Social learning and organisation development:

How Curatr influences employee engagement

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Social learning through MOOCs and SPOCs to realise organisation development is becoming more popular in organisations. Hence there was no research done to this topic before. Therefore this research gives insight in the relationship between social learning through Curatr and employee engagement leading to organisation development. According to former theories this relationship might go through knowledge sharing or through implementing actions. To establish the above, a survey was held within a Dutch retail organisation and an international accountancy cooperation. Next to this, three interviews were held, one at each organisation and one with a Curatr expert, to gain more insight in the survey results. The results made clear there is a relationship between social learning through Curatr and employee engagement leading to organisation development and that this relationship is partly going through knowledge sharing. Hence, more research is needed to gain a complete insight in this relationship.

*Keywords: social learning, SPOC, organisation development, employee engagement, implementing actions, knowledge sharing*.

**Introduction**

Social learning through Curatr, a platform which can be used for interactive online e-learning, has been used all over the world by training providers, universities, schools and also corporate organisations (Curatr, n.d.-a). Organisations are using Curatr nowadays more often to achieve organisation development. Nonetheless there are no studies yet about the relation between social learning and organisation development.

However, there is research about social learning, organisation development, employee engagement, implementing actions in organisations and knowledge sharing. These concepts will be used in this research to define the relation between social learning and organisation development.

**Social learning**

Firstly, as Curatr is built on the principles of social learning, it is important to define the concept social learning. Social learning is not a new concept. Its roots lie in older theories, for example the social cultural-historical theory, founded by Vygotsky a.o. (1978), and the Social learning theory of Bandura (1977). The main idea of the sociocultural-historical theory is that the individual context and the social context of the learner are important to understand the individual learning process (Rogoff, 2003). Learning has to be considered as participating in social processes (Brandi & Elkjaer, 2011). Bandura (1977) shows this by his social learning theory that emphasizes that the learning processes of people are based on observing and modelling behaviours, attitudes and emotional reactions of others (Bandura, 1977). Nowadays, an important part of social learning is still about participating in social processes. However, with the use of new technologies, it became connected with online social tools (Hart, 2014). These brought the possibility to create even bigger social processes through online platforms. For example, Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) and Small Private Online Courses (SPOCs), which are becoming more popular, can offer a context for social learning. These are a type of e-learning that provides users with the opportunity to interact with each other through discussions or simply by reading each other's answers.

According to Hart (2014) social learning is about how people are connecting, conversing, collaborating and learning from and with each other on a daily basis at work. The conceptualization of social learning of Reed et al. (2010) can be used to expand this definition. They describe three aspects for social learning. When these three aspects are met we can call learning, social learning.

First of all, learning only takes place if there is a change in the understanding of the individuals. This learning may be at surface level or deeper levels (Reed et al., 2010). The surface level and deeper level of learning can be associated with Argyris’ (1991) theory of single-loop learning and double-loop learning. Single-loop learning can be linked to the surface level and is defined as learning about consequences of specific actions. A deeper lever of learning is double-loop learning, which is learning by reflecting on assumptions (Argyris, 1991; Reed et al, 2010). This reflection and examination of the underlying assumptions can lead to change in attitudes, behaviour and social norms (Reed et al., 2010). Both types of learning can be considered social learning when the two other aspects of social learning are met (Reed et al., 2010).

Secondly, learning should go beyond individuals, it should be situated within a wider social unit or community of practice (Reed et al., 2010). During the 1990s, a shift occurred in the literature about learning in an organisation. Instead of focussing on the individual learning from employees, there was a focus on enabling organisations to learn and to change (White et al., 2005). It is likely that collective learning can perform better than a sum of individual learning (Senge, 1990). Because of internet access it is not about what we can do, but more about what can we and our network connections do. Knowledge itself is moving from the individual to the individual and his contacts (Cross, 2006). The community of practice has become more important. People have always formed communities to share their cultural practices and to reflect on their collective learning (Wenger, 2000). According to Wenger (2000) participating in these communities of practice is essential to our learning. Communities of practice can be perceived as basic building blocks of social learning systems (Wenger, 2000).

Finally, there should be learning through social interaction and processes between actors within a social network (Reed et al., 2010). Not only in their formal learning contexts, but also in work teams, external networks and communities, people like to learn with and from others (Hart, 2014). If someone has learning or performance difficulties, they often turn to their professional network for help. In these networks people ask questions, share and receive ideas and solve problems together. In this way social learning can occur (Berkes, 2009; Cross, 2006; Hart, 2014).

To summarize, social learning takes place when there is *a change in understanding, situated within wider social units or communities of practice, through social interaction or processes.*

## Organisation development and employee engagement

Organisation development is defined in many different ways. Burke and Bradford (2005, p.12) argue that ‘organisation development is a system-wide process of planned change aimed towards improving overall organisation effectiveness by way of enhanced congruence of key organisational dimensions’. Another definition is by Minahan (2010), who defines organisation development as ‘a body of knowledge and practice that enhances organisational performance and individual development, viewing the organisation as a complex system of systems that exist within a larger system, which each has its own attributes and degrees of alignment’. Both definitions show that organisation development improves organisation effectiveness. Furthermore, they state that organisation development affects the whole organisation. Lastly, Minahan (2010) adds the part of individual development to the definition of Burke and Bradford (2005, p.12).

Individual development is a part of organisation development as the possibility to develop as an individual within an organisation and leads to increased employee engagement (Minahan, 2010; Priyal & Vijayadurai, 2014). Employee engagement refers to a condition where employees are fully captivated in their work and are emotionally attached to their organisation. Engaged employees care about the future of the company and therefore are willing to put effort in their job. They are also more enthusiastic about their job and more willing to help others (Priyal & Vijayadurai, 2014; Rutledge, 2009). Employee engagement is a major part of organisation development, as having engaged employees is strongly related to the effectiveness of the organisation (Priyal & Vijayadurai, 2014).

Considering all of the above, this leads to the definition of organisation development that will be used in this research, which will be: *planned actions related to the whole organisation that enhance organisational efficiency and individual development achieved by increasing employee engagement.*

## Implementing actions

To achieve organisation development, it is important to correctly implement planned actions leading to organisation development. Therefore it is important to minimise the resistance to change within the organisation. One of the most important barriers to change is the uncertainty about what is going to happen after the change. To overcome this barrier, education and communication about the organisational change are important. This way workers will be prepared for the upcoming change and will not be uncertain about the future, which takes away resistance (Jones, 2012). Another way to minimise resistance among employees is to invite them to participate in the change process. This can be done by bargaining and inviting them to negotiate about the change so everyone can be informed about how the change could affect them and to develop a perspective about organisation development (Jones, 2012).

## Knowledge sharing

Social learning is most likely to be efficient when sharing experiences and ideas during joint problem solving and reflection (Berkes, 2009). It is possible to perceive knowledge sharing as a goal of social learning and it can also be used to create and improve organisation development. It occurs when people are really interested in helping each another in order to develop new capabilities for action. Creating learning processes is central here, by working together, helping each other and collaborating with each other (Hart, 2014).

Knowledge sharing connects communication and learning with each other and presumes a communication relationship between at least two parties, one that possesses the knowledge and one that acquires knowledge (Hendriks, 1999). It can be perceived as the communication process in which individuals try to establish a shared understanding to eventually establish collaborative actions to make the performance more effective (Boer, 2005). A common motivation to introduce online technologies, also the ones that are used to foster social learning, is that they may empower the individual knowledge worker by providing the tools to support his knowledge sharing skills (Hendriks, 1999).

A way to improve the learning process in organisations is to improve organisational knowledge and the sharing of organisational knowledge. Organisational knowledge is seen as the strength and a characteristic of an organisation, it is defined as the combined knowledge of all employees of the organisation. This can be extended by interaction, to combine existing knowledge to new knowledge (Tsoukas & Vladimirou, 2001; Quintas, Lefrere & Jones, 1997), most likely through knowledge sharing as well.

Using organisational knowledge to develop an organisation involves knowledge management. Knowledge management brings organisational knowledge into practice. Knowledge management is continually managing knowledge to meet existing and emerging needs, identify and exploit the existing and acquired knowledge assets and develop new opportunities through this knowledge (Quintas et al., 1997).

Knowledge management has several goals. One of the goals is to create knowledge repositories, which can be used by organisations as competitive intelligence. Another goal is to improve the knowledge access within the organisation and establishing an environment that creates more effective knowledge and transfer of knowledge. Lastly, managing knowledge as an asset on the balance sheet is a goal most organisations strive to achieve (Davenport, De Long & Beers, 1998). All of these goals are related to the overarching goal of making the organisation more efficient and adaptive to create a competitive advantage. This can make knowledge management an action leading to organisation development.

## Organisation development through social learning

Knowledge sharing, organisational knowledge and knowledge management are used to relate organisation development to social learning. Social learning occurs when there is a change in understanding through social interaction that goes beyond individuals (Reed et al., 2010). Therefore it occurs when we relate knowledge from different individuals to each other. All of this knowledge together is called organisational knowledge, and in an ideal situation it is shared among employees. To create this knowledge in practice, knowledge management is required. Knowledge management can be an action that leads to organisation development as it is related to the goal of making organisations more efficient and adaptive to create a competitive advantage through creating a higher employee engagement. Alternatively, knowledge management can be used to reduce resistance amongst employees against planned actions or to get people involved in planned actions for organisation development. When using knowledge sharing, actions for organisation development can be implemented better.

MOOCs and SPOCs can be used to create social learning within organisations and thus can be perceived as a form of knowledge management. Whilst users of MOOCS and SPOCs interact with each other social learning occurs and new knowledge can be created which extends the organisational knowledge. This can lead to benefits for the organisation in terms of higher employee engagement, a part of organisation development.

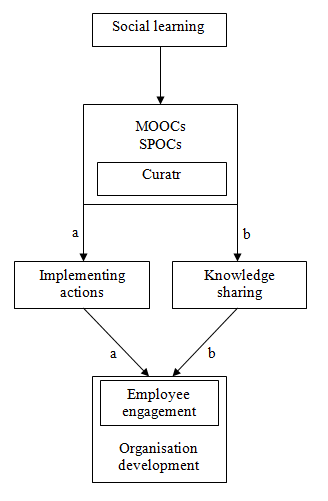
A platform that can be used to create MOOCs and SPOCs is Curatr. This platform “enables an organisation to create and deliver highly effective learning experiences (Curatr, n.d.-a) in a unique social environment which encourages learners to explore their content, commenting and answering discussion questions whilst contributing their own ideas back to the platform” (Curatr, n.d.-b). Curatr is based on social learning and can be used to help organisations to develop themselves by extending their organisational knowledge or to implement new strategies using organisational knowledge and develop those strategies (Jones, 2012).

There is no research done yet to the effects of using Curatr, or in broader terms MOOCs and SPOCs on employee engagement and organisation development, even though the world of training and development is changing and MOOCs and SPOCs are more and more used to achieve organisation development. This is a new way of using MOOCs and SPOCs that formerly were only used by several universities to create courses with diverse content available for people around the world and which let people collaborate by adding their own content and discuss about the topic. As this is a new trend, it is interesting to study the possible effects of social learning on organisation development.

The main question of this research will be *‘What is the relationship between social learning using the platform Curatr and organisation development?’* This question will be answered using the following sub questions: *a) ‘In which way does social learning through Curatr help implement actions leading to employee engagement?’* and *b) ‘In which way does social learning through Curatr stimulate knowledge sharing leading to employee engagement?’*

Based on the former discussed literature the following hypotheses and model of concepts (Figure 1) will follow these research questions. As indicated in Figure 1, Model of Concepts, the main hypothesis is that social learning through Curatr has a positive relationship with and leads to a higher employee engagement and thus eventually to organisation development. The hypothesis for the first sub question indicated by arrow a, is that social learning through Curatr has a positive effect on and leads to implementing actions which will eventually lead to organisation development through higher employee engagement. For the second sub question indicated by arrow b, the hypothesis is that social learning through Curatr has a positive effect on and leads to knowledge sharing which eventually leads to organisation development through achieving a higher employee engagement.

**Figure 1.** Model of concepts

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*Figure 1.* Model of concepts showing the relationships between the concepts tested in this research.

Method

To answer the research questions, a survey research and three semi-structured interviews were conducted. With the aid of the survey, quantitative data was collected to gain insight into the relationship between social learning and organisation development by using the platform Curatr from the perspective of the employee by measuring four different constructs that will be explained later. The semi-structured interviews were organised to gain more insight into the goal and effects of using social learning for organisation development from the perspective of the employer and experts. Therefore, the interviews had a bigger focus on the management side, the effectiveness of the organisations, compared to the survey. This way a more in depth view on the results of the survey was provided. Furthermore it gave a possibility to generalise the results.

## Participants

For the survey in this research, the data collection took place in two organisations that use Curatr to achieve organisation development. One organisation, a large Dutch retail company, uses Curatr to share experiences and knowledge about a new strategy. Another organisation, an international accountancy corporation, uses it to share experiences and knowledge about new trends. These organisations were using Curatr in a pilot group.

The participants of this research were sampled purposively, which means that only the employees of the organisations that are enrolled in the SPOC are selected (Neuman, 2012). In this research the participants participated on a voluntary basis and were not compensated. The survey was spread over the 57 employees of the SPOC pilot groups. Characteristics about the gender, years of service and functions of the respondents are displayed in Table 1.

Table 1

*Characteristics as a Percentage of the Sample*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Characteristic | (n = 28) |
| Gender |  |
| Male | 28,6 |
| Female | 71,4 |
| Years of service |  |
| 0-5 years | 50 |
| 6-10 years | 7,1 |
| 11-15 years | 21,4 |
| 16-20 years | 3,6 |
| 21-25 years | 3,6 |
| more than 25 years | 14,3 |
| Function |  |
| Leading function | 25 |
| Executive function | 75 |

Three interviews took place. The first interview was conducted at the Dutch retail company with a projectmanager in learning and development. The second interview was conducted at the international accountancy corporation with a learning and development consultant. The interviewees of both organisations were involved with the coordination of the SPOC. A third interview was conducted with an expert of social learning and the platform Curatr, whom had already implemented many other SPOCs in different organisations.

## Instruments

**Survey.** The data was collected from the employees of both organisations, involved in a SPOC, through an online survey. The survey contained questions that measured the concepts: *social learning,* organisation developmentby measuring *employee engagement, implementing actions* and *knowledge sharing*. For each of these concepts, items about the opinions were made and were measured with a 6 point Likert-scale, which means participants were forced to take a position about the items. Furthermore, it was not possible to formulate the item statements in a neutral way, therefore the choice was made to formulate all the item statements in a positive way. The intention of only using a positive formulation rather than mixing both positive and negative formulations, is to contribute to the reliability of the survey (Kamoen, 2012). The survey can be found in Appendix A.

When creating the items for each of the four concepts the previously discussed theory was leading. For measuring *social learning* the three aspects, namely a change in understanding, learning situated within wider social units or communities of practice and learning through social interaction or processes (Hart, 2014; Reed et al., 2010) were used to make the items. These items will tell if social learning occurs when using Curatr. The mean of these seven social learning items will form the variable social learning.

For measuring organisation development, the construct of *employee engagement* was used. Organisation development itself is hard to measure in such small research. However, as stated previously, organisation development is highly related to employee engagement, since a high employee engagement indicates a more efficient and thus a developing organisation (Priyal & Vijayadurai, 2014). Items about an increasing care of the future of the organisation, willingness to put effort in their job, enthusiasm about their job and willingness to help others are included in the survey (Priyal & Vijayadurai, 2014; Rutledge, 2009). When creating these items an existing survey, the work engagement survey template (Society of Human Resource Management Foundation, n.d.), was used as a basis. The goal of these items is to identify if the employee engagement, and thus indirectly organisation development, increased after using Curatr. The mean of these eight employee engagement items will form the variable engagement.

For measuring *implementing actions,* the goal is to see if Curatr helps implementing an action leading to organisation development according to the employees. Items about being prepared, the communication about the change, the invitation to participate in the change and what could affect them were included in the survey (Jones, 2012). The mean of these six items about implementing actions will form the variable implementation.

For measuring *knowledge sharing* the objective is to see if through Curatr knowledge sharing leads to an increased organisational knowledge. The aspects combining existing knowledge to new knowledge (Tsoukas & Vladimirou, 2001; Quintas, Lefrere & Jones, 1997), working together, helping each other (Hart, 2014) was used to make the items. It will give an insight if Curatr is a good tool for knowledge management. The mean of these five knowledge sharing items will form the variable, knowledge sharing.

**Interview.** The three semi-structured interviews with the two employees working in the Learning and Development section of the organisations and the social learning experts were structured with a topic list. The topic list was based on the survey that was used in this research. The concepts of *social learning, organisation development / employee engagement, implementing actions* and *knowledge sharing* are the central topics and are each elaborated with several subtopics which are based on previously discussed literature. The leading topic list for the interviews can be found in Appendix B.

## Design and procedure

This research contains a descriptive design, since it will try to describe the impact of social learning on organisation development. As the instruments already imply, it was a mixed method research. The quantitative data collection of the survey was combined with the qualitative data of several interviews.

The survey was sent to the participants with a request to respond to the survey within three weeks. After one week, a reminder was sent to the participants. The semi-structured interviews were conducted with a topic list.

**Reliability analysis.** Before distributing the survey, the questions were judged and revised by experts to achieve a high reliability. In order to judge the reliability of the constructs measured by the survey afterwards, four reliability analyses were constructed by conducting Cronbach’s alpha. The Cronbach's alpha for the 7-item of the social learning construct was .920. This can be considered as adequate (Allen & Bennett, 2010). Further examination did not lead to any changes. The Cronbach's alpha for the 8-item of the employee engagement construct was .943. This can be considered as adequate (Allen & Bennett, 2010). Further examination did not lead to any changes. The Cronbach's alpha for the 6-item of the implementation construct was .925 (Allen & Bennett, 2010). This can be considered as adequate . Further examination did not lead to any changes. Lastly, the Cronbach's alpha for the 5-item of knowledge sharing construct was .857 (Allen & Bennett, 2010). This can be considered as adequate enough. Further examination did not lead to any changes.

**Survey analysis.** SPSS was used to analyse the quantitative data. To figure out the relationship between the different concepts several bivariate Pearson correlations were conducted. The correlations between: (1) *social learning* and *implementing actions*, (2) *social learning* and *knowledge sharing*, (3) *social learning* and *employee engagement*, (4) *employee engagement* and *implementing actions*, (5) *employee engagement* and *knowledge sharing* were calculated. Furthermore partial Pearson correlations were conducted between: (1) *social learning,* and *employee engagement*, after controlling for *implementing actions* and (2) *social learning,* and *employee engagement,* after controlling for *knowledge sharing.* To measure the reliability of the four survey constructs Cronbach’s alpha were conducted.

**Interview analysis.** Each interview was conducted by two researchers. Interviews were audio-taped and transcribed afterwards. The transcription of the interview was coded by the third researcher, whom was not present at the interview, with the intention to bear in mind the reliability of the interviews. The interviews were each coded by making a distinction in *social learning, employee engagement, implementation* and *knowledge sharing*. Within these concepts a distinction was made between positive and negative comments.

**Results**

The most important results of the research are summarized below. These results give insight into relationship between social learning through Curatr and employee engagement leading to organisation development. First of all, the descriptive statistics of each of the constructs will be shown to gain insight into the values of the constructs. Secondly, bivariate correlations between the concepts social learning, employee engagement, implementing actions and knowledge sharing were calculated to see if there are relationships between those variables. Thirdly, two partial correlations were calculated to see if the relationship between social learning and employee engagement might go through implementing actions or through knowledge sharing. Lastly, the qualitative results of the interviews will be summarized to gain more insight in the relationships. The data used for the quantitative analysis as described above was collected between the 16th of April and the 7th of May. The data used for the qualitative analysis was collected on the 20th and 23rd of April and on the 9th of May. There were no missing data.

**Description concepts**

The participants of the survey scored themselves on the four different concepts, namely social learning, employee engagement, implementation and knowledge sharing. The averages for each of the concepts were calculated and can be consulted in Table 2.

Table 2

*Average score on social learning, employee engagement, implementation and knowledge sharing*

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Concept | Minimum | Maximum | *M* | *SD* |
| Social learning | 1.00 | 6.00 | 3.94 | 1.27 |
| Employee engagement | 1.00 | 6.00 | 3.43 | 1.43 |
| Implementation | 1.00 | 6.00 | 3.23 | 1.42 |
| Knowledge sharing | 1.00 | 6.00 | 3.43 | 1.23 |

*Note.* The score on the concepts is rated on a scale from one to six, with one being totally disagreed and six being totally agreed.

**Correlations between the concepts**

To assess the relationship between each of the concepts used in this research, several correlations were calculated.

**Assumptions.** Prior to calculating the correlations, *r*, the assumptions of normality, linearity and homoscedasticity were assessed. After a visual inspection of the normal Q-Q and detrended Q-Q for each of the four constructs, social learning, engagement, implementation and knowledge sharing, it was confirmed that they were normally distributed. A visual inspection of the scatterplots confirmed that the relationships between the variables were linear and hetroscedastic. Therefore a bivariate Pearson correlation has been performed.

**Bivariate correlation.** When analysing the data, to assess the size and direction of the linear relationship between the different constructs, two-tailed bivariate Pearson correlation coefficients (*r)* were calculated. Firstly, the correlation between the social learning score and the employee engagement score was positive and strong (Cohen, 1988), *r*(26) = . 613, *p* = .001. Secondly, the correlation between the social learning score and the implementation score was positive and strong (Cohen, 1988), *r*(26) = . 520, *p* = .005. Thirdly, the correlation between the social learning score and the knowledge sharing score was positive and strong (Cohen, 1988), *r*(26) = . 785, *p* < .001. Fourthly, the correlation between the implementation score and the employee engagement score was positive and strong, *r*(26) = . 930, *p* < .001. Then, the correlation between the knowledge sharing score and the employee engagement score was positive and strong (Cohen, 1988), *r*(26) = . 560, *p* = .002. And finally, the correlation between the implementation score and knowledge sharing score was positive and strong (Cohen, 1988), *r*(26) = . 582, *p* = .001. As seen above, all of the constructs are positively related to each other. The correlations are displayed in Table 3.

Table 3

*Correlations Social learning, Employee engagement, Implementation and Knowledge sharing*

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Social  Learning  (*n=*28) | | Employee Engagement  (*n=*28*)* | | Implementation  (*n* = 28) | | Knowledge  Sharing  (*n* = 28) | |
|  | *p* | *r* | *p* | *r* | *p* | *r* | *p* | *r* |
| Social Learning |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Employee Engagement | .001 | .613 |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Implementation | .005 | .520 | <.001 | .930 |  |  |  |  |
| Knowledge sharing | <.001 | .785 | .002 | .560 | .001 | .582 |  |  |

*\* p <.05*

**Influence of implementing actions and knowledge sharing**

As the bivariate correlations were all positive and strong (Cohen, 1988), there is a chance that implementing actions or knowledge sharing causes, or in other words influences, the relationship between social learning and employee engagement. To clarify the influence of implementing actions and knowledge sharing on the relationship between social learning and employee engagement, two partial Pearson correlation coefficients *(r)* were calculated. Firstly, the influence of implementing actions was established. After controlling for the implementation score, the partial correlation between social learning and employee engagement was statistically significant and of medium strength (Cohen, 1988) , *r*(26) = .413, *p* = .032. Secondly, the influence of knowledge sharing was established. After controlling for the knowledge sharing score, the partial correlation between social learning and employee engagement was statistically non-significant and small of strength (Cohen, 1988), *r*(26) = .338, *p* = .084.

## Qualitative analysis of the interviews

**Social learning.** The participants were mainly positive about social learning using the Curatr platform. The interviewee of the Dutch retail company mentioned that using Curatr created a community. Curatr gave them an opportunity to easily exchange ideas between the different stores and when questions were asked, they received valuable answers. The interviewee of the international accountancy corporation believed in the power of social learning through an online platform. At the international accountancy corporation there was a community manager who made sure that the community created through Curatr kept on going. The overall value of Curatr as an e-learning and social learning tool was rewarded. Lastly, it was mentioned that Curatr was used to facilitate contact between people. The expert mentioned during the interview that the power of social learning in Curatr is that the content is easy to design. The interviewee emphasized that not only being interactive and social leads to learning, but sometimes it can be enough to just read what others say. Thus, there are different levels of learning whilst using the platform, which is considered as valuable. As a point for improvement the interviewee from the retail company mentioned that it was not clear yet how social learning through Curatr was used in the physical workplace. In addition, the interviewee from the accountancy corporation stated that using Curatr is not effective on its own; a mix of online social learning and social learning on the physical workplace is needed. The expert agreed and added that social learning through Curatr must be integrated within the organisation.

**Employee engagement.** Employee engagement could be higher after using social learning through Curatr. The interviewee at the Dutch retail company said that the use of Curatr gives the employee the feeling that the organisation pays attention to them. It also makes the employees more enthusiastic about the new way of working and it provides the employee with the opportunity to do something extra for the company. The interviewee at the international accountancy corporation mentioned that especially those who are directly involved with the subject are using Curatr. The content of Curatr can therefore lead to employee engagement. At the workplace the employees are linking the insights of the SPOC to their current work, which is valuable for the engagement. In the interview with the expert it was said that by using Curatr the employees receive appreciation for the knowledge they already have and for their own opinions and experiences. Furthermore, social learning through the SPOC is more realistic than regular e-learning and therefore is more meaningful for the employees. Finally, to create more engagement the content needs to connect with the needs of the employees. The interviewee of the accountancy corporation provided arguments as to why social learning through Curatr might not necessarily lead to increased employee engagement. The interviewee mentioned that not everyone participates and a lot of people quit after a few levels. It is hard to motivate people to join if they are not interested in the content of the SPOC. In addition to this, the expert says that the success of a SPOC depends on the culture within the organisation.

**Implementation of actions.** The interviewees are overall positive about using Curatr to implement actions. The interviewee of the retail organisation says employees are being informed by the use of Curatr, which they like. The interviewee at the international accountancy corporation says they learn through experimenting with a SPOC about how they could implement the SPOC in the best way for their clients. According to the interviewee, social learning has a huge role in this. The expert mentioned that the use of Curatr gives the employee the possibility to talk and give their opinion about a change and that this could be achieved by asking the right questions. This provides a lot of data for the organisation, which could be used when implementing an action. A critical note to this is that the organisation has to do something with the data the SPOC provides; otherwise the employees will not provide the information the next time a SPOC is used.

**Knowledge sharing**. The interviewees are positive about knowledge sharing through Curatr. The interviewee from the Dutch retail company acknowledges that people share knowledge in Curatr. There are employees who know a lot and through Curatr they can learn from each other. To improve the learning process the interviewee asks an expert to join the discussion when necessary. The employees appreciate that they get the chance to be in an environment like Curatr together and get the opportunity to learn from each other. Knowledge in the organisation becomes easily accessible through Curatr. The interviewee also recognised that knowledge sharing leads to new ideas. All in all, people can help each other by using Curatr. The interviewee at the accountancy corporation mentioned that employees get inspired from the content. Through knowledge sharing each other’s frame of reference becomes clear, which makes it easier to think together about implementing the ideas that were mentioned in the content. The expert added that adding knowledge is actually already organisation development if it is relevant for the organisation.

**Discussion**

To answer the research questions, a survey was held among the participants of the SPOC at both organisations. Furthermore three interviews were held, respectively, an interview with the project manager learning and development of the Dutch retail company, an interview with a learning and development consultant at the international accountancy corporation and an interview with an expert on social learning with Curatr. The data of the quantitative and qualitative research were analysed as shown in the results.

**Implementing actions**

First of all, the sub question *‘In which way does social learning through Curatr help implement actions leading to employee engagement?’* will be answered. The hypothesis of this sub question was that social learning through Curatr has a positive effect on and leads to implementing actions, which will lead eventually to organisation development through a higher employee engagement.

The quantitative results show a strong correlation between social learning and implementation as well as a strong correlation between implementation and employee engagement. This could imply that social learning leads to employee engagement through implementing actions. However, when analysing the partial correlation between social learning and employee engagement whilst controlling for implementation, the correlation between social learning and employee engagement is still significant. Interpreting this, it can be argued that the correlation between social learning and employee engagement is not caused by implementing actions.

In contrast to this, the interviews imply that it might be possible to use social learning through Curatr to implement actions. The employees of the Dutch retail company were positive about the information they got through social learning in Curatr about the action. In addition to that, the expert told that social learning through Curatr offers the employees the chance to think and talk about the action together, which could have a positive impact on the implementation of the action. The qualitative data shows what was expected of the theory, which states that, to minimise the resistance against the action, education and communication is necessary as well as inviting the employees to bargain and negotiate the action (Jones, 2012). Anyhow, as the quantitative data does not show the influence of implementation on the relationship between social learning through Curatr and employee engagement, the hypothesis will be rejected.

**Knowledge sharing**

The second sub question was ‘*In which way does social learning through Curatr stimulate knowledge sharing leading to employee engagement?’* The hypothesis is that social learning through Curatr has a positive effect on and leads to knowledge sharing which eventually leads to organisation development through achieving a higher employee engagement.

The quantitative results show that there is a strong correlation between social learning through Curatr and knowledge sharing and between knowledge sharing and employee engagement.

To be able to know if the correlation between social learning through Curatr and employee engagement goes through knowledge sharing, a partial correlation test was conducted. This partial correlation shows that after controlling for knowledge sharing, the correlations between social learning through Curatr and employee engagement is statistically not significant. This can be explained by the fact that knowledge sharing is the connection between social learning and organisation development. As discussed before social learning occurs when there is a change in understanding through social interaction (Reed et al., 2010) which is knowledge sharing. Knowledge sharing leads to collective knowledge within the organisation, which is called organisational knowledge. An organisation can develop through managing the knowledge they have (Quintas et al., 1997). Thus, looking at the quantitative analysis of the data, the hypothesis seems to be correct.

The qualitative data shows that knowledge sharing takes place through social learning through Curatr as well. The employees share information with each other through Curatr and learn from each other. They also inspire each other which leads to new ideas. Lastly, the expert acknowledges that by adding relevant knowledge to the organisation using Curatr the organisation is already developing.

Concluding, it can be said that the hypothesis that social learning through Curatr has a positive effect on and leads to knowledge sharing, which eventually also leads to organisation development through achieving a higher employee engagement, is found to be correct.

**Social learning and organisation development**

Given the answers on the sub questions as discussed above, the main question can be answered as well. The main question was *‘What is the relationship between social learning using the platform Curatr and organisation development?’* the hypothesis is that social learning through Curatr has a positive relationship with and leads to a higher employee engagement and thus eventually to organisation development.

As the quantitative data shows, the correlation between social learning and employee engagement was strong and positive. The partial correlation shows that the relationship between social learning and employee engagement is significantly caused by knowledge sharing but is not significantly caused by the implementation of actions.

The qualitative data shows this positive relationship as well. Overall the interviewees acknowledged the relationship between social learning and employee engagement. The interviewee of the Dutch retail company for example mentioned that the employees feel like attention has been paid to them and that it makes them more enthusiastic. In addition to this, the interviewee of the international accountancy corporation said that the employees are linking the insights of the SPOC to their current work, which is valuable for employee engagement. The interviewee mentioned furthermore that to create employee engagement through social learning the content of the SPOC must be in line with the needs of the employees.

Linking the above to the model of concepts as shown in figure 1 it can be concluded that the part of the model stating social learning is connected with employee engagement leading to organisation development through knowledge sharing is proven. To summarize, there is a relationship between social learning through Curatr and employee engagement leading to organisation development and a part of this relationship is caused by knowledge sharing.

**Practical implications**

Given the fact that social learning through Curatr has a positive relationship with and leads to higher employee engagement and thus eventually to organisation development, social learning through Curatr can be used as a tool for organisation development. The interviewees, by instance, emphasized that the use of Curatr facilitates contact between employees. This leads to knowledge sharing and the creation of new ideas, which extends the organisational knowledge leading to organisation development. Furthermore, employees get more engaged by using Curatr. As mentioned during the interviews, the employees become more enthusiastic about their jobs and are more motivated after using Curatr. This leads to an increased efficiency of the organisation and thus to organisation development.

All in all, this research gives organisations more insight in the use of Curatr as a tool for organisation development. Therefore it is easier for the organisations to use Curatr within the organisation to achieve organisation development.

**Limitations**

The first and biggest limitation of this research was the low number of respondents. Due to the low number of participants of the SPOCs in both organisations, there were only 57 participants which could receive the questionnaire. This had to be done digitally, as the employees of both organisations were almost never at the same place at the same time. Even though two reminders were send to all the respondents there were only 28 respondents. Next to the fact that the number of respondents was low, they were not randomly selected either. The respondents were sampled purposively, based on their participation in the SPOC or not. As there was a low number of respondents and the respondents were not selected randomly, the generalizability of this research is questionable

Furthermore, the respondents participated in the survey on a voluntary base. This might have influenced the employee engagement that was measured. Probably most of the respondents were already engaged and motivated as they participated on voluntary basis in the SPOC and in the survey. This might have had an impact on the results of this research.

Lastly, the questions in the survey referring to the implementation of actions were not correctly understood by the participants of the international accountancy corporation. The questions referred to a change that already occurred or a change that might still occur. As the change of the international accountancy corporation was an implicit change, the employees were not all aware of the change and might have misunderstood the questions. This could have influenced the results of the research related to the implementation of actions.

**Recommendations**

For further research on the relationship between social learning through Curatr on organisation development, it is recommended to measure the constructs before and after taking part in the process of social learning through Curatr. This way the effect of social learning through Curatr on organisation development can be measured. Besides, it is recommended to do research to more parts of organisation development. In this research organisation development was measured as employee engagement, which is a part of organisation development, but does not cover the concept organisation development completely. Furthermore, to be able to generalize the results of the research it is necessary to do research at more organisations with more participants.

Lastly, it became clear from this research that the relationship between social learning through Curatr and employee engagement leading to organisation development is partly moving through knowledge sharing. Hence it is not proven yet if other factors are involved. Further research to those possible factors is needed to gain more insight in the relationship between social learning through Curatr and employee engagement leading to organisation development.

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Appendix A

## Vragenlijst

**Inleiding Nederlandse Retailorganisatie**

[De organisatie] gaat langzaam aan over naar de nieuwe strategie. Om u op deze nieuwe manier van werken voor te bereiden heeft [deze organisatie] in samenwerking met MOOCFactory een interactieve online cursus (SPOC) over de nieuwe strategie ontworpen.

Middels deze vragenlijst willen wij u graag uw bevindingen van het gebruik van de interactieve online cursus (SPOC) over de nieuwe strategie van [deze organisatie] bevragen. Het invullen van de vragenlijst zal ongeveer 5 minuten in beslag nemen. Bij het beantwoorden van de vragen kunt u gebruikmaken van de volgende antwoordopties:

--- = helemaal oneens  
-- = oneens  
- = een beetje mee oneens  
+ = een beetje mee eens  
++ = eens  
+++ = helemaal eens  
n.v.t. = niet van toepassing

**Wanneer er in de vragenlijst gesproken wordt over ‘een (mogelijke) verandering’ bedoelen wij hiermee de verandering naar de nieuwe strategie.**

Als laatste willen wij u informeren dat deze vragenlijst volledig anoniem verwerkt zal worden en willen wij u vragen om de vragenlijst zo eerlijk mogelijk in te vullen om zo een goed beeld te kunnen krijgen van de invloed van de SPOC.

**Inleiding Internationaal Accountancy Kantoor**

[De organisatie] denkt samen met u na over nieuwe manieren van leren binnen een interactieve online cursus (SPOC). Dit met als doel om in de toekomst ook gebruik te kunnen gaan maken van deze nieuwe manieren van leren binnen [deze organisatie].

Middels deze vragenlijst willen wij graag uw bevindingen van het gebruik van de interactieve online cursus (SPOC) over de nieuwe manieren van leren bevragen. Het invullen van de vragenlijst zal u ongeveer 5 minuten in beslag nemen. Bij het beantwoorden van de vragen kunt u gebruikmaken van de volgende antwoordopties:

--- = helemaal oneens  
-- = oneens  
- = een beetje mee oneens  
+ = een beetje mee eens  
++ = eens  
+++ = helemaal eens  
n.v.t. = niet van toepassing

**Wanneer er in de vragenlijst gesproken wordt over ‘een (mogelijke) verandering’ bedoelen wij een verandering die deze SPOC teweeg zou kunnen brengen.**

Als laatste willen wij u informeren dat deze vragenlijst volledig anoniem verwerkt zal worden en willen wij u vragen om de vragenlijst zo eerlijk mogelijk in te vullen om zo een goed beeld te kunnen krijgen van de invloed van de SPOC.

**Algemeen**

1. Ik ben een: man/vrouw
2. Hoeveel jaar bent u werkzaam bij uw organisatie?  
   0-5, 6-10, 11-15, 16-20, 21-25, >25
3. Wat is uw functie?  
   - Leidende functie (bijvoorbeeld teamleider, manager)  
   - Uitvoerende functie (medewerker)
4. Ik vind het leuk om deze SPOC te volgen.

**Social learning**

* Ik heb iets nieuws geleerd door deelname aan de SPOC.
* In de SPOC heb ik iets gelezen dat ik nog niet wist.
* Ik heb actief deelgenomen aan de SPOC.
* Ik heb de aangeboden kennis in de SPOC doorgenomen.
* Ik heb deelgenomen aan discussies in de SPOC.
* Ik heb reacties geplaatst in de SPOC.
* Ik heb hetgeen wat ik geleerd heb in de SPOC besproken met andere collega’s.

**Betrokkenheid**

*Door het deelnemen aan de SPOC*

* Voel ik mij meer betrokken bij mijn werk
* Ben ik enthousiaster over mijn werk
* Zet ik mijn beste beentje voor in aanloop naar de (mogelijke) veranderingen
* Pas ik me makkelijker aan aan andere situaties
* Denk ik meer mee over de uitdagingen en kansen van mijn organisatie voor de toekomst
* Help ik collega’s vaker wanneer dat nodig is
* Pak ik nieuwe taken eerder aan
* Sta ik meer open voor verandering
* Heb ik meer het gevoel dat mijn kennis iets bijdraagt aan de organisatie

**Implementeren van acties**

*Door het deelnemen aan de SPOC:*

* Sta ik positiever tegenover een (mogelijke) verandering
* Ben ik beter voorbereid op een (mogelijke) verandering
* Voel ik me meer betrokken bij het invoeren van een (mogelijke) verandering.
* Heb ik nieuwe dingen geleerd over een (mogelijke) verandering.
* Is het duidelijk wat een (mogelijke) verandering voor mij zal betekenen.
* De SPOC vind ik een goede manier om een (mogelijke) verandering door te voeren.

**Kennisdeling**

* Door het lezen van antwoorden van collega’s heb ik nieuwe ideeën opgedaan.
* Door het lezen van discussies tussen collega’s heb ik nieuwe ideeën opgedaan.
* Door het discussiëren met collega’s hebben we samen nieuwe ideeën bedacht.
* Door het reageren op een reactie van een collega heeft die collega iets geleerd
* Ik heb bestaande kennis kunnen koppelen aan iets nieuws

Opmerkingen over het gebruiken van de SPOC voor het in de inleiding beschreven doel:

Opmerkingen over deze vragenlijst:

Hartelijk dank voor het invullen van deze vragenlijst!

Appendix B

**Topiclijst - Interview Sleutelpersoon Organisatie**

**Sociaal leren**

Samenwerking MOOCFactory

Curatr

Voordelen

Nadelen

**Betrokkenheid van werknemers (als meetbaar aspect van organisatie ontwikkeling)**

Betrokkenheid

Effectiviteit

**Implementeren van acties**

Weerstand tegen vernieuwing

Voorbereiding

Onzekerheid

Medewerkers betrekken bij vernieuwingen

Adaptiviteit

**Kennisdeling**

Knowledge management

Toegang kennis medewerkers

Waarde toekenning aan kennis