



Chapter 3 Research Design

As described in chapter 1 and 2, the process towards disability inclusive development can be perceived as a process of social change. This social change process requires a transformative approach. It demands a paradigm shift from seeing disability as the field of operations of specialised NGOs to acknowledging disability as the responsibility of every mainstream development actor. The rhetoric on adopting a social perspective of disability has largely been discussed in literature and academia; however, in practice this is a societal ideal which has not yet been realised (Stone, 1999).

3.1 Research Questions

The main aim of this thesis is to provide an understanding of the change processes towards disability inclusive development of NGOs and their international development programmes. From a transformative perspective we want to increase our understanding by supporting disability mainstreaming in different organisations and their development programmes and by identifying possible strategies for facilitating the change process towards disability inclusive development. Therefore, the research question formulated for this thesis is:

How can the change processes towards disability inclusive development of NGOs and their programmes be understood and what possible strategies can be identified to facilitate the change?

This question was studied in several communities (represented by the circles in figure 3.1) of organisations (represented by the stars in figure 3.1), united to address inclusive development. Figure 3.1 visualises these communities in relation to the sub-questions that are formulated to answer the main research question.

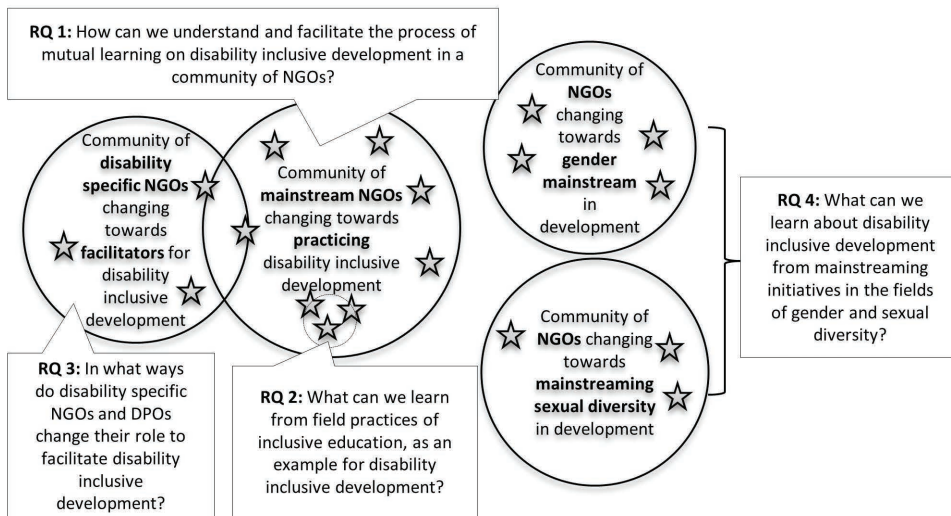


Figure 3.1 Schematic representation of the research questions in relation to the communities studied

The first two sub-questions relate to the 'TLP on inclusion of persons with disabilities'. In the TLP on inclusion of persons with disabilities a community of mainstream and disability specific NGOs was brought together to experiment with practicing disability inclusive development. This TLP provided insight into the first two sub-questions. The first sub-question (chapter 4 and 5) involves the whole community. The second (chapter 6) zooms in on the practice of a niche experiment in the community inclusive education. This community is visualised in figure 3.1, in the dotted circle within the middle circle wherein the stars represent the individual organisations that are united in the community.

1. *How can we understand and facilitate the process of mutual learning on disability inclusive development in a community of NGOs?*
2. *What can we learn from field practices of inclusive education, as an example of disability inclusive development?*

The third question relates to the role of disability specific NGOs and DPOs in supporting disability inclusive development. In figure 3.1 it can be seen that disability specific NGOs and DPOs, are united in their own community wherein they learn about their changing role from implementers of disability specific programmes to facilitators of change (chapter 7). The two communities of disability specific organisations and mainstream organisations

overlap, since one of the disability specific NGOs participated in both the TLP on inclusion of persons with disabilities and the community of disability specific NGOs and DPOs.

3. *In what ways do disability specific NGOs and DPOs change their role to facilitate disability inclusive development?*

The field of disability inclusive development is not alone in its change process towards inclusive development. Also the issues of other distinct groups are mainstreamed in international development programmes. All these initiatives together are referred to as inclusive development. In figure 3.1 this is visualised in the two other communities on gender mainstreaming and sexual diversity that are a bit distanced from the community on disability inclusive development. Despite the differences in needs among these different groups, they are experiencing a similar process of change, and therefore they form an interesting comparison. For our research we wanted to learn from these other practices as well, which is reflected in the fourth sub-research question.

4. *What can we learn about disability inclusive development from mainstreaming initiatives in the fields of gender and sexual diversity?*

3.2 Transformative Research Approach

As explained in chapter 2, this research to study the social change process towards disability inclusive development was of a transformative nature. Transformative research, as an approach to understand social change, started in social and behavioural science to address inequalities and social justice (Mertens, 2007). Scholars describe four functions of transformative research. First, transformative research aims to promote a paradigm shift (Mertens, 2003; Trevors, Pollack, Saier, & Masson, 2012) from the individual to the social perspective on disability for realising disability inclusive development. Second, transformative research aims to be responsive to different cultural settings (Crockett et al., 2013; Mertens, 2012). This responsiveness is important in development cooperation, where international development programmes are rolled out in multiple cultures and countries in the Global South. Third, transformative research aims to stimulate reflection and collaboration in transdisciplinary teams involving the community (Crockett et al., 2013; Mertens, 2012; Trevors et al., 2012). In chapter 2 we have seen the importance of reflection and learning among different actors involved to facilitate change on disability inclusive development. Finally, transformative research aims to approach complex issues in a

creative way, discovering new solutions and envisioning the full complexity of the problem (Crockett et al., 2013; Trevors et al., 2012). In this section we will explain how we applied a transformative research approach to support the development of innovative practices to co-create knowledge and strategies for disability inclusive development by NGOs.

In the following sections we will elaborate on the research design by presenting the different case studies in which transformative research was applied; explaining the practical application of action research as an approach to structure transformative research; and including information on the research methods applied, data analysis and the steps taken to ensure the validity of the results.

Case studies that influence processes towards inclusive development

The research questions were addressed using a case study approach. In a case study approach researchers provide a deeper understanding of a phenomenon, studied in a real life context (Yin, 2009). Yin (2009) describes three characteristics of the case study approach that all apply to our research. First, case study research often addresses ‘why’ and ‘how’ questions in their study design. ‘Why’ and ‘how’ questions often explore a process of change over time, instead of other research methods that are more interested in the mere frequencies or incidence of research outcomes (Yin, 2009). In the research underlying this thesis we were indeed interested in understanding the process of change towards disability inclusive development. Second, case study research studies a phenomenon in its natural setting (Yin, 2009). We studied the different communities on inclusive development in their natural setting through observations and shadowing organisations in the process towards disability inclusive development. The third characteristic describes the focus of case study research on contemporary actions that result in change (Yin, 2009). We incorporated this characteristic by looking from different angles at the process that NGOs employed when including persons with disabilities in their work. We can distinguish four broad case studies that underpin this thesis, in which we researched different communities connected together in different Thematic Learning Programmes (TLP).

The first community is the TLP on the inclusion of persons with disabilities (2010 – 2012). This TLP formed the basis for this thesis, and particular addresses the first and second research question (chapter 4, 5, and 6). The TLP on the inclusion of persons with disabilities was initiated by five Dutch NGOs and the Dutch umbrella organisation PSO in response to the United Nations Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), which

strongly encourages development actors to implement disability inclusive policies and practices (Bruijn et al. 2012; General Assembly United Nations 2006: article 32). The TLP on inclusion of persons with disabilities brought together different development actors to systematically and collectively learn how to include persons with disabilities in development programmes and organisations. The TLP on inclusion of persons with disabilities can be considered as an embedded case study, wherein various sub-cases can be distinguished. We studied and compared cases from the Netherlands, India and Ethiopia. Furthermore, we focussed on understanding the process of mutual learning on disability inclusive development among all actors involved. The organisations in these countries all went through a similar learning trajectory to explore disability inclusive development. The organisations from India and Ethiopia were linked to the Dutch organisations through formal partnerships that existed already before the programme.

Our understanding of disability inclusive development was enlarged through our involvement in the second community, which was part of the TLP on Organisational Assessment and Organisational Development (2010 – 2012). In a sub-case of this TLP, disability specific NGOs and DPOs were studied as they were adopting their new role as implementers of disability inclusive development. Since some of the participating organisations were also part of the TLP on inclusion of persons with disabilities, the two communities overlap. This community was initiated by Light For The World Netherlands and funded and supported by PSO.

Finally, when addressing the fourth research question, we made a comparison between the first community of the TLP on inclusion of persons with disabilities with two other communities on mainstreaming gender and sexual diversity, that were funded and supported by PSO. We chose this case in order to harvest knowledge and experiences from existing literature and from three practical cases on mainstreaming in development cooperation. Since the concept of mainstreaming has been applied as a strategy for development organisations to include the needs of marginalised groups as an integral dimension of policies and programmes, we use this comparison to learn about the organisational changes within NGOs that are necessitated by the objective to include marginalised groups in their work (Bruijn et al., 2012; Jolly, 2011; Moser & Moser, 2005; Squires, 2005; Waal, 2006). Table 3.1 gives an overview of these four TLPs and how they relate to the questions addressed in this thesis and gives an overview of the research participants and the involvement of the researchers in the programmes.

The coordination of the TLP on inclusion of persons with disabilities was executed by Paulien Bruijn (coordinator inclusive development) from Light for the World (LFTW) Netherlands. LFTW Netherlands is part of a consortium of NGOs that are committed to saving eyesight and improving the quality of life of persons with disabilities in the underprivileged regions of our world. The Athena Institute was the academic partner in the TLP on inclusion of persons with disabilities and academic consultant in the TLP on organisational assessment and organisational development. Dr. Barbara Regeer (assistant professor) and Saskia van Veen (junior researcher, author of this thesis) facilitated and documented the learning processes and knowledge outcomes. Master students (11) supported this documentation process by conducting their research interns in the context of the programme. Prof. Dr. Joske Bunders, Dr. Marjolein Zweekhorst and Dr. Wim van Brakel acted as advisors to the programmes, attending some of the programme meetings and giving feedback on the design and outputs of the research. Roelie Wolting from the Dutch Coalition on Disability and Development (DCDD) and Huib Cornielje from Enablement were involved in the facilitation of the TLP on inclusion of persons with disabilities as experts of disability and development issues. DCDD is a coalition of organisations that aim for full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all persons with disabilities, especially of persons with disabilities in low- and middle income countries. Enablement is a training, research and development institute that specializes in Community Based Rehabilitation (CBR) and inclusive development. In India the NGO Leonard Cheshire Disability (LCD) and in Ethiopia the Ethiopian Centre for Disability and Development (ECDD) supported the local partner organisations in developing disability inclusive practices. LCD is an international disability specific NGO, that as well as providing disability services, campaigns to put disability at the heart of international development. ECDD works collaboratively with other organizations to promote and facilitate disability inclusive development in Ethiopia.

Table 3.1 overview of the four TLPs in relation to the sub-questions and their participants

	Sub-question addressed	Members of the TLPs that participated in this research	Involvement of the researchers
TLP on inclusion of persons with disabilities 2010-2012	How can we understand and facilitate the process of mutual learning on disability inclusive development in a community of NGOs? What can we learn from field practices of inclusive education, as an example for disability inclusive development?	5 Dutch NGOs 5 facilitating organisations (expert & academia) 9 partner organisations in Ethiopia 12 partner organisations in India 10 additional NGOs that joined during the process	Design of programme activities. Facilitator of change. Gathering data. Analysis of data. Writing reports/articles for the practice and scientific community.
TLP on organisational development 2010-2012	How can we understand and facilitate the process of mutual learning on disability inclusive development in a community of NGOs?	1 Dutch NGO 1 academic institute 6 partner organisations in East Africa	Design of programme activities. Analysis of data. Writing a report/article for the practice and scientific community.
TLP on gender 2012	What can we learn about disability inclusive development from mainstreaming initiatives in the fields of gender and sexual diversity?	3 facilitating organisations (expert & academia)	Secondary analysis of data. Writing an article for the scientific community.
TLP on mainstreaming sexual diversity 2012		2 Dutch NGOs 1 facilitating organisation	

Applying action research in the TLP on inclusion of persons with disabilities

Chapter 2 explained how action research is related to the methodological considerations of transformative research. In this section we will zoom in on how the action research approach influenced the design of the research underlying to this thesis. The cyclic approach to action research we applied in this research was developed by Kemmis and McTaggart (1988). Kemmis and McTaggart (1988) describe action research as a process that starts with the reconnaissance of a problem, proceeding with 'a spiral of steps, each of which is composed of planning, action, observation and evaluating the result of the action' (p 246), as is visualised in figure 3.2. The overall process design is spread out over a longer period of time and consists of a number of cycles (Joske Bunders et al., 2010).

Managing an action research project is a continuous process that needs constant adjustment of actions based on reflection on previous results and experiences. The choices of interventions (visualised with the stars in figure 3.2) to stimulate knowledge co-creation within this cycle is determined in each round on the basis of the experiences in practice. The spiral does not have a set starting or stopping point.

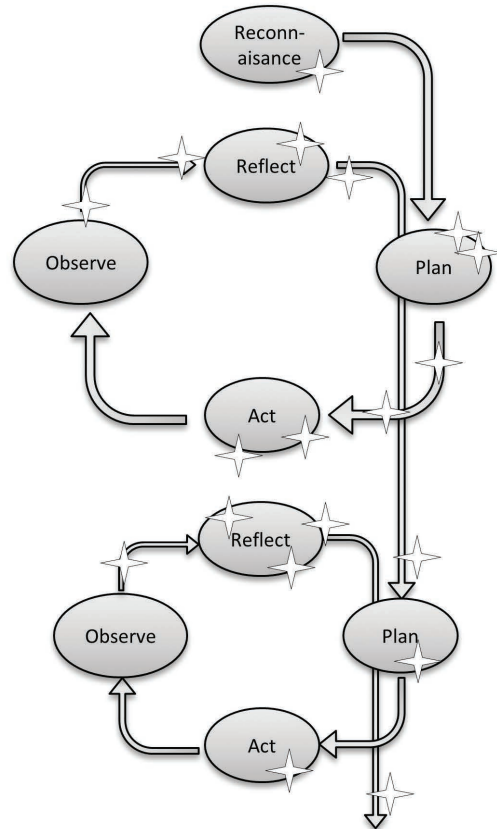


Figure 3.2 Action research spiral, based on Kemmis and MacTaggart (1988)

In action research, it is seen as important to empower marginalised groups to participate in the research process to transform the situation of social oppression, alienation and injustice they face (Kemmis, 2001). In this way the outcomes of research can directly be applied (A. R. L. Dilworth & Willis, 2003). The application of action research can contribute to a social

movement (Kemmis, 2001) and empower actors (Crockett et al., 2013). In the TLP on inclusion of persons with disabilities, participation was realised by involving persons with disabilities in different aspects of the programme. Persons with disabilities were part of the facilitating team. NGOs were encouraged to include persons with disabilities in their work force at different levels. Persons with disabilities in the communities were consulted to discuss how they wanted to be included in the development programmes of NGOs. As Bruijn et al. (2012) state in the practical guide on inclusion of persons with disabilities, one of the outputs of the TLP on inclusion of persons with disabilities, *'the best advocates for the rights of persons with disabilities are disabled people themselves'* (p. 34).

In the TLP on inclusion of persons with disabilities the action research approach was applied in several rounds of reflective learning sessions. The learning sessions consisted of participatory exercises that stimulated discussions and imagination. The participants of the TLP formulated their own learning questions giving guidance to the action research in their home organisations. In designing interventions to facilitate knowledge co-creation the facilitators also learned about the importance of continuously and flexibly adapting the set goals of the TLP participants in the light of newly gained insights. Adapting goals on the basis of emerging findings relates to the importance of aligning newly developed knowledge to contexts of regular practices (Wenger, 1998). In between learning sessions, the participants experimented with introducing the newly developed ideas and practices in their respective organisations. The resulting confrontation of the ideas developed within the TLP with the 'real world' of these organisations led to potentially valuable feedback within the TLP. We stress 'potentially', since flexibility and creativity are key here: the challenge is to find ways of sufficiently aligning the goals of the TLP with regular practice to give them a chance of being adopted, while still keeping the objectives of the TLP firmly in focus. The facilitators paid ample attention to this feedback from practice and stimulated its incorporation into the work of the TLP.

3.3 Methods

As data collection for transformative research requires an in-depth exploration of the cases studied, we adopted a variety of qualitative methods. Studying and analysing disability inclusive development with a variety of methods and different actors involved resulted in triangulation, which facilitated more robust insights.

All methods contributed to the transformative nature of the study, which means that they were participatory (involving different actors), included a component where learning from experience was enhanced (vicarious learning), combined different ways to stimulate learning (accommodating different types of learners), and were adapted to the contexts in which they were applied (culturally sensitive). The methods consisted of new methodologies specifically designed for this transformative research project and conventional methods that were applied in such a way that they also ensured a learning experience for the participants.

The research consisted of multiple cycles of action research. Within these cycles, learning sessions were conducted which allowed for reflection on the vision, expectations and practice of disability inclusive development (seven learning sessions were organised in the Netherlands, and four in India and Ethiopia). Learning needs were identified with help of the tool the Dynamic Learning Agenda (DLA) (chapter 4) (B. J. Regeer, Hoes, van Amstel-van Saane, Caron-Flinterman, & Bunders, 2009). The discussions in the learning sessions evolved from an exploratory to a concrete nature where the participants started to define criteria for disability inclusive development. To complement these community activities, similar issues were addressed per organisation in inter-organisational group discussions. In these group discussions support for disability inclusive development was created and practices of disability inclusive development were made sector specific. Concrete plans were made to support the change towards disability inclusive development in each respective organisation. The process of inter-organisational attention on disability inclusive development began with an assessment to get a baseline for the practice of inclusion of persons with disabilities for each organisation. The assessment was not only applied as an instrument of measurement, but also involved an exploration of the learning needs, expectations and motivation of the organisation. The actions on disability inclusive development were monitored by the participants who kept research diaries and the researchers who conducted observations and regular interviews. Furthermore, for learning needs determined as important to the participants, additional research was conducted through interviews and focus group discussions. In addition to these participant sessions, the facilitating organisations reflected in expert meetings on the progress in practicing disability inclusive development emerging from the TLP and the movers and the criteria for change. In the final sessions, the lessons learned from the TLP were presented by all participants to a wider audience, starting a discussion on how to scale-up disability inclusive development in different sectors.

Table 3.2 gives a condensed overview of the methods applied in the TLP on inclusion of persons with disabilities and the actors involved. We facilitated learning in three ways; through direct contact, through exchange via an intermediary, or through indirect exchange (Wit, 2012). Direct contact was facilitated by organising learning sessions and field visits where participants could discuss the process towards disability inclusive development in dialogue and experience it in real life. The facilitator was positioned as an intermediary to bring people with similar learning needs together. This was sometimes done in learning sessions, however the researcher advised participants to connect with each other outside these structured meetings as well. Indirect exchange was facilitated by the documentation of learning processes and case stories, presented in newsletters and reports. To make sure the reading or viewing documentation resulted in learning, the whole process of learning was described in a detailed manner, based on the principles of thick description (Geertz, 1973).

The three other TLPs adopted similar activities and methodologies. Because the data from these TLPs are represented in chapters 7 and 8 we refer to the methodology sections in these chapters for further explanations on methods.

Table 3.2 Data gathered in the TLP on inclusion of persons with disabilities.

Subject	Method	Participants involved							
		Facilitating NGOs			Mainstream NGOs			Exp	Uni
		NL	ET	IN	NL	ET	IN		
Design a vision for disability inclusive development	Learning sessions	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V
	Interviews	V			V			V	V
	Inter-organisational group discussions	V	V	V		V	V		V
Discuss expectations and motivation	Interviews	V			V			V	V
	Assessment	V			V			V	V
	Inter-organisational group discussions	V	V	V		V	V		V
Identify learning needs	Learning sessions	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V
	Inter-organisational group discussions	V	V	V		V	V		V
Discuss roles and responsibilities	Learning sessions	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V
Practice disability inclusive development	Assessment	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V
	Inter-organisational group discussions	V	V	V	V	V	V		V
	Interviews		V	V		V	V		V
	Observations		V	V		V	V		V
	Expert meetings	V	V	V				V	V
	Learning sessions	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V
Discuss costs and benefits of disability inclusive development	Interviews	V	V	V	V			V	V
	Learning sessions	V	V	V	V			V	V
	Focus group discussions	V	V	V	V			V	V
Set criteria for disability inclusive development	Learning sessions	V	V	V	V			V	V
	Expert meetings	V	V	V				V	V
Present the lessons learned on implementation	Final sessions	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V
Evaluate the TLP approach	Inter-organisational group discussions	V	V	V	V	V	V		V
	Expert meetings	V	V	V				V	V
	Interviews	V			V				V

3.4 Validity

Throughout the thesis, a variety of strategies were applied to ensure internal and external validity of this research.

Internal validity deals with the interpretation of the data by the researcher. The interpretation of data deals with the effect of the researcher on the research setting and the participants (Maxwell, 1998). In action research, this is even more important as the researcher takes part in the action being studied (Gray, 2004). The academic partners in the TLP, facilitating both the action research process and analyses, were well aware of their dual role (in assessing the change and participating in the change) in the programme. Through reflection in a research logbook and regular discussions with colleagues that were not directly involved in the research, they tried to interpret the data. Furthermore, inter-subjectivity was improved by involving multiple researchers in the design, collection and data analysis; investigator triangulation. The researchers were not all academics. Experts in the field of disability inclusive development were also involved, to contextualise the results. The research questions guiding the research were formulated together with the participants of the programme, who expressed their learning needs. This all resulted in a shared effort for this research. The main functions of the academic researchers were quality management, knowledge embedding, and translating outcomes into theoretical ideas. Furthermore, multiple sources (Gray, 2004; Verschuren & Doorewaard, 2007) were used to obtain a better understanding of the meaning of disability inclusive development. Participants with different stakes in the process, like NGO managers, office staff, field staff, beneficiaries and persons with disabilities contributed to this research. Finally, multiple methods (Gray, 2004) were employed to understand the meaning of disability inclusive development; methodological triangulation. Different participatory and dialogical tools were used at different moments in time to address the sub-questions of this research, resulting in a broad evidence base that substantiates this research; data triangulation.

The three countries selected as cases in this thesis were chosen based on the different stages of progress with regards to realising disability inclusive development. India was chosen as the government has already put some measures in place to implement disability inclusive development. Ethiopia was chosen as the government ratified the convention but resources to implement it are scarce. The Netherlands was chosen, as it is the base for the donor organisations that fund the partner organisations in Ethiopia and India.

External validity relates to the generalisability of outcomes found in research (Gray, 2004); in other words, how applicable the research is in other contexts. As this study is of an explorative nature, generalisability was not our main objective. We regarded it as more important to understand the meaning of disability inclusive development in different contexts. Because of the variety of different sub-cases that were analysed by similar theoretical frameworks, the patterns we extracted may be generalisable in different contexts (Verschuren & Doorewaard, 2007). Furthermore, we compared our findings to similar studies available in scientific literature and NGO reports. Ultimately, we hope that the results can help other interested development actors to set up similar initiatives for disability inclusive development to create a broader base for experimentation.

3.5 Thesis outline

This thesis consists of five studies and an essay as an epilogue, which focus on understanding the change processes towards disability inclusive development of NGOs and their programmes. Chapters 4 and 5 describe how we can understand and facilitate the process of mutual learning on disability inclusive development in a community of NGOs. Chapter 6 extracts lessons learned from field practices of inclusive education in Ethiopia, as an example for disability inclusive development. Chapter 7 deals with the changing role of disability specific NGOs and DPOs when moving toward facilitating disability inclusive development. Chapter 8 explores what can be learned about disability inclusive development from mainstreaming initiatives in the fields of gender and sexual diversity. Chapter 9 synthesizes the findings of the research, drawing conclusions on how we can understand the process towards disability inclusive development and discussing theoretical implications and suggestions for further research. Finally, the epilogue will shed insight on the facilitation of learning in the TLP on inclusion of persons with disabilities by showcasing an example of lessons learned on the costs and benefits of disability inclusive development.

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