more modest and always connects with the voice of the people as citizens. The word 'citizens'

refs to community participants, in whose words the interest of the community echoes (Tonkens, 2008). The third key factor relates to the normative dimension of the interventions of the lifelong learning professionals, in all their modesty. They act 'virtue-based' (Biesta, 2013) as 'normative professionals' (Kunneman, 2013). The goal is to improve the quality of life of the people involved. Interventions, methods and results, which in some cases go against ruling norms and traditions, have to be accounted for in the light of this goal. The next example takes us to northwestern Uganda to explore the commitment of the professional to this normative goal.

Professionals staying on course

In October 2013 I accompanied my former colleague Amy Flynn[13] to northwestern Uganda where she supports a community development organisation uniting a women's group and a youth group. Amy was born in southern Sudan, but fled from the war zone in that area with her parents and sisters to northwestern Uganda. She grew up there. She completed her education at Ahfad University for Women in northern Sudan and at the Institute for Social Studies in The Hague in the Netherlands, where she had to stay due to health reasons. We spent our days in Uganda in and around the building that was constructed with money collected by Amy's organisation from several sources in the Netherlands and a great deal of hard work on the part of the local organisation. I observed people lining up to discuss matters with Amy ranging from the local news to family matters to the strategy of the organisation. In her own words, Amy with her background in the area, while living in the Netherlands, acts as a 'bridge' between the different contexts, cultures, expectations (Koboko, Uganda, 2013).

This example shows how parties from different backgrounds come together to make a difference for a community with a turbulent history. There is a local community development organisation, in which women and youth from the community cooperate. There is Amy with strong ties to this community, currently living in the Netherlands. There are Dutch donor organisations. There are participants in the activities of the local organisation. And there is a (local) government. Not all of these are mentioned in the example; they came into the picture when I talked with a range of people as part of a research project on the role of the diaspora in rebuilding education in the area (Van der Linden, Blaak & Andrew, 2013). This made me understand a lot about the conditions on the ground and even more about human involvement (Van der Linden, 2015). Amy showed a deep commitment to helping the region that once hosted her and her family, when they came as refugees from bordering southern

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[13] Pseudonym, respondent in Van der Linden, 2013 and 2015

Sudan. A local government representative, however, voiced her appreciation for what Amy was doing, coupled with her fear that Amy might bring certain unwanted Western cultural elements to the local community. This revealed how much diplomacy and flexibility is required to play the role of 'bridge'.

Through their biography people like Amy embody a bridge that requires heavy maintenance. They are the ultimate example of what Van der Laan (2006) calls embodiment and experience of social work professionals. He describes the involvement of the professional as a person with his or her own background and biography. Spiers (2014) refers to Van der Laan when he adds this aspect of personal involvement as indispensable component of the professional beside craftsmanship (being regarded as knowledgeable) and artistry (possessing the necessary skills). It is this personal drive that is needed to find the courage to enter the complexity identified by Kunneman (2013). Out of what he calls 'amor complexitatis' ('love of complexity'), people act as crafts(wo)men in the 'swampy' conditions of the current reality. In the case presented this applies to Amy as a member of the diaspora, but also to the people of the organisation on the ground. Trying to make a difference on the ground, they demonstrate their internal strength, which keeps them manoeuvring patiently to negotiate the needs of the different parties involved. Unfortunately, as the words of the local government officer indicated, they lack a firm base in the surrounding society, which could be regarded as external strength (Spiers, 2014).

As authors like Van der Laan (2006), Kunneman (2013) and Spiers (2014) confirm, the main resource for professionals to rely on in complex circumstances is their personal resource. Education and training help, but only work if connected to the personal desire to do the job well (Sennett, 2008). 'Doing the job' well means understanding and encouraging individuals and communities to improve the quality of their lives. There is a risk that professionals may turn into officials disconnected from their personal resources and performing prescribed tasks according to predefined rules (Van der Laan, 2006). In the field of education and teacher training, competence-based education, which started out by analysing the professional working process, can have the effect of fragmenting the work in learnable pieces or chunks (Van der Linden & Mendonça, 2006; Research voor Beleid, 2010). Resisting this kind of fragmentation and 'mechanisation', professionals almost have to work against the odds not to become deprived of their main resource. The fourth key factor relates to tapping into this personal resource, uncovering the internal strength of the professional and building on this to develop external strength. In the example described this could result in the work of the

community development organisation receiving recognition from the local authorities and adding to the efforts of these authorities in the reconstruction of education in this war-torn area (Van der Linden, 2015). Searching for ways to build on the internal strength of professionals, the next example takes us back to Mozambique.

Recognition and room to manoeuvre

Close to Maputo, the capital of Mozambique, on the coast of the Indian Ocean, is a village called Marracuene, where people live on fishing, agriculture and some tourism. My fellow researchers from Eduardo Mondlane University and I chose this village for a feedback meeting in the framework of our research into literacy learning. We invited literacy teachers, their supervisors and district officers from neighbouring villages to share the preliminary results of our research and get feedback. Around forty 'literacy professionals' took local transport on a Saturday morning and sat with us in the desks of a primary school to discuss their views and reflections. One of their day-to-day worries, they told us, was to encourage people to continue attending classes when their neighbours insisted on them joining in work and leisure activities. After the meeting we walked to a nearby restaurant for a lunch of fish and rice. It took a long time for the lunch to be prepared, but that did not affect the good spirits. People shared chairs, plates and meals and finally there was enough for everybody before returning home (Marracuene, Mozambique, 2004).

The experience lingered in my mind because of the enthusiasm of the participants, first engaging in discussions on their work and afterwards enjoying their time in the restaurant. In a country where workshops were usually organised in luxurious hotels and participants would only appear if they got high allowances and copious meals, this feedback meeting involved only very basic compensation (the participants each received less than a euro to compensate their bus fare). My Mozambican colleagues explained to me that literacy teachers, who only receive a small subsidy for their work, are not used to getting this kind of recognition or to even being consulted at all. This was the situation at the time of the meeting in Marracuene in 2004 (Van der Linden & Rungo, 2006) and it continues to be like this (Manuel, Van der Linden & Popov, accepted). Just as the internal capabilities, discussed by Nussbaum (2011), need certain conditions to turn into 'functionings', the professionals with their personal involvement, skills and knowledge, need certain conditions to function as professionals. Although it cannot be denied that there is a dire need for better material conditions for literacy teaching and learning in Mozambique, recognition and support of professionalism may be just as important. What was recognised in the meeting in Marracuene, is the professional as a person with his or her dedication and commitment, and also the knowledge stemming from the action on the ground. This knowledge is not gathered through a single

action, but through multiple actions. It is used and built on in every action taken, ranging from the selection and adaptation of materials to interaction with participants and clients, planning with colleagues and negotiating working conditions.

The knowledge of professionals-in-action is mostly tacit knowledge (Polanyi, 1967, in Schön, 1983), which requires recognition and encouragement to be moulded into appropriate words. The meeting in Marracuene can be regarded as a meeting to develop words to describe experiences and share meaning as professionals-in-action. It served as a professional space, carefully prepared and guided towards exchanging and documenting knowledge which usually remains hidden. Space coupled with interaction, not only with people in similar circumstances, but also with people who respectfully challenge dominant views, allows for collective learning and the production of shared meaning which strengthens the perception and action of professionals and learners involved (Friedman, 2011; Zeelen, 2015). The fifth key factor concerns professional space that should not be an isolated space fenced off from the outside world, but open to other views and perspectives of reality to enable learning. What is needed, is 'conversational' space in terms of Van Haaster (1991), which serves to *make a coordination possible between the participants in order to generate not only individual improvements, but, especially, collective competence* (p. 245, translation by the author). More recently, Wenger (1999) introduced the term 'communities of practice', which inspired the initiation of professional learning communities in different domains (see also Fullan, 2015). The platform function of these communities allows interaction with the surrounding society and stimulates sharing of knowledge between professionals in different fields of action (Scholtens, 2015). The Marracuene meeting presented at the start of this paragraph was designed to inform research. In retrospect it also informs the conceptualisation of professionalisation as the next paragraph will describe.

Professional space and professionalisation

Taking stock, throughout the examples presented in this article, we have come to know several interesting people. Not all of them are professionals; some are participants, learners, citizens and community members. What makes them special, is that they make observations, ask questions, act in unexpected ways and make other people think and question the way they understand reality. They act as change agents without imposing this change. Thus, they play a decisive role in lifelong learning processes. Without denying that others can play this role, this is the professionals' commitment. Professionals must face sensitive issues and dig

into the complexities of the society of today, lifting the smoke screen on the social and educational exclusion of vulnerable groups. The examples mentioned relate to education for young people and adults, income generation, bodily health, and community and professional development. These are all complex issues that matter in developing capabilities of individuals, groups, communities and societies at large (Sen, 1999; Nussbaum, 2011). Complex as they are, they form the object of the professionals' actions.

The leading question of this article is the question how lifelong learning professionals can be supported in their contribution to the surrounding society and its citizens. The key factors identified throughout this text show that they are held accountable against evidence-based standards that serve fair treatment, and at the same time get critical questions from citizens that challenge these standards. Their actions are motivated by their professionalism and cannot be informed by static standards. They need professional space with flexible standards to direct their actions and an overarching standard by which they can measure these flexible standards. The development of the capabilities of their clients, pupils, students or participants can serve as the overarching standard against which flexible standards can be measured. The drive to continuously invent and develop flexible standards derives from the professionals' desire to do their work well. As they share this desire with their fellow professionals, learning communities can be formed. The type of professionalisation needed begins close to the professionals-in-action and to the learning communities in which they participate. Professionalisation should serve the development of professional communities as a conversational space and as a platform for the development of new approaches grounded in the experiences of the professionals taking full account of the complexity of their work and their role as capability enabler. The learning communities in themselves represent a form of professionalisation in terms of developing experience-based standards for the professional-in-action. In this sense professionalisation, which forms the precondition for the autonomy of professionals as Mintzberg (2013) explains, connects to professional space and professional learning communities, rather than to diploma-oriented formal education.

´Experience-based' professionalisation as proposed in the previous paragraph challenges dominant epistemological beliefs, because it implies the ongoing development process of science as indispensable support to the professional-in-action. The separation between scientists as knowledge developers and professionals or practitioners as knowledge users is a false one as Schön (1983) and Van Strien (1986) already recognised. Knowledge cannot be developed by scientists and applied by professionals. Schön (1983) promotes 'action science',

which is concerned with situations of uncertainty and instability and works through the cooperative inquiry of the professionals involved. Van Strien (1986) defends attention to problem solving in every day practice as the starting point of science. Although these approaches were developed some time ago and did not succeed in penetrating mainstream science, they have not lost their expressiveness as they keep returning in different guises. Flyvbjerg (2001) and Biesta (2013) refer to Aristotle promoting 'phronesis' as giving sense to social science (see also Flyvbjerg, Landman & Schram, 2012). Kunneman (2013) speaks of rival models of complex systems which are all valid at once. He states that the professional has to have the courage to abandon the idea of stable foundations for valid knowledge. This comes close to 'action research' in which knowledge is derived from and built on (professional) action (see for example Boog, Preece, Slagter & Zeelen, 2008). All these authors propagate research that focuses on actions and interventions in social domains. It is this kind of practice oriented research that places the professional at the core of the development of new knowledge through experience and reflection (see also Van der Kamp, 2002). Professional space and professional learning communities cannot do without it.

Discussion

Starting from the lifelong learning professional in dialogue with a young child, we have used experiences from the lifelong learning practice and notions derived from theories to create a picture of the working conditions, internal strength and way to develop this internal strength of the lifelong learning professional. One could argue with the narrative approach of this article. Indeed, research methods like stimulated recall (Stevenson, 2015) would contribute to the scientific rigour of this exercise bringing together the dynamics of practice and the seriousness of theories. As it is, this article presents a personal learning history on the way in which professional practice and knowledge development can converge. This tentative reflection on how the relevance and adequacy of lifelong learning practice can be strengthened, in order to come closer to reaching the sustainable development goal concerned, calls for a follow up in professional learning communities and other embodiments of professional space linked to theory development. To challenge common epistemological beliefs, putting practice and theory on the scales of the child in Kindergarten, the exclamation *This one is stronger* should refer to lifelong learning practice to inform theory and not the other way round. The spotlights on the lifelong learning professional-in-action will hopefully lead to lifelong learning research supporting, informing and getting informed by professional learning communities of lifelong learning professionals.

4.5   Reflection with pointers on the role of the professional and professionalisation

This chapter started by presenting an intermezzo on the professional practice of Dutch primary school teachers followed by an account of non-formal education in a post-conflict area in Africa and an article on the lifelong learning professional. Many (short) stories on professional practice that do not seem to have much in common are told in this chapter. The professionals appearing throughout the stories are teachers, trainers, students and activists. Many of them are still studying, gathering work experience as freelancers or volunteers or serving their community without any material incentive; only a few work with a permanent contract and regular payment. It is no coincidence that they are drawn together in the search for an answer to the sub-question: *What kind of professional involvement is needed to encourage and facilitate learning by groups at risk*? They show involvement while maintaining professional standards. Their common drive is educating, not for the sake of showing their knowledge, but for the sake of opening up new possibilities for the learners. This is what the learners appreciate, as revealed in the article on literacy in chapter 3. This is what Nussbaum (2011) calls 'fertile functioning': education gives access to other capabilities. Professionals taking this seriously should stay in the background to allow the learners to flourish and 'function'. In this light it is to their credit that they are called 'silent forces' (Spierts, 2014). It does not prevent them from taking risks challenging standard approaches and traditions as I witnessed in the women's leadership and entrepreneurship course in northwestern Uganda, where women were promoted to act as leaders. Learners and professionals come together to create not only new knowledge, but also new practices and new traditions. They share challenges and possible solutions, mostly with a lot of fun. The following pointers have been identified for the main research question - *How can lifelong learning serve groups at risk*?

The relationship between lifelong learning professionals and the learners

Lifelong learning professionals interact with (potential) learners on a day-to-day basis. They know of their struggles for survival. They can assess their needs and identify opportunities to meet these. They aim to increase the capabilities and functioning of the learners (Nussbaum, 2011). This is a very broad stipulation, but it indicates the way in which professionals who take their job seriously, constantly develop their craftsmanship (Sennett, 2008). The search for the improvement of lifelong learning practices never stops and 'drives' the professional. Values

play a role in supporting the learners. Increasingly, lifelong learning practices include people with different backgrounds, histories and languages. Lifelong learning professionals should be inventive in the way they unite people for a common cause. This plays a role when different groups join in one organisation or activity, but also with different groups in the classroom. It is a constant struggle to keep the balance even. Things may come adrift in a split second. As the project in northwestern Uganda demonstrates, women can play an important role in rebuilding society because of their position within social networks. Empowering them may go against dominant cultural values; that is a reason for caution, not for complying with 'old' values. It calls for 'normative professionals' (Kunneman, 2013), who seek to improve their professional practice to serve the learners, building on the agency of these learners.

Ready-made knowledge brokering or interactive knowledge creation

The challenging assignment of the lifelong learning professional is not to deposit knowledge in learners as if they were empty vessels in need of ready-made knowledge (Freire, 1970) but to join in a process of creating knowledge with the learners, connecting the experiences and needs of the learners to the existing body of knowledge. The existing body of knowledge is not a static set of facts, but a dynamic collection of theoretical insights and experiences that is constantly in development. Acknowledging this makes one critical about what is dominantly considered as knowledge, usually from the global North. It creates openness towards other forms of knowledge, such as the knowledge from the global South. Professionals have to build their own knowledge base to be sure of a flexible base in interaction with the learners (Oonk, Van Zanten & Keijzer, 2007). Instead of playing the knowledgeable expert as Illich (1971) states, the lifelong learning professional goes into dialogue with the learners, acknowledges their experiences and searches for ways to build on these (Freire, 1970). This is challenging because this dialogue takes a new shape in every context, in every period of time and in every classroom or lifelong learning meeting (see also Biesta, 2013).

Professionalisation and professional space

Professionalisation is often used in the sense of formalisation. Methods and approaches that prove to be effective can be formalised to save re-inventing the wheel (Mintzberg, 2013). For young organisations like YWCDO in Uganda this is certainly useful. But it should not turn into institutionalisation in which the system defines what is good for the participants (Illich, 1971).

This would kill creativity and openness to dialogue. To pioneer and be creative, professionals need professional space. The organisations of which the professionals are part should, if possible, combine formalisation with professional space where needed. Professionalisation should encourage learning opportunities in this professional space and strengthen the processes that play a role in this space (Friedman, 2011) instead of going for formalisation and formal degrees. Unfortunately, the political environment seems to prefer formalisation for management purposes and cannot appreciate the space in which educational risks are taken. The professional power to facilitate learning and keep people together on a micro level does not automatically lead to recognition on macro level (Spierts, 2014). Communities could benefit, if (local) authorities made more use of available resources in terms of human capabilities and acknowledged craftsmanship (Sennett, 2008) instead of pushing practices into the straightjacket of standard solutions (Van der Laan, 1990). Practice-oriented research should support the development of knowledge, based on experience, thus contributing to the recognition and the learning process of the professionals involved.

Chapter 5

Research and lifelong learning

Chapter 5 Research and lifelong learning

5.1   Intermezzo: *Welcome to the district that has produced great people*!
Fieldtrip to Koboko, northwestern Uganda

Welcome to the district that has produced great people! These were the welcoming words with which I was received in the district of Koboko. It took a nine-hour bus trip from Kampala, the capital of Uganda, to arrive in the remote northwestern corner of Uganda, bordering the Democratic Republic of Congo and South Sudan. On the way I saw numerous petty traders, thatched cottages, some velvet monkeys and even an elephant in the distance. From the moment the bus crossed the Nile, the scenery was green, hilly and full of meandering streams. But when we arrived at the main town of Koboko district, Nyarilo was dark apart from some lights emanating from solar energy and generators. *There is no power in Koboko*, explained my travelling companion: *This government does not invest in this region*.

My goal was to visit the Youth and Women Community Development Organisation (YWCDO) in Koboko, supported by an organisation of members of the South Sudanese diaspora living in the Netherlands. I had familiarised myself with the experiences of South Sudanese people in the Netherlands who were trying to contribute to the development of the region studying their activities as a new form of development cooperation. And when I was invited to accompany Amy Flynn[14], the chairperson of the diaspora organisation, on one of her projects, I happily took the chance to gain insight into the receiving side. So I brought a bag full of clothes to distribute, but also a voice recorder and a camera to collect data for my research.

The 'great people' referred to in the beginning were Idi Amin and his people. Idi Amin Dada Oume, by some called ´the butcher of Uganda´, ruled Uganda from 1971 until 1979 (Broere & Vermaas, 2005). Like most of the inhabitants of Koboko district he was a member of the Kakwa tribe. I was told that after Amin was overthrown in 1979, the region was punished for his harsh regime. Tribes like Kakwa have a history of migration and live scattered in South Sudan, Uganda and the Democratic Republic of Congo. During the war between northern and southern Sudan and the atrocities of the Lord's Resistance Army of Joseph Kony, many South

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[14] Just as in the preceding chapters I use pseudonyms.

Sudanese fled from Sudan to Uganda and Ugandans living in remote areas sought refuge in the towns. Refugees from neighbouring Congo also settled in the district. Just three kilometres from the house where I was staying a militia, called Militia 23, was active in Congo. So I was told not to leave my room at night.

At the time of my visit, YWCDO offered a training course on leadership and entrepreneurship skills to 25 women from six of the seven sub-counties of Koboko. While they studied topics like leadership styles, communication and business plans, I collected background information about the organisation, the centre and the training, conducted interviews with the founders of the organisation, with the local authorities, the trainers and of course also with the women themselves. One of them was Rebecca, whom I had met before at the market of Nyarilo where she was selling her goods. Another one was Leah from Kuluba sub-county. During the interview Leah hardly looked at me and each of her answers consisted of a few hardly audible words. I had trouble understanding the little information she gave. I understood she had moved from Marata where she grew up to a more fertile region, Kuluba, on the border with South Sudan to engage in small-scale crop farming. When I asked her whether she participated in a group, she told me she was the secretary of the farmers' association of Kuluba. *So, everybody knows you in Kuluba*? I tentatively concluded. Immediately she straightened her back and looked me in the eye with a fierce: *Yes, of course*! Leah turned into a different person, when I recognised her important task. She showed herself to be very capable of selecting the right elements of the course to share with the members of her organisation.

The two-week course finished with the participants' presentation of action plans which showed that they all held positions similar to Leah within their communities. Several government officials were present at the closing ceremony. They praised the course and the organisation and the mayor promised to repair the road. This gave me valuable insight into the strength of a locally embedded organisation as a precondition for support from outside. Hopefully, in ten years' time, the great people produced in the district may be women leaders. YWCDO is certainly helping to make this happen.

5.2   Introduction to the articles in this chapter

This account is based on a fieldtrip report that was shared with the YWCDO members immediately after the trip. The data collected were analysed and processed in the study on

non-formal education in (post-)conflict areas as discussed in chapter 4 (Van der Linden, 2015). The story illustrates the role of the researcher as a guest in an environment where people were struggling to secure a livelihood for themselves and their families and where every effort made beyond this should be highly respected. The interview with Leah made me aware of this. It was not so much her words as her attitude and behaviour that showed me that I was perceived as a researcher from outside to whom the 'right' answers had to be given.

As Smith states in her book on research and indigenous peoples (2012):

> Research is not an innocent or distant academic exercise but an activity that has something at stake and that occurs (in a set of social and political conditions (p. 5).

A white lady accompanying the chairperson of the funding organisation may be considered as a representative of Western countries, the former colonisers of Uganda. That is not an easy starting point from which to understand what is going on and to appreciate people's efforts. Just as Freire (1970) revealed that 'banking' pedagogy reproduced oppression of the learners, so Smith analyses that research done by outsiders easily turns into a new form of colonialism because it extracts indigenous traditions, knowledge and skills and attempts to integrate these into Western knowledge. It is interesting that Smith, although very critical of the colonial tradition of research, does not reject research as such. In her book 'Decolonizing methodologies', she brings to the fore some very important questions, such as:

> Whose research is it? Who owns it? Whose interests does it serve? Who will benefit from it? Who has designed its questions and framed its scope? Who will carry it out? Who will write it up? How will its results be disseminated? (p. 10).

It is a challenge to overcome the 'colonial' relationship between the researcher and the researched and this demands opening up for dialogue and reflecting on the role of the researcher, including the 'insider' researcher (compare also Chambers, 1997, quoted in the general introduction to this thesis).

Whereas the paragraph on research in the general introduction justifies the overall research approach for this thesis, this chapter is about research for lifelong learning. As there is no standard approach for lifelong learning programmes to be beneficial for their participants, research is indispensable for the development of appropriate programmes. In an attempt to uncover unheard voices of people with an interest in lifelong learning, this chapter looks at the question: *Which research approach could be instrumental in the development of*

meaningful lifelong learning programmes for groups at risk? Thinking of Leah in Uganda, her initial answers to my questions could easily have led me to disregard a very important part of her personality and of her interest in the course in which she participated. This illustrates the importance of uncovering unheard voices for the development of appropriate lifelong learning programmes. Referring back to Smith's questions, the objective is not only to expose and register the unheard voices, but also to engage in a dialogue with them and tune programme development to them. Of course there is no straightforward guideline for the way to go about this. Similar questions keep coming back as questions of conscience asked in the action research tradition (Boog, Coenen, Keune & Lammerts, 1998; Boog, Coenen & Keune, 2001; Boog, Slagter, Jacobs-Moonen & Meijering, 2005; Boog, Preece, Slagter & Zeelen, 2008).

The first publication incorporated in this chapter analyses insider and outsider contributions on action research in Africa to the World Congress on Action Research held in Groningen in 2006 (Boog, Preece, Slagter & Zeelen, 2008). It has been published as a book chapter. One piece of research discussed in that book chapter was the research on non-formal education in Mozambique, presented in chapter 3. The second article (published in a peer reviewed journal) discusses how a university research programme on adult education and social exclusion was built to support practices and policies in a disadvantaged region of South Africa. Research topics resulted from consultations with the people in the region, including politicians, professionals and participants. Feedback sessions were held during the research process and the results were brought back to the communities. This research programme can be seen as a way of bridging the usual gap between the university and its environment and as a form of joint construction of a research programme that is meaningful and useful for the researched groups themselves. Taken together, the two articles will generate some critical issues (pointers) to be taken into consideration for the development of research for lifelong learning programmes.

5.3   Action research in Africa: challenges and perspectives[15]

Abstract
Josje van der Linden and Jacques Zeelen took the challenge to analyse the contributions of researchers in Africa to the World Congress on Action Research. They discuss nine research projects carried out in different African countries on different topics. This leads to the identification of three important issues for reflection and discussion: dialogue with and participation of stake holders, follow-up and power relations and knowledge production and academic output.

Introduction

Because of its 'empowerment imperative' action research seems the most appropriate type of research in developing countries. As Boog, Preece, Slagter and Zeelen (2008) state in the introduction to their book, action research aims (among other objectives):

> to provide the means to improve people's self-determination — to empower them in their roles as professional practitioners or citizens in the diverse social domains in which they live and work (p. 1-2).

This comes close to the intentions of international development cooperation with governments, civil society organisations and people in developing countries. However, good intentions and good practices do not necessarily go together. Reflection on and discussion of action research experiences in developing countries are needed to provide insight into the phenomenon and, if expedient and useful, to design improved ways of implementation.

The World Congress on Action Research (WCAR) provoked many scholars from developing countries to reflect on their experiences and to write and present their findings. These contributions provide a good opportunity to identify common issues. Because of the authors' familiarity with Africa (at least with some countries on this continent) contributions from that context have been chosen for investigation. They focus on diverse issues as farmers' gatherings in local communities in Kenya (Kitetu, 2005), young farm workers in South African farms (Modiba, 2008), children affected by war in Uganda (Angucia, 2006), San people in

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[15] Published as Van der Linden, J. & Zeelen, J. (2008). Action Research in Africa: Challenges and Perspectives. In B. Boog, J.Preece, M. Slagter & J. Zeelen. *Towards Quality Improvement of Action Research. Developing Ethics and Standards* (pp. 183-197). Rotterdam/Taipei: Sense Publishers.

Botswana (Lekoko, 2006), non-formal education programmes in Mozambique (Van der Linden & Manuel, 2006), business innovation in Burkina Faso (Karsten & Pennink, 2006), HIV/AIDS in Uganda (Munyonyo, 2006) and in South Africa (Wijbenga, Vintges & Zeelen, 2006) and developing innovation competence at Makerere University in Uganda (Kibwika, 2006)[16]. Some interesting, but also alarming similarities in constraints and obstacles to be overcome have been found and will be discussed in this chapter.

Guiding questions

Parallel to the concerns expressed at the WCAR, the development of ethics and standards in action research is a central theme of the book based on the congress, the guiding questions for our analysis reflect three central perspectives on this theme: research design and methods, research follow up and theoretical basis and impact. They are formulated as follows:

- To what extent does the researcher succeed in establishing a dialogue between the actors, facilitating the learning process of all the actors involved, taking into account ethical problems and power relations?
- Does the research aim to produce practical knowledge and how are the perspectives of this knowledge to be used to guide sustainable solutions for social problems?
- Does the research include a cyclical process of action and reflection to produce knowledge applicable in other contexts or new theoretical insights?

The questions reflect the empowerment aim, which forms the link between action research and development cooperation. In the context of developing countries the buzz word 'participation' is just as important as 'action'. In Participatory Action Research (PAR) we encounter a combination of the two. In her key note on the WCAR Preece (2006) discussed the rhetorics and critiques of Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA). PRA was initiated as a reaction on 'Rapid Rural Appraisal' (RRA), which in practice meant a top-down quick way to assess needs in rural

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[16] The congress committee received several papers from researchers in developing countries. Those received on time have been included in the congress CD. Unfortunately not all the writers could make it to the congress, mostly because of lack of funds (speaking about empowerment and participation ...). This chapter is based on papers, presentations and extra information received from participants and intended participants of the WCAR. The Kenya example stems from the CODESRIA General Assembly in December 2005 in Mozambique. The example of higher education in Uganda was derived from the PhD study of Paul Kibwika.

communities by people not really involved in these communities. In opposition to this, PRA was supposed to involve the local community in expressing their needs and ways to meet them. PRA methods and objectives are similar to action research. In fact, PRA methods like mapping, ranking and drawing, useful for illiterate people, have inspired many action researchers. Experiences with PRA as discussed by Preece and others (see for example Boog, Coenen, Keune & Lammerts, 1998; Cooke & Kothari, 2001) can be used to sharpen the guiding questions.

However, community participation needs itself to be critically reviewed. There is a danger of the participation not being representative of all the members of a community or even prioritising those in power. Whose voices are heard? Whose are excluded? Are differences in view recognised? This seems a good addition to the first question, where we look at the involvement of all the actors, taking into account ethical problems and power relations. Then there is the role of the researcher: the PRA researcher should be a facilitator of discussions and actions. This means that researchers must acquire the competencies to be skilful and effective facilitators. Is the responsibility to ensure a proper follow up of the research, which is at stake in the second question, a realistic one, when we refer to the researcher's competencies and the conditions of the research? Finally, PRA, possibly because of its roots in Rapid Rural Appraisal, bears the risk of suffering from of 'under-theorisation'. Are newly collected data confronted with previous research results and existing knowledge and analysed in a broader perspective? Or is it as if each data collection mission seems to be the first one that has been carried out? This concerns the third question about reflection, theory and knowledge production.

Each of the three guiding questions is answered on the basis of an analysis of the 'African' contributions. It goes without saying that all the research projects discussed relate to all three questions. However, each case will be discussed under one of the questions, some of them more extensively by way of example.

Establishing a dialogue between the actors

To what extent does the researcher succeed in establishing a dialogue between the actors, facilitating the learning process of all the actors involved, taking into account ethical problems and power relations? To explore possible difficulties in establishing a dialogue, which is not dominated by (existing) power relations, an example from research among farmers in Kenya

will be discussed first (Kitetu, 2005). Then we will proceed to South Africa, where farming is organised mostly in large farms and Modiba attempted to communicate in a meaningful way with the young farm workers (Modiba, 2008). Thirdly, Angucia will take us to children affected by the war in northern Uganda (Angucia, 2006). Obviously in these three cases power is present and researchers have to get to terms with ethical questions. Let us see how the three of them managed to create the conditions for dialogues and facilitate learning processes.

'Baraza' versus farmer groups in Kenyan villages

Catherine Kitetu (Kitetu, 2005) looked into communication strategies used by Kenyan agricultural extension services, which were meant to support farmers towards development. She found that extension services use the traditional social gatherings, called 'baraza', for community mobilisation. Discourse analysis of the 'baraza' demonstrated power and control at various linguistic levels, including style, topic control, address forms, inclusive and exclusive pronouns and modality. For example, in extension activities the words 'we' and 'you' or 'they' were used by extension officers as respectively referring to 'we', the extension officers and 'you', the farmers. An opening phrase in a baraza gathering would be: 'We came to teach you'. No women were found in 'baraza' gatherings. As a result, extension services, though motivated by noble intentions, can be viewed as service delivery of the top-down mode. Even though the words were being used without awareness of their connotations, they formed an indication of propositions and relationships and had their impact on the establishment (or non-establishment) of a dialogue.

According to Kitetu, farmer groups or community groups were found to be more participatory and dialogical. In these groups rural folk, including women, define and implement their own development. This is illustrated by a remark by one of the participating farmers, which becomes even more interesting in the light of the current ethnical problems in Kenya:

> We are ethnically mixed. Before, I would not have mixed with Kalenjin or Luo. We now have friends. We travel to other regions for courses and general visits (Kitetu, 2005, p.5).

Kitetu states that the use of traditional ways of gathering may account for the non-adherence to agricultural technology. She hopes she will contribute to the extensionists' awareness of power relations, when they try to organise a dialogue with the farmers and consider making use of traditional meetings like the 'baraza'. Kitetu does not explain how farmer groups

succeed in being participatory and dialogical in an environment where the 'baraza' displays power structures that do not only exist in these traditional meetings. However, Kitetu's message is clear and useful for the development of participatory and dialogical methods in action research: beware of unconscious power relations in local meeting traditions. Researchers in their role as facilitators may unintentionally strengthen existing power relations and the effect of their work may be contrary to their own aspiration to empower all the actors in a certain field and strengthen the capacity of the whole community.

Young adult farm workers in South Africa: will they say what they think?

Mamphago Modiba carried out research among young farm workers in Limpopo Province (Modiba, 2008), one of the former home lands in South Africa. She grew up on a farm herself and was lucky to be able to get education up to tertiary level because of her own persistence and the support of her parents. Most of the colleagues she grew up with did not get this chance. This motivated Modiba to take up the subject of educational needs of farm workers for her research in the framework of the research programme 'From Social Exclusion to Lifelong Learning' of the Adult Education department of the University of Limpopo (see Rampedi, 2003; Zeelen, 2004).

The research took place in a context in which working conditions for labourers, including working hours and minimum wage, had been improved. That was after the end of the Apartheid regime and the first free elections. Policies and strategies of the South African government identify the lack of skills of the South African labour force as the major hindrance for the economic growth of the country. Unfortunately, the implementation of the policies and strategies to improve the situation leaves a lot to be desired, not in the least because responsibility for implementation is allocated to the employers, who, in the case of the farm workers are the farm owners.

Contrary to the relative openness of rural communities in Kenya, the farms in South Africa used to be isolated domains in which the workers were totally depending on the employers for social welfare. One might expect them to be even more closed when they are supposed to implement new government policies. With her knowledge of the context and a great deal of patience Modiba managed to get access to four different farms to speak with the workers and their foremen. She had to guarantee interviews would not interrupt the production process and thus had to find ways to speak with small groups of workers during lunch break and with

the foreman in his car driving from one location to another. Her childhood experience in a nearby farm and her knowledge of the local languages proved very helpful to make the interviewees feel at ease and speak out to her.

She found that employers were not dodging legislation: they were indeed offering training programmes to their employees. The problem was in the contents and organisation of the training. The contents were dominated by occupational skills instead of more generic life skills and civic education about rights. Employees were not consulted about their training needs. One of them said:

> We were never asked anything about the problems we encounter in executing our daily job activities and what could be done to overcome those problems. We were also never asked about whether we wanted to attend training or not (Modiba, 2008, p. 110).

Sometimes they just attended because of fear of intimidation, even when they considered the training to be not very useful. This discloses the power relations under which the research had to take place. In this case questions like 'Has there been a dialogue between the actors involved? Or 'Was there a mutual learning process?' seem rhetorical. Modiba had to use all her creativity and sensitivity to even get to know what was going on, let alone establish dialogues between the actors involved. She succeeded however in creating conversational space (Van Haaster, 1991) for those who had never been consulted before, which is an indispensable element of action research as those involved can only decide on action when they formulate interests that are relevant to them.

War affected children in Uganda: It is better to speak out than to bottle up

Action research in the complex emergency situation of northern Uganda may even have a therapeutic effect. Margaret Angucia experienced this, when she spoke with war affected children in this region. Angucia made an effort to create an environment of trust and protection by approaching the children prudently through the staff in camps for Internally Displaced Persons (IDP), by encouraging them to speak in their first language and by not being judgmental. She describes how she was tempted to stop the conversation when participants broke down as they recalled and recounted their experiences (Angucia, 2006). She then forced herself to continue not only for the sake of the research, but also for the 'healing process' to take place. At the end of the conversation she noticed signs of relief and she concluded: *It is better to speak out than to bottle up*.

Speaking out in the politically and emotionally explosive environment of a post-war situation (preparations for the peace agreement of 2008 were already taking place) can be quite dangerous. Interestingly, speaking out to a non-judgmental, not involved researcher appeared to be healing in itself. Angucia however, did not stop at this stage. In her own delicate way she got involved in securing a follow up for her research. She established a feedback committee with representatives of organisations working with these children and representatives from local communities. Also, she is planning to hold focus group discussions on her preliminary results. Thus she is trying to make sure that her research contributes to the empowerment of the children and youth growing up in post-war northern Uganda.

Some concluding remarks

Coming back to the question of establishing dialogue between the actors, the above examples will have showed this is far from easy. To be a good facilitator the researcher should also be a co-subject, of which the essential features are interactivity, symmetry, openness, hermeneutics, mutual trust and respect (Boog, Coenen, Keune & Lammerts, 1998). In essence, the above examples show the importance of awareness of and reflection on ethical problems and power relations in the African context. In addition to these three examples Rampedi and Zeelen (2003) refer in this context to their research experiences in the rural areas of South Africa. For instance, on entering the communities they often experienced mistrust and suspicion of the local people. Years of Apartheid, forced removals from their land, but also recent unfulfilled promises of the new politicians are sometimes hindrances for building trustful relations between researchers and local people. Foreign ('white') researchers are sometimes vulnerable. Being an insider ('black') researcher and speaking the local language helps, but is not always a guarantee to overcome these problems. In addition the continuous poverty in those rural communities often fosters the attitude of asking for immediate rewards, rather than the willingness to participate in promising development projects with predominantly delayed benefits. Furthermore, some communities are so much involved in local power relations that opening the box of participatory research, without being aware of the local power relations, can easily lead to action research for the already powerful (Rampedi & Zeelen, 2003). Similar observations were made by Ramphele (2002) reflecting on a research and development project in Cape Town:

> Research was regarded as a resource to be harnessed for patronage and power plays as part of the survival strategies of poor people. These problems call into question the appropriateness of

community involvement in all levels of the research. The idealism behind participatory research as part of the process of empowering people has to be tempered with realism (p. 24).

For action researchers it seems to be advisable to first make a rigorous stakeholder analysis in terms of power relations, to take time and to invest deeply in building up relations in the community, and to judge carefully what level and what format of participation is appropriate and realistic.

Sustainable solutions

Does the research aim to produce practical knowledge and how are the perspectives of this knowledge to be used to guide sustainable solutions for social problems? To shed light on this question three investigations with clear implementation objectives will be discussed. What are the obstacles for implementing the solutions proposed by action research? What could be a way out? We will look into research in marginalised communities in Botswana (Lekoko, 2006), research on non-formal educational programmes in Mozambique (Van der Linden & Manuel, 2006) and research in the business community in Burkina Faso (Karsten & Pennink, 2006). The topics are diverse, but the obstacles to implementation show some similarities, as we will see.

San people in Botswana: many researchers have come and disappeared, leaving them with empty promises

Rebecca Lekoko (2006) states that *local people should be brought into the research as owners of knowledge and be empowered to take action with the knowledge they have produced* (p. 2). This goes especially for marginalised communities like the San community in Botswana. Trying to implement these ideas in this community, Lekoko's team was first met with distrust because of previous negative experiences of the San people with researchers. While her team worked together with the community on strategies for San children to enhance educational programmes, San people gained trust in the researchers and, more important, in their own capability of designing solutions. Lekoko refers to Freire's words to explain what happened:

> using Freire's (1973) idea, … putting capabilities in the hands of the deprived people so that they can identify themselves as knowing actors; they can also define their realities and transform their lives for the better (Lekoko, 2006, p. 5).

The team left promising to respect communities' ideas and suggestions and to mobilise funds towards the building of schools.

Subsequently the team worked on securing funds and succeeded to find funding agencies. The funding agency showed confidence in the researchers, who were linked to the University of Botswana, to coordinate the project, but the government could not agree with this. The issue could not be solved and this unexpected hurdle of political-administrative character prevented the money from reaching the San people. Consequently, in Lekoko's disappointed words: *San communities might be thinking that we are just like other researchers, who have come and disappeared, leaving them with empty promises* (p. 5). Although this research seems so to be a genuine example of a participatory research because of the dialogue established between the actors and the learning process of the actors involved, the result of the research in terms of sustainable solutions for a social problem is the issue at stake here. It proves to be very difficult to complete the action research cycle, including the implementation of proposed solutions, evaluating them with the stake holders, improving them etc. Do researchers have a strong enough power base to live up to the expectations created? Do governments send researchers back to the ivory tower of the university and co-opt participatory methods for cosmetic purposes? Without going into the discussion of whether securing funds is the responsibility of researchers or not, the securing of a proper follow up certainly is.

Non-Formal Education in Mozambique: priority for sustainable solutions?

Manual and one of the authors of this chapter carried out an evaluation research on pilot programmes regarding Non-Formal Education (NFE) in Mozambique (Van der Linden & Manuel, 2006). The programmes were meant to equip poor, mostly illiterate Mozambicans with skills to generate income and improve the quality of their lives. The evaluation would strengthen the governmental strategy on NFE. Action research, or at least elements of action research, seemed a good choice to make sure the experiences of the learners would be reflected in knowledge on appropriate programmes and government strategies.

Before implementing the pilot programmes a learning needs analysis using participatory methods was undertaken in three provinces in Mozambique. This analysis was followed by the implementation of a programme on horticulture in Inhambane province, a programme on brick making in Sofala province and a programme on small business in Manica. The topics fitted the profiles of the three provinces, but they did not fully cover the outcome of the needs assessment. Paradoxically, the heavy use of participatory methods in the needs assessment created an ethical problem afterwards. So many expectations were raised in the phase of the inventory of learning needs that they could only be disappointed. Unfortunately,

this problem is quite common when it comes to the use of participatory methods. They are used at the start of a project and provoke attention and enthusiasm, but afterwards others take over and decisions are taken without involvement of those whose expectations have been raised (see also Preece, 2006; Cooke & Kothari, 2001).

During the implementation process, much attention was given to the production of the right materials, the selection and training of trainers and the identification of the appropriate venues. Support from outside was needed to produce materials, to train the trainers, and in some cases to implement the learning activities with the literacy learners. We saw the attention narrowing down to three courses in three provinces with a total of nearly 150 participants. The courses were good, the participants were satisfied. It was tempting to conclude that the activities should be repeated for other participants in other districts and provinces. However, this would never lead to a sustainable approach of NFE training programmes for all those in need. The plea of the researchers was to strengthen local educational programmes and build capacity of local educational officers to implement NFE programmes making use of locally available expertise and resources. Government officials listened benevolently to these suggestions, but had other interests when it came to implementation. In fact, when it comes to this level of decision making power relations including actors like government officials at different levels, donors, political parties, civil society key persons are quite complex and easily overrule university research practitioners with their noble (naive?) ideas.

A process approach of business innovation in Burkina Faso

Also in the area of business administration in Burkina Faso follow up and implementation of research results hardly happened (Karsten & Pennink, 2006). Students of the University of Groningen, equipped with Western management concepts, but also with contingency theory and knowledge about cultural differences were asked to develop solutions for organisational problems in different companies in Burkina Faso. Although Burkinabe managers were eager to get to know about Western management theories and their application in their companies, they never actually implemented the recommendations based on these theories. Karsten and Pennink use Bourdieu's concept of 'habitus' to explain this (Bourdieu, 1977). While the students did what they were asked and African organisations presumed they could implement Western management concepts with few modifications, the 'African manager' was seen as a unbiased actor without taking strategic choices and options in the environment into account.

Karsten and Pennink then decided to shift the focus of the research towards a process oriented approach. They decided to study how African managers interpret modern Western management knowledge based in their own habitus. They learned how African managers bring their own indigenous thought systems to the organisation to interpret, construct and ascribe meaning to actions. This accounts for an interesting switch in their own approach of cooperation in knowledge production.

The background of these experiences are slightly different: Western (Northern) business administration students went to Africa to 'help' African managers, whereas in (most of) the previous examples researchers carried out research in their own country. African researchers will be more familiar with the 'habitus' of the potential implementers. They know at least something about indigenous knowledge; they know about bureaucracy and long procedures, they know about people's interests. Still, that does not automatically lead to the implementation of sustainable solutions. Also they have to balance between the interests of the researched and the existing power relations.

Some concluding remarks

Referring back to the question about the production of practical knowledge and the potential of this knowledge being used, these three examples show that there is still a lot to do to turn research into real action research. What is the problem? Is the research too innovative and the practice too conservative? Are the researchers Northerners or Northern oriented and the envisioned implementers Southerners? Would it be a solution to study the process of implementation/ adaptation as a part of action research?

Some light appears when we place this in line with the answers on the first question. When the dialogue between the actors involved is limited to warming up participants for a research or for a certain programme, then the implementation appears as if it does not have a connection with the preceding research activities: there is no impetus, no support and no insight in power relations in the environment. To successfully guide sustainable solutions for social problems the researcher should facilitate the involvement of all actors. When it comes to power relations, being a facilitator may not be enough. Then, the researcher needs to take the role of a change agent or when this is beyond reach, cooperate with a person or a party who can act as such.

It seems to be advisable in action research to be, right from the beginning, aware of possible overstretched expectations and to make, as mentioned earlier, a power analysis of the stakeholder dynamics, if possible in dialogue with those very stakeholders. A route to connect the research right from the start with opportunities for implementation is the establishment of a feedback committee for the research process, where important (policy) stakeholders for the implementation of innovations are present. This may help to get access to the envisaged research environment and create opportunities to safeguard the implementation of the outcomes of the research project.

Knowledge production

Does the research include a cyclical process of action and reflection to produce knowledge applicable in other contexts or new theoretical insights? What is the role of knowledge production in action research? Is the orientation towards action the dominant focus so that reflection hardly gets attention? Is doing action research similar to acting as a 'reflective practitioner' in terms of Schön (1983)? The examples above show that there are still many problems and obstacles to be understood. This makes it even more important to pay attention to knowledge sharing and production. Two of the following examples are about HIV/AIDS: one took place in Uganda (Munyonyo, 2006) and the other in South Africa (Wijbenga, Vintges & Zeelen, 2006). In addition we will discuss an action research project at Makerere University in Kampala, Uganda (Kibwika, 2006). Although all three also relate to the first two questions, they will be discussed from the perspective of knowledge production.

HIV/AIDS in Uganda: only one of the many threats to well being

Can a useful facilitator's guide on Gender and HIV/AIDS be developed? The research of Remigius Munyonyo shows that it is worthwhile using participatory action-oriented methods to identify an appropriate content for such a manual (Munyonyo, 2006). It turned out that people and communities perceive and deal with HIV/AIDS as only one of the many problems and tensions affecting their well-being. Prevention of HIV/AIDS, according to them, means contributing to the overall health and well-being of families and communities. HIV/AIDS cannot be treated in isolation. It requires the inclusion of all the issues that relate to the creation of well-being and health of communities.

Hence, the study team decided the content of the facilitator's guide on Gender and HIV/AIDS should allow for the development of people's capacities which need to be developed so that they can take roles in community action planning. Capacities of people will further be developed if structures are put in place where participants work totally committed to the health of the community. Forming men's groups and women's groups to which members can turn in case they encounter problems related with gender and HIV/AIDS, is another way of building people's capacities.

Thus, the inclusion of the participants right from the beginning resulted in a learning process for the researcher. This changed the focus of the guide. Furthermore, the participants put him on a track to develop solutions that reach beyond the problems faced at that moment. It is interesting that the scope of the research and subsequent intervention changed altogether because of the contribution of the communities. Hopefully this will lead to more sustainable solutions. However, this will only be proved by ongoing research and debate.

South Africa: storytelling to create conversation space

Debate is certainly necessary on the issue of HIV/AIDS. The following story takes us to the issue of the taboo on HIV/AIDS in South Africa (Wijbenga, Vintges & Zeelen, 2006). A story teller, located in the waiting room of a township clinic tells stories in the local language (Tsonga) using carved wood animals. The stories contain health education messages about HIV/AIDS for the people waiting, who are usually low-educated women. Hieke Wijbenga investigated the relevance of this project as a method of adult health education and found that it not only contributed to the knowledge about HIV/AIDS, but also to the openness around it and the reduction of stigmatisation. Storytelling forms a safe environment in which topics like HIV/AIDS stigma and sexuality can be discussed without embarrassing people.

In terms of knowledge production in health education the research points at the development of educational methodology making use of local traditions, which accounts for an interesting connection between tradition and modernity. Comparing the South African experience with the Ugandan, it can be proposed that they may well reflect the political situation in these two countries. Unlike the Ugandan president Museveni who took the lead in convincing people not to discriminate people with the virus and to get informed about protective measures themselves, the South African president Mbeki refused initially to acknowledge fully the existence of the AIDS pandemic.

In terms of action research and its methodology the South African research shows the importance of creating conversation space.

> Before people feel free to articulate their opinions they should feel at ease, respected and recognised. This is especially vital when it comes to delicate issues such as dealing with stigma, sexuality and traditional beliefs (Wijbenga, Vintges & Zeelen, 2006, p.10).

Storytelling is linked to traditions of the local community and combines personal attention with unobtrusive behaviour. In this way it proves to be a helpful tool in creating conversation space, which is indispensable for the dialogue on which action research is based.

Makerere University: Learning to make change

The PhD thesis of Paul Kibwika (2006) describes and evaluates an experiment of 'innovation competence' development for transforming learning, research and consultancy in Makerere University in Kampala by using the concepts of action research and action learning. The main underlying research problem is that

> Persistent levels of poverty and food insecurity in Sub-Sahara Africa are unbearable, and yet universities in the region continue to turn out graduates every year, and generate technologies and knowledge ostensibly to deal with such development challenges, without much evident impact on poverty reduction (p. 20).

The main objective of the study was to establish how the innovation competence development programme for university lecturers could be designed and implemented to increase the relevance of the University for the National Development, especially in the agricultural sector.

In this PhD study three case studies have been conducted. In the first case study Kibwika explored farmer learning and innovation among small holder vanilla farmers in Uganda. The choice of this case study is based on the assumption that *farmers are able to generate knowledge and innovations without external intervention from either research or extension work* (p. 35). This leads to proposed functions of university graduates (i.e. researchers and extension workers) which are much more contextualised to the realities in the rural areas and which give more attention to 'change agents' competencies. In the second case study, the perceptions of challenges of agricultural professionals in the context of demand-driven service delivery are articulated with respect to what they know and do. On the basis of the first two case studies Kibwika focused in the third case study on an experiment to find out how the

required competences can be developed in the university staff so as to be passed on to the graduates.

An important conclusion of the study, among others, is that social learning in agriculture is inevitable, but to support this phenomenon

> agricultural professionals need new skills and re-orientation of mindsets. It is therefore imperative that the African universities re-orient their programmes to produce graduates capable of enhancing innovation and social change in the community of small holder farmers. But university lecturers must acquire the necessary competences first (p. 206).

In terms of knowledge production this action research project leads to relevant contextualised 'stepping-stones' for capacity building and curriculum development in African universities which are oriented towards developmental issues. At the same time Kibwika contributes to the further development of action research concepts in a developing context, for instance by combining constructivist and realistic epistemologies. An additional valuable element is the appendix to his study in which he reflects on his own learning experiences while doing a PhD study.

Some concluding remarks

The question was whether the research includes a cyclical process of action and reflection to produce knowledge applicable in other contexts or new theoretical insights. The three research projects above pay attention to knowledge production. Moreover, they teach us what kind of knowledge may be produced in action research. First of all it is knowledge 'in action', knowledge which will prove its sustainability in the use that is made of it and the following evaluation or reflection. Then it is contextualised knowledge: what works in Uganda may not work exactly the same way in South Africa and the other way round. On the other hand, for instance the new knowledge in capacity building and curriculum development gained at Makerere University could have exemplary value for other African universities. Thirdly, it is knowledge about the contents of the research just as well as knowledge about how to conduct action research. From this point of view the researcher has to add another role to his/her roles as facilitator and change agent, namely that of an academic, learning from the experience and sharing this learning with others. The reconstructive analysis of the action research project at Makerere University by reflecting on and connecting experiences with ongoing discourses in knowledge production is an insightful demonstration of this. In other

words, the action researcher has to act, in the words of the late professor of Adult Education Max van der Kamp (2002) at the University of Groningen, as an engaged and competent outsider dealing with both worlds, the community and the university.

Conclusion

Though not all research projects discussed above are examples of action research 'pur sang', all researchers made an effort to include at least essential characteristics of action research in their research design. As such, action researchers can certainly learn from the experiences of the 'fully fledged' action researches as carried out by Angucia, Kibwika and Kitetu, but also from the others. Actually, often the reality is that, due to difficulties entering the field, logistical obstacles and time constraints, only certain elements of action research can be used. The main design is then for instance a case study or an exploratory study. Leaving these kinds of investigations out of the discussion would result in a position outside the research reality. It thus would deprive the research community of the opportunity to discuss ongoing practices and their challenges. The research projects described point at three important issues for reflection and discussion:

Dialogue and participation are becoming dangerous buzz words. Traditionally, an authority figure, such as a queen or governor, was asked to be present at the start of a project, currently, it is fashionable to organise a dialogue. All the actors from grass root level to government and donor level participate, but only the latter continue participating in the dialogue up to the very end. This is a dangerous trend in development cooperation and also in action research carried out in a developing context. Real involvement of the people who are supposed to benefit means investing in the creation of conversation space and in the invention of strategies relating to power issues.

Follow-up and implementation belong to the core of action research, but are hard to deal with. In many cases it is difficult to understand why proposed interventions or innovations are not implemented. It is not that only Northerners just come in on brief visits and use their famous 'hit-and-run' strategies (they come, they see and say what should be improved) and never really get to know the situation from inside. It also happens to people from the same country and culture as is shown above. The hurdles in Africa are many more than can be perceived at first sight: bureaucracy, cultural and traditional divides between population groups, immense logistical (transport) problems, power and the fear to lose power, interests

and pressure of the extended family and sometimes blunt political will. Action researchers have to face these hurdles and seek coalitions to overcome them and, in some cases, acknowledge that this is beyond their reach.

When it comes to knowledge production two issues already discussed show how important it is to reflect on experiences, share these experiences and formulate what can be learned from them. The risk of knowledge produced in action research is that this knowledge is not confronted with the broader existing body of knowledge. Thus the remains are scattered, over-contextualised pieces of knowledge. It is highly urgent to work on the development of communities of practice where university researchers, professionals in the field, social movements, local people and policy makers work together for a longer period. South-South as well North-South international collaboration projects might inspire mutual learning processes as well. Those new communities of practice could give structure and support to all kinds of specific action research initiatives.

As the theme of the congress and the book is ethics and standards in action research, we would recommend taking these issues into account in the development of ethics and standards. To recap, we looked at three main areas of concern, the consultation of the beneficiaries, the power relations at stake and academic output. Also, we would urge that the ethics and standards developed would apply equally to action research 'pur sang' and to those research designs which incorporate elements of action research. Last but not least, we think that our analysis of action research practices in Africa brought up interesting issues, whose validity will not stop at the borders of the African continent.

5.4 Grounding adult education research in rural areas: Reflections on the development of a research programme at the University of Limpopo in South Africa[17]

Abstract

Mission statements of universities in developing countries usually include serving the surrounding communities. Often this service does not reach beyond lip service. This article puts into context the experience of developing an adult education research programme responding to the needs of the surrounding community in a historically disadvantaged rural area. The areas of research were adult education needs assessment and community development, young adults at risk, adult health education, and policy and implementation issues. Globalisation, social exclusion, and lifelong learning were key concepts tailored to the specific context of the rural areas in South Africa. The first two authors of the article were personally involved in the programme, as a visiting professor from the Netherlands and his South African successor, respectively. The third author worked in a similar programme at the Eduardo Mondlane University in Maputo, Mozambique.

Introduction

> Every day we can see the university buildings. We always wonder if this big institution with all its knowledge cannot help us! But we do not know how to ask and we are afraid that they will send us away.

The statement above is from a man from Ga-Mothapo (in Stevens, 2000, p. 53), a settlement situated a few kilometres from the University of Limpopo, formerly known as University of the North (UNIN). The statement expresses not only the cry for help from people in the neighbouring community but also the feeling of immense psychological distance to the university, despite its physical proximity. It reflects the role of this university in the Apartheid era. As indicated by White (1997), *The University of the North was created as a political, not an educational, necessity* (p. 1). The university served mainly as an ideological legitimisation for an inferior kind of higher education meant for Black people and civil servants for the homeland administration. The quality of teaching and research was questionable,

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and the curricula were often not tailored to the urgent needs of the community (Rampedi, 2003).

Against this backdrop, Hetty Stevens set out in 1994 as the first exchange student of the University of Groningen in the Netherlands to explore the needs for adult education in the community around the university. She visited ten villages around the university and spoke with many members of the community, among them the man whose words are quoted at the beginning of this article. Stevens' research activities were part of a collaboration programme between the universities of Groningen and Limpopo. Representatives of these universities decided in 1992 to give priority to adult education as one of the areas for collaboration. The main aim of the collaboration was to develop a teaching and research programme in adult education tailored to the rural conditions in the province, which would support adult education practices and policies. This took place just after the end of Apartheid and a long period of academic boycott of South African universities by the University of Groningen (Van der Kamp, 2000b).

As the statement quoted above shows, tailoring an adult education programme to the rural conditions meant bridging a huge gap between the communities and the university. In 1998, after some years of long-distance collaboration, the first author of this article was appointed as full professor of adult education at the University of Limpopo. The main objective of his placement was the establishment of an adult education department to foster the sustainability of the teaching and research programme. Among other things, the placement entailed capacity building of academic staff (see also Zeelen & Van der Linden, 2009). The idea was that eventually a South African professor of adult education would take over. This actually happened in 2004, when Rampedi, the second author of this article became the head of the adult education department.

Zeelen and Rampedi, the first two authors, worked closely together in the establishment of the department and the development of its teaching and research programme. In this article, they reflect on the conceptual framework, the methodological approach, and the proceedings of the research programme, identifying points for improvement and the way forward. The focus of interest will be the tuning of the research to the rural context, as the teaching programme was based on and fed by the research programme. The main question is how the adult education research programme gradually became grounded in the surrounding community, in terms of both content and research approach. The answer to this question should lead to lessons learned, also beyond the specific case of Limpopo Province.

The research programme itself reflected the diversity and variety of its context. Groups at risk ranging from teenage mothers and university cleaners to school dropouts were researched by Bachelor and Master students, while a PhD research focused on adult education policies and their implementation (see Table 5.1 for an overview). All the researchers participated in the same research programme, which meant not only that they shared the desire to serve the surrounding community but also that useful concepts and appropriate research approaches were collectively developed and subsequently applied. The authors will reflect on the experiences gained in building the research programme as a whole and in executing specific sub-projects, to identify general issues leading to an answer to the main question of this article.

Limpopo Province: A challenging context for adult education

After the end of Apartheid and the first free elections in 1994, in which a vast majority of the South African people chose Nelson Mandela for president, the hopes for more access to quality education were high. The legacy for the newly chosen government consisted of racially embedded inequality and poverty, reflected in the educational system with its strong separation between education for Whites and education for Blacks. Blacks were allowed access only to underfunded and ill-equipped 'Bantu education', characterised by one-way traffic between teacher and learner, rote learning, and exposure to a curriculum without any link to issues relevant to Africa (Rampedi, 2003; see also Kanyandago, 2010).

Certainly, there has been progress since the Apartheid era. Adato, Carter and May (2006) show that South African average living standards are above those in (other) developing countries, but they also state that racially embedded inequality and poverty still exist and impede the South African poor from using social mechanisms of access to capital to move away from poverty. Figures in the Education for All Report for 2011 (UNESCO, 2011a) reveal that still more than half a million children were out of school in 2007 and it is projected that the number will only increase in the coming years. Limpopo Province is one of the least developed of the provinces in the country and although the province has the highest population growth rate, economic and social development is behind the rest of the country (Gyekye & Akinboade, 2003). It is a rural province; the main employment sectors are agriculture, the civil service, mining and tourism. Unemployment in 2008 was 28.1% (South African Government, 2009). Many breadwinners work as migrant labourers in Gauteng Province. Limpopo consisted of three homelands in the past, in which Bantu education was the only education provided for Blacks. Partly as a result of this, there is still a more than 40%

illiteracy rate in the province today. Many learners are dropping out of the formal system. The 'throughput' of the educational system is considerably low. There is an indication that *only 40% of learners continue through the system all the way to grade 12* (National Department of Education, 2003, p. 16). In the year 2001, more than 140,000 early school-leavers in the Limpopo Province were not connected with education or work.

Conceptual framework: Globalisation, social exclusion, and lifelong learning

Three key concepts, 'globalisation', 'social exclusion', and 'lifelong learning', were considered to be useful zoom lenses to analyse the situation in Limpopo and to identify possible contributions of adult education in improving the situation. In this section, these concepts will be discussed, linking them to the reality in Limpopo and to the way they open up areas for research.

Globalisation has a strong influence on South Africa. Social economic market forces, heavily supported by the revolution in information technology, resulted in high-tech industries and specialised hospitals. In this way, globalisation added to the feeling of excitement and a sense of becoming part of the world community at the end of the past century and promised even the most remote areas in the world 'a place under the sun in the new global village' (Mengisteab, 1996). These trends have negative effects in developing parts of the world, where countries are struggling with high rates of unemployment (Kiely & Marfleet, 2002; Jarvis, 2007) and, more recently, increasing food prices. South Africa has not escaped from these negative effects. In Limpopo Province unemployment numbers are high, fuel and food prices are rising, and many (young) workers and whole families move to urban areas to try to earn some income, as discussed in the previous section.

One of the negative effects of globalisation is *social exclusion* (Byrne, 1999; Gyekye & Akinboade, 2003). For most of the people in the Limpopo Province, social exclusion has, beside the dimension of immense poverty, the dimensions of social-psychological, cultural, and educational deprivation due to the impact of the Apartheid legacy. Or in the words of Brian Harvey (1994, p.3-4, cited in Ó Fathaigh, 1998), *Social exclusion is not just about lack of money, but may be about isolation, lack of work, lack of educational opportunities, even discrimination* (p. 10).

The concept of lifelong learning and its potential contribution to the mitigation of the effects of social exclusion look attractive at first sight. It would be wonderful if one could develop oneself throughout one's life stimulated by creative learning environments (Tuijnman & Van der Kamp, 1992). In developing societies with high levels of illiteracy, however, this concept runs the risk of becoming a slogan from which only the highly skilled happy few will benefit (see also Jarvis, 2007; Schugurensky, 1997; Walters, 1997). Inspiration for lifelong learning as an opportunity to overcome social exclusion stems from writers from the South such as Paulo Freire and Julius Nyerere (see Finger & Asún, 2001; Mulenga, 2001). Conscientisation, empowerment, and self-reliance are essential to overcome different forms of exclusion. Moreover, without overly romanticising the role of indigenous knowledge, this type of knowledge was considered to be relevant for the development of adult education (Zeelen, 2002). Thus, the described theoretical zoom lenses of globalisation, social exclusion, and lifelong learning were used to both critically examine existing practices and policies in adult education and design new ways of implementing adult education programmes in rural areas to meet immediate community needs.

The research programme: From social exclusion to lifelong learning

The academic isolation of South Africa during the Apartheid era affected all universities and all parts of the population. Empirical research was an underdeveloped area at most universities and not only at the disadvantaged ones. The ambition in establishing the adult education research programme was to develop sufficient research capacity that could have a supporting role on the professionalisation of practitioners as well as enhance good practices and policies appropriate for rural areas.

On the basis of preparatory research, several conferences with adult educators and an analysis of the available international literature (see, among others, Tuijnman, 1996), the following objectives were formulated in the research proposal 'From Social Exclusion to Lifelong Learning' (Rampedi & Zeelen, 1999):

1. To conceptualise and analyse social exclusion and lifelong learning within the rural context of the Limpopo Province;
2. To gain empirical insight into the problems of specific groups within the Limpopo Province threatened by social exclusion;

3. To provide insight into the role and effectiveness of adult learning and adult education in the combat against social exclusion;

4. To develop, analyse, and evaluate 'good practices' of adult education with exemplary value for policy and practice;

5. To improve implementation strategies in the field of adult education and social exclusion in the Limpopo Province.

The research programme was accompanied by a capacity building programme for staff and students in the field of adult education consisting of a training programme for adult educators in the field, BEd Honours and Master programmes in adult education, and an adult education resource centre. Practical relevance and scientific output of the programme have been disseminated through the UNIN Adult Education Series, a newsletter, as well as scientific journals and books issued by academic publishers.

Social Learning

In the approach, chosen teaching and learning strengthened each other. The approach of social learning implies that in learning situations, the backgrounds, opinions, and views of all participants should be put forward for discussion through a dialogue (see Wenger, 1998; Wildemeersch, Finger & Jansen, 1998). All participants are seen as competent actors who are able to connect reflections with interventions in their own environment (see, among others, Freire, 1970). Social learning is in principle interdisciplinary. The reduction of social problems demands the participation of a diversity of actors, including people who may not be considered experts in the traditional sense, such as rural women and marginalised youth. The approach of social learning framed the interaction between the researchers, (adult) educators, and adult learners in the field. The teaching and learning legacy of the Apartheid education, and especially the Bantu education, led, in many cases, to a negative self-image, lack of self-confidence, and a passive learning attitude. For example, some years ago, one of the colleagues mentioned in a research workshop that for him, and many other Black lecturers, *research is still a monster that can only be tamed by intelligent white people*.

Creating conversational space to articulate experiences and views of stakeholders was essential, not only with the contacts outside the university (Zeelen, 2003). From the start of the research programme, the social learning approach was also used to create a powerful

learning environment where university staff, PhD candidates, and Master and Bachelor students could share their experiences and learn from each other's research. An adult education resource centre was established to facilitate this type of learning processes. This was enriched through the participation of educators and members of community organisations.

The research approach

The approach of action research, closely related to social learning, seemed to be appropriate as an epistemological framework for the research activities (Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Reason & Bradbury, 2001). This approach implies that human beings are considered competent actors who already carry interpretations of the social world with them. This means that the researcher interprets a reality already interpreted by other competent actors, which Giddens (1976) formulated as 'double hermeneutics.' For instance, when the issue of motivation for work activities is being investigated, the researched already have ideas of their own about their motivations. These ideas reflect reality or express possibility in their own words (see also Flyvbjerg, 2001; Tromp, 2008). To reach a meaningful explanation, the researcher should create a dialogue with the researched about these interpretations. As Tromp formulates,

> the idea that the researcher and the researched live in two separate worlds and that the researcher by all means has to prevent herself from being 'contaminated' by both the thoughts and actions of the researched, can no longer hold (p. 14).

In action research, the researched are becoming participant researchers, not as a goal in itself but with the intention to initiate social change. This type of research is *a cooperative process of problem solving, where social scientists—researchers—and the research subjects are peer-partners* (Boog, Preece, Slagter & Zeelen, 2008, p. 3). On the basis of this common ground, interventions can be developed and implemented to contribute to the solution of social problems, such as contributing to the combat of social exclusion in rural areas.

Table 5.1 Sub-projects conducted in the framework of the Adult Education Research Programme of the University of Limpopo used for this article (1996-2007)

	Title of research	Researcher	Supervisor	Year of completion/ publication
Adult education needs assessment and community development	*Functional (il)literacy in a changing South Africa*	Hetty Stevens	Max van der Kamp	1996, republished 2000
	ABET (Adult Basic Education and Training) needs assessment in the Northern Province	Monica Rakoma	Max van der Kamp, Makgwana Rampedi and Jacques Zeelen	2000
	Towards substantial participation of men in adult education programs in Limpopo Province	Ntlhashana Mphahlele	Jacques Zeelen, Makgwana Rampedi and Monica Rakoma	2003
	Towards adult education programs for cleaners at the University of the North	Maria Mogotsi	Jacques Zeelen and Makgwana Rampedi	2005
Young adults at risk	*Early school leaving and the role of career guidance and counselling*	Corry Conen and Dorien Rutten	Max van der Kamp, Jacques Zeelen and Makgwana Rampedi	2003
	On the road to nowhere? Research into the problems and needs of early school leavers	Astrid Niersman	Max van der Kamp and Jacques Zeelen	2003
	Towards an intervention programme for drop outs at Mohlakaneng Secondary School in Seshego	Albert Mthanji	Jacques Zeelen and Makgwana Rampedi	2007
Adult health education	*Teenage Pregnancy in Rural Areas*	Julia Swierstra	Makgwana Rampedi and Jacques Zeelen	1997
	Health Adult Education	Edith Kiggundu and Julia Swierstra	Jacques Zeelen and Makgwana Rampedi	2002
	Towards good practices in sexuality education	Corrie Conen and Julia Swierstra	Jacques Zeelen and Makgwana Rampedi	2003

	An insight into the provision of sexuality education as part of Life Orientation at Nare Secondary School in Limpopo Province	Lorraine Marisane	Jacques Zeelen and Mamphago Modiba	2004
	It happened in a certain village: storytelling as a method of adult health education	Hieke Wijbenga	Jacques Zeelen and Mamphago Modiba	2006
Policy and implementation issues	*Implementing adult education policy in the Limpopo Province of South Africa: Ideals, challenges and opportunities*	Makgwana Rampedi	Max van der Kamp, Wally Morrow and Jacques Zeelen	2003
	Towards a 'professional' profession: the University of the North towards the implementation of a curriculum for adult education	Joan Hulst and Judith Kerkhof	Max van der Kamp and Jacques Zeelen	1996, republished 2000
	Teaching the Adult Learner: An introduction to Learning theories and Teaching methods in Adult Education and Training	Judith Kerkhof and Monica Rakoma	Jacques Zeelen and Makgwana Rampedi	1999
	A tentative framework of a curriculum for adult educators at the University of the North	Adriaan Mellema	Max van der Kamp, Jacques Zeelen and Makgwana Rampedi	1999, republished 2000
	Problems affecting the implementation of ABET policies in the Limpopo Province	Dennis Mabasa	Makgwana Rampedi and Jacques Zeelen	2002

The epistemological perspective as described entails, however, not a ready-made methodology road map for developing research activities in a context where a research culture was almost absent and where the craftsmanship required for empirical research had still to be developed. Furthermore, at the level of each Bachelor and Master project, a fully-fledged implementation of an action research approach, with several feedback loops and development tracks, would be both unrealistic and scientifically precarious. This meant that in the use of research designs, we also applied exploratory, case study, and implementation approaches. In terms of research methods, qualitative as well as quantitative data collection instruments have been used. However, the epistemological viewpoints mentioned earlier were taken into account as much as possible. For instance, in most sub-projects, tentative findings were, before a final analysis, shared and discussed with the researched to strengthen the validation. Moreover, in the creation of a dialogue, much attention was paid to possible power, gender, and language issues. In a way, the development of the teaching and research programme itself could be understood as an action research project in the sense that knowledge was produced in interaction with beneficiaries and professionals in the field.

The four research priorities

The discussions in the preparatory conferences attended by practitioners, district officials, policy makers, university staff, and students, as documented in the research report of Mellema (2000), resulted in the following adult education research priorities in Limpopo Province: adult education needs assessment and community development, young adults at risk, adult health education, and policy and implementation issues. Examples of sub-projects in the areas of adult education needs assessment and community development will be discussed and analysed in depth, both from the perspective of the research methodology (social learning and action research) and from the theoretical zoom lenses of globalisation, social exclusion, and lifelong learning. The research activities and results in the other areas will only be summarised in short. Table 5.1 provides an overview of the relevant sub-projects in the four areas.

Adult education needs assessment and community development

The history of Limpopo Province as a former homeland province resulting in social and economic exclusion of the majority of its population is expected to lead to high demands for adult education. In this section, needs assessment studies carried out in the community surrounding the university will be discussed. The study of Hetty Stevens (2000), mentioned before, was conducted in 1994 around the university, where she interviewed people about their adult education needs. Many villagers had problems in daily life tasks, such as making banking deposits and withdrawals, completing forms, and reading medical prescriptions:

> We cannot read the doctor's prescriptions. In the clinic they tell us several times what to do, but we tend to forget the dosages of the medicines and tablets. That can be dangerous. What happens if we give our child too many tablets or not enough? (p. 60)

There is a widespread communication problem among couples, when one of the partners works far away in Gauteng as is often the case. A related problem for people was their dependency on the few educated people in the village (Stevens, 2000).

Based on the action research approach of Guba and Lincoln (1989), Monica Rakoma (2000) conducted a needs assessment of learners in Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) in the area around Tzaneen. It turned out that the learners, the majority of them being female, did not get a chance to access education before. They therefore attended ABET programmes to improve their situation. Their needs included not only basic literacy skills such as being able to read and write their names, to append signatures, to communicate in writing with others, and to be able to read and understand issues that apply to their immediate environment but also skills to get employment or to be able to generate their own income. One of the adult learners said: *I bought a sewing machine, but if a person comes, I cannot take his or her measurements* (p. 89). Rakoma used feedback loops to validate the data. Respondents from the communities were allowed to comment on the interpretations of the researcher as part of the research process. The outcomes of both Rakoma's and Stevens' (2000) research have been widely used to improve adult education curricula in the communities as well as the teaching programmes of the department of adult education.

To build on Rakoma's findings, an additional study focused on the issue of the participation of men in ABET programmes. Ntlhashana Mphahlele (2002) investigated this issue in two communities northwest of Polokwane. With the support of the 'expectancy-valence model'

(Tuijnman, 1996), Mphahlele analysed the different needs of men and the obstacles to take part in ABET programmes. One of the interviewees told him,

> We need skills lessons. The people are doing agriculture but there is no market. They can plant their vegetables but where are they going to sell them? If the government, when bringing this kind of project, can also arrange the market then we will go and learn. And another one: Women are doing sewing and other skills. We need something that can at the same way give us money. If we can have anything that would give us income, then it will attract a lot of men (p. 73).

In his recommendations Mphahlele breaks a lance for the involvement of the Department of Labour in the execution of ABET programmes that should include a strong skills component. Short practical courses, for instance, plumbing, should be taught, adjusted to the living conditions of men in rural areas, who often look after cattle or have other small piecemeal activities.

An important relationship between the university and its environment is formed through employment of service personnel. Maria Mogotsi (2005) conducted an action research study into the needs of the cleaners at the University of Limpopo. By means of a survey (in English and Northern Sotho) with 175 cleaners, interviews with representatives of the management, and a case study of a running ABET programme on campus, she obtained an insight into the actual problems and needs of the cleaners. Mogotsi found that the majority of cleaners could neither read university circulars nor understand proceedings in meetings or communicate with English-speaking staff members. This resulted in the majority of cleaners being excluded from the activities of the university and missing out on important information. Remarkably, many of them were also not able to write in their own mother tongue properly. After conducting several meetings with the cleaners and staff members, Mogotsi recommended the use of ABET programmes with a variety of components, since the needs of cleaners differ greatly in terms of age and gender. Suggested subjects are numeracy, basic reading and writing skills in English and Northern Sotho, health education programmes, job-related skills, functional literacy, and income-generating skills, such as agriculture, sewing, and cooking (Mogotsi, 2005). Some of these elements have subsequently been integrated in the existing ABET programme for technical and cleaning staff at the university.

From the perspective of the three zoom lenses (globalisation, social exclusion, and lifelong learning), the sub-projects show that social exclusion in rural areas has diverse features and touch on issues of health, education, and citizenship. One vital element is the gender issue. For a long time, the social exclusion of women featured prominently on the agenda of adult

education programmes. However, the sub-projects show the importance of being aware of the social exclusion of men in rural areas. Furthermore, in all examples, the language issue was an essential element of social exclusion. The sub-projects demonstrate an advanced understanding of adult education needs going beyond basic literacy and numeracy and stretching as far as job-related and income-generating skills and, in doing so, contributing to overcoming social exclusion. The need for the transformation of a 'schoolish' adult education approach to a 'lifelong' and 'lifewide' learning approach became visible.

From the perspective of the research approach used (social learning and action research), Rakoma's (2000) study confirmed the usefulness of the constructivist approach of Guba and Lincoln (1989). Beside interesting insights in the needs of rural women, Rakoma's study gives a deeper understanding of how to use an action research approach in the process of needs assessment. Unfortunately, this did not lead to a sustainable follow-up in terms of intervention practices, partly caused by the logistical distance between the university and the remote rural area. The project of Mogotsi (2005) made clear that for the execution of an action research project, a local structure (in this case the university campus), where people meet on a regular basis, is key for the implementation of interventions. Another important point is that sometimes new interventions can be linked to ongoing (ABET) initiatives.

The three other research areas

Apart from adult education needs assessment and community development, the three other research areas were young adults at risk, adult health education, and policy and implementation issues. Related to young adults at risk, the sub-projects gave a deep insight into the state of the schools in the rural areas. Apart from tremendous problems concerning facilities, teacher absenteeism, and abuse, a systemic problem was the lack of diversified pathways in the secondary school curriculum. Vocational tracks were almost completely lacking, and in terms of the local mind-set, these types of activities were considered only for the losers. Most of the learners and parents saw secondary school as a stepping stone to university and eventually to a job in the formal labour market. However, the statistics show that this is the perspective of only a very small number of people. This type of systemic problems of education creates an immense skills gap between the capabilities of (early) school leavers and the demands of the informal labour market as well as the partly globalised economy (Conen & Rutten, 2003; Niersman, 2003; Zeelen, Rampedi & Boerkamp, 2010). In terms of the research approach, the intensive collaboration between several

stakeholders during five years initiated creative collective learning processes, with an important role for members of youth organisations. Through their direct contact with early school leavers, they were informed about the—often harsh—realities of school life in the rural areas. Due to a complicated relationship with the provincial department of education, it was problematic to create sustainable follow-ups to the research project. Fortunately, the exemplary value of the experiences of the project could be used in innovations in other African countries (Zeelen, Van der Linden, Nampota & Ngabirano, 2010).

Regarding adult health education, the sub-projects show how sensitive issues need innovative approaches in connecting to local traditions and how much more attention should be paid to the distribution of materials and documents to the deep rural areas. Also, dealing appropriately with the gender issue is crucial here. Creating conversational space for girls is of utmost importance. At the same time, in sexuality education, more attention should be paid to the feelings and attitudes of boys (Swierstra, 1997; Kiggundu & Swierstra, 2002; Conen & Swierstra, 2003; Marisane, 2004). In terms of the social learning and action research approach, especially the joint production of module books together with adult educators from the field paid off. The storytelling project revealed how important expressive tools as storytelling and performances in the local language are for creating collective learning processes among clinic visitors, nurses, and researchers (Wijbenga, 2006; Zeelen, Wijbenga, Vintges & De Jong, 2010).

The fourth research area was about policy and implementation issues. Research in this area lead to the conclusion that South Africa in terms of implementation processes in adult education is suffering from an 'overproduction' of policies and an 'underperformance' in implementation. The overproduction of policies in South Africa relates to the devastating legacy of the Apartheid past. Much had to be developed in a very short time. The impact of globalisation through neoliberal stances on the need for market-driven policies might have played a role as well (see e.g., Aitchison, 2003; Tikly, 2003; Frõdin, 2009). Rampedi's studies show that the underperformance in implementation is caused by similar causes as experienced during the 'War against Poverty' in the 1960s in the United States as well as by the specific conditions of underdevelopment existing in the mainly rural Limpopo Province (Kerkhof & Rakoma, 1999; Hulst & Kerkhof, 2000; Mabasa, 2002; Rampedi, 2003; Zeelen, Rampedi & De Jong, 2011). In terms of the research approach used, it was instructive that participatory elements were used in Rampedi's project itself, in the finalisation of the study as well as after completion and further dissemination of the findings, in this case though a

regional conference in Limpopo with participation of representatives from the national department of education. This demonstrates that doing action research means that processes of social and educational change do not stop when a certain sub-project has been completed. This is a decisive argument for the development of research programmes and partnerships with communities, government and businesses over a much longer period (Van der Linden & Zeelen, 2008).

From social exclusion to lifelong learning in Limpopo Province

Has the research programme served its objectives so far? After giving an insight into experiences and findings in the different research areas, it is useful to look back at the objectives of the research programme as formulated in 1999.

To conceptualise and analyse 'social exclusion' and 'lifelong learning'

Economic exclusion on the basis of unequal distribution of income, due to unemployment and poverty, is still a harsh reality in Limpopo. The other dimensions of exclusion — social-psychological, cultural, and educational — are relevant as well. The research has shown so far that in the lives of rural people, the divides between the poor and the rich, Black and White, Black and Black, educated and uneducated, older and young, and healthy and ill are all playing an important role in the way people are dealing with existing challenges. Modernity is coming in with all its technological and medial force. Individualisation and consumerism are becoming common phenomena. Old values are fading away, and many young people fail to have a clear compass in their lives (Ramphele, 2002).

For adult education activities, this implies that the issue of norms and values and the enhancement of active citizenship and reflexivity should become urgent priorities. The sub-projects show that before talking about lifelong learning of the 'learning rich', the issue of basic education for all is at stake (see also UNESCO, 2011a). In recent times, several authors have underlined the strong relationship between lifelong learning, the human capital theory, and the neoliberal concepts of globalisation (Baptiste, 2001; Baatjes, 2003; Von Kotze, 2003; Jarvis, 2007). A reductionist use of the concept of lifelong learning only in the context of employability and economic growth with a heavy responsibility on individual learners is equal to closing the eyes to the realities of the rural areas. The following description of groups at risk shows how unjust this is.

Empirical insights into problems of specific groups

To get insight into the problems of specific groups threatened by social exclusion within the Limpopo Province, many different groups and problem areas have been explored. Besides the groups categorised as rural women and early school leavers, research also targeted prisoners, teenage mothers, young farmworkers, and physically disabled and psychiatric patients. The body of knowledge about the educational circumstances, living conditions, and needs of these marginalised groups has grown and keeps on growing. Many people of the groups mentioned, live in isolation with little or very limited access to the world of employment and other forms of participation in society.

Insight into the role and effectiveness of adult education

The research shows that often a systematic needs analysis of learners is missing. Moreover, adult education is still perceived as exclusively a second chance to complete secondary school and too often 'shadow schooling' dominates the content and approach. This brings to the fore the 'education paradox'. This paradox refers to the experience established in adult education that educators deal with learners who often have had bad experiences in formal schooling. In other words, it is difficult to turn adult learners into enthusiastic and motivated learners when everything is seemingly done to remind them of the painful past, such as their frightening school experiences. Change of approach could go a long way in ameliorating the situation. It should be possible to organise short term training programme to meet the urgent needs of people in rural areas. Creative combinations of formal, non-formal, and informal learning should be enhanced in which learners themselves are involved in the preparation and execution of programmes (see Rakoma, 2000; Van der Kamp & Toren, 2003).

To develop, analyse and evaluate good practices

The activities of the research programme contributed to the improvement of ABET and health education programmes in the field as well as at the university. In the case of young adults at risk, it was possible to contribute to the initiation of a good practice in dealing with the prevention of early school leaving as well as the support of early school leavers themselves. By means of co-organising conferences and publications, it was possible to

highlight the exemplary value of good practices even beyond the Limpopo Province and South Africa.

To improve implementation strategies in adult education

Detailed insights into implementation processes of government policies in adult education are gained. The findings of the research projects show several discontinuities and contradictions in the implementation of adult education policies, partly caused by the legacies of the (Apartheid) past, such as the specific division of tasks between the national and provincial levels, communication problems between government services and the grassroots level, and lack of reinforcement. By means of several conferences and debates with representatives of the national department of education, among others, the adult education programme of the University of Limpopo has contributed to the national discourse on the role of implementation of adult education policies. In further research it could be fruitful to go back to the field to evaluate the implementation processes of the past seven years, to get deeper into the needs of adult learners in rural areas, and to develop new ways of influencing policy development and implementation from below.

In summary — the research activities of the programme led to rich empirical knowledge of the realities of groups at risk as well as deep insights into the challenges and opportunities of adult education programmes in rural areas. On the basis of these insights, the programme could make a beginning of contextualising concepts such as globalisation, social exclusion, and lifelong learning to the local rural conditions. In the next section, lessons learned that could be of interest beyond the area under focus will be formulated.

Lessons learned

The discussion of the research objectives showed that the research programme got grounded in the surrounding communities in terms of contents. The description of the sub-projects demonstrated how participatory approaches contributed to this result. This leads us to the last question: What lessons can be learned for the role of adult education in a globalised context, the sustainability of the research programme, and the grounding of adult education research programmes in rural contexts beyond Limpopo Province?

Adult education in a globalised context

The findings and experiences of the research programme 'From Social Exclusion to Lifelong Learning' have shown that adult education in rural areas finds itself in a precarious state. The declining support for ABET, the emphasis on skills and employability, the shift toward globalised neoliberal strategies, the concentration on individuals rather than on collectives, and the marginalisation of more political concepts of empowerment have tremendous consequences for the lives of rural people. A more focused social intervention programme, including a substantially larger budget for basic education, is needed to reduce the growing gap between the (learning) poor and the (learning) rich, noting also that the latter is no longer only a group of Whites but includes more and more a growing Black middle class (see Sparks, 2003). More creative thinking, debate, and sound empirical research are needed to develop an adult education concept that can deal with these consequences of globalisation (see also Preece, 2009a). Beside the negative consequences, one should deal creatively with its opportunities in the domains of information technology and multimedia. For instance, that young people in rural communities have now more and more access to other life styles and experiences of their peers in different countries could help them find interesting cues for the development of their own 'life project', to use a term of Anthony Giddens (1991).

The sustainability of the research programme

The continuous interaction with meaningful experiences and suggestions from the communities and the educational field contributed to renewed interventions. The intensively used resource centre, as well as the international exposure through staff and student exchange between the University of Limpopo and the University of Groningen enhanced capacity building of young South African university staff as well as practitioners in the field. However, after 2007, partly due to changes of staff and management as well as institutional problems at the university, the intensive interaction with the field and international partners is weakening. Moreover, despite the publications mentioned in this article, the process of publishing locally, nationally, and internationally is rather slow. To secure the sustainability of the programme, further international collaboration and exposure are essential. Vital is as well the protection of the programme by the university management. Good practices should be cherished (see also Zeelen & Van der Linden, 2009).

Lessons learned beyond Limpopo province

A successful element of the innovation at the University of Limpopo was the use of a long term and regional relevant research programme that gave an overarching frame to several sub-projects, as well as enhanced working systematically on the theoretical concepts and research methodologies used. In addition, the research programme was very helpful to establish fruitful links with communities and policy makers beyond the limited scope of a single sub-project. In terms of lessons learned for partnerships between universities and rural communities, it is useful to add a few more reflections. One should be realistic about the opportunities for action and transformation processes in communities. Although participatory approaches proved their value, the steps for interventions are often small and not always sustainable. The immense structural problems and existing power relations slow down quick changes and sustainable innovations (for more insights into the complexity of partnerships in South Africa and elsewhere, see Ramphele, 2002; O'Brien & Ó Fathaigh, 2007).

Working with rural communities is a long-term process and requires a lot of perseverance and modest steps in the right direction. Investing in people, developing flexible networks, and building social capital in the region often seems to be more effective than establishing structures and organisations (Zeelen & Van der Linden, 2009). It is essential to invest as well in accessible, transparent, and readable outcomes of research and creative ways of bringing them into the public discourse, for instance, by making use of traditional communication media such as newspapers and the radio, as well as by using new social media.

The man from Ga-Mothapo reflected he was afraid to ask anything from the university. It is hoped that the adult education department contributed in the breaking of this psychological distance. There is evidence that the links between the activities of the adult education programme at the University of Limpopo and the daily realities in the communities became fruitful. At the same time, we experienced considerable resistance in and outside the university to go this path. Universities in a globalised world should take their responsibility and invest more in their partnerships with communities, businesses, and civil society. This will help to respond to the call of the man from Ga-Mothapo and people in rural communities elsewhere.

5.5   Reflection with pointers on research and lifelong learning

The two publications (a book chapter and an article) presented in this chapter both reflect on research in an international context. The first reflects on the contributions on action research in the volatile atmosphere of a congress; the second on the long-term persistence needed to build a research programme. A common factor in the research discussed is the desire to improve existing lifelong learning and development practices in the context of different countries in Africa. In some cases interventions and actions are included in the research process as in action research; in other cases research serves to prepare for or evaluate interventions. In all cases it is practice-oriented research that is needed to support the design, implementation and evaluation of lifelong learning opportunities and processes. The two articles contain valuable lessons to consider when answering the sub-question: *Which research approach should accompany the development of meaningful lifelong learning programmes for groups at risk?.* These lessons were produced in the context of international cooperation. This stressed the importance of uncovering unheard voices of people with an interest in lifelong learning. The following pointers recapitulate the most striking issues to be covered by the answer to the main research question – *how can lifelong learning programmes serve groups at risk?* - in the next chapter.

Understanding the reality of the learner

Meaningful lifelong learning programmes for groups at risk should be connected to the reality in which these groups live. Grasping this reality is not a straightforward research process as was shown by the conversation with Leah from Kuluba in the intermezzo preceding this chapter. Without being aware, the research and the researched may find themselves caught in the way reality is framed by the dominant power relations. Similar experiences were identified in other contexts such as the ´baraza´ in Kenya (Kitetu, 2005) and the farms in South Africa (Modiba & Zeelen, 2007). In their book on qualitative research methods, Hennink, Hutter and Bailey (2011) speak of 'meaning-making partnership' (p. 109, referring to Hesser-Biber & Leavy, 2006) and discuss methods as instruments for co-creation of knowledge and meaning that leads to co-construction of reality by researchers and researched. Hennink, Hutter and Bailey will probably agree that co-creation and co-construction need more than just the right methods. A common base for a dialogue in which new knowledge can be produced starts with the establishment of conversational space (Van Haaster, 1991). Aware of the power position

assigned to him or her (Smith, 2012), the researcher should continuously reflect on the effects of his or her behaviour; this includes the questions asked, the language spoken, clothing worn, seating arrangement and venue.

The 'emic' or insider perspective is also important to genuinely understand and analyse responses and attitudes as Hennink, Hutter and Bailey (2011) explain. Understanding the reality of the learner or potential learner is vital, not only in the context of developing countries in Africa and other continents discussed by Hennink, Hutter and Bailey (2011) and Smith (2012). It is also paramount and equally complex in the context of the Netherlands as Van Haaster (1991) showed when analysing what was labelled as 'crazy talk'. Giving meaning to the words of people who are not used to being taken seriously may mean opening up to various co-existent realities and this in turn results in an epistemologically dynamic view of knowledge. The words of groups at risk, such as psychiatric patients, people living in post-conflict areas, farm labourers and others express the way they view reality. In the 1980s, when I participated in a group developing lifelong learning programmes for young school leavers, much time was spent familiarising ourselves with their reality, reading and rereading their words (*dwarslezen* as we called this in Dutch) (see Kool, Rippen, De Rooy & Berkers, 1981). A grasp of the emic perspectives helped us design programmes that did not take the 'outsider reality' for granted and served as real, powerful learning environments for the learners.

Participatory Action Research and communities of practice

Participatory Action Research is not only about co-creating knowledge and co-constructing reality, but also about changing reality as discussed in the article on action research in Africa and at the congress on which this article is based (Boog, Preece, Slagter & Zeelen, 2008). The article concludes that researchers should be open about their limitations and about follow-up to avoid creating high expectations that will never become reality. The researched participate as co-researchers. Participation should be genuine participation during the whole process from the needs assessment to the design and implementation of the lifelong learning programmes and the follow-up and without being limited to the phase of needs assessment. Only in this way will the capabilities of people be developed and strengthened, enabling them to get a grip on their own life project in the short- and the long-term (Sen, 1999; Nussbaum, 2011).

The dialogue in which new knowledge can be produced, to paraphrase the words of Hennink, Hutter and Bailey (2011), has to be followed by the creation of new practices and realities to prove its meaning. These practices and the actions undertaken by the participants are not only informed by knowledge, but also produce knowledge, so-called practice-based evidence. Van Strien (1986) speaks of 'practice as science'. To ensure that this practice-based evidence makes sense to the various stakeholders, they too should be involved in communities of practice (Wenger, 1998) as was the case in the Adult Education Department at the University of Limpopo in South Africa. A look at Table 5.1 in the article about the research practice in this department shows how researchers from different backgrounds cooperated. The text explains how partnerships were built to overcome traditional insider/outsider perspectives, in the case of South Africa historically dominated by Apartheid. Researchers should not come as outsiders to extract data from insider communities as was experienced by the San people in Botswana in the first article (Lekoko, 2006) and as Smith (2012) describes for New Zealand. Awareness of power differences, genuine interest in the other, and joint activities sharing life events are more likely to nourish meaningful and powerful partnerships (Zeelen & Van der Linden, 2009). It is this kind of partnership that will lead to the production of new knowledge, which will not only inform but also sustain lifelong learning interventions and programmes and contribute to their continuous improvement.

New perspectives for universities?

The man from Ga-Mothapo, quoted in the article on adult education research at the University of Limpopo, saw this university as a big institution with a lot of knowledge but closed to the surrounding communities. The University of Limpopo, in whose shadow the man lived, was historically a university for Blacks, offering second-class education and conducting second-class research as the article describes. We can take his words as an expression of exclusion. He experienced the university he knew as an institution with its back to his reality and problems. The Adult Education Department took his appeal seriously and developed practices to overcome the barriers experienced by establishing a research programme in dialogue with the surrounding communities. Should we regard this as an isolated incident of good practice or can we identify signs of change? The world of universities is changing, in some respects promising, in other respects ambiguous. Long-established universities in the global North have to justify the value of their research, meaning that they have to explain how it is put to use (called 'valorisation'). Universities of applied sciences are new among the universities. Their teaching programmes have a long tradition, but their research programmes

that are practice-oriented, still have to find solid ground. At the same time, universities are mushrooming in developing countries and accepting everybody who can pay, unfortunately with weak job perspectives. Even universities of longer standing expand their student numbers without offering proper facilities (Tumuheki, Zeelen & Openjuru, 2016).

Although the spreading of universities is not necessarily to the benefit of their students and the communities they stem from, we can mention some positive developments that bring together researchers and practitioners from the North and the South. In 2006, there was the action research congress, hosted by the Higher Education Group of the Northern Netherlands together with the University of Groningen, which resulted in a book with the most important contributions (Boog, Preece, Slagter & Zeelen, 2008). Recently, Early School Leaving in Africa (ESLA), followed by Youth, Education and Work, a research network established by the Lifelong Learning Department of the University of Groningen together with partner universities in Africa and America (South and North), lead to new intervention programmes, policy recommendations and joint publications (Zeelen, Van der Linden, Nampota & Ngabirano, 2010; Blaak, Tukundane, Van der Linden & Elsdijk, 2016). These initiatives can be qualified as genuine communities of practice because institutional borders have not prevented people from joining in. Researchers, both from 'traditional' universities and universities of applied sciences, participate just as well as independent researchers, practitioners, policy advisors, employers and last but not least the young people themselves. It is the improvement of practice that unites them. These communities inspire and boost practice-oriented research in universities, both old and new, both in the North and in the South. The flexibility and openness of these initiatives is their strength, but that may also turn into their weakness as the initiatives are only supported by certain individuals and not institutionalised within the university structures (see also Zeelen & Van der Linden, 2009). It is certainly a challenge to further the development of interdisciplinary partnerships and research programmes that result in improved practices and policies and in the consolidation of the knowledge produced in the form of articles and books.

Chapter 6

Conclusion: Ensuring meaningful lifelong learning opportunities for groups at risk

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Ensuring meaningful lifelong learning opportunities for groups at risk

6.1   Introduction

This chapter will bring together the findings and preliminary conclusions of the previous chapters in order to formulate an answer to the main research question: *How can lifelong learning programmes serve groups at risk?* The sub-questions used as stepping-stones to reach this point, are:

1. What is the background against which meaningful lifelong learning programmes can be developed in the context of international cooperation?
2. Which factors play a role in the development of meaningful lifelong learning programmes oriented towards the multiple needs of the learners?
3. What kind of professional involvement is needed to encourage and facilitate learning by groups at risk?
4. Which research approach could be instrumental in the development of meaningful lifelong learning programmes for groups at risk?
5. What lessons can be learned regarding approaches to lifelong learning and international cooperation?

After giving thought to the background (question 1), the programmes (question 2), the professionals (question 3) and the research approach (question 4), the lessons learned regarding approaches of lifelong learning and international cooperation (question 5) will be collected. The pointers derived from the articles presented in the four previous chapters will play their role as stepping-stones for answering the fifth sub-question. To build a fresh perspective for the integration and discussion of the findings of the previous chapters, the main research question will be accentuated. A characterisation of the groups at risk is the starting point of the subsequent discussion of the lifelong learning programmes (question 2), moving on to the professionals who deliver such programmes (question 3), to the research approach required to accompany the programmes and the professionals (question 4) and to the background of international cooperation as the fertile soil for the challenges involved in the whole process (question 1). Thus, the lessons learned regarding lifelong learning approaches and international cooperation are formulated as a preparation for the final reflection on the main research question.

6.2   Lifelong learning and groups at risk

To accentuate the research question I would like to draw the attention to two different stances on lifelong learning for groups at risk. The first is brought forward by Finger and Asún in their book 'Adult Education at the Crossroads. Learning our way out' (2001); the second is formulated by Van der Kamp and Toren in their paper on 'Hybrid forms of learning. Innovative approaches to learning for groups-at-risk' (2003). For Finger and Asún the 'risk group scenario' as they call it, would mean that the broad concept of adult education would be limited to lifelong learning assigned to the risk groups of the current turbo-capitalism. These risk groups consist of those who are unable to fit into the accelerating industrial development process, such as the growing numbers of the unemployed, immigrants, young people, and women. All these and other risk groups have to be 'upskilled' and made fit for turbo-capitalism. Although this scenario would maintain adult education as a valuable process, it would result in a *ghettoisation of the field* (p. 135) whereby adult education would act as an instrument to maintain turbo-capitalism by correcting its negative effects.

Van der Kamp and Toren (2003) seem to fit this scenario with their description of new approaches to learning for groups at risk. They would probably agree with Finger and Asún that current society produces groups at risk that do not share in its benefits. In one of his earlier writings, Van der Kamp (2000a) even contends that lifelong learning policies and practices themselves can be held responsible for the emergence of certain groups at risk. The promotion of lifelong learning as a way to achieve or maintain employability favours those who are used to learning (the 'learning rich') over those who have said farewell to school and formal learning in their childhood (the 'learning poor'). Designing ways to attract the learning poor to engage in lifelong learning could indeed be considered as a remedy for the negative effects of current society and its emphasis on lifelong learning as an individual responsibility. On the other hand, catering for the groups at risk requires breaking through the traditional borderlines between formal, non-formal and informal learning and thus shakes traditional teaching and learning methods.

Who benefits in the end? Multinational companies which are the driving force behind capitalist society today (Finger & Asún, 2001; Jarvis, 2007) and/or those members of the groups at risk who acquire instruments to facilitate their path in society (Van der Kamp, 2000a; Van der Kamp & Toren, 2003) and to live a life worthy of dignity (Sen, 1999; Nussbaum, 2011)? I will not immediately take sides by answering the question right away. To give a

considered answer to this question I start bottom-up, discussing groups at risk and the way learning – either formal, non-formal or informal – may serve them, then I look at what is required at different levels to make this happen.

6.3   Groups at risk

Who are these people referred to as 'groups at risk'? Generally spoken, people described as groups at risk in the context of lifelong learning suffer educational exclusion and consequently run the risk of social exclusion. Finger and Asún (2001) speak of the unemployed, immigrants, young people, and in some respects women. It is not difficult to add some other groups such as people with a functional impairment, (ex-)psychiatric patients, members of multi-problem families, those living in poverty, the elderly, certain ethnic groups, and those living in conflict-situations. As they have sounded throughout my research and practice in lifelong learning, it is hoped that the voices of people belonging to these groups have been heard throughout this thesis. They have different characteristics. What unites them is that they are all missing something that is essential to their livelihood and to their lives. In the intermezzo preceding chapter 2, Ahfad University for Women is introduced as a university dedicated to serving groups at risk in Sudan in different ways. The fieldtrips to rural areas with students of this university brought me to many classrooms with children of different age groups in one classroom. Many of them had missed a year or two of schooling, among them very bright children such as the girl who asked about the choice of languages taught at school (mentioned in one of the articles in chapter 4). In Mozambique, literacy learners told us how important literacy was for the respect given to them as individuals who could have a say in their community. Also those who needed a literacy course but could not afford to participate, testified to this phenomenon (reflected in one of the articles in chapter 3). In northwestern Uganda, we encountered semi-literate women, who made up for their deficit by joining forces with young university graduates. Together they formed an organisation which contributes to the development of the community (chapter 4). The intermezzo preceding chapter 3 brought us to the Netherlands where Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning procedures offered to industrial employees revealed that many employees were not able to read and write. Shame and painful experiences at school had made them find ways to hide this lack of basic skills and their employers had never noticed.

None of these people got a proper chance to go to school nor did they benefit sufficiently from the education they received. As a result, they lack some essential basic skills or, if they

succeeded in acquiring certain skills and knowledge, these are not really useful for earning a living, or perhaps outdated and difficult to upgrade. They encounter different barriers to education as described by Van der Kamp and Toren (2003): physical and material barriers such as time and money (we could add: conflicts and insecurity), structural barriers such as the way in which education is organised, and barriers related to their own attitudes, including lack of self-confidence and motivation (see also Cross, 1981). These people, the 'learning poor' as Van der Kamp (2000a) named them, are usually described and approached in negative terms: they lack something. The examples in previous chapters show, on the contrary, that they can be creative in finding their way, in avoiding the negative stigma, even in establishing their own organisation. So, instead of asking why the groups at risk did not benefit from education, we can also ask why education did not succeed in demolishing the barriers to participation, in offering them what they needed, in trying to identify practices that present opportunities for them, and in breaking with traditional educational systems. This creates a perspective for drawing conclusions to this thesis.

6.4   Groups at risk in their (educational) context

The context of the groups who run the risk of educational exclusion is diverse. These groups have grown up in situations where there is no educational infrastructure at all, such as in South Sudan where the war with the North almost destroyed the whole education system (Lako, Van der Linden & Deng, 2010). Or they have been subjected to educational systems that have destroyed their creativity and independent thinking, because such systems are dominated by the ruling power. We saw this in South Sudan, where Arabic was imposed in the few remaining schools (Breidlid, 2005, 2010), in South Africa where Afrikaans was imposed and schools for the black majority were of poor quality (Zeelen, Rampedi & Van der Linden, 2014) and in Mozambique, where education was the privilege of the colonists and those who sacrificed their own identity, called 'assimilados' because they had to 'assimilate' Portuguese culture (Lind, 1988). Education, presented as value free, is in fact loaded with values reproducing existing power differences (Bourdieu, 1998). Street (1984) also points to this aspect when he discusses autonomous and ideological literacies. Education, language and literacy are regarded as 'technical', 'autonomous' issues, but in reality they serve the powerful. This is also the case in the Netherlands where education runs the risk of working as a selection mechanism favouring those who are endowed with a supportive background (Glastra & Meijers, 2000).

Yet, although the context paves the way in which education serves as a vehicle for the powerful, we cannot turn the argument around and deny education to the less powerful because it would not benefit them. Acknowledging the critical function of education in the reproduction of the existing power distribution, we can look for ways to support groups at risk in getting access to good education to improve the quality of their lives. Freire (1970) taught us that literacy and education can serve the less powerful, if their experience and knowledge is the starting point and educators respectfully build on that potential. Nussbaum (2011) states that education can encourage the development of capabilities that allow people to live their life in dignity. The learners themselves reveal their potential to adapt the content taught to their own situation and to their own benefit. An example of this was what the women in northwestern Uganda did, when they made their own blend of knowledge about leadership and entrepreneurship (Van der Linden, 2015). Of course, education cannot guarantee the achievement of a life worthy of dignity. Economic circumstances, health infrastructure, safety and security, and human rights are important conditions that may limit the way in which people's capacities can be put to practical use (Wheelahan & Moodie, 2011). The role of education in relation to the quality of life of groups at risk should not be overestimated, but its contribution can be vital, not in the least because of its relation to the agency of these groups (Giddens, 1976).

6.5   Learning for agency

Groups at risk may easily shy away from classes if they are taught in ways that do not respect their potential and agency. In chapter 3 a Mozambican woman is quoted who told us she did not join literacy classes because she was already old and her head would not accommodate new knowledge. Others remembered they were scolded by the teachers. 'Banking' education (Freire, 1970) will not encourage them to speak out and use education for their own ends. Their knowledge and skills should be recognised in the way education is organised. School or 'schoolish' learning may well be a narrow concept for the learning required. During their lifetime they have learned in different ways. Critics of lifelong learning argue that the approach of lifelong learning is exported from the global North to the global South, without acknowledging that lifelong learning used to be 'the' way of learning in the South where extended families taught their children how to behave and care for themselves as they grew up (Preece, 2009a; Regmi, 2015). A powerful learning environment (Van der Kamp & Toren, 2003), which takes into account that learning is not confined to school, will take heed of this

natural way of learning and open up other ways of teaching and learning as meaningful lifelong learning opportunities.

Although this may sound attractive, we should not become uncritically nostalgic. Lifelong learning in the extended families was also used to reproduce power differences, for example those between men and women as referred to in the Sudanese-Ugandan case (discussed in chapter 4). 'Old' ways of learning are endangered by global changes that disturb the traditional ways of living together and create new challenges but also new chances for family members and their livelihoods. What then should groups at risk learn? There is no fixed curriculum that fits the diversity of learners nor is it possible to give guidelines for the development of a curriculum. Each group and each context demands a specific combination of foundational, vocational and generic skills (UNESCO, 2015). The capabilities approach, which emphasises building lasting capacities in learners and not just vocational skills required for a certain job, could influence the mixed composition of a programme and maintain openness towards different outcomes (Wheelahan & Moodie, 2011). Learners would not only acquire skills to serve as human capital, but also knowledge and capacities to support their independence. Thus, the reconciliation of the two approaches characterised in paragraph 6.2 forms the background for revisiting the pointers of the other chapters.

6.6   Lifelong learning professionals working with groups at risk

From the description above it will be clear that it is not an easy task for professionals designing lifelong learning programmes in the sense of powerful learning environments, reaching out to and accompanying learners, creating opportunities for their capabilities and 'functioning'. Professionals are required who are genuinely interested in the learners and their backgrounds, who master the skills and knowledge to be transmitted and who are craftsmen and –women in their ability to create learning environments. 'Guided reinvention' is the term used in mathematics education to refer to the process in which children (learners) are guided to discover mathematical principles (Freudenthal, 1991). Interaction, the creation of shared meaning and mutual learning is crucial to this process. Like mathematics teachers, lifelong learning professionals should possess not only subject knowledge and teaching skills, but also learning skills to genuinely respond to the learners. This is quite demanding and it seems hardly possible to unite all this in one person. Lifelong learning professionals will have to make use of the existing body of knowledge and to refer to crafts(wo)men concerning specific skills. Their craftsmanship lies in the way they make knowledge and skills accessible to people for

whom access was hitherto sealed and who now get the opportunity to actively join in the development of knowledge and skills themselves. The critical question concerns exclusion and inclusion: are certain groups (un)intentionally but systematically excluded and how can this be avoided or improved? This question is not only valid for out-of-school education for groups at risk, but also for education in schools and for students who do not obviously pertain to a group at risk.

Unfortunately the reality nowadays is that the existing body of knowledge is turned into textbooks, primers and standard tests and that skills are fragmented into competencies, disconnected from more comprehensive underlying capacities (Van der Laan, 2006; Wheelahan & Moodie, 2011). Many professionals, willingly or unwillingly, follow the prescribed steps without really observing and hearing the learners. The textbooks may be very good, based on many years of experience in teaching, and the primers may assure that the right knowledge and skills for tests are taught, but even then they should not blur the sight of the learners. The learners are becoming crafts(wo)men themselves incorporating knowledge and skills into their personalities for the rest of their lives. It is not a purely technical task to supervise this process; it requires a normative professional who is not afraid of taking risks (Biesta, 2013; Kunneman, 2013) and who is given the freedom to act (Mintzberg, 2013).

6.7 Professionalisation of lifelong learning professionals working with groups at risk

Can professionalisation support professionals in their risky educational adventures? How should we understand the current trend which pushes professionals to get higher qualifications? Tumuheki, Zeelen and Openjuru (2016) notice that many professionals join higher education in Uganda motivated by status. The situation in Mozambique is similar: Mendonça observes Master students who work in education but do not relate their studies to their work (see chapter 2) and Manuel, Van der Linden and Popov (accepted) claim that professionalisation in terms of educational level is a prerequisite for recognition of the lifelong learning professional. In the Netherlands, there are fellowships for teachers in primary, secondary and tertiary education to study at universities. Degrees seem to be promoted as formal hurdles to take in order to achieve some status, recognition and corresponding room to manoeuvre. What is behind this? Mintzberg (2013) shows that formalisation and training are interchangeable. This means that people with less training have to follow the rules strictly and those who are trained at a higher level get more room to manoeuvre because they

oversee the consequences of adapting the rules. In this line of reasoning, the higher the degree, the better people are prepared for the risks involved in being a professional in lifelong learning and the more room to manoeuvre they should get. Education induces trust in one's professionalism. This sounds reasonable, but an important aspect is missing if the contents of the training or professionalisation are not taken into account.

What kind of professionalisation would be beneficial to the professionals, but also to the learners? Coming back to the perspective we chose for this final chapter, this kind of professionalisation should turn professionals into good observers and good listeners with a firm knowledge base, which is not carved in stone but dynamic and open to dialogue with the learner. The flexibility required does not come naturally with training. It presupposes years of experience, processed in dialogue with learners, colleagues, readings, in short: in lifelong learning. This is lifelong learning in the sense Jarvis (2007) characterises it as the ongoing process by which people learn from experience in different ways and in different settings. So, instead of relying on people because of their degrees, trust should be generated through professionalism based on experience. This professionalism only reveals itself in interaction, in sharing experiences, in working and discussing together. Formal degrees should not be banned, but degree programmes should be a mixture of practice and theory to produce flexible professionalism refined through lifelong learning (cf. the 10,000 hours practice required to become a craftsman, mentioned by Sennett, 2008). This would imply the intrinsic motivation of the degree student who does not just study to get a piece of paper but really wants to make a difference in practice.

6.8   Research on lifelong learning for groups at risk

What kind of research supports the development of appropriate lifelong learning programmes accompanied by dedicated and well-equipped professionals? What kind of knowledge should research in this area produce to ultimately serve the learners? Should we know more about the groups at risk, especially about their agency, for example, by conducting ethnographic research? Should we know more about effective lifelong learning programmes, for example, through evaluation research? Should we know more about the competencies of the professionals, using action research? Should we investigate the (non-)formal education system through organisation research? Or should we know more about supportive policies through policy research? There are a lot of perspectives for relevant research, all with their characteristics, strengths and weaknesses. The challenge is in the ownership of the research.

Who would own the research? The group at risk? The learner? The professional? The organisation to which the professional belongs? The (local) government that is designing and implementing policies on lifelong learning?

The bottom line is that the learners and even the potential learners (see chapter 3 for this term) should benefit and participate, but the responsibility for conducting relevant and sound research lies elsewhere. Based on the experience described in chapter 2 and chapter 4, I make a plea for carrying out research in *communities of practice* involving various research contexts and combining professionalisation of its members with research undertaken. In this way professionalisation is based on the processing of experiences in practice-oriented research whereby the knowledge gained is not fragmented but part of a joint research programme. The insider perspective of (potential) learners, professionals, policy makers and others is complemented by the dedicated outsider perspective of researchers (Van der Kamp, 2002). This is genuine joint knowledge production as described in chapter 2. Depending on the objects of research the roles of insiders and outsiders may change. Interaction and dialogue are the keys to keeping each other geared to a common cause: high quality lifelong learning for groups at risk.

6.9 Partnerships and power relations

In this era of globalisation and internationalisation it should not be difficult to establish communities of practice as proposed in the previous paragraph. The website of the University of Groningen reads: *Collaborations between researchers on the frontiers of knowledge take place within extensive networks, affirming our strong, worldwide reputation* (http://www.rug.nl/about-us/who-are-we/ retrieved December 6 2015). In fact, the bulk of the research presented in this thesis was conducted in the framework of cooperation between the University of Groningen and universities in Africa, namely Ahfad University for Women in Sudan, Eduardo Mondlane University in Mozambique, University of Limpopo (formerly University of the North) in South Africa, and Uganda Martyrs University in Uganda. A research programme was established for joint knowledge production on issues around early school leaving, lifelong learning, youth, education and work (Zeelen, Van der Linden, Nampota & Ngabirano, 2010; Wabike & Van der Linden, 2014; Blaak, Tukundane, Van der Linden & Elsdijk, 2016). Professionalisation and research were interrelated through Bachelor, Master and PhD students who enriched their own professionalism and contributed to the programme with their research (see for example Angucia, 2010; Tukundane, 2014).

But there is a sting in the tail. Although the university website speaks of collaboration among researchers and extensive networks, these networks are meant to *affirm our strong, worldwide reputation*. Is this an expression of the way in which universities in the global North use universities in the global South to upgrade their own reputation? Is collaboration only tolerated in so far as it contributes in this respect? This refers to the power imbalance that still exists between the global North and the global South, notwithstanding some inspiring practice and joint research programmes. Institutional realities frequently dominate university cooperation projects in which the universities of the global North focus on the production of Masters, PhDs and publications in relevant journals, thus reproducing the existing power imbalances. Also universities in the South have their institutional realities that tie the hands of their employees: beautiful statements on missions to contribute to the development of the country are not implemented, there is little time for research outside degree programmes, pressure to please donors, etc. (see chapter 2). 'Bowling together' to strengthen North-South and South-South collaboration and to jointly produce new knowledge (Zeelen, 2015) cannot take place without openness about these institutional realities to pave the way for meaningful communities of practice. These communities of practice can only lead to joint knowledge production, if all members invest in mutual understanding and learning (Zeelen & Van der Linden, 2009).

6.10 Lessons learned

Step by step we have summarised the lessons learned regarding approaches to lifelong learning and international cooperation, recognising the agency of the groups at risk instead of characterising them as groups who lack something. As a point of departure this led to a fresh perspective on the approach to lifelong learning and international cooperation, facilitating dialogue and the production of new knowledge instead of one-way traffic and the reproduction of power differences. It refers to lessons learned at different levels: contents and organisation of programmes (chapter 3), reflection and learning of accompanying professionals (chapter 4), focus and ownership of research (chapter 5) and the context or background (chapter 2). Among others, Freire (1970), Sen (1999), Nussbaum (2011) and also the late professor van der Kamp (2000a) have inspired the theoretical foundation of lifelong learning programmes serving groups at risk in a way that transcends the production of human capital for economic development. Taken together, these lessons form the answer to the fifth

sub-question and pave the way for the final reflection on the main research question about serving groups at risk by way of quality lifelong learning.

6.11 Recent developments

Before discussing the main research question, I want to draw attention to recent developments that show the topicality of this question. Lifelong learning is on the national and international agenda again. There is some new substance to the debate about lifelong learning as described before between Finger and Asún (2001), who warned against the risk group scenario for adult education and Van der Kamp and Toren (2003) who elaborated on it as a chance for the groups at risk to benefit from new learning opportunities. In 2014 in the Netherlands, the minister for Education, Culture and Science and the minister for Social Affairs and Employment jointly sent a letter to the Dutch parliament, starting with the sentence *Lifelong learning is a spearhead for the government in the coming years* (file:///C:/Users/Gebruiker/Downloads/kamerbrief-over-voortgang-leven-lang-leren, pdf retrieved December 6, 2015). As already mentioned in the introduction, the United Nations decided in 2015 to explicitly mention lifelong learning in one of its sustainable development goals for 2030. Goal 4 reads: *Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all*. This is most remarkable since the preceding 2015 development goals only spoke of access to primary education.

As one can expect, given the two authors of the letter to the Dutch parliament, this letter is grist to the mill of Finger and Asún. The letter refers to a report by the Dutch Scientific Council for Government Policy (2013) on the 'learning economy' with the call to invest in the national 'earning capacity'. It connects the need for a new (lifelong) learning culture almost exclusively to future economic growth, demanding new competencies of the labour force without questioning the necessity of this growth and its consequences. The late Professor van der Kamp would also have been critical as the letter calls for individuals, employers, educational institutes, entrepreneurs and other stakeholders to implement the necessary learning culture. This means that people can be held responsible for updating their own skills and lifelong learning can easily turn into empty rhetoric for the so-called 'learning poor', who may not know where to turn (Van der Kamp, 2000a).

Sustainable development goal 4 may incite more hope. Target 4.5 is especially important in this framework: *By 2030, eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access*

to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations (https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/ retrieved December 6 2015). Other targets also promote lifelong learning. Before becoming jubilant, let us take note of the critical remarks of Regmi (2015) who analysed the UN High Level Panel Report which prepared the formulation of goal 4 regarding the role of lifelong learning for 'least developed countries'. He claims that it is *highly ambitious and rhetorical* (p. 10) and *it reiterates the economistic dogma of the narrow human capital theory as the only possible educational strategy for poor countries* (p. 11).

6.12   Ensuring meaningful lifelong learning opportunities for groups at risk

Finally turning back to the main research question *How can lifelong learning programmes serve groups at risk?,* we may establish that this question is still appropriate today and ask what is new in comparison with the debate of around 15 years ago. Should we turn away disappointedly or comply with the revitalisation of lifelong learning obediently? I hope to have made clear that we should not be forced into either one of these reactions. Although the dilemma cannot be solved easily, it is possible to accept the criticism of the narrow focus on economic progress while at the same time developing meaningful lifelong learning opportunities for groups at risk. The starting point for the development of these programmes is the agency of the people and the strengthening of their capabilities as capital for their own lives. This is as valid for the learners as it is for the professionals. The professionals too need recognition of their agency and strengthening of their capabilities. Based on the agency perspective, we can outline the contents, professional supervision, the role of research and of the universities themselves.

In the general introduction I have presented four assumptions underlying this thesis. The first assumption is that genuine development cooperation presupposes interaction and mutual learning. The second assumption is that education for children, as well as for youth and adults, should create learning opportunities that support people in coping with the world of today. This brings about a third assumption that education should be offered in a way that it enables people to engage in development and benefit from it in the way they choose. Lifelong learning professionals can and should implement their role in this perspective (assumption 4) by opening up learning possibilities for learners and potential learners. This thesis has not only fuelled these assumptions, but also developed them in the sense that

lifelong learners are not only coping with the world, but are actively involved in (re)creating it. Consequently, lifelong learning programmes should not reproduce existing power imbalances, but create meaningful learning opportunities from this perspective.

The renewed attention to lifelong learning opens possibilities, but also calls for careful implementation that does not disregard vulnerable groups in different contexts. The proposal to amend sustainable development goal 4 in the introduction is enriched with arguments throughout the thesis. Firstly, to avoid a limited concept of lifelong learning as related to economic development, I add the word 'meaningful', referring of course to the learners, stretching beyond a limited concept of skills or competencies, including underlying knowledge to support independence and agency. Secondly, I replace the word 'promote', which sounds noncommittal and puts the responsibility on the shoulders of the learners, with the word 'ensure' which is also used for 'inclusive and equitable quality education' in the first part of the goal. This means that the responsibility is not only with the (potential) learner, but also with those in charge at various levels of society: a societal need should not be diverted to individuals. Thirdly, I replace 'for all' by 'for groups at risk', because their inclusion needs special attention, as also expressed in target 4.5. Thus amended, the goal reads: *Ensuring meaningful lifelong learning opportunities for groups at risk,* which is the title of this thesis. The goal is an urgent challenge for practitioners, politicians and researchers in the coming years.

The project of writing this thesis started with the idea of a collection of articles for a non-existent journal. In the introduction I also referred to the accreditation of prior experiential learning as if the thesis would be a sort of portfolio to be accredited. Finally, there appears to be a common denominator in the articles that may guide contemporary developments requiring wise decisions to avoid the exclusion of certain groups in our society. Compiling this thesis was a useful exercise in a process which has not yet come to an end. There may be more common denominators which I overlooked, or interesting differences to be investigated. The implementation of goal 4 and its targets will certainly need more research at different levels to really serve groups at risk and not lose them on the way. The fact that the goal includes lifelong learning is an excellent opportunity for universities, both of 'traditional' and of 'applied' sciences, to take their responsibility in supporting the development of lifelong learning programmes for groups at risk and to rethink the way they treat lifelong learners within the university, not only promoting but also ensuring meaningful lifelong learning opportunities for all, explicitly including groups at risk. This is only possible if the experience

and reflections of the members of the groups at risk like the lady quoted at the start of this thesis, are acknowledged and taken into account.

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Summary

It is a commonplace idea that lifelong learning is mandatory in the contemporary knowledge society in which the knowledge required changes faster than school curricula can keep up with. What contents of lifelong learning would be meaningful and what teaching and learning methods would be appropriate? What is required of people when they have to organise their own lifelong learning? What conditions are necessary in terms of content, methods and support? Questions like these motivated me to investigate lifelong learning practices in different contexts. Speaking with participants, educators and other stakeholders, sitting in on classes and studying teaching and learning materials, I tried to develop notions on meaningful lifelong learning programmes, especially for people for whom learning is not a matter of course. In the last phase of writing this thesis, I was pleasantly surprised to receive corroboration from a different level. The fourth sustainable development goal agreed on by the United Nations in September 2015 reads: *Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all* (Tang, 2014). To do justice to the perspective of this study I reformulated this goal into *Ensuring meaningful lifelong learning opportunities for groups at risk;* this then serves as the title of my thesis.

The general research question for this study is: *How can lifelong learning programmes serve groups at risk*? This broad question has been split into five sub-questions:

1. What is the background against which meaningful lifelong learning programmes can be developed in the context of international cooperation?
2. Which factors play a role in the development of meaningful lifelong learning programmes oriented towards the multiple needs of the learners?
3. What kind of professional involvement is needed to encourage and facilitate learning by groups at risk?
4. Which research approach could be instrumental in the development of meaningful lifelong learning programmes for groups at risk?
5. What lessons can be learned regarding approaches to lifelong learning and international cooperation?

The 'pièce de résistance' in answer to each sub-question consists of an amalgamation of sub-studies on lifelong learning issues that I have carried out in different contexts in the last ten years when I worked in various positions and different countries as a lecturer, teacher trainer and researcher. The studies resulted in scientific publications in the form of articles and book

chapters. Eight of them are integrated as a whole in this thesis; others served as material for intermezzos or background information. The eight publications are embedded in four chapters, each preceded by an opening story (intermezzo) and an introduction and followed by key issues (pointers), relating to one of the sub-questions. Thus, this thesis consists of a general introduction (chapter 1), four chapters each containing two publications on the first four sub-questions and a sixth chapter which elaborates on the fifth sub-question and forms the general conclusion.

The first chapter sets the scene discussing the topical social relevance of the study, the main concepts used, the research questions, the research methodology and a preview of the contents. The main concepts relate firstly to lifelong learning (Freire, 1970; Street, 1984; Van der Kamp, 2000a; Jarvis, 2007). Acknowledging the different contexts of the lifelong learning practices studied, concepts on development and international cooperation (Sen, 1999; UNDP, 2009a; Nussbaum, 2011) are added to build a framework on the relationship between lifelong learning and development, referring to the work of Preece on this issue (2009a). As the ultimate goal of this exercise is to develop recommendations for improvement, concepts about professionals and their interventions (Schön, 1983; Sennett, 2008; Tonkens, 2008; Kunneman, 2013; Spierts, 2014) are linked to the previous concepts. The combined perspectives lead to critical questions that are used to analyse the findings in the various publications incorporated in the following chapters. The first chapter also contains a reflection on the research methodology used throughout the different studies to justify the methodology of the whole exercise. The main issue at stake concerning research methodology, which also has an epistemological component, is to make sense of lifelong learning practices and of the experiences of the people involved (Schön, 1983; Van Strien, 1986; Van der Kamp, 2002).

Following this general introduction, the second chapter elaborates on sub-question 1, which relates to the background of international cooperation in all the sub-studies undertaken. All the sub-studies have benefitted a great deal from the collaboration between people with different backgrounds who shared experiences and discussed theoretical notions to evaluate them. Elaborating on terms like 'capacity building' and 'capacity development', which suggest unequal contributions, my colleague and I have characterised this type of collaboration as 'joint knowledge production' (Zeelen & Van der Linden, 2009). Besides the article that introduces this term, the chapter contains an intermezzo on a collaboration experience in Sudan, based on an unpublished article (Van der Linden & Hussein, 2002) and a

reflection on curriculum development for a Master programme in Mozambique (Van der Linden & Mendonça, 2006). Both show how people from different backgrounds work on a common cause to the benefit of the practice involved, particularly because the different perspectives resulting from these backgrounds are discussed and fed into partnerships.

Chapter 3 probes into lifelong learning programmes in different contexts to uncover the factors that are crucial to the development of meaningful lifelong learning programmes (sub-question 2). The contexts comprise the Netherlands (intermezzo, derived from Van der Linden, Burema, Renting, 2010), Mozambique (Van der Linden & Manuel, 2011) and South Sudan (Van der Linden, Blaak & Andrew, 2013). Thus, the contexts range from a country considered to be 'developed' to a 'developing' and rather stable country and a country in a (post-)conflict situation. In the 'developed' Netherlands low-skilled labour is outsourced to low income countries and lesser educated people remain empty-handed in terms of employment opportunities. In 'developing' Mozambique the government and non-governmental organisations cooperate to 'upskill' the labour force to meet the needs of the formal and informal labour market. Although the war between northern and southern Sudan has ceased, (armed) conflicts continue to occur in the region and the whole South-Sudanese education sector still has to be (re)constructed. As diverse as they are, all the learners find themselves in precarious situations and this translates into different but urgent educational needs. These needs should be the main basis for the content and modes of delivery of appropriate lifelong programmes. To implement these programmes, the parties involved such as governments, non-governmental organisations, companies and private persons should strive to overcome differences and join forces.

Following this line of reasoning, developing and implementing lifelong learning programmes is not a question of following the right recipe; it demands creativity and resourcefulness from human beings. Professionals, remunerated or not, come into view here. To answer the third sub-question spotlights are put on the professionals and their interventions in chapter 4. The intermezzo at the start of the chapter takes us again to the Netherlands, revealing the innovative attitude demanded of primary school teachers (Van der Linden, 2013). The first article ponders on a lifelong learning centre in northwestern Uganda, where refugees from bordering South Sudan are educated together with other inhabitants, supported by a partnership which includes members of the diaspora and different groups within the community (Van der Linden, 2015). The potential of this partnership in terms of service delivery on the one hand and the apparent indifference of the local government

towards this potential on the other hand sets one thinking. The potential of professionals, especially in locally embedded partnerships, can probably be put to better use. This is what the second article describes, drawing on previous research and meaningful experiences (Van der Linden, 2016). The conclusion to this chapter stresses the importance of professional space, supported by professionalisation in professional learning communities and accompanied with practice-oriented research.

Chapter 5 expands on the type of research needed to develop and implement lifelong learning programmes (sub-question 4). As the preceding chapter suggests, research in this framework should be practice-oriented. And as the intermezzo to this chapter shows, it should not take existing practices for granted. Smith (2012) shows the 'colonising' effect of research methodologies that seem to be universally applicable but do not question dominant perceptions about vulnerable people. The chapter contains a book chapter and an article describing research approaches that appreciate (tacit) knowledge of these people. The book chapter (Van der Linden & Zeelen, 2008) discusses different experiences of researchers using elements of action research in Africa and shows that the inclusion of those people investigated in the different stages of the research design may lead to fruitful mutual learning, but also needs certain conditions on the ground. The article by Zeelen, Rampedi and Van der Linden (2014) demonstrates the usefulness of a research programme which is continuously improved and built on by mutual learning of researchers and researched. The effectiveness of such a programme is not only a question of using the right methods, it is also a question of research paradigm and epistemological assumptions as knowledge in this type of research is constructed in interaction (Van Strien, 1986; Flyvbjerg, 2001; Boog, Preece, Slagter & Zeelen, 2008).

As the fifth sub-question suggests, the final chapter takes stock of the lessons learned throughout the preceding chapters. It reiterates the main research question - *How can lifelong learning programmes serve groups at risk*? - and discerns two contradictory approaches to answering the question. The first approach regards the focus of lifelong learning on groups at risk as a service to the economic interests of multinationals absorbing their residues, while the second approach seeks ways to turn lifelong learning into something useful for groups at risk. From this thesis it will be clear that I choose the second approach, but I do so while paying due respect to the critical potential of the first approach. The critical questions to be taken on board revolve around the disclosure of the voice of those within the groups at risk, their need to learn something meaningful in meaningful ways and the recognition of their input (see also

Angucia, 2010; Tukundane, 2014). The final plea of this thesis is to opt for the development of meaningful lifelong learning programmes which serve the needs of groups at risk and to ensure the opportunities for them to benefit from these programmes. Taking into account the doubts about the motivation for and feasibility of sustainable development goal 4 (Van der Kamp, 2000a; Regmi, 2015), careful monitoring and research should accompany practice and monitor results.

Samenvatting: Een leven lang leren voor risicogroepen

In de huidige maatschappij, waarin kennis sneller veroudert dan schoolcurricula bij kunnen houden, is de gedachte gemeengoed geworden dat een leven lang leren noodzaak is. Wat is dan een zinvolle invulling van een leven lang leren? Wat vraagt het van mensen om dit te organiseren? Welke voorwaarden moeten gecreëerd worden, zowel wat betreft inhoud als wat betreft vormgeving en begeleiding? Deze vragen motiveerden mij om op zoek te gaan naar praktijken van een leven lang leren in verschillende contexten. Daarvoor sprak ik met deelnemers, begeleiders en andere belanghebbenden van cursussen (en andere leeractiviteiten) en bestudeerde ik het cursusmateriaal om me een beeld te vormen van betekenisvolle programma's voor een leven lang leren, juist voor mensen voor wie leren niet vanzelfsprekend is. In de laatste fase van het schrijven van dit proefschrift werd ik aangenaam verrast toen de nieuwe duurzame ontwikkelingsdoelen door de Verenigde Naties in september 2015 werden vastgesteld. Het vierde doel luidt namelijk: *het verzekeren van kwalitatief goed onderwijs en het bevorderen van de mogelijkheden om een leven lang te leren voor iedereen* (Tang, 2014). Om recht te doen aan de invalshoek van dit onderzoek, heb ik dit doel geherformuleerd als *Het verzekeren van mogelijkheden voor risicogroepen om een leven lang betekenisvol te leren.* De Engelse versie hiervan is de titel van mijn proefschrift geworden. In het Nederlands luidt deze kort: *Een leven lang leren voor risicogroepen.*

De centrale onderzoeksvraag voor dit onderzoek is: *Hoe kunnen programma's voor een leven lang leren steun bieden aan risicogroepen?* Deze brede vraag is in vijf deelvragen opgesplitst, die als volgt luiden:

1. Wat is de betekenis van de context waarbinnen betekenisvolle programma's voor een leven lang leren worden ontwikkeld in het kader van internationale samenwerking?
2. Welke factoren spelen een rol bij het ontwikkelen van betekenisvolle programma's voor leven lang leren in aansluiting op de diverse leerbehoeften van de deelnemers?
3. Welke professionele betrokkenheid is vereist voor het begeleiden van het leren van risicogroepen?
4. Welke onderzoeksbenadering draagt bij aan de ontwikkeling van programma's voor een leven lang leren voor risicogroepen?
5. Welke lessen kunnen geleerd worden wat betreft een leven lang leren in relatie tot internationale samenwerking?

Het 'pièce de résistance' om elke deelvraag te beantwoorden, bestaat uit deelonderzoeken met betrekking tot diverse aspecten van een leven lang leren, die ik in de afgelopen tien jaar uitgevoerd heb. Ik werkte in verschillende landen als docent, opleider en onderzoeker. De deelonderzoeken hebben geresulteerd in wetenschappelijke publicaties in de vorm van artikelen en hoofdstukken in diverse boeken. Acht van deze publicaties zijn in hun geheel in dit proefschrift opgenomen; andere zijn gebruikt als materiaal voor intermezzo's of als achtergrondinformatie. De acht opgenomen publicaties zijn ingebed in vier hoofdstukken, die elk een deelvraag behandelen. Ieder hoofdstuk begint met een kort praktijkverhaal, 'intermezzo' genoemd, en een introductie waarna de publicaties volgen. Telkens wordt afgesloten met de hoofdpunten uit de publicaties voor de beantwoording van de betreffende deelvraag. Deze hoofdpunten vormen tevens de basis voor de beantwoording van de vijfde deelvraag in het zesde hoofdstuk. Aldus bestaat het proefschrift uit een algemene introductie (hoofdstuk 1), vier hoofdstukken met publicaties betreffende de eerste vier deelvragen (hoofdstuk 2 tot en met 5) en een zesde hoofdstuk waarin de vijfde deelvraag wordt uitgewerkt en conclusies ten aanzien van de centrale onderzoeksvraag worden getrokken.

Hoofdstuk 1 begint met een bespreking van de actuele maatschappelijke relevantie van het onderzoek, de theoretische concepten, de onderzoeksvragen, de onderzoeksmethodologie en sluit af met een vooruitblik op de inhoud van het gehele proefschrift. De belangrijkste theoretische concepten hebben betrekking op levenslang leren (Freire, 1970; Street, 1984; Van der Kamp, 2000a; Jarvis, 2007). Om de verschillende contexten van de onderzochte praktijken van een leven lang leren te doorgronden, zijn deze concepten gerelateerd aan concepten betreffende ontwikkeling en internationale samenwerking (Sen, 1999; UNDP, 2009a; Nussbaum, 2011). Dit heeft geleid tot een kader waarbinnen de relatie tussen levenslang leren en ontwikkeling wordt uitgewerkt, onder verwijzing naar het werk van Preece (2009a). Omdat dit onderzoek tot doel heeft om aanbevelingen voor verbetering van de bestaande praktijk op te leveren, zijn ook concepten over professionals en hun interventies bestudeerd (Schön, 1983; Sennett, 2008; Tonkens, 2008; Kunneman, 2013; Spiers, 2014). Tezamen leveren de concepten kritische vragen op om de bevindingen uit de deelonderzoeken te analyseren en met elkaar in verband te brengen. Het eerste hoofdstuk bevat tevens een reflectie op de onderzoeksmethodologie die gebruikt is in de deelonderzoeken, ter verantwoording van de methodologie van het gehele onderzoek. De belangrijkste methodologische opgave, die tevens een epistemologische lading heeft, is het betekenis geven aan de praktijk van een leven lang leren en aan de ervaringen van de betrokkenen (Schön, 1983; van Strien, 1986; van der Kamp, 2002).

Na deze algemene inleiding komt in hoofdstuk 2 de eerste deelvraag aan de orde. Deze heeft betrekking op de achtergrond van internationale samenwerking die alle deelonderzoeken kenmerkt. In alle onderzoeken hebben onderzoekers en vaak ook onderzochten samengewerkt, ervaringen gedeeld en nieuwe inzichten verworven. Voortbordurend op termen als capaciteitsopbouw ('capacity building') en capaciteitsontwikkeling ('capacity development'), die ongelijkwaardigheid suggereren, hebben mijn collega en ik deze vorm van samenwerking getypeerd als 'gezamenlijke kennisproductie' ('joint knowledge production') (Zeelen & Van der Linden, 2009). Naast het artikel waarin deze term geïntroduceerd wordt, bevat dit hoofdstuk een intermezzo over een ervaring met internationale samenwerking in Soedan, gebaseerd op een ongepubliceerd artikel (Van der Linden & Hussein, 2002) en een reflectie op curriculumontwikkeling voor een Master programma in Mozambique (Van der Linden & Mendonça, 2006). Beide laten zien hoe de samenwerking tussen mensen met verschillende achtergronden met een gemeenschappelijk doel ten goede komt aan de betreffende praktijk, juist omdat verschillende perspectieven worden besproken en meegenomen in de samenwerking.

Hoofdstuk 3 is gewijd aan programma's voor een leven lang leren in verschillende contexten met het doel factoren te identificeren die essentieel zijn voor de ontwikkeling van betekenisvolle programma's (deelvraag 2). De contexten omvatten Nederland (intermezzo, gebaseerd op Van der Linden, Burema & Renting, 2010), Mozambique (Van der Linden & Manuel, 2011) en Zuid-Soedan (Van der Linden, Blaak & Andrew, 2013). Het eerstgenoemde land wordt beschouwd als 'ontwikkeld', het tweede als 'ontwikkelend' en redelijk stabiel en het derde als een land in opbouw na een jarenlange oorlog. In het 'ontwikkelde' Nederland wordt laaggeschoolde arbeid uitbesteed aan landen met lage lonen. Onder andere hierdoor kampen laagopgeleide mensen met verlies van werk en langdurige werkloosheid. In 'ontwikkelend' Mozambique werkt de regering met niet-gouvernementele organisaties aan het vergroten van de vaardigheden van de beroepsbevolking om tegemoet te komen aan de eisen van de formele en informele arbeidsmarkt. In het nieuwe land Zuid-Soedan, waar de oorlog met het Noorden beëindigd is, maar (gewapende) conflicten niet zijn uitgebannen, moet de hele onderwijssector in opnieuw opgebouwd worden. Hoe divers de voorwaarden in de verschillende landen ook zijn, de deelnemers bevinden zich allemaal in kwetsbare situaties, die om dringende oplossingen op het gebied van opleiding en training vragen. De behoeften van deze kwetsbare groepen zouden als uitgangspunt genomen moeten worden bij het bepalen van inhoud en vorm van betekenisvolle programma's voor een leven lang leren van de (potentiële) deelnemers. De implementatie van dit soort programma's vraagt om een

bundeling van krachten en het overstijgen van verschillen tussen regeringen, niet-gouvernementele organisaties, bedrijven en betrokken privé personen.

Uit het voorgaande blijkt dat het ontwikkelen en implementeren van programma's voor een leven lang leren niet een kwestie is van het volgen van een recept. Deze programma's vragen om de creativiteit en vindingrijkheid van betrokken mensen. De professional, betaald of onbetaald, komt hier in beeld. In hoofdstuk 4 worden, om de derde deelvraag te beantwoorden, de professionals en hun interventies in de schijnwerpers gezet. Het intermezzo aan het begin van dit hoofdstuk neemt ons mee naar Nederland en laat zien hoezeer een innovatieve houding wordt gevraagd van basisschoolleerkrachten (Van der Linden, 2013). Het eerste artikel neemt een centrum voor leven lang leren onder de loep in het Noordwesten van Oeganda, waar vluchtelingen van buurland Zuid-Soedan samen met de lokale bevolking opgeleid worden. Het centrum wordt ondersteund door samenwerkende groepen afkomstig uit de Zuid-Soedanese diaspora en uit de gemeenschap ter plekke (Van der Linden, 2015). Het potentieel van de samenwerking tussen deze groepen aan de ene kant en de ogenschijnlijk onverschillige houding van de lokale regering ten aanzien van de resultaten, geeft te denken. De kracht van de professionals ingebed in lokaal verankerde samenwerkingsverbanden, kan waarschijnlijk beter worden benut. Hier gaat het tweede artikel over, waarin voortgebouwd wordt op eerder onderzoek en betekenisvolle ervaringen met betrekking tot de rol van de professional (Van der Linden, 2016). De conclusie van dit hoofdstuk benadrukt het belang van professionele ruimte, ondersteund door professionalisering in professionele leergemeenschappen en begeleid door praktijk georiënteerd onderzoek.

Hoofdstuk 5 gaat in op het type onderzoek dat de ontwikkeling en implementatie van levenslang leren programma´s ondersteunt (deelvraag 4). In het voorgaande hoofdstuk is al een aanbeveling gedaan voor praktijk georiënteerd onderzoek. Het intermezzo voor dit vijfde hoofdstuk laat zien hoe gemakkelijk bestaande machtsverhoudingen als vanzelfsprekend aangenomen worden in de uitvoering van onderzoek. Smith (2012) spreekt in dit verband van het 'koloniserende' effect van onderzoeksmethoden die weliswaar universeel toepasbaar lijken te zijn, maar waarbij geen kritische vragen gesteld worden over de dominante percepties ten aanzien van kwetsbare mensen. Net als de andere hoofdstukken bevat dit hoofdstuk twee eerdere publicaties: een hoofdstuk uit een boek en een artikel waarin de opbouw van een onderzoeksprogramma uit de doeken wordt gedaan. De eerste publicatie betreft ervaringen van onderzoekers die elementen van praktijk georiënteerd onderzoek in de

vorm van 'action research' in Afrika hebben gebruikt. Het laat zien dat de participatie van de onderzochte groepen in de verschillende fasen van het onderzoeksontwerp kan leiden tot bijzondere gezamenlijke leerprocessen, maar wel een aantal voorwaarden veronderstelt (Van der Linden & Zeelen, 2008). Het artikel van de hand van Zeelen, Rampedi en Van der Linden (2014) laat zien hoe een onderzoeksprogramma ontwikkeld kan worden op basis van gezamenlijke leerprocessen van onderzoekers en onderzochten. De effectiviteit van een dergelijk programma is niet alleen een kwestie van het gebruiken van de juiste onderzoeksmethoden, maar voert ook terug naar epistemologische aannames betreffende het belang van de kennis en ervaringen ('tacit knowledge') van kwetsbare groepen. In het gehanteerde onderzoeksparadigma gaat het erom deze kennis als kennis te waarderen en mee te nemen in de ontwikkeling van het onderzoek (Van Strien, 1986; Flyvbjerg, 2001; Boog, Preece, Slagter & Zeelen, 2008).

Zoals de vijfde deelvraag suggereert, maakt het laatste hoofdstuk (6) de balans op van de lessen die in de voorgaande hoofdstukken zijn geleerd en samengevat aan het einde van elk hoofdstuk. In het slothoofdstuk staat de onderzoeksvraag (*Hoe kunnen programma's voor een leven lang leren steun bieden aan risicogroepen?)* centraal. Ter inleiding worden twee tegengestelde benaderingen onderscheiden om de vraag te beantwoorden. De eerste benadering beschouwt het aanbieden van programma's voor een leven lang leren van mensen uit risicogroepen als het behartigen van de economische belangen van grote ondernemingen. Deze programma's dienen er slechts toe om menselijk kapitaal voor deze ondernemingen veilig te stellen. De tweede benadering zoekt naar wegen om een leven lang leren betekenisvol te maken voor mensen uit risicogroepen. Op grond van dit onderzoek kies ik voor de tweede benadering, waarbij ik het kritische geluid van de eerste benadering mee wil nemen. Betekenisvolle programma's voor een leven lang leren geven een stem aan mensen die behoren tot risicogroepen, gaan uit van hun behoeften en erkennen en versterken hun handelingsbekwaamheid ('agency') (zie ook Angucia, 2010; Tukundane, 2014). Het uiteindelijke pleidooi van dit proefschrift richt zich niet alleen op het ontwikkelen en aanbieden van mogelijkheden voor een betekenisvol leven lang leren, waarbij de behoeften van mensen uit risicogroepen als uitgangspunt dienen maar ook nadrukkelijk op het zeker stellen dat daadwerkelijk van deze programma's geprofiteerd kan worden. Gegeven de twijfels over de intentie en de haalbaarheid van het duurzame ontwikkelingsdoel 4 (Van der Kamp, 2000a; Regmi, 2015), dient de invulling hiervan kritisch gevolgd en onderzocht te worden.

About the author

Josje van der Linden (The Hague, 1956) obtained a Master degree in Educational Sciences from the Vrije Universiteit of Amsterdam, the Netherlands and a Bachelor degree in Mathematics from the Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences. After working in various positions in higher education and adult education in the Netherlands, she lived and worked for nearly ten years in Africa. She established an educational support unit in Ahfad University for Women in Sudan and served as head of this unit and as quality assurance officer to the university (1996 – 2001). As this experience asked for a follow up in the form of submersion in another African context, Josje moved to Mozambique to contribute to the establishment of a new Faculty of Education in Eduardo Mondlane University as a lecturer on adult education (2002-2006). Currently, she is a lecturer and researcher on lifelong learning at the University of Groningen and on maths education for primary school teachers at the University of Applied Sciences iPabo in Amsterdam/Alkmaar, both in the Netherlands. Her research interests encompass the area of adult education and lifelong learning in Africa and the Netherlands in a broad sense as testified by this PhD thesis on lifelong learning and groups at risk.