CHAPTER 2

Linking Research and Practice to Enhance the Implementation of School-based Sexuality Education: Adoption of the Regulative Cycle and a Participatory Action Approach

As discussed in the Introduction, the study described in this dissertation was initiated to improve the implementation of school-based sexuality education in Uganda in general, and of comprehensive sexuality education in particular, by obtaining an understanding of teachers’ motivations to teach sexuality education. To do so, the Population Research Centre, Faculty of Spatial Sciences, of the University of Groningen collaborated with Rutgers, a Netherlands-based NGO that partners with NGOs in Uganda to develop and implement comprehensive school-based sexuality education programmes.

This chapter describes why and how principles of a participatory action approach and the regulative cycle were adopted to enhance the implementation of sexuality education in a multi-level context by linking academic research to practice. This chapter reflects on the added value of, and challenges and conflicts encountered when, performing academic research for and with an organisation such as Rutgers, and my strategies to negotiate these challenges.
2.1 Linking Research and Practice: the Co-construction of Knowledge

As discussed in more detail in de Haas and van der Kwaak (2017), there is increasing recognition of the importance of strengthening linkages between research, policy and practice. Stronger linkages aim to contribute to societally relevant research, such as programme and implementation evaluations (Ketting, Friele, Michielsen, & European Expert Group on Sexuality Education, 2016). Stronger linkages also aim to contribute to more effective policy and practice because they can make the value-laden, “sensitive and often contested” field of sexuality education more transparent and evidence-informed (Córdova Pozo et al., 2015; Delisle, Roberts, Munro, Jones, & Gyorkos, 2005; Sutherland, Fleishman, Mascia, Pretty, & Rudd, 2011; Theobald et al., 2011, 1).

Often, strengthening linkages between research, policy and practice is interpreted to mean that researchers should disseminate their findings to enhance evidence-informed policies and practices (ESRC-DFID, 2013; Shaxson et al., 2012). However, various researchers have argued that this interpretation of ‘research uptake’ as a one-directional, static knowledge flow from research to policy and practice is not sufficient to achieve social change. Rather, they argue that various stakeholders should share knowledge in interdisciplinary interactions and jointly construct new knowledge (Shaxson et al., 2012; von Krogh, Ichijo, & Nonaka, 2000). Therefore, to facilitate the achievement of social change through research, I adopted principles of a participatory action approach in my PhD research.

2.1.1 Participatory Action Approach

To facilitate the co-construction of knowledge, participatory action approaches in research integrate “theory, practice and people’s everyday experiences” (McIntyre, 2008, 67). They aim to carry out research with people, rather than on people (Kesby, Kindon, & Pain, 2005; Koch & Kralik, 2006; McIntyre, 2008). The researcher facilitates a process in which the researcher, research participants and other key stakeholders together try to address a problem or issue relevant to the participants by reflecting on ways to change the situation or build capacity (Boog, Slagter, & Zeelen, 2008; Koch & Kralik, 2006).

Through the participants’ active participation in all stages of the research process and the creation of dialogues between the research participants and the researcher, knowledge is generated that consists of the perspectives and experiences of all participants involved in the research process (Kesby et al., 2005; Koch & Kralik, 2006; McIntyre, 2008). A condition for optimising this process of co-constructing knowledge is the recognition that all participants, irrespective of their background or educational level, possess knowledge, and that all types of knowledge are important and legitimate (Shaxson et al., 2012).

Literature review indicates that activities focusing on co-constructing knowledge include critical reflection, dialogue and learning. A strength of such methods is their attention to contextual factors, such as cultural and community beliefs and related practices, and to tacit knowledge, such as perceptions, experiences and know-how. Tacit knowledge is considered an important source for innovation (Goffin & Koners, 2011; McIntyre, 2008; von Krogh et al., 2000).
The process of co-constructing knowledge can create self-awareness and unveil existing power relations — for instance, between the research participants and other stakeholders. As a result, participants and other stakeholders involved may feel empowered to create opportunities for individual, collective or social change (Boog et al., 2008; Koch & Kralik, 2006; McIntyre, 2008).

Participatory action approach processes have a cyclical nature in which participants generate knowledge, reflect on it and translate it into action. The cyclical nature of participatory action approaches and its integration of theory, practice and people’s everyday experiences strengthen: (1) the co-construction of new knowledge; (2) the validation and reliability of the knowledge generated, because the successive reflections of various stakeholders enable a deeper and more comprehensive understanding based on emic perspectives; and (3) active participation of research participants and other key stakeholders in social learning and self- and critical awareness leading to empowerment and individual, collective and/or social change (Boog et al., 2008; Koch & Kralik, 2006; McIntyre, 2008).

2.1.2 The Regulative Cycle

Figure 2 shows the conceptual model, which visualises the adoption of participatory action approach principles in the present study following the steps of the regulative cycle (van Strien, 1997). The regulative cycle by van Strien (1997) is a useful cycle to apply in participatory action research because it supports evidence-informed practice by integrating scientific theories and methodologies in practical problem-solving. Similar to participatory action approach processes, the regulative cycle adopts a cycle of knowledge generation, reflection and translation into action and enables the researcher, research participants and other key stakeholders to actively participate and co-construct knowledge. The regulative cycle consists of five steps: (1) identification of a problem; (2) diagnosis of the problem; (3) plan of action; (4) intervention; and (5) evaluation (’t Hart et al., 1996). The distinction between these steps makes the regulative cycle a useful framework for analysing the fluctuating contributions of, and interactions between, theory, practice and people’s everyday experiences at each stage of the process of enhancing the implementation of sexuality education in a multi-level context.

In the research process described in this chapter, ‘theory’ represents researchers working in academia. ‘Practice’ refers to the Rutgers level where WSWM is being developed, the SchoolNet Uganda level where the implementation of WSWM is being coordinated and facilitated, and the secondary school level where sexuality education programmes are being delivered. ‘People’s everyday experiences’ refers to the research participants: Ugandan students and sexuality education teachers. Of the research participants, the focus is mostly on the sexuality education teachers who participated in the research process on three occasions: (1) the feasibility study; (2) the main data collection; and (3) the validation study. Via research, their voices and experiences were shared with the organisations that develop and implement school-based sexuality education programmes.
Figure 2. Conceptual model based on McIntyre (2008); Boog, Slagter and Zeelen (2008); and van Strien (1997). Key: PAA = Participatory Action Approach
2.2 Adopting the Regulative Cycle and Participatory Action Approaches in this Study

The present study characterises two types of participatory action approaches: (1) researching for organisations; and (2) researching with organisations. On the one hand, this study aimed to undertake research for the Netherlands-based NGO Rutgers by studying students’ and teachers’ perceptions of sexuality and sexuality education in Uganda, to come up with recommendations for the organisation to respond to, but, on the other hand, it also aimed to undertake research with Rutgers, by having the organisation’s employees participate actively in the research process, to build organisational commitment to translate the findings into action (Cameron, 2007; Wadsworth, 1998).

According to Kesby, Kindon and Pain (2005), the nature of an organisation may affect the type and level of participation at various stages of the research process. This section discusses how participatory action approach principles were adopted, including challenges that were encountered and strategies to negotiate them, involving a variety of research participants and other key stakeholders at the various stages of the research process. The description starts with step 5 of the ‘previous’ regulative cycle because my involvement, as an academic researcher, in the process of improving sexuality education began with the evaluation of the Rutgers WSWM comprehensive sexuality education programme in Uganda. Although the description of distinct steps of the regulative cycle suggests that the research was conducted in consecutive stages, in practice, steps can overlap, since there is a continuous cyclical process of generating knowledge, reflection and translating knowledge into action (McIntyre, 2008). The last section of this chapter will reflect on the achieved outcomes of applying principles of a participatory action approach in the research process.

2.2.1 Previous Cycle Step 5. Evaluation of the WSWM Comprehensive Sexuality Education Programme in 2008

In 2008, Rutgers conducted a four-country process and outcome evaluation of its comprehensive sexuality education programme WSWM. The outcome evaluation measured the effect of the programme on students’ knowledge, attitudes and practices (KAP), utilising the theory of planned behaviour as the main theoretical framework (Ajzen, 1991; Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010). I supported SchoolNet Uganda, Rutgers implementing partner in Uganda, with the data collection for the quantitative evaluation in that country (Rijndijk et al., 2011). In addition, I performed qualitative research to interpret the quantitative findings and to embed these into the broader cultural meaning system. The findings of this qualitative study are discussed in Chapter 5.

The qualitative study provided an understanding of the quantitative findings. For example, some students in the quantitative study had initially been removed from the dataset because they had indicated in the questionnaire that they were abstaining but had also been sexually active. This was interpreted by the quantitative researchers as being invalid. However, the in-depth interviews and focus group discussions with secondary school students showed that these questionnaires were valid, as some students adopted so-called
‘secondary abstinence’ after they had been sexually active. Secondly, the qualitative findings showed added value, as the following topics had not been included in the quantitative study: (1) the important role of sexual urge in students’ perceptions of sexual practices; (2) the perceived importance of obtaining a secondary school qualification; (3) the perceived problems associated with unsafe sexual practices at university; and (4) the role of the teacher as a gatekeeper to students’ access to information about sexual and reproductive health and rights.

Furthermore, the qualitative study showed how other topics that had been included in the questionnaire were perceived to be not relevant to the daily lives of Ugandan secondary school students, such as the question: “I am able to resist temptations, like going to a bar or to a party, when I know that there is work to be done”, because at their age many students were often not in the position to make such decisions, especially not those students who resided in boarding schools. Other — quite abstract — questions about their future planning, such as “I often think about how my actions will affect my health when I am older” were often not well understood by the students.

Lastly, the qualitative findings contextualised the meaning of the concepts used in the theory of planned behaviour, a previous version of the reasoned action approach that is discussed in Chapter 3, such as students’ perceived sexual urge which lowered their perceived behavioural control to abstain and which they considered difficult to overcome.

Table 3 shows the various stakeholders that were involved in the evaluation of WSWM in Uganda. Through presentations and dialogues, I (indicated in the Table as the primary researcher) identified and shared the findings with the key practitioners and policymakers who worked at the school under study, SchoolNet Uganda and Rutgers. Furthermore, I recommended additional research to explore sexual practices at universities and the role of teachers as gatekeepers to students’ access to information about sexual and reproductive health and rights.

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Table 3. Key stakeholders involved in step 5 of the previous cycle of the research process.
Key: PI=primary researcher
2.2.2 Step 1. Identification of the Problem: Dialogues and Feasibility Study

As a result of my involvement in the WSWM evaluation, a four-year PhD grant was used to carry out the recommendations for further research resulting from the evaluation. To increase the collaboration between the Population Research Centre of the University of Groningen and the Netherlands-based NGO Rutgers, I worked at the Rutgers office for two days a week and at the university for three days a week. Working at the Rutgers office enabled me to develop a better understanding of the organisation’s needs and priorities, to receive regular and direct feedback from practitioners, to understand the international development practice of developing and implementing comprehensive sexuality education and the power relations involved, and to contact other key stakeholders both in the Netherlands and in Uganda. Furthermore, it was envisaged that the collaboration with Dutch and Ugandan organisations would enable me to make use of the existing NGO infrastructure to enhance sustainable change at a larger scale than only the schools involved in the study, which has been described as an advantage of participatory action approaches by Boog, Slager, and Zeelen (2008). At the same time, working at the university enabled me to interact with other academics and to receive scientific input on the research design, theoretical framework, methodologies and research ethics. The collaboration between the university and the NGO also enabled me to present and receive feedback at both academic conferences and conferences attended by practitioners and policymakers.

I started the process of problem identification of my PhD research with regular dialogues with Rutgers employees to discuss the research question. Rather than researching with a group, whereby the researcher facilitates group dialogues to formulate the research question, this type of participatory action approaches involved researching for and with Rutgers. The organisational setting created time constraints for employees to actively participate which limited opportunities to organise group dialogues. Therefore, in addition to the group dialogues, I initiated one-to-one dialogues and adopted a coordinating role to bring the knowledge and needs of the various key stakeholders together. A perceived disadvantage of adopting this coordinating role was that it gave me more control and most likely reduced the opportunities for creating ownership by doing research with the organisation.

The development of the research questions was not only grounded in one-to-one and group dialogues with Rutgers and its implementing partners working internationally, such as SchoolNet Uganda, but also in a scientific and grey literature review, including the findings from the WSWM evaluation; in dialogues with academic researchers working in various disciplines and countries; and in a feasibility study in Uganda to reflect on the knowledge generated and to explore the issue further from the perspective of Ugandan stakeholders. The feasibility study consisted of:

- fifteen in-depth interviews and informal interviews with teachers at primary and secondary schools, (deputy) head teachers, sexual and reproductive health and rights and teacher support specialists, trainers of trainers, and employees of the NGOs SchoolNet Uganda and Save the Children Uganda. These two NGOs were both implementing partners of Rutgers in Uganda. Because of the sensitive and private nature of the topic, I decided to conduct interviews rather than group dialogues to complement the teacher training
observations (see below), to explore the issue and needs from participants’ perspectives;  
- observations of three teacher trainings for primary and secondary school teachers to teach sexuality education; and  
- a personal story — known as a testimony in Uganda — shared by a female teacher, which showed the importance of teaching comprehensive sexuality education (see Intermezzo 3).

The feasibility study confirmed that Ugandan stakeholders perceived the proposed research topic to be important. Furthermore, the process of knowledge generation and reflection during the feasibility study helped to further identify the problem, sharpen the research questions and adjust the research design.

In this process of developing the research proposal, some challenges were met while trying to bring the perceptions and needs of all stakeholders together. First of all, the perceptions and needs appeared to differ for each participant. Perhaps typical for doing research for organisations, Rutgers employees had their own specialisms and projects, which made it more difficult to formulate research questions that interested all employees. This is different in liberatory projects, where participatory action approaches are undertaken with groups of people who feel oppressed and want to create social change for themselves (Cameron, 2007). For instance, one Rutgers employee suggested a focus on young people who were born HIV-positive, because this was interesting and new, whereas another employee argued the same for the implementation of comprehensive sexuality education in primary schools. The different research interests within Rutgers may have contributed to a lack of collective commitment in the organisation to investigate, reflect and act on the topic of teachers’ delivery of sexuality education in Uganda (McIntyre, 2008). In addition to the differing knowledge needs within Rutgers, Ugandan teachers suggested more abstract research questions, such as focusing on AIDS because this was a big problem in their community. At the same time, the university required that this PhD research would make scientific contributions in terms of content and methodological and theoretical knowledge.

In this phase of the research process, I acted as a coordinator to integrate all information and the needs and interests of the various key stakeholders involved, obtain a complete overview and decide on a topic that would benefit theory, practice and people’s everyday experiences. The resulting research questions, as formulated in the research proposal, which informed the data collection instruments were as follows:

Overall research question:  
How do teachers’ personal beliefs and experiences regarding sexuality and sexuality education create dilemmas when teaching sexuality education in secondary schools in Kampala, Uganda, and what recommendations can be provided to overcome these dilemmas?

Sub-questions:
1. What are the personal beliefs regarding sexuality and sexuality education of teachers teaching sexuality education in Uganda?
2. What are the personal experiences regarding sexuality and sexuality education of teachers teaching sexuality education in Uganda?
3. How do the teachers intend to teach sexuality education?
4. How do the teachers teach sexuality education?
5. How are the teachers’ teaching of sexuality education embedded in their personal beliefs and experiences regarding sexuality and sexuality education?
6. How are the teachers’ personal beliefs and experiences and their intended and actual teaching of sexuality and sexuality education embedded in the concepts of perceived autonomy, bounded rationality and fear?
7. Which recommendations can be provided to overcome the dilemmas teachers face with regard to their personal beliefs and experiences of sexuality and sexuality education when teaching sexuality education?

These research questions were co-constructed by various actors at different levels of developing and implementing policy, as shown in Table 4. In this first step of the regulative cycle, dialogues with key stakeholders and the envisaged target population made important contributions to the development of the research proposal. For instance, a few decisive moments in the process of developing the research proposal were based on suggestions from each of the three fields: theory, practice and people’s everyday experiences. First, the study followed the suggestion from a manager at Rutgers who explained that there was no money to develop a new intervention for university students and that the research findings would probably be more beneficial for change if the research focused on the role of teachers, as concluded by the WSWM evaluation. Another important suggestion came from two East Africa-based academic researchers who suggested that the research would benefit more from a comparison of three types of sexuality education programmes — i.e. faith-based, government-based, and evidence- and rights-based — than merely involving WSWM teachers, because this comparison would help to show differences between the approaches. Finally, it was a teacher’s personal testimony, shared in Intermezzo 3, about how her personal experiences motivated her to teach sexuality education that further directed the research questions, because little attention had been paid to the role of personal experiences in the scientific literature so far.

After the feasibility study, a research proposal was written and discussed with Rutgers to reflect on its usefulness for the organisation. One important contribution made at this point was a remark to not only focus on ‘the problem’, as the regulative cycle proposes, but to focus also on lessons learned resulting from best practices. As discussed in Chapter 4, the research questions as formulated in the research proposal would later be revised to correspond with the new insights derived from the process of data collection and analysis, including the validation study in which the research participants and other Ugandan stakeholders reflected on the findings. Those final research questions for this PhD dissertation are formulated in the Introduction.
Table 4. Key stakeholders involved in step 1 of the research process. Key: PI=primary researcher

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<td>Feasibility study</td>
<td>Dialogues and in-depth interviews</td>
<td>PI Uganda-based researchers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Feasibility study</td>
<td>Observations of teacher trainings organised by SchoolNet Uganda and Save the Children</td>
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2.2.3 Step 2. Diagnosis of the Problem

After the research proposal had been agreed upon by Rutgers and the university, the data collection started in 2011. This process is described in Chapter 4. Table 5 shows how, in this step of the regulative cycle, the focus was mainly on doing research for, rather than with, organisations. Although there were interactions with the Ugandan NGOs that introduced me to the schools, the participatory action approach focus at this stage of the research process was mainly on the research participants — i.e. getting to know the voices of the people who were actually involved in the delivery of sexuality education.

My university supervisors and I discussed that I would need to show at this stage of the PhD research process that I was able to undertake rigorous research independently — i.e. adhering to scientific standards for the use of theories and data collection and analysis — which meant that I would not involve the research participants as co-researchers in the process of data collection. My educational background and involvement in the academic
research group that studies demographic behaviour within sociocultural contexts made me aware of relevant theories, such as cultural schema theory, and methods, such as in-depth interviews, for studying the research questions. The choice of these theories and methods in turn influenced the resulting plans for action, as described in step 3 (Plan of Action).

First, the participatory action approach taken in this study aimed to understand and solve the barriers that teachers encounter when teaching comprehensive sexuality education. Cultural schema theory, as described in Chapter 3, showed itself to be a suitable theory to apply within this participatory action approach because it allowed me to inductively derive and reveal the internal conflicts that teachers experience but which they often leave implicit in their reasoning about teaching sexuality education. In addition, the combination of in-depth interviews and lesson and school observations, as described in Chapter 4, and the use of cultural schema theory allowed participants’ perceptions and experiences to be integrated with cultural and community beliefs and related practices that were specific to the teachers and the schools they worked in (McIntyre, 2008). Consequently, the resulting plans for action reflected personal, individual perceptions and experiences, rather than joint normative opinions regarding students’ sexual citizenship and the types of information they need, which could have arisen in group dialogues and quantitative questionnaires (Boog et al., 2008; Gordon & Cornwall, 2004; Kesby et al., 2005).

Second, the use of cultural schema theory, as described in Chapter 3, enabled new ways of approaching the role of teachers in the implementation of sexuality education, as this motivational theory exposed teachers’ motivations, and conflicts in their motivations, to teach sexuality education and the role of the school context in teachers’ reasoning to teach. These findings complemented the use of the theory of planned behaviour, which Rutgers had applied in the WSWM evaluation, which studied mainly teachers’ attitudes and social norms. As a result, plans for action would not only focus on improving teachers’ knowledge, attitudes and practices but also on creating a supportive environment for teaching sexuality education.

Table 5. Key stakeholders involved in step 2 of the research process. Key: PI=primary researcher

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2.2.4 Step 3. Validation and Bringing Voices Further: Plan of Action

Most academic research usually ends after step 2: ‘Diagnosis of the Problem’, when the findings and their implications have been documented. In this research, additional steps were taken to simultaneously validate the findings and bring the participants’ voices further by developing a plan, or multiple plans, of action. Similar to step 1 in the regulative cycle, Table 6 shows that it was again mainly participatory action approaches, involving various stakeholders at different levels, being applied in this step of the regulative cycle. These stakeholders engaged in a process of co-constructing knowledge, including critical reflection, dialogue and learning, with the aim of creating opportunities for individual, collective or social change (Boog et al., 2008; Koch & Kralik, 2006; McIntyre, 2008). In addition to the empowerment and critical awareness happening among the research participants leading to individual changes (as discussed in Chapter 4), it aimed to achieve collective and social changes by reflecting on the findings and developing plans of action with other key stakeholders in Uganda and the Netherlands.

To obtain a range of opinions of persons who were involved in the delivery of sexuality education in Uganda, I shared the preliminary findings not only with the secondary school teachers who had participated in the data collection (see Chapter 4), but also with other secondary school teachers who taught school-based sexuality education and with the employees of SchoolNet Uganda. At this stage of validating the findings, important reflections and deeper understandings of the data were obtained (see Chapter 9). For instance, one teacher-support specialist, who was an experienced school-based sexuality educator, remarked after presentation of the findings that teachers adhere closely to school regulations, which provided additional insights into the role of teachers’ professional identity and the importance of a mandate for teachers to teach sexuality education.

Based on the findings, SchoolNet Uganda concluded that intrinsic motivation to teach sexuality education is more important than extrinsic motivation to achieve good results. Until then, it had been motivating teachers with WSWM-club T-shirts and other requests made by teachers, but now it decided to adapt its strategy to recruit teachers and schools and to adapt the content of its teacher trainings — for instance, by training teachers to use learner-centred methods. I also presented the research findings to the Ugandan SRHR alliance, which was established by the Dutch SRHR alliance, in which SchoolNet Uganda took part as a partner of Rutgers. The alliance brainstormed what kind of actions should result from the findings. It concluded that a link to policy should be made, and agreed to lobby as an alliance for comprehensive sexuality education at the national level.

I noticed that SchoolNet Uganda was quick to adapt its programme and implementation based on the 2008 WSWM evaluation, the findings of this follow-up research, the feedback they received from teachers, and their own experiences in the field. Compared to SchoolNet Uganda, I perceived it was more difficult to achieve ownership, learning and action for change at Rutgers. Although individual Rutgers employees were able to participate, and many dialogues were held, I experienced several challenges that counteracted opportunities for translating the research findings into action.

First, I felt that institutional challenges were a barrier to achieving change. This
confirms the findings from Cameron (2007), who argues that these types of participatory action approaches, in which research is conducted for and with organisations, are known to face institutional challenges. In addition to the abovementioned time constraints, institutional challenges included staff turnover and the organisation’s merger. Based on my experiences at Rutgers, I perceived that real change could only be achieved if the findings were adopted at management level, because managers could direct the organisational strategy — for instance, by deciding on the content of programme proposals. However, changes in the organisational structure made this process more difficult. The practice cycle for Dutch NGOs of resource mobilisation and programme implementation showed the importance of timing the dissemination of findings and involving those in charge of resource mobilisation. For instance, a proposal for funding had already been written for the WSWM follow-up before the 2008 WSWM evaluation findings were available, while the findings could have guided the new proposal. Due to the merger and staff turnover, the stakeholders in the organisation who were key for translating the research findings into action changed during the research process. Through presentations and one-to-one dialogues, I tried to involve these new actors, but this remained a challenge, especially once the organisation had expanded and consisted of more departments, managers and interests. In addition, presenting too often seemed to bore the employees, because, although I kept presenting new insights, to the outsider these findings did not seem very different from previously presented findings.

Second, I perceived a distance between the Dutch practice and Ugandan everyday experiences. Whereas research with organisations was more present in steps 1 (Identification of the Problem) and 3 (Plan of Action) of the regulative cycle, a participatory action approach for organisations was more present in step 2 (Diagnosis of the Problem). When I returned to the Netherlands to share the findings I had collected for Rutgers in step 2, I shared findings and observations that were in ways challenging the efficacy of its sexuality education implementation processes. For instance, Rutgers employees could be under the impression that Ugandan schools were implementing the computer-based version of WSWM completely and comprehensively, whereas the fieldwork had shown me that this was not common practice. After I had given a presentation, an employee responded: “If what you are saying is true, I don’t know what we have been doing for the last 20 years.” Although the NGO employees regularly visited Uganda, I realised that, due to constraints in human and financial resources, these were often short visits in which they would mainly interact with highly educated NGO employees who were supportive of sexual and reproductive health and rights. In addition, the training locations where teachers were trained were wealthy schools with a computer room, which were not representative of the average Ugandan school I visited during my fieldwork. In such a week of training, teachers’ attitudes towards young people and sexual and reproductive health and rights may become more positive. However, the Dutch NGO employees would not be there to observe how the teachers, once back at their schools with colleagues who had not been trained and were burdened with many other tasks, would have to put the learned knowledge and skills into practice. I realised that this may have caused the NGO employees to have a more positive image of the situation than I encountered in the schools during fieldwork.
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I deemed it more difficult to translate the research findings into action because of the level of involvement of the organisation as a whole in the research process and its findings, and because of a distance between the Dutch context where the employees worked and the Ugandan context where the research had been conducted. When employees did take on the findings, I felt it was difficult to use the findings for changing their routines. To overcome the perceived distance between Dutch practitioners and Ugandan everyday experiences, it might have been interesting if the Dutch practitioners had been co-researchers in the main data collection, especially to observe the lessons and school contexts in which sexuality education is implemented. This idea of co-researchers has been suggested by Wadsworth (1998) and Boog (2003).

Despite some challenges, my daily presence at the Rutgers office showed advantages because: (1) one-to-one interactions increased internalisation of the research findings among the practitioners; (2) through my research I was able to give voice to the students and teachers who had participated in the research and had shared their experiences; and (3) ideas for action were tested in practitioners’ daily work. For instance, after finding out that personal experiences were an important motivation for teachers to teach sexuality education, one practitioner added an exercise to her teacher training, whereby teachers were asked to reflect on their personal experiences regarding sexuality and how this motivated them to teach sexuality education. This test showed that such an exercise can evoke traumatic and emotional memories and that teacher training is not the right setting for such an exercise. The one-to-one dialogues also led to mutual understanding that it can be difficult for teachers working in cultures with autocratic teaching styles to adopt a facilitative role and to implement learner-centred methods, as this contradicts teachers’ professional identities of being a respectable elder who instructs students how to behave.

Around this time, a new employee came to work with Rutgers who had a background in community-led approaches and who subscribed to the importance of holistic approaches to achieve change. Parallel to my research, she was assigned to develop a plan of action to scale up WSWM because of its low reach. Inspired by the research findings, her own work experiences, and literature about upscaling, she developed a whole-school approach for implementing comprehensive sexuality education which aimed to scale up WSWM by increasing the number of students participating in WSWM within schools, rather than expanding the number of schools teaching WSWM. In Uganda, the whole-school approach was developed in partnership with SchoolNet Uganda, which was considered a logical and valuable partner for developing this approach because it was already involved in creating an enabling environment for implementing sexuality education by facilitating parents’ sensitisation workshops and training school nurses. The whole-school approach was piloted in Uganda and Kenya in 2013 and resulted in a school manual in 2016. The development of the whole-school approach endorsed the importance of not only developing a comprehensive sexuality education curriculum, and training teachers to teach this curriculum, but also of creating ownership in schools to implement such a programme and to adhere to the principles of sexual and reproductive health and rights. For instance, the whole-school approach encouraged schools to develop a school policy that protects and fulfils students’ sexual and reproductive rights, for long-term and sustainable implementation.
Table 6. Key stakeholders involved in step 3 of the research process. Key: PI=primary researcher

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<td>Step 3: Plan of action</td>
<td>Validation study one-to-one dialogues</td>
<td>PI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consultation with stakeholders presentations dialogues</td>
<td>PI Uganda-based researcher</td>
<td>School administrations of the schools under study; employees of Rutgers, SchoolNet Uganda, Straight Talk Foundation, and Youth Alive Uganda; members of the Ugandan SRHR alliance an employee of the National Curriculum Development Centre</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The time that passed between the 2008 WSWM evaluation and the development of a school manual for adopting a whole-school approach in 2016 shows how long processes of change can take. In Uganda, research participants and other key stakeholders involved in the present research often argued that other people were responsible for restricting the implementation of comprehensive sexuality education in Uganda. For instance, teachers would argue that school administrations, the school curriculum and national policies did not allow them to teach comprehensive sexuality education, whereas a school director said he did allow it but that his teachers were the ones who did not want to teach this content. This also happened when I shared the research findings with an employee of the Uganda National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC), the agency that developed the government-funded abstinence-only programme PIASCY. The employee indicated that the NCDC wanted to develop more comprehensive sexuality education materials, thereby endorsing the need as it emerged from the study findings, but that they were restricted by cultural and religious leaders and rural schools that would object to such content.
2.2.5 Steps 4 and 5. Intervention and Evaluation

The study ended, as the research participants and other key stakeholders had developed various plans of action. Table 7 shows how I was no longer involved and how the organisations integrated the research findings into their continuous improvement of the implementation of sexuality education programmes. At the time of writing, Rutgers is further developing and implementing the whole-school approach, and SchoolNet Uganda has adapted its way of working to aim more at teachers’ intrinsic motivations and creating ownership at schools for implementing sexuality education.

Table 7. Key stakeholders involved in steps 4 and 5 of the research process. Key: PI=primary researcher

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Regulative cycle</th>
<th>Operationalisation</th>
<th>Involvement of research participants and other key stakeholders</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Theory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Academic researchers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 4: intervention</td>
<td>Pilot whole-school approach</td>
<td>Rutgers Ugandan SRHR alliance, including SchoolNet Uganda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 5: evaluation</td>
<td>Evaluation of pilot of whole-school approach</td>
<td>Rutgers Ugandan SRHR alliance, including SchoolNet Uganda</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2.3 Conclusion and Discussion

This study aimed to link academic research and practice, to enhance the implementation of school-based sexuality education. To link academic research and practice, principles of a participatory action approach were adopted involving a variety of research participants and other key stakeholders in the various stages of the research process. The research approach used questioned the meaning, integration and co-construction of various types of knowledge — i.e. from theory, practice and people's everyday experiences — and explored how a cyclical nature of knowledge generation, reflection and translation into action could enable the construction and use of new knowledge for improving the delivery of sexuality education (Boog et al., 2008; Koch & Kralik, 2006; McIntyre, 2008). This chapter has discussed these various insights into the use and added value of participatory action approaches when conducting research with and for organisations.

Table 8 shows how the research participants and various stakeholders contributed to the construction of new knowledge and how their active participation directed the course of the research process in each step of the research process. The distinctive steps in the regulative cycle showed that that the process in steps 1 (Identification of the Problem) and 3 (Plan of Action) focused mainly on doing research with organisations, using participatory action approaches to develop the research proposal and plans of action with research participants and key stakeholders; whereas the process in step 2 (Diagnosis of the Problem) focused more on doing research for organisations, which was relatively more guided by the scientific requirements of conducting qualitative research and learning from 'people's everyday experiences'.

The feasibility study in step 1 (Identification of the Problem) and the validation study in step 3 (Plan of Action) contributed to strongly grounded data and, therefore, the generation of more reliable and valid knowledge, as the data were interpreted and reflected on by the research participants and Ugandan key stakeholders. First, the feasibility study ensured that there was a need to obtain a better understanding of the topic under study; it ensured that contextual considerations were taken into account, such as when and where to conduct the study; and it generated active involvement of the stakeholders in the research process. Second, the validation study led to a deeper understanding of the findings, as research participants reflected on the preliminary findings. For instance, as presented in Table 8, research participants would explain the observations that were made, such as that teachers do not actually believe, but pretend, that students are sexually innocent (see Chapter 9). Furthermore, research participants could pinpoint important issues that were not addressed in the preliminary findings and which they felt should be included, such as that sexuality education should focus more on boys.
Table 8. Integrating theory, practice and people’s everyday experiences in the course of the research process (inspired by Fenenga et al. 2015)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stakeholders</th>
<th>Direction provided in the research process</th>
<th>Findings/knowledge construction</th>
<th>Learning outcomes (empowerment; change)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Theory</strong> Academic researchers</td>
<td>Focus on scientific contributions</td>
<td>Cultural schema theory provided new insights</td>
<td>Cultural schema theory allowed to integrate participants’ perceptions and life experiences with cultural and community beliefs and related practices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Compare teachers of three different sexuality education programmes</td>
<td></td>
<td>Participant reflections provided theoretical insights into various components of cultural schema theory.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Practice</strong> Practitioners and policymakers</td>
<td>Rutgers: Money for intervention Focus not only on problem but also on best practices</td>
<td>Rutgers: The practice (cycle) of CSE implementation; embeddedness in an SRHR framework</td>
<td>Rutgers: A facilitative teaching style is difficult to achieve in an autocratic teaching culture. Personal experiences difficult to address in teacher training The importance of a whole-school approach.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ugandan stakeholders: The challenges and best practices of implementing school-based sexuality education; the Ugandan context</td>
<td>SchoolNet Uganda: importance of intrinsic motivation SRHR alliance: lobby for CSE at ministry level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>People’s everyday experiences</strong> Research participants</td>
<td>Teacher’s personal story/testimony</td>
<td>Teachers pretend that students are sexually innocent. Teachers adhere to school regulations and want to be respectable elders to students.</td>
<td>Importance of accurate information for young people; important to talk to young people; boys are left out in sexuality education. Sexuality education messages should focus on students’ personal values and goals</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Thus, the resulting plans for action to improve the implementation of sexuality education arose from the dialogues and reflections of research participants and practitioners but resulted also from new ways of thinking triggered by the application of cultural schema theory, as an alternative to the theory of planned behaviour, or reasoned action approach, previously used in the WSWM evaluation. Because of its inductive nature, cultural schema theory showed itself to be an appropriate theory to study participants’ perceptions and experiences as embedded in cultural schemas regarding sexuality education and young people’s sexual citizenship. In turn, participants’ reflections provided theoretical insights into various components of cultural schema theory, such as the strategies teachers adopted to deal with internal conflicts and the role of personal experiences in teachers’ motivations to teach sexuality education (see Chapter 9 and Chapter 8, respectively). Table 8 shows these learning outcomes for the various stakeholders involved.

The ‘Problem Identification’ in step 1 and the creation of a ‘Plan of Action’ in step 3 showed the complexity of key stakeholders involved in this research, and how individual, collective and social change was created at different levels both in Uganda and the Netherlands. This created insight into the complexity of practice, as practice exists at different levels. As a result, it was not just the creation of one ‘plan of action’ for one intervention, as the regulative cycle may suggest, but, rather, small cycles of developing a ‘plan of action’, ‘intervention’ and ‘evaluation’ at different contextual levels.

The research approach used in this study showed added value, especially the feasibility and validation study, because it allowed the voices of the research participants and key stakeholders to direct the course of the research process. This supported the implementation of sexuality education, as it enabled the validation of the findings and informed the resulting plans of action at various levels. However, conducting a study for and with multiple organisations was also found to be challenging and conflicting. I found frequent interactions during the research process, including one-to-one dialogues, helpful to negotiate these challenges.
INTERMEZZO 1

POSITIONALITY

As discussed in Chapter 2, I applied principles of a participatory action approach to conduct research for and with organisations. Because of this, I interacted with a variety of key stakeholders from research, practice and people’s everyday experiences from multiple contexts. In this intermezzo, I reflect on my positionality as a researcher in Uganda and in relation to the various stakeholders involved.

I am a young, white female who was born, brought up and works in the Netherlands. Internationally, the Netherlands propagates the ‘Dutch approach’ to sexual and reproductive health and rights, with basic principles that include the right to comprehensive, correct information; a safe and enjoyable sex life; and the right to live up to your sexual identity (Government of the Netherlands, 2016). The international promotion of the Dutch approach has been justified by low rates of unintended pregnancies and abortions among young people in the Netherlands due to low-level access to contraception (Levels, Need, Nieuwenhuis, Sluiter, & Ullte, 2012). In the present research, I collaborated with Rutgers, the Dutch centre of expertise on sexual and reproductive health and rights. It embraces the Dutch approach and addresses sensitive themes such as abortion, sexual diversity and sexual violence both in the Netherlands and internationally.

The first time I went to Uganda was in 2008. I had only been outside the European continent once, on a study trip to Mexico, and thus had no idea what to expect. I packed my backpack and a big pink suitcase — which my youngest sister could fit in; we tested it — got my vaccinations and left. Luckily, SchoolNet Uganda, a partner organisation of Rutgers, was there to welcome me and help me with whatever I needed. I appreciated this a lot, since my backpack and suitcase were delayed and I had no idea where to get a toothbrush and pyjamas. For future reference, I now knew that I had to pack such things in my hand luggage. However, to not exceed the weight restrictions of my cabin bag luggage, I had stuffed my hand luggage with 15 kilograms of study books.

My stay in Uganda started with the preparations for the quantitative data collection, which would be conducted at 48 secondary schools spread across Uganda, to evaluate the sexuality education programme WSWM (for more detail, see section 2.2.1 in Chapter 2). I helped SchoolNet Uganda to train university students who would be collecting the data, and I joined two of the students for data collection at eight secondary schools in the western part of Uganda. The first challenge I encountered in doing research in Uganda was slow internet connectivity and regular power cuts. As there is always an upside to downsides, the power cuts taught me to make efficient use of the available power and internet connectivity and, since there was a pool table at the youth hostel I stayed at in the first month, to be a ‘good’ pool player.

Visiting the secondary schools with two Ugandan university students gave me an important introduction to Uganda. They taught me the local foods, to make my bed properly, and how to dress and behave in schools. As we sat on the grass of the school compounds, they would recall memories of being students themselves and make me aware of the meanings of the sounds around us, such as the sound of students being caned. I would not have noticed this myself because I did not expect this to be taking place in schools. Interestingly, the two Ugandan university students felt just as much ‘tourists’ or ‘strangers’ in the western part of Uganda as I did, since they had not grown up there and did not speak the local language.

BEING A MUZUNGU

As we were collecting data in western Uganda, we passed through villages where people had not often seen a muzungu — the Ugandan way of referring to a white person. Young children halted along the
side of the road to wave at me and yell: “Muzungu!”, which made me very aware of my white skin and the connotations people could have when meeting me. Later, when I had been in Uganda for a while, I could forget about my own whiteness and be the one to jump up in a bus when seeing muzungus walking down the street, while wondering what their reason could be for being here in Uganda.

Connotation 1: Being rich
Some of the connotations people might express in relation to me being a muzungu were related to me being rich. For instance, one time a taxi driver charged me 30,000 Ugandan shillings, which was about 8 Euros. When I told him that I wanted to pay the regular 1,500 Ugandan shillings, he replied that I should pay him the 30,000 Ugandan shillings because I was rich. However, the moment I told him I was a student, he changed his mind and agreed that I should pay the regular fee. Also, in one of the interviews, a student referred to what he had seen on MTV, telling me that ‘you guys’ own three houses each.

Connotation 2: Free sexual morality and homosexuality
Another connotation was related to the perceived free sexual morality in the Netherlands, including premarital sex and masturbation, and the Dutch or Western support for homosexuality. Although the latter was not very prevalent in conversations in 2008, it did come up more often during data collection in 2011. At that time, public discussions in Uganda were taking place about passing the so-called ‘anti-homosexuality bill’ (Sadgrove, Vanderbeck, Andersson, Valentine, & Ward, 2012). Ugandans, including research participants, often asked me about my opinion of homosexuality. I usually answered their questions honestly, provided that I did not expect it to influence the data collection.

One time, I was asked a similar question while travelling by public transport in 2013. I knew that homosexuality was being debated heavily and that very negative opinions were prevailing. A man my age was sitting next to me with a Bible on his lap and asked me if I was aware of homosexuality and how I felt about it. There were other people in the van, and I knew I could not get out easily if I wanted to. This was one of the few times that I felt vulnerable sharing my opinion, because I did not know how the passengers in the van would respond. Therefore, I decided to ignore the question and to talk around it, which made me feel bad about myself.

Also, in the schools I visited, I could decide to keep my opinions to myself. This was more related to me wanting to make my research participants feel comfortable to give their opinion without feeling judged. Furthermore, I kept my opinions to myself in appreciation of the warm welcomes provided by the schools and my hopes to continue being welcome.

During my last data collection in 2013, I could feel tensions surrounding my presence in some schools, something which I had not felt before. In one of the last schools I visited, which was a Seventh Day Adventist school, a teacher told me that colleagues might interpret my presence in a wrong way. She said that they might suspect that I was there to pay her to promote homosexuality among the students in her class and that this suspicion could make her lose her job. This made me realise how even only the presence of me with my white skin, without saying or doing anything, could jeopardise her job. In another school, I visited the Head of Education to share my report with preliminary findings. Before he had even opened my report, he said: “Ah, so you are here to promote condom use among our students?” I interpreted that as he had assumed this because of my white skin.

The positive sides of being a muzungu
Although my white skin could carry these negative connotations, I feel that being an ‘outsider’ has actually helped me during data collection. On a regular basis, both the student and teacher participants would start their phrases with: “Let me say, in a country like Uganda...” or “According to our culture...”, as if they felt the need to explain to the muzungu how things worked in their country.
made it easier for me to distinguish cultural aspects in which their perceptions were embedded.

At the same time, the cultural differences made me also aware of the sexual taboos in my own culture. For instance, research participants could mention various sexual ‘immoralities’, such as homosexuality, masturbation and bestiality. Although I would probe them about homosexuality and masturbation, I hardly ever probed them about bestiality because this is not accepted in Dutch culture either. This example of bestiality made me notice that I asked fewer questions when both the research participants and I agreed on a topic than when our values and beliefs diverged. I experienced a similar bias in my questions when I felt more inclined to ask male participants about having multiple sexual partners (also referred to as ‘side dishes’) than female participants because of the literature I had reviewed about this topic.

I could sometimes feel as if the research participants assumed that I was already sexually immoral, which made it easier for them to share personal sexual experiences because they did not expect me to judge them. However, I do not think that this was the only reason, because sometimes teachers explicitly told me that they were sharing intimate information because they felt that the research I was doing was important. Also, knowing that I was only going to be there once and, thus, would not be able to share their stories with their colleagues seemed to encourage participants to open up.

People I met had also attached positive connotations to me coming from Holland, especially where it concerned soccer: “Holland? Ah, van Basten?”; “Ajax!”, “I love Bergkamp!” etc. Regarding Western people’s food habits, some could be disapproving of ‘us’ eating microwave-heated pre-packaged meals instead of a well-prepared meal.

**Being treated in a special way**

Being a *muzungu*, I was always treated in a special way, which could make me feel honoured but also very awkward and uncomfortable. For instance, in some schools, teachers would ask students to stand up and applaud me. While using public transport, I would feel protected because of my *muzungu* appearance. For instance, if someone bothered me, other people would tell them to leave me alone.

One time I crossed the street with a female Ugandan. A female car driver stopped to let us cross. The female Ugandan I was with responded with surprise, saying that the driver must have stopped because of me because, usually, Ugandan women would not stop for each other in the street. I do not know whether this was true or an exception, but such experiences did remind me how I was constantly being treated differently, even at moments when I no longer felt like an outsider myself.

**Adhering to my own norms and values**

Two things I always found difficult about adhering to my own norms and values in Ugandan society were my being an atheist and a pescatarian. One of the first questions people would usually ask me was which religion I adhered to. Whenever I told them I was an atheist, they would often respond with disbelief that I could think there is no God. This answer could lead to long, uncomfortable discussions. Therefore, I often ended up responding that I was raised Catholic, which was true. Furthermore, I was always happy to attend religious services with research participants and other Ugandans I met, as it helped me to learn more about their lives.

I decided to interrupt my pescatarianism while being in Uganda because I spent almost all my days in schools. To create rapport with the teachers, I spent a lot of time with them in the staff rooms. As their guest, teachers would invite me for lunch and share their food with me. Knowing that meat was a luxury, I felt burdened to refuse it because of principles. And since I like the taste of meat, it was usually a secret joy for me to be able to eat it.
**BEING A WOMAN**

I felt that being a woman enabled me to interview both male and female students and teachers about sexuality. I did notice that I identified more with female research participants, especially when they were my age. There was only one time that I felt awkward during an interview with a male teacher. He was married, and since I had read that multiple sexual partners were occurring in Uganda, I asked him if he had sex with multiple partners. In response, he looked at me as if I had invited him to have sex with him right there.

On another occasion, a male teacher, who was not one of my research participants, greeted me outside the school compound in a deserted area by grabbing my breast with his hand. I was too surprised to respond and acted as if nothing had happened. As this person was known to be a trained comprehensive sexuality education teacher, I expected this person to be respectful towards women, sexual boundaries and informed consent. This incident made me question the extent to which students in Uganda would be able to establish trusting relationships with their sexuality education teachers.

Sometimes I would use my ‘foreigner’ status to act more boldly than Ugandan society expects women to act to feel less vulnerable in public. For instance, rather than behaving modestly and submissively, I could choose to look men directly in the eye, speak up and talk to them as if we were friends, to show that I was not easily intimidated. In schools, however, I often adapted my behaviour to that of the Ugandan women around me, including the way of clothing. This was also appreciated, as one teacher remarked: “Thank you for dressing according to our tradition.” Only, one time, I was observing a sexuality education lesson when I felt my skirt was a bit too short. It made me feel embarrassed because in that particular lesson the teacher remarked that girls should not wear skirts above their knees, as it could arouse boys.

**BEING MY AGE**

When I started data collection among students in 2008, I was 24 years old, whereas my research participants were 15–19 years old. During my data collection among teachers in 2011, I was 28 years old, whereas my research participants were aged 22–53.

Although relatively young for a researcher and still able to recall life as a teenager, I was five to ten years older than the students who participated in my research. Even though I had explained to them that they could stop the interviews and discussions whenever they wanted to, and that they were not obliged to answer my questions, I did realise that the age difference, and my being a foreigner, could make them feel impressed and potentially provide information they may not be totally at ease with later. This made me very aware not to probe whenever I sensed it could make them feel uncomfortable. For instance, I suspected a female student was HIV-positive and wanted to know about her experiences, but, considering the emotions my questions might evoke, I decided not to probe because I did not consider this information to be crucial for answering my research questions.

In my interactions with the teachers, it often felt like we were adults together. With participants my age, our interactions could feel like friendships, and intimate questions were relatively easy to ask. However, some participants were the age of my parents, and, although I usually did ask them about their sexual experiences, I could feel quite shy and uncomfortable doing so.

One instance that made me realise how fortunate I was, and especially at my age, was when I told teachers I was doing PhD research. Some would exclaim: “What?! You’re doing PhD research? How old are you?!” This could make me feel uncomfortable, as many of the participating teachers dreamed of obtaining a Master’s or PhD degree. At the same time, this was a constant reminder for me of the inequalities between the contexts we were raised in and in the opportunities we had been given.
INTERMEZZO 1

Also, when conducting the in-depth interviews, I could feel guilty about being born in a society where sexual and reproductive health information and contraception are readily available. For instance, a female teacher told me how she had abstained until the age of majority because that was what society expected from her. Once she was 18 and allowed to have sex, she quickly got pregnant because she and her partner had not used protection. She said that she had assumed that her partner would use the withdrawal method. I identified with her because she was slightly younger than I was. I felt it was unfair that she had fallen pregnant because society had made her vulnerable: they had only taught her to abstain and not about contraceptive methods or how to communicate about or negotiate the use of contraception with a partner. While she was pregnant, her partner died in a gas explosion, which made her a widowed, working mother at the age of 22 years.

WORKING AT THE NEXUS BETWEEN RESEARCH AND PRACTICE IN A MULTI-LEVEL CONTEXT

In Chapter 2, I discussed how I conducted research for and with organisations. Despite the many advantages of working at both Rutgers and the university, I could find it challenging to adhere to the expectations of the various organisations involved in the research process. It required me to speak and understand different languages or discourses, and to shift easily between not only theory and practice but also between Uganda and the Netherlands and between what happened at the NGO and at the school level. At university, I would need to show the relevance of my study for science, whereas the NGO expected me to reflect on its relevance for practice. Switching between theory and practice could be difficult, but in the end I found it rewarding and enriching. Although it was an honour to have the opportunity to learn about sexuality education in both an academic and an NGO environment, which has benefited both the research and me personally, being in two organisations, but both only half of the time, could make me feel like I was never fully part of either one of them. To prevent any challenges arising from working both in research and practice, it could be useful to discuss each other’s expectations beforehand with the organisations involved and, to encourage commitment, to have each organisation equally fund the project.

I was not paid by Rutgers or SchoolNet Uganda to conduct this research, but my work with these organisations made me more familiar with WSWM than the other sexuality education programmes I observed in the schools. This familiarity could make me potentially biased towards the findings of this programme compared to the findings of the other programmes. As discussed in Chapter 4, it turned out not to be possible to compare the programmes, and as such this bias was not evident. However, it did conflict in other ways, as I felt more compelled to be positive about the implementation of WSWM to Rutgers employees and its partners.

During my time in Uganda, I developed a close bond with SchoolNet Uganda and its work. Back in the Netherlands, I could sometimes feel frustration when I felt that SchoolNet Uganda needed more support from Rutgers in its work or to be given more voice in the agenda-setting. Similar to how I felt that I was representing the voices of the research participants, as discussed in Chapter 2, I also felt that I needed to represent SchoolNet Uganda’s voice and address its needs. Again, I could sense a distance between the Dutch and the Ugandan context. For instance, SchoolNet Uganda might indicate the need to address child and domestic violence within the WSWM curriculum. Rather than taking this up as a priority issue within the second edition of WSWM, I could feel that SchoolNet Uganda’s wishes were downplayed because it was not supportive of advocating for sexual diversity within the WSWM curriculum. To me, the latter was understandable considering the difficulty of implementing such a curriculum in the present Ugandan environment that condemns and criminalises sexual diversity.
Also, in Uganda itself, I felt I was representing SchoolNet Uganda. During the validation study in 2013, the Rutgers project officer who coordinated the Ugandan programme and the Ugandan SRHR alliance coordinator talked with me about first discussing my research findings with SchoolNet Uganda before presenting them to the SRHR alliance. In that way, I could emphasise in my presentation how SchoolNet Uganda had been involved in the research and how it had used the findings to improve its programmes. Because it was a relatively small organisation within the Ugandan SRHR alliance, telling the other organisations how SchoolNet Uganda had successfully used research findings to improve its programmes could increase its status and was, thus, considered a strategic move to strengthen its position within the alliance.

**DISCUSSION**

While reflecting on my positionality in this PhD research, one aspect that I have not yet mentioned but that could be regarded as underlying the themes discussed in this intermezzo is my awareness of the post-colonial power relations involved. These power relations underlie the decision for the research topic and my position as a researcher in relation to my research participants and the Dutch and Ugandan NGOs involved. I believe that this awareness could have made me humbler than I otherwise would have been in my interactions with my research participants and other Ugandans — for instance, where it concerned expressing my own norms and values such as in relation to sexual diversity and teachers’ treatment of students. Also, I believe that this awareness made me more dedicated to voicing the perceptions of the research participants and creating an understanding of their reasoning and situation, especially teachers’ vulnerability when being expected to teach comprehensive sexuality education within the current Ugandan school setting.