

Vicarious learning as a strategy to improve inclusive education for children with disabilities: facilitating learning from experience among grassroots initiatives in Ethiopia

Emma E. de Wit, Saskia C. van Veen, Marjolein B.M. Zweekhorst and Barbara J. Regeer

Despite the commitment to achieve Education For All, realising inclusive education (IE) for children with disabilities remains challenging. Although experiential knowledge on IE is widely available, this knowledge often remains implicit and confined. Facilitating learning processes and exchange of experiences on IE could potentially help to accelerate the advancement of IE, particularly in hard to reach areas. In this research we took a case study approach, involving three rural schools with running IE initiatives in Ethiopia. In each school, the advancement of IE was addressed through stimulating learning from others' experiences on topics indicated as potentially challenging for IE. This process was carefully documented and reflected upon. The interventions used in each school were developed based on principles of vicarious learning, paying attention to the shared *experience*, the *analysis* process, and the emotional *support* provided during the sharing process. Important components of IE were found to be influenced through the 1) narration of stories by a mediator, 2) a reflection and learning workshop in a classroom and 3) the performance of a play on IE in a larger community. The three case studies show that facilitating vicarious learning was widely applicable for teachers, classes and the community. In the conclusion we pay attention to the principles of vicarious learning which helped to support educational actors developing new insights with regards to IE.

Keywords: children with disabilities; inclusive education; vicarious learning; experiential knowledge; multiple case study; Ethiopia

Introduction

The ambition of reaching Education for All (EFA) in 2015 to ensure that all children have access to compulsory education of good quality, which was drawn up during the World Education Forum in 2000, has not been reached in many developing countries (UNESCO,

2015). Despite great efforts, and significant political and financial investments to support the EFA goals, the most disadvantaged groups, including children with disabilities living in low income countries, seem the last to benefit. In striving for universal primary education, children with a disability seem to most predictive of exclusion and non-enrolment, due to various physical, social and economic barriers (e.g. insufficient physical access, teachers who are not trained on disability inclusion, limited resources for special teaching aids, and negative prejudices) (UNESCO, 2015). The need for better access to quality education is even more pressing for children living in remote rural areas, where school are generally less conducive for children with disabilities (UNESCO, 2010, 2015). Furthermore, teacher training does not always reach remote areas in developing countries and traditional prejudices and practices surrounding disability prevail (Srivastava, Boer & Pijl, 2015). Therefore, scholars and policy makers in the education sector continue to underline the urgent need for special attention for educational enrolment and completion of primary education for children with disabilities in developing countries (Srivastava et al., 2015; UNESCO, 2015).

Inclusive education (IE) is internationally acknowledged as a valuable approach to education as it supports and welcomes diversity amongst all learners (EFA & UNESCO, 2002). IE is therefore closely connected to the goal of improving educational enrolment and completion of primary education for children with disabilities (Peters, 2005). According to Lipsky and Gartner (1999) *‘inclusive schools have the belief that all children can learn and that all benefit when learning is done together’* (Lipsky & Gartner, 1999, pg 33). This quote implies that it is in the interest of all to eliminate any form of social exclusion with regards to educational learning in society, and therefore to strive for making schools more inclusive (Lipsky & Gartner, 1999).

Ethiopia strongly supports the notion of IE. At the national level, inclusion became a cross cutting issue for the Ethiopian Ministry of Education (MoE) in 2005 which initiated an integrated program on Special Needs Education (SNE) into the mainstream educational system (Ministry of Education and UNICEF, 2012; Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland, 2010). Alongside the government’s SNE program, various NGOs are involved in stimulating IE locally, especially focusing on schools for children who are “hard to reach” (e.g. working children, remote rural dwellers and nomads, ethnic and linguistic minorities, children effected by conflict and those with disabilities) (Rose, 2009). In relation to IE for children with disabilities, Ethiopia was praised by the UNESCO’s EFA evaluation report (2015) for its educational projects with needs-based approaches, school buildings adapted for children with disabilities, support of teachers training, and awareness campaigns on IE (UNESCO, 2015). This shows that Ethiopia has many good examples of schools that include children with disabilities in their classes (Teferra, 2005). Yet, despite these promising developments, estimations on enrolment rates reveal that only 3.2% of school-aged children with disabilities in rural areas could get access to education (Ethiopian Ministry of Education, 2012). Also, it remains questionable as to whether these children are actually participating and learning fully,

as many children with disabilities drop out prematurely (ACPF, 2011). Therefore, it is important to focus on creating more opportunities for IE in these harder to reach areas. Typically schools in rural areas encounter a variety of challenges with regards to IE for children with disabilities, which range from assessment strategies, teaching skills, physical access, shortage of materials and resources, as well as crowded school spaces (Mitiku, Alemu & Mengsitu, 2014). Mitiku et al. (2014) mention that, although Ethiopia has come a long way to stimulate EFA, it requires more collaboration between educational actors to help face this array of challenges. This raises the question of how to manage the good practices and experiential knowledge that are available, so that other areas can learn and implement similar solutions in their own unique settings? In other words, how can localized knowledge be made visible and shared with others as to improve IE, particularly in hard to reach areas?

In this research, we aim to support the development of IE in rural areas by stimulating the exchange of experiential knowledge in local grassroots settings. We will first provide insight into theories on learning from experiences. Second, we will explain the methodology applied in this research. Third, we will present the results of the research in the form of three case studies which show the process and outcomes of learning from experiences in three different settings. Finally, we will reflect on the shared value of these interventions for learning from experiences in the practice of IE for children with disabilities.

Theoretical foundations for experiential learning

In the development field, attention to knowledge management is growing (Cumming, Regeer, Ho, & Zweekhorst, 2013). Knowledge can be seen as a set of shared beliefs that are constructed through social interactions and are embedded in the context in which knowledge is created (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, referring to Wittgenstein, 1953). Managing knowledge to accelerate positive change, and, in some cases, to prevent others from ‘reinventing the wheel’ (Myers, 2015), can be done by learning through the practical experiences of others, whether these are observed directly, or constructed symbolically in interaction with ‘models’. In the context of knowledge management, learning from experiences, also called ‘vicarious learning’, is used to transfer lessons learnt in practice within a broader context (Myers, 2015).

Vicarious learning, a concept developed based on the work of Bandura (1977) on social learning theory, embodies the idea that learning from modeled experiences can help ‘observers’ to find solutions that fit their own unique context. Vicarious learning is closely related to experiential learning, as it uses experience to enable learning. The difference lies in the fact that experiential learning theory emphasizes the importance of personal experience, while vicarious learning occurs when someone observes or takes account of experiences of others (Roberts, 2010). The fundamental premise of vicarious learning is that it does not

require personal direct experiences for people or organizations to learn to improve their practice or avoid errors (Cox, McKendree, Tobin, Lee, & Mayers, 1999). Vicarious learning can occur through various indirect processes where the ‘learner’ is triggered to abstract lessons from other people’s experiences by processes of imagination and modelling (Manz & Sims, 1981). According to Bandura (1977), such processes are imperative organizational resources as they advances the production and integration of knowledge faster than through stimulating ‘learning by doing’ or ‘trial and error’. This type of learning is used in many contexts, including (higher) education (Bandura, 1977; Cox et al., 1999; Craig, Gholson, Ventura, & Graesser, 2000) and in the knowledge management for development sector (Maas, Bunders, & Zweekhorst, 2013; Van Veen, Staal, & Poelje, 2015).

Vicarious learning comprises three important components which are: 1) to make knowledge ‘visible’ or accessible; 2) to encourage the knowledge to be communicated to others through direct contact; and (3) to find ways to allow sharing of knowledge in a larger contexts or networks through indirect mediums. Traditional approaches to vicarious learning, such as observation or modelling, emphasise one-way knowledge transfer, but these have been expanded by recent scholars, such as Meyers (2015), showing that more interactional methods, incorporating feedback loops between ‘model’ and ‘learner’, can be used to further enhance the learning experience. In this adaptation, the interpersonal connection is described as a prerequisite for the learner to discover and integrate the key lessons from an indirect experience (Meyers, 2015, p. 30).

Various guiding principles are described in the literature to facilitate vicarious learning in individuals and in organizations and networks. We adopt the principles of Myers (2015), who in his dissertation speaks about ‘*coactive vicarious learning*’. He describes these core principles as: 1) reflecting on ‘experience’ (depicting the actual content of the experience and bringing this across vividly); 2) ‘analysis’ (stimulating probing questions to aid understanding and clarify how the experience was constructed and why); and 3) ‘support’ (in which both the sharer and learner emotionally support each other during the process of sharing and receiving experiences, of which some could be embarrassing or confronting, using encouraging statements to thus smoothen the learning process).

In this study, vicarious learning is viewed as an essential process for the distribution and integration of knowledge on IE between peers. We want understand how examples of experiences of others (role models) can help local actors to develop their own capabilities and solutions to improve their practice of IE (according to the aforementioned components of vicarious learning).

Methodology

The study was embedded in a Thematic Learning Program (TLP)¹ on the inclusion of persons with disabilities (2010-2012), a network of Dutch NGOs and their local partnering organizations in India and Ethiopia. Their aim was to learn in collaboration on the topic of inclusive development in general.

This paper describes a multiple case study conducted by the authors in collaboration with members of the TLP in Ethiopia. From the nine Ethiopian NGOs that were involved in the TLP, five formed a forum on IE in Ethiopia to learn more about inclusion of children with disabilities in primary education, especially focused on low-resource, rural settings to contribute to IE in these “hard to reach” areas. For this study, the forum on IE selected three schools from the participating NGOs’ local partnering organisations, which met the following inclusion criteria: a) a relatively high enrolment rate of children with disabilities in their services (respectively 17, 7, 6 compared to otherwise entirely exclusive schools in other areas); b) placement in a remote rural setting that was safe enough for the researchers to travel to; and c) an interest to share and learn about local solutions for IE (see Table 1).

Table 1: Characteristics of the schools that participated in the research

Funding NGO	School	Area	# of Children with disabilities
NVEA	Jagee	Bako, West Ethiopia	7
RLDO	Halekane	Yir’galem, South Ethiopia	6
WCAT	Wogodame Gabriel	Anbesame, North Ethiopia	17

The authors facilitated the process of vicarious learning at national, school and community level. The research consisted of three case studies in which vicarious learning on IE was facilitated, involving one activity in each school.

These case studies were preceded by explorations on the status of IE in each school. NGO staff members and policy makers at the national level; and principals, teachers, school board members, students and their parents at the school level, participated in one or two in-depth interviews (n=30) on the successes and current challenges with IE in their respective setting. Focus groups were conducted with teachers (n=16) in each school, and in one school two focus groups were also conducted with parents (n=24), to discuss the underlying difficulties and opportunities for change. Furthermore, in each school two observations days were executed to observe the participation of children with disabilities in the classroom, complemented with informal interviews with the children involved and their friends. Consent from all people involved was obtained before research activities commenced. During the study the researchers and NGO staff members worked closely together in obtaining consent, sampling, and translation. The authors recorded and transcribed verbatim all interviews and focus group discussions. They also maintained observation logbooks with

reflections on the participation of children with disabilities in the class room. Qualitative analysis was done through open coding to abstract distinct themes until no new themes would emerge (Gray, 2014). The results of these explorations on IE are described in another article (Van Veen et al., submitted).

Based on these explorations, the principal, teachers and researcher choose a topic of concern that was observed in their school, and the researcher developed interventions which would fit the unique context of the school, and could enhance vicarious learning for relevant actors in that setting. In the results we explain the reasoning behind each specific intervention. This relates to UNESCO's (2005) plea to address diversity in education through grassroots interventions that aim to overcome barriers for the participation of children with disabilities. In the execution of the interventions, the researcher performed the role of mediator, in some cases to facilitate knowledge exchange. They facilitated discussions and analysis surrounding the experiences shared according to the principle of 'thick description' (Guba and Lincoln, 1989), including richness and lifelike details in a story, to enhance the learner's interest and capacity to pick up important nuances of the story. All contributions to the discussions was transcribed and summaries were prepared to inform the actors involved. The summaries were reflected upon directly after the interventions were completed at the school level, and also provided input at the national level for the forum on IE in the TLP. Furthermore, after three months, the lasting effects of the interventions were discussed in interviews (n=6) with NGO staff and participating teachers.

To analyse the three case studies together on how they facilitated vicarious learning, we looked for patterns and principles that were present in the three cases and could provide us more insights into the factors that enabled vicarious learning. These categories involved concepts related to the process and context of the intervention itself as well as the impact of the interventions on the receivers the lessons that were learned and how IE was improved.

Case studies

In each school, an intervention was implemented with the aim of facilitating vicarious learning on a particular topic related to IE (see table 2). The topics 'teaching skills', 'peer effects', and 'community awareness' were identified respectively as possible starting points for the advancement of IE by actors at each school. Interventions were developed by the researcher in deliberation with the actors involved, to make relevant experiential knowledge available and accessible, in a process that would seek to enhance vicarious learning among relevant actors. In the first school, an intervention was developed that involved '*narrating experiences of a role model through a mediator*' to advance teaching skills on special needs. In the second school, a '*reflection and learning workshop*' was organised in the classroom to positively influence interactions among disabled and non-disabled students. In the third school, a '*theatre play*' was prepared and performed to facilitate awareness-raising on IE

among parents and the wider community. We will reflect in the following sections on whether and how these interventions stimulated vicarious learning on IE in these schools.

Table 2: Interventions to enhance learning in relation to challenges

School	IE topic	Intervention to enhance learning	Actors involved
Jagee	Teaching skills	Sharing of an experience of a role model by a mediator	Student with a disability Some peer students Teacher Principal NGO staff
Halekane	Stimulating positive peer effects	Learning & Reflection workshop	Student with a disability Class of peer students Teacher
Wogodame Gabriel	Community awareness	Theatre performance	Disability club (children with/without a disability) All peer students All teachers Principal Community at large NGO employee

Sharing of an experience by a mediator to stimulate appropriate teaching skills

In the first school, the teachers explained how they involved children with disabilities, but that they wanted guidance on how to respond to the different learning needs of the children in the classroom. Specifically, in one first grade class the teacher voiced her concern about how to include a boy impaired with low vision in her lessons (see Box 1). The researcher and teacher of the class observed that Dawit² was not fully participating in class, due to his impairment, and agreed that the teacher could perhaps apply more differentiated teaching methods to address his special needs.

Box 1: Observation notes grade 1, Dawit (low vision)

During a particular English class a series of words was written on the blackboard and children in the class had to come to the board, one by one, to read the words out loud. When it was Dawit's turn, he positioned himself close to the board and read the words. He had a few more problems than the other students but managed to finish the assignment quite well. Next, the students took their notebooks to write the words portrayed on the black board, except for Dawit, who was holding his notebook under the table, like he was shy. He seemed to be waiting till everyone was finished, while pretending to write.

After class, the teacher was asked why she thought Dawit did not write the words from the blackboard. She answered that he could write but maybe he could not see the board properly (even though he was already in front of the class).

The researcher intervened as mediator in order to make relevant experiential knowledge available for the teacher, and hopefully increase Dawit's level of participation in the classroom. The researcher shared the experiences of a successful blind woman who is advocacy advisor of an International NGO and role model for many persons with disabilities in Ethiopia, who had set-up her own school programme in Addis Ababa. Her story is described in more detail in Box 2. In summary, the researcher explained how as a child the blind woman struggled to learn in a mainstream high-school, but how much her situation improved once she found a friend who could read for her.

Box 2: The story on how support of a buddy can increase participation in education

'I started my educational career in a special boarding school for the blind. Here, I learned to work with Braille, to read and write. After primary education I had to continue my education in a regular high school, which was not accessible to blind students and lacked appropriate learning materials. In those times I soon realized the importance of friends: the government supports blind students financially, and I used this money to buy some Buna (coffee) or food for other students, so I could easily make contact with classmates. Some became my friends and the great advantage of these friends was that they started to read for me. This was very important for me in a regular school because there was no Braille. In order to for me to learn it was imperative that I had these friends with me in order to do my homework sufficiently. Finally, this was not only valuable for me, but I learned it was also useful for my friends who actually studied the material better through these practices of reading to me. Actually, one friend who assisted me, still mentions today that in her work she is benefitting from these experiences.'

During this research it was observed and discussed in interviews that blind students in regular schools that lack appropriate learning materials, as also portrayed in the story, often reach out to other students to read their homework and the class material for them. This also benefits the child who is reading as they practice the assignments double and become very fluent readers, as often mentioned by teachers as well as peers of blind students in the research setting.

A few important steps were facilitated during this exchange. First, as the story was shared and the knowledge made available, the mediator paid attention to the details and contextual factors of the story. Secondly, in the context in which the story was shared, the mediator made sure the teacher was receptive for the story by first acknowledging the positive steps she had already taken with Dawit, and her interest in improving his situation further. She also invited the teacher to ask questions with regards to the story she had shared, thus stimulating two-way interaction. The teacher was therefore able to extract the importance of a buddy system for the child with a disability in her class, by analyzing how the girl had come to enjoy her education better. This may sound like an obvious solution, though in the context of Ethiopian teaching (with a lot of reciting, cramped classes and little time for teachers to address individual needs) it had not yet crossed the teachers' mind to think of such a system.

In this example, actors at the national and school level were connected, as the blind role model (through the mediator) was able to share her story with a primary school teacher of a remote rural school. Consequently, the teacher was able to derive value from the story by applying it in her own context, as is illustrated by further observation notes in Box 3.

Box 3: Continuation observation notes grade 1, Dawit (low vision)

The teacher was happy to hear about the story on the strength of support of a buddy and immediately arranged a buddy for Dawit. She asked the students in class who would like to read for Dawit during the class and placed a smart girl next to the boy. The girl looked proud to support Dawit with his assignment and started reading. After class I [researcher] observed that Dawit had written all his words in the notebook and clearly looked relieved. His mother told me in an informal conversation that she also noted that he wrote better and praised him for it.

Three months later the researcher asked the teacher about Dawit's progress. She expressed how - after the girl had helped Dawit for one month - she arranged a male buddy for Dawit. This was a better match since the boys are friends. Dawit has improved his writing since and is doing well, according to his teacher. The teacher explained how this simple initiative also helped her to think about simple and creative solutions for other children with disabilities in her class. She also shared her practical experience with colleagues at her school and local NGO staff, who also acknowledged that they could use various simple inclusive teaching methods.

Learning & reflection workshop to improve student interactions

In the second school, the principal, teachers and the researcher wanted to address the topic of 'negative peer effects' that were observed in the school and stressed by parents and students as a concern. A Learning & Reflection workshop was designed for one of the classes that included a student with a disability who felt isolated. The aim of the Learning & Reflection workshop was to stimulate vicarious learning in a class, based on the experiences (and knowledge) of a student with a disability. This tool was chosen since it facilitates learning of 'outsiders' through reflection on the challenges, successes and learning experiences of 'insiders' (Regeer, Hoes, van Amstel-van Saane, Caron-Flinterman, & Bunders, 2009; Regeer et al., 2011). Also, the workshop allows for interpersonal interaction between the 'model' and learner.

In the school involved, classes contain many children - on average around 50-60 students. There is not much time for addressing all the diverse needs in the classroom and education is easily disrupted, and bullying can easily occur. How children with disabilities experience this situation is not always noticed by their teachers and peers. In such a setting, we wanted to see whether a more conducive classroom climate could be created by sensitizing children with the topic of inclusion which would hopefully lead to diminished bullying and exclusion.

The researcher in collaboration with the local NGO staff and teacher applied a Learning & Reflection workshop in grade 4. In this class Beza, a physically disabled girl who walks with crutches and feels isolated among her peers, shared her experiences as an “insider” with her class, who were “outsiders” to this problem. We hoped that sharing her story in a learning & reflection workshop would lead to more positive attitudes towards her. As an important step in the intervention, the process was preceded by two awareness raising sessions, of two hours each, with play exercises around disability inclusion. To ensure that Beza’s openness about her experience would not lead to further segregation, there was much attention to building rapport in the class to create a safe environment. This relates to the topic of ‘support’ addressed by Myers (2015) as an important component of vicarious learning. During the awareness sessions, which for instance entailed an exercise on ‘being blindfolded’, children were also invited to reflect on not being able to see, to help them abstract the meaning of disability. Since mutual trust in a Learning & Reflection workshop is very important (Mierlo et al., 2010) Beza was only asked to share her experience at the end of the second session (see Box 4).

Box 4: Observation notes grade 4, Beza (physical disability)

As priority was given to first creating a safe environment for Beza, she shared her challenge with the rest of the class only during the second session:

‘Just when I come to school and I enter the class, I would like to have a chair that is arranged for me and if there is no place, to have other children to allow me to sit down. Also people in the community sometimes bump into me but that knocks me over. And maybe if teachers can actively participate by giving me some extra attention when I have problems with writing, for example, that would make me happy. It would make me able to learn more.’

After this opening statement from Beza, who showed some nervousness in the short intonation and her appearance, the children reflected on her experience and thought about ways to diminish her problems in the future. One of the children stated: ‘I did not know I was hurting her, because I didn’t think about it. Now I would like to help her if I can.’

The discussion that followed Beza’s statement showed that her peers could reflect openly, from their perspective, on the situation. Most children had not realize how they played a role in Beza’s negative school experience. The researcher noticed several socially desirable answers during the discussion but still, after the workshops, the children initiated the idea for a disability club to address peer attitudes towards disabled students. Furthermore, the teacher observed that Beza and the other students were studying together more often, sharing resources, and more generally that Beza’s classmates were more attentive to her needs as they provided seating for her in class or sat with her during breaks. This may relate to a change in

attitude among the students. Beza herself also mentioned changes during the breaks. In the interview conducted three months after the intervention, she indicated that she was playing games with other children and that the number of her friends had increased. Although she also felt that some classmates were still gossiping about her, she felt the Learning & Reflection workshop had helped, especially concerning the specific things she mentioned when she shared her story.

Drama to facilitate awareness-raising on Inclusive Education in the wider community

In the third school the topic of 'awareness on IE' in the wider community, including the parents of the school, was addressed. Since 2009, the school in question has worked towards becoming more inclusive and different strategies were adopted by the NGO and school staff to create awareness on IE. As a result, parents gained a better understanding of the value of education for children with disabilities. Still, according to the NGO and school staff, it is important to make sure members of the community see the availability of IE as beneficial for all children in the community and that parents with children with disabilities see how local education can respond to specific needs. Therefore, continuous awareness-raising is required. For this topic, it was decided that a play would be most conducive to make knowledge available to a larger group in order to learn. The NGO and school staff also agreed that a theatre performance best fitted their context and possibilities, since the children were enthusiastic about engaging in such form of play. Also traditionally the community used similar forms of theatre for information sharing purposes, making it likely that many people would come to see the play. Playful theatre is a means to start dialogue and reflection, and is especially used in the context of creating social change in community development (Sloman, 2011). Theatre allows the participants and observers to re-experience a challenge in a new way and create a safe space to examine their cultural beliefs (Hinthorne & Schneider, 2012). These are important elements to create a space where interpersonal analysis could take place and people would be supported in their sharing and learning process.

The researchers and teachers (n=3) reached out to the children of the disability club – a volunteer group of 10 disabled and non-disabled students who discuss issues surrounding disability, and proposed they perform a drama for the wider community, with the ulterior goal of starting a discussion within the community about IE. The theatre performance was based on the development of the school over the last three years and represented the lives of children with disabilities enrolled in education. It included detailed scenes on the past situation, showing how children with disabilities were excluded from education and hidden by their parents. It displayed the concerns of the school and the school board members who recruited children with disabilities in the last few years and how more children with disabilities were coming to school. The parents, as played by the children, learned that their children with disabilities were able to learn and get their diplomas. The play ended by showing the future of these enrolled children, for example one had become a doctor. An important feature was that the drama provided a lot of detail and was recognizable for the

community. The context was well drawn and a variety of emotional processes were enacted, which made the story very lively.

Approximately 150 students, teachers, and community members came to watch the performance, which lasted an hour, and throughout this time a variety of emotional responses were triggered (including sorrow, laughter, curiosity and relief), displaying the engagement of the audience. Afterwards the researcher asked the community to reflect upon it. The men who stood up to voice their opinion about the play thought that it correctly and realistically illustrated traditional practices in the past with regards to children with disabilities. One member remembered: 'Hiding children was a serious practice in the community. There were many children with disabilities not exposed because of this cultural problem.' Another community member said that not just children with disabilities were excluded from education: many children were kept at home to work. In his view, the theatre performance showed that education can improve the future prospects of the child and that exclusion from education is unadvisable for any child. Two other members reflected that the performance was useful because it was detailed and showed the positive outcomes of education for a child. These responses show that the community members became involved in the analysis of the vividly played history of their village. It was furthermore noticed that the community got involved in discussions around the topic amongst each other, and remained to do so for at least an hour after the performance. In this way further support was built through shared vicarious learning. The theatre performance on disability issues in the community provided an example of direct exchange, between the disability club (of the school) and the wider community. Our experience shows how a performance can provoke reflection and discussion about the issue underlying the play. We have to be aware that perhaps only the more positive members of the community members were prepared to speak up, but subsequent reflections on the event indicate a general belief that drama can enhance vicarious learning on the importance of IE.

Taking things further; sharing lessons at the national level

Finally, as a means to share what actors had learned through the cases described above, and to stimulate further learning also within the forum on IE, experiences of vicarious learning at the school level were summarised and shared with the NGOs and policy makers at the national level, through organised visits after each intervention and through a newsletter distributed in the TLP network. From there, they may influence other schools in the network to adopt the lessons learned, leading to knowledge being transferred to other localities. In the context of knowledge management this is described as building a structure for knowledge to be transferred within a larger network (Myers, 2015).

In addition, actors at the national level might relate the lessons learned to other sectors of the development sector wherein they carry out activities. The Dutch organisations in the TLP accessed the lessons learned through a newsletter with thickly described case stories, including a detailed explanation of the intervention and the learning curve afterwards. They

reported that this information has given them important insight in practice, which strengthens their support to national NGOs in Ethiopia in their efforts to realise disability inclusive development (Van Veen, Bunders & Regeer, 2013). This possible chain reaction of learning is visualised in Figure 1.

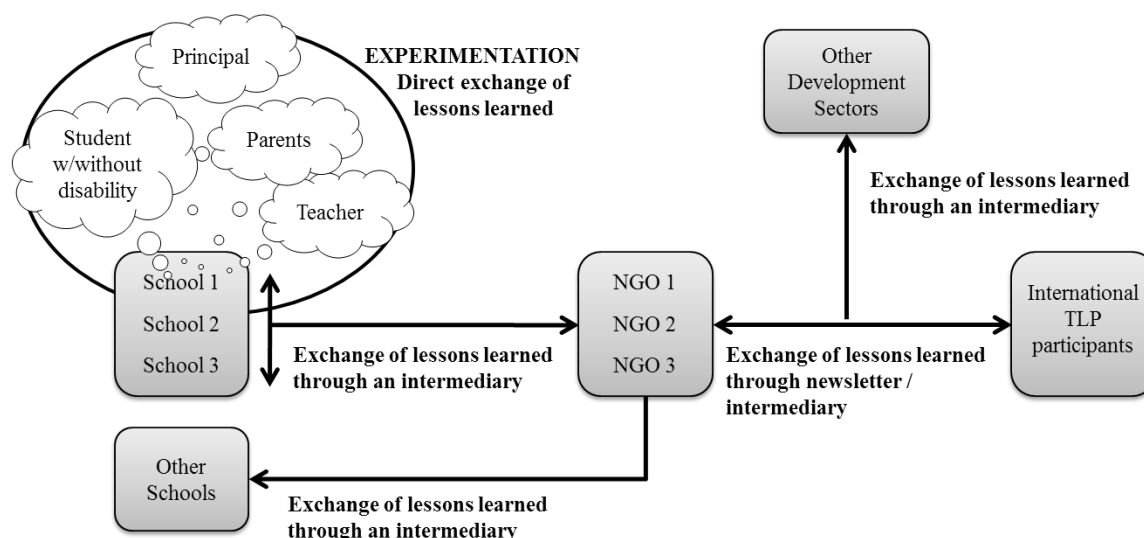


Figure 1: Possible chain reaction of vicarious learning in a knowledge management network

Conclusions

In this research, we aimed to understand how experiential knowledge of others can help local actors to improve IE through vicarious learning. This research took place in rural setting in Ethiopia, dealing with several challenges in the advancement of IE in their schools. The contextualised solutions developed in the three case studies address challenges in IE and show good prospects for accelerating progress. Here, we will first reflect on the three cases with respect to the core principles of vicarious learning found in wider literature and in relation to Myers (2015). Then we will conclude by suggesting how the lessons learned through vicarious learning may contribute to the advancement of IE in general.

In the first case study which focused on teaching methods, a teacher learned through the detailed experience of a role model about steps to facilitate differentiated learning. The focus on someone else's solution in the example helped the teacher to think about a solution in her own unique situation. This is also acknowledged by other literature. Cox et al. (1999) describe for instance how 're-usable dialogue' can be seen as a useful resource for vicarious learners (Cox et al., 1999). If we compare this to Myers (2015), we see that re-usable dialogue is a story of experience of a role model that is described vividly and concretely (Myers, 2015). Important in narratives is that it presents a solution to the problem and leads to a desirable

outcome (Bandura, 1977) and that the role model evokes respect and reflects competence (Manz & Sims, 1981). These facets will help the receiver of the story to build an interpersonal connection with the role model which allows for decoding the story into actual meaning for the local situation (Myers, 2015). In this way the lessons in the story become re-contextualised to a new context.

In the second case study, vicarious learning was stimulated through a Learning & Reflection workshop to address disruptive peer effects. In an honest and open atmosphere, the student with a disability was able to express her personal difficulties, and her peer students got concrete examples on how to improve the situation. Again, we see the principles of Myers (2015) who describes the importance of providing support for vicarious learning by carefully building a safe environment to learn in. Herein, social interaction in a group, like the students in the respective class, can enhance the effect of learning (Brown & Daguid, 1998). This also relates to work of van Regeer et al. (2011) who describe the benefits of reflecting in a small group on the experiences of someone. Thus outsiders to a problem can become insiders and a shared solution can be found.

The third case study involved the enhancement of community awareness on IE. Here, the disability club of a school performed a play for the school and the community that was detailed and honest in portraying progress towards inclusive practices. The recognisability of the story presented ensured that the community members could relate to it. Again, a vividly explained (Myers, 2015) and thickly described (Geertz, 1973) story ensured that the community members could relate to the information presented. The results show that the performance touched the hearts of the public, provoking dialogue and reflection among community members. Theatre performance to bring a community closer together on sensitive issues is not new. This technique also has been beneficial for women empowerment in water and sanitation projects (Smits, Moriarty, & Sijbesma, 2007), in participatory development communication (Hinthorne & Schneider, 2012), and in community development in general (Sloman, 2011). Although 'theatre cannot solve problems, it can only illustrate and expose them' (Boeren, 1992: 261) drama can help to provoke ongoing reflection and discussion about issues underlying the performance. This case study showed that vicarious learning through a vividly told theatre play helped the community to build an interpersonal relation with (in this case) the actors which helped them to decode the story into reflections on the meaning of IE in their community.

The three cases teach us that stimulating vicarious learning can be relevant at individual, class and community level, thus demonstrating its wide applicability. Furthermore, all examples show how participatory interventions elicited coactive vicarious learning according to various factors stated in wider literature, as well as in accordance to the three core principles of vicarious learning as proposed by Myers (2015) (see Table 3). We see that certain similarities occurred across the three stories, such as detailed and vivid descriptions, the space to 'decode'

meaning from the stories through dialogue and probing, as well as emotional support and engagement to ‘lubricate’ the sharing process (Myers, 2015).

Table 3: Factors and core principles of vicarious learning in relation to the interventions applied addressing relevant IE topics

Challenge	Factors which are likely to have contributed to vicarious learning	Core principles of coactive vicarious learning by Myers (2015): experience, analysis & support
Appropriate teaching skills	Experiences from a former student with a disability shared through a <i>mediator</i> : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Detail in the story helped the teacher to reflect on her work - Role model had status and success in her life - The solution derived from the story was distributed in the wider teacher community as an example for practicing IE 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Meaning from the story was constructed through dialogue between teacher and mediator (<i>analysis</i>) - The story included an experience that was relevant for the teacher to pick up and learn from (<i>experience</i>)
Peer effects	Experiences from a peer student with a disability were shared in a <i>learning and reflection workshop</i> : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The personal and concrete story included clear indications for children based on which they could adjust their behaviour. - A safe environment and mutual trust was created in awareness sessions before sharing the story 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Analysis and decoding was stimulated in the children by encouraging them to ask questions and reflect on what they were experiencing. (<i>analysis</i>) - Emotional support was offered by facilitators and children to support the sharing and learning experience (<i>support</i>)
Community awareness	Experiences from a community progressing towards IE, visualized in <i>theatre</i> : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The detail and honesty in the theatre play touched the community members at heart - The stories were recognizable and community members could relate to what was told. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Experiences displayed in the story were relevant and included detail (<i>experience</i>) - The interpersonal (emotional) connection between actors and community members was triggered. (<i>support</i>) - Reflection afterwards provoked a dialogue among community members on former practices and visions for the future (<i>analysis</i>)

The results show how aiding the process of vicarious learning has strong potential to contribute to the advancement of IE at the grassroots level by distributing lessons learned in a vivid manner that makes experiential knowledge visible and transferable, in a conducive environment that allows for sharing experiential knowledge from other contexts. We have shown how a change in attitudes and practice has started when relevant experiential knowledge becomes available and that the actors involved feel confident to continue and spread their experiences. Linking local level actors through vicarious learning leads to more 'practice-based evidence' (described in relation to medical research for guideline development by Mellor-clark, Barkham, Connell, & Evans, 1999) that can also be useful in other settings. Finally, the influence of vicarious learning may also be experienced in larger organizational structures, when lessons are transferred within a learning network, such as the TLP. Similar factors, such as thick description, remain important here to enable relatedness and learning, building a structure of knowledge in which actors can grow and improve their performance.

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About the authors

Emma de Wit is a PhD student at the Athena Institute, VU University. She has a background in Pedagogic Sciences (BSc) and International Development Studies (MSc). During her masters she conducted transdisciplinary action research to stimulate learning on inclusive education for Persons with Disabilities in Ethiopia, after which she graduated Cum Laude in 2013. Her PhD-project is based in India, where she works in a network of civil society agents to reduce stress and anxiety in youth and families. Email: e.e.de.wit@vu.nl

Saskia van Veen is a researcher at the Athena Institute of the VU University, Amsterdam since 2008. During her academic career she became conversant with inter- and transdisciplinary research methods and facilitation of innovation processes related to problems of equity in society. Saskia received a PhD in 2014 with her thesis “Development for all, understanding disability inclusion in development organisations” and published numerous articles and reports on disability rights, action learning, knowledge co-creation and inclusion. Currently, she is applying her knowledge also in other sectors like nature policy and community-based programmes. E-mail: sevanveen@gmail.com

Marjolein Zweekhorst graduated in Medical Biology at the VU University Amsterdam (1996). After her graduation she joined the department Biology and Society as a researcher. She then became a PhD student and she wrote her PhD thesis on institutionalization of an interactive approach to technological innovation. Her current research is focused on methodology development for interactive policy and interactive technology development in the field of international public health, biotechnology and biomedical sciences. She is Associate Professor at the Athena Institute. Email: m.b.m.zweekhorst@vu.nl

Barbara Regeer is Assistant Professor at the Athena Institute for Research on Innovation and Communication in Health and Life Sciences, VU University Amsterdam. She has analysed and developed interfaces and interactions between science and society in various ways throughout her career. She conducts research on emerging innovative strategies for sustainable development. She has been involved in numerous inter organisational change processes, with a specific focus on enhancing learning between all actors involved, in such areas as sustainability innovation programmes (agriculture, urban development, mobility), care farming, disability mainstreaming, youth care organisations, and psychiatric institutions. She has initiated the development of TransLearning and other reflection tools such as the Dynamic Learning Agenda. Email: b.j.regeer@vu.nl

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