Becoming a reflective educational professional

An interpretative phenomenological analysis

of students' experiences

A A. E. Marica
s1095889

University of Twente
Educational Science and Technology

Supervisor: dr. E.J. van Rossum
Co-Supervisor: dr. ir. H J. Vos

26-10-2015

UNIVERSITY OF TWENTE.

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my gratitude to my supervisor Dr. Erik van Rossum, for the support in my learning process and the positive and constructive comments.

I would like to thank Marlo Kengen for her support in enabling me to undertake this research at the HAN University.

I would like to express my gratitude to my the participants of this study who were willing to share their time and their experiences with me.

I want to thank my friends and colleagues for their support and encouragement throughout my study.

Finally yet importantly, a big thank you to my family for their love and endless encouragement throughout my study. To my husband, daughter and son for their understanding and patience when I have had to lock myself away in the study- thank you for all your help and support.

Abstract

Developing the ability to reflect is an important goal in higher vocational education. This goal is mentioned in the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (European Commission, 2008) that describes the qualifications for the several educational levels. For higher vocational education it states that students should be able to review and improve their own achievements and that of others. Students are more and more encouraged to examine how they succeeded or failed or improved on a task or set goals for future work and to make this knowledge public and open to scrutiny through a portfolio (Lyons, Hyland, & Ryan, 2002; Klenowski, 2002). In this process of professionalization the role of reflection is recognized as being important, it is supposed to have a positive influence on self-knowledge (Procee, 2006), and on the ability to steer one's own development. In many teacher education programs reflection has become one of the essential goals (Korthagen & Vasalos, 2005), while portfolio's are considered tools that stimulate and promote reflection (Mansvelder-Longayroux, Beijaard & Verloop, 2007).

This phenomenological study aimed at gaining understanding of the experiences of students engaged in reflective activities in an educational setting. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with five students of which four interviews were included in the present study. Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was used to analyse the interviews and three super-ordinate themes were identified. The first describes how the reflection process is conceptalized, the second detailes the experiences of being engaged in educational reflective activities, the third describes what opportunities and resources students need when learning to reflect. Existing literature on reflection in education was utilised in order to shed light on the results, and in order to clarify the material.

The findings reveal a dynamic experience, full of conflicts, which can be understood as a the start of a learning proces. Being engaged in challenging reflective activities students go through periods of self-deception, not knowing how to continue or where to start. This leads to feelings of being de-skilled. A important finding was that participants have mixed feelings about structured reflection. Different styles seemed to be in conflict, *to reflect right according a given model* competes with the desire to *reflect on ones own way*. Consideration therefore needs to be given to the compulsary structures of reflective approaches in educational settings.

The significance of the study include a recommendation for awareness building on the difficulty of learning reflection, a focus on support and also ensuring that mentors (or teachers) are familiar with difficulties students' run into when they get engaged in reflective activities.

Keywords: Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis, IPA, Reflection, Higher education, Perception, Experience, Level of reflection, Reflective practice

Content

1 Introduction to the research

1.1 Introduction

The current study is an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) (Smith & Osborn, 2003; Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009) of the experience of students with structured reflection. The purpose of this study is to explore the experiences of students who are engaged in reflective activities in an educational setting, from their own perspective. The study was undertaken in 2014-2015, as part of the Master's programme Educational Science and Technology at the University of Twente in Enschede, in collaboration with the HAN University of Applied Sciences.

In this introductory Chapter I provide background information about reflection in education by exploring existing literature highlighting the role of reflection in education. I also explain the rationale and aims of the study, the research question, and its significance for educators and my position as a researcher including the decision to adopt an IPA approach.

1.2 Reflection in education

Reflection has been considered important for learning by educators and researchers in the field of education (Dewey, 1910; 1933; Schön, 1983; Kolb, 1984; Higgs, 1988; Mezirow, 1990; Hatton & Smith, 1995; Van Manen, 1995; Procee, 2006). John Dewey (1910; 1933), the inspirer of reflection in education today, argues that it is important to reflect, because "we do not learn from experience. We learn from reflecting on experience" (p. 78). Kolb (1984) elaborates that adults learn from their experiences, and reflection is the engine that moves the learning process. Schön (1983) argues that reflection leads the professional to become an expert. Thus developing reflective capacity is essential for professionals to gap the bridge between the static knowledge found in textbooks and the dynamic, adaptive knowledge that is needed in the dynamic, complex, and unstructured settings in which professionals work (Schön, 1983). Mezirow (1990), asserts that learning occurs when we reflect on content, process and personal foundational beliefs, we will us change our assumptions, attitudes and believes. Higgs (1988) argues that through reflection students will learn to clarify their thoughts, which will lead to insight and understanding of the information they receive. The link between learning, making meaning and changing practice starts when students are initiated in their specific practice (Procee, 2006). They learn the technical competencies associated with the quality standards of a practitioner in the profession. Reflection can thus be seen as a necessary competency for practitioners if they want to be able to act with confidence in a professional manner (Procee, 2006).

It seems that reflective practice is considered in education because it encourages learners to explore new ways of thinking and to develop alternative explanations for experiences. Educators believe it contributes to learning and personal development. However there is no consensus on how to determine, facilitate, and assess reflective practice. For this reason, I have decided to review the different notions of reflection in education and develop further understanding of the aims, focus, and processes of reflection in education. In my selection of literature I have tried to provide the most helpful context I can for understanding the research I have undertaken, and the reasons why it is interesting, relevant and necessary.

1.2.1 Defining reflection

The concept and the practice of reflection have been explained by educational scientist in different ways (Mezirow, 1981, 1990, 1991; Schön, 1983, 1987; Hatton and Smith, 1995; Van Manen, 1984). According to Rogers (2001) who performed an analysis of common definitions of reflection, educational scientists seem to agree that reflection is a cognitive activity or process. In the reflection process, a person has to be examining his or her own emotional or cognitive responses to situations or experiences actively, with the overall purpose to improve his effectiveness (Rogers, 2001). In their description of reflection and the reflection process, the educational scientist have identified several types of reflection based on the object

or the outcome of reflection and most scientist seem to share the idea that learning occurs through reflection, through questioning one's own ideas, methods, and beliefs (Rogers, 2001). Procee (2006) argues that the most influential approaches are the pragmatist school of Dewey and the so-called Frankfurt school of critical social theory.

Dewey (1933), an influential educational philosopher, conceptualized reflection as a rational and purposeful act. According to Dewey (1933), we learn through routine action, and reflective action. Impulse and external circumstances such as "tradition and authority" (p. 9) guide routine and therefore routine is not considered actively. Dewey (1933) explains, that reflective action on the other hand requires "active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it and the further conclusions to which it tends" (p. 9). Dewey argues that when a practitioner has taken actions as a result of reflective thinking, the practitioner has rationally considered the aspects of the issue and has undergone periods of doubt and uncertainty while working towards finding a solution. Reflective thinking, according to Dewey (1933), is mainly triggered by practical events that created feelings of doubt, uncertainty or difficulty. This perplexity leads to reflective thinking; the need to solve these feelings is the goal that guides the reflection process. Dewey (1933) conceptualized a cyclic reflection process in which he identified the following phases of reflection: interpretation of experience (recognition of possible solutions to the problem); description of experience (problematizing or intellectualizing the situation); analysis (generating hypotheses that might lead to possible solutions) and overt action on the part of the thinker (experimenting, testing hypothesis). Nevertheless, Dewey (1933) argued that reflection should not be learned as a series of steps or procedures, because reflection is more than just logical problem-solving processes. He believed that the reflective skills could be improved by having an understanding of the reflection process and experimenting with forms of thinking and that the improvement of these skills should be initiated by formal education (Moon, 1999). Dewey (1916; 1933) explains that for reflective thinking a person needs to develop four attitudes: whole-heartedness, directness, open-mindedness and responsibility. An individual with enthusiasm for his subject matter shows whole-heartedness. Directness refers to confidence an individual has that his own experience is valid without worrying about the judgements of others (Dewey, 1916). Open-mindedness refers to the ability of an individual to remain open to different perspectives and to accept that there are strengths and weaknesses to one's own perspective and to that from others. An individual shows responsibility, first, by being whole-hearted, open-minded and directed and, second, by acknowledging that he or she acts on his or her own meaning. When these attitudes guide reflection, there is a better chance that reflection may improve one's knowledge and awareness (Dewey, 1933).

Schön (1983), inspired by Dewey, described reflection as an ongoing process aiming at developing professional knowledge. He distinguished between two processes in which reflective thinking occurs. Reflection-in-action refers to reflection on behavior while it happens or while being engaged in an experience. During practice, the professional makes conscious decisions about practice and adjustments to practice based on feedback. The process of reflection-on-action is a critical reflection process that starts after practice. This process produces new theories and improves practice in similar future situations. Professionals face unique and challenging situations every day. Reflection-on-action helps professionals develop the theories-in-use that underlie competent, expert decision-making (Schön, 1983; 1987). Schön (1987) argues that professionals should use their previous experiences to understand how and why things happen, in order to be more effective. Schön (1987) also introduced the term "knowing in action" to describe tacit knowledge, the knowledge and skills that a professional possesses and uses within a given context.

The school of critical social theory sees reflection as a way of making meaning in life (Mezirow & Taylor, 2009), or as a transformative learning process to change beliefs (Mezirow 1997). Mezirow's (1991) transformational learning theory implies that reflection is more than a cognitive process; it also involves affective aspects such as emotions and feelings. According to Mezirow (1991), a person's experiences and the assumptions, which are used to interpret experience, can be described as frames of reference. These frames "selectively shape and delimit expectations, perceptions, cognition, and feelings" (Mezirow, 1997, p. 5). Mezirow (1997) explains that we have "a strong tendency to reject ideas that fail to fit our preconceptions, labelling those ideas as unworthy of consideration, aberrations, nonsense, irrelevant, weird, or mistaken" (p. 5). In his transformational learning theory, Mezirow (1991) identified three types of

reflection based on what one is reflecting on: the content, the process or the premises. These three types of reflection help learners think reflectively upon their external situations. Content reflection focuses on the examination of 'what' or the content of a problem. It causes a learner to think back to what was done. Content reflection may lead to a transformation of a meaning scheme. Process reflection focuses on 'how' to handle or solve the problem. It causes a learner to consider problem-solving strategies. Process reflection might also lead to transformation of a meaning scheme. In premise reflection, the focus is on exploration of the problem to find out 'why'. It requires the learner to see the larger view of how his or her value system is being operated. Premise reflection can lead to transformation of a meaning perspective. Premise reflection, is the process of critical reflection. Mezirow (1991) argues that critical reflection is much deeper, more complex, the one who reflects needs to analyze the premises and assumptions that are inherent in his personal perspectives. It includes questioning how and why specific ways of thinking and examination are part of the reflective process and not others. Mezirow (1991) argues that if we critically reflect on our assumptions, we are in a position to change our frames of reference, which then results in transformative learning. This process in which we become critically aware of how and why the assumptions we have about the world influence the way we see ourselves and the way we relate to others, is called 'perspective transformation' (Mezirow, 1991). Mezirow (1991) further explains that these higher levels of reflection, the critical consciousness levels, require capacities that are unique for adults and should therefore be a major learning domain in adult education.

1.2.2 Reflective practice

Reflective Practice, a term developed by Donald Schön (1983), refers to the professional who examines his or her actions and "takes [on] the form of a conversation with a situation" (p. 295) or with one's self in an effort to improve in the future. Educators support the view that reflection is a cognitive process or activity that can serve as a learning tool (Dewey, 1933; Boud, Keogh & Walker, 1985; Mezirow, 1997; Schön, 1983; Korthagen & Vasalos, 2002). In discussing the aspects and depth of reflective thoughts, they distinguish between several stages, levels or themes (Van Manen, 1977; Mezirow, 1981, 1991; Boyd & Fales, 1983, Goodman, 1984; Kolb, 1984; Boud et al., 1985; Schön, 1883, 1991; Korthagen & Vasalos, 2005; Procee, 2006). Most of these educators developed models to provide structure for the practice of reflection. In 2001 Rogers analyzed seven influential models of reflection and revealed four key features of reflection models. Reflection is a cognitive process or activity: (1) in which an individual needs to be actively engaged; (2) after being triggered by an unusual or surprising situation or experience; (3) to examine his or her responses, beliefs, and premises in light of the situation at hand; (4) resulting in integration of the new understanding into his or her experience (Rogers, 2001).

Kolb (1984), also inspired by Dewey's notion of reflection, developed an experiential learning model that incorporates four key elements: concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation. In Kolb's model, reflection is crucial for learning to occur. The cycle starts with a concrete experience; this experience is the basis for observation and reflection. That means that where a person carries out an action he can then both observe and reflect upon the processes that initiated the action and on the possible consequences. The person then formulates a 'theory' based on observations, sets goals based on theory, and takes action. On the basis of this new experience, the person devises a new action or plan. For day-to-day learning the loop is productive and within the given variables and framework, the learner gains competence and confidence.

Schön (1983, 1987), argues that the experience of learning by doing a challenging, focused, and critical assessment of one's own behavior is a way to developing one's own craftsmanship. In Schön's (1983) view of the reflection process, reflection guides decision-making. Reflection requires one to engage actively in intellectual processes, to explore problems or experiences, in order to gain a changed perspective or new insights (Wainwright, Shepard, Harman & Stephens, 2010) subsequently. Wainwright et al. (2010) described five stages in Schön's reflection process. The process starts with *knowing-in-action*, the knowledge and skills that a person possesses and uses in a certain context. Knowing-in-action is tacit; it becomes knowledge-in-action when we describe it. Until we describe it, we just do it intelligently. Once we know how to do these actions, we do them spontaneously without putting words to them. In the second stage, the learner becomes aware of uncomfortable feelings and thoughts. Schön (1991) calls this the experience of *surprise*. Surprise arises when we realize that in a situation, the knowledge we are

applying is not sufficient in itself to explain what was happening in that unique situation. In the third stage, *reflection-in-action*, a person critically analyses the situation. This means that we need to examine our feelings and knowledge to inform our decision making process. The fourth stage, experimentation, is informed by the reflection-in-action stage. It starts when we try to apply other knowledge to find an explanation of that unique situation. When we look back on what has happened, we enter the fifth stage, the reflection-on-action stage. The basic cycle of Schön's approach, the iteration of *knowing-in-action, surprise,* reflection-in-action, experimentation and reflection-on-action, reflects Dewey's reflective action, according to Wainwright et al. (2010).

Boud et al. (1985) argue that reflection provides a bridge between experience and learning; it involves both cognition and feelings. They claim that negative and positive emotional associations with topics and environments will affect the mind's ability to work with an experience. Negative emotions can work as obstructing feelings and block the efficacy of learning. The reflective process can be used to remove these obstructing feelings through a thorough examination of the experience. In their model, Boud et al. (1985) focus on emotion. Boud et al.'s (1985) model of reflection consists of two main components: the experience of a learner, and the reflective activity on this experience. Within the reflective activity, Boud et al. (1985) identified three important stages: *returning to experience*, *attending to feelings* and *re-evaluating the experience*. During the first stage *returning to experience*, the learner describes to others what happened during the experience. The description provides data and possible clarification for the learner and may provide insight into particular feelings that the learner did not recognize during the experience. In the second stage, *attending to feelings*, the learner focuses on how the feelings at the time of the event may have affected his response. By describing the event to others, the learner engages in reflection on his actions and obtains a view of what happened from the perspective of others. In the third stage, *re-evaluating the experience*, the learner evaluates via four elements: association, integration, validation and appropriation. Association means that the learner links new ideas and feelings to the existing knowledge and attitudes. By integration, the learner is seeking for relationships between pieces of information. If associations are meaningful, the learner can integrate new knowledge into patterns of ideas and attitudes. The learner then tests whether the new appreciations correspond with existing knowledge and beliefs to determine the authenticity of the ideas and feelings. This is the process of validation. Appropriation means that a learner is making knowledge his own. According to Boud et al. (1985), some learning can enter our sense of identity, and become highly significant in our value systems.

An important reflection model in the context of this study is the ALACT model (Figure 1) proposed by Korthagen (1985), an influential contributor to the practice of reflection in teacher education. Korthagen originally developed the ALACT model for the use in teacher education programs. The cyclic ALACT model consists of five phases: (1) action, (2) looking back on the action, (3) awareness of essential aspects, (4) creating alternative methods of action, and (5) trial.

The first stage is the real practice in the classroom. The second stage involves answering concreting guiding questions *(*Korthagen & Kessels, 1999) to clarify what has been done during the class. This is a way for the practioner to discover the essential aspects of what happened during the class. In the third stage, the *awareness of essential aspects* stage, the practitioner uses the answers of the guiding questions from the previous stage to become aware of the influence the problem or the advantage of this experience has on him. At this stage, the practioner may use some theoretical insights (Korthagen, Kessels, Koster, Lagerwerf, & Wubbels, 2001). In the fourth stage, the practitioner is aware of the situation from different perspectives and creates alternatives to improve the situation. The practitioner compares the advantages and disadvantages of each of these alternatives, in order figure out which alternative could be the best in the specific situation. In the last stage, the practitioner tries out the alternative. The last stage is also the first stage of a new cycle. Korthagen and Vasalos (2005), like Dewey (1933), recognize that successful reflection requires some guidance and support. Korthagen and Vasalos (2005) propose different strategies that supervisors can use to support their students in the different phases of reflection. The supervisor can help the practitioner identify useful experiences, discuss the guiding questions with the practitioner, discuss theoretical information, discuss alternatives and support the practitioner in applying alternatives (Korthagen & Vasalos, 2005).
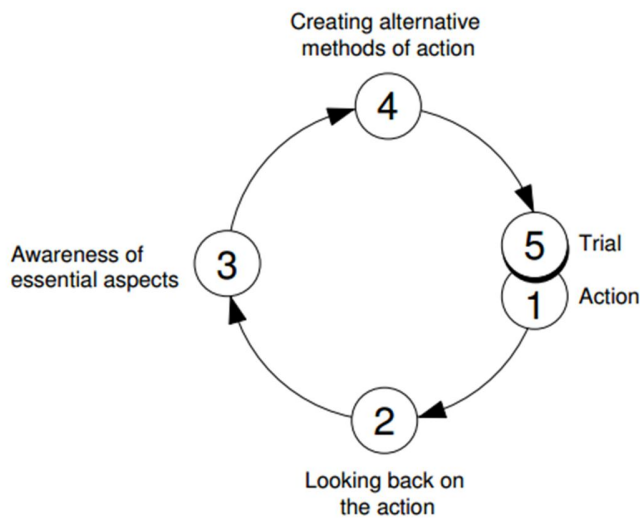
Figure 1: The ALACT model of reflection. (Korthagen, 1985)

Although the ALACT model describes a structured reflective process, it does not reveal the content of reflection. Korthagen and Vasalos (2005) explain the content of reflection in the onion model (Figure 2). The onion model contains six levels on which reflection can take place: *the environment* (everything outside of the person); *a* person's effective and ineffective *behaviour*; different *competences* of a person; different *beliefs* of a person; *identity* (the self-understating of a person); *mission* (callings and inspirations) (Korthagen & Vasalos, 2005).

Korthagen and Vasalos (2005) distinguish between two concepts: reflection and core reflection. Core reflection refers to reflection at the two deepest levels in the onion-model. A key element of core reflection is the attention to core qualities in people (e.g. empathy, compassion, love and flexibility, courage, creativity, sensitivity, decisiveness, and spontaneity). These core qualities can help the novice practitioner to handle the critical situations better (Korthagen & Vasalos, 2005). Korthagen and Vasalos came to the insight that the ALACT model can make reflection somewhat superficial, because it does not support the practitioner in knowing what to reflect on (Korthagen & Vasalos, 2005).

Figure 2: The Onion model. (Korthagen & Vasalos, 2005)

Korthagen and Vasalos (2005) adapted their ideas about how core reflection could be established in the ALACT model and introduced their Phase model of Core Reflection in (Figure 3). In this phase model, Korthagen and Vasalos (2005) introduced the idea to focus on an ideal situation in the reflection process in order to arrive at a notion of the ideal situation. They argued that an individual, who takes his or her

ideals or successes as a starting point of the reflection process, could understand the essence of the problem he or she encountered in a more effective way. Because when the individual describes his or her ideal situation, not only he or she is cognitively engaged, but also emotionally and motivationally. Through this process, the individual becomes more aware of the core qualities that are embedded in his or her ideal functioning. This close connection between ideals and core qualities is in line with the onion model (Korthagen & Vasalos, 2009).

Figure 3: Phase model of Core Reflection (korthagen & Vasalos, 2005)

Korthagen and Vasalos (2005) refer *to the self-determination theory* (Ryan & Deci, 2002) in their explanation of the core reflection process. According to the self-determination theory people have three basic psychological needs, autonomy, relatedness and competency. Autonomy refers to the desire to act psychologically free; to act from one's own interests and values. Relatedness refers to the desire to build positive relationships with others, to feel connected to others and to experience care for others. People want to feel connected with others socially and want to belong to a group. Competence comes from the idea that people are born with the desire to influence the environment, check and create opportunities. It refers to the desire to deal with the environment effectively and it refers to the feeling that one is effective in the inte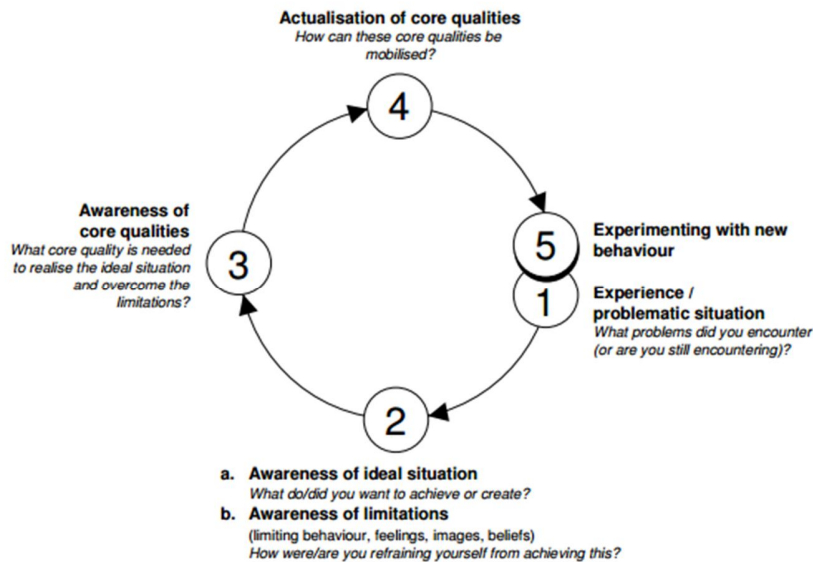raction with the social environment and experience opportunities to express abilities. Deci and Ryan (2002) argue that that the fulfilment of the three basic needs is related: only if the needs to relationship and autonomy are met, the need for competence becomes optimally fulfilled. Personal relationships, based on authentic contact with others, are essential in fulfilling the need for relationships. For the fulfilment of the need for autonomy, it is it is essential to keep in touch with yourself, with your own core. Focused reflection around the six levels, helps to come in touch with your own core (Korthagen & Vasalos, 2005). Authentic contact with the self and others are conditions for the fulfilment of the need for competence. Korthagen and Vasalos (2005) emphasize that fundamental changes in the middle layers of the onion model only take place when persons invest in relationships with others and in contact with their own deeper layers (the sources of autonomy).

1.2.3 Summary

The literature has shown that the reflective process can lead to greater self-awareness, critical review, the development of new knowledge about professional practice, and to improvement of professional behaviour. Also it can lead to emotional outcomes such as a change in feelings, attitudes and values. This suggests that learning happens through the process of reflection and that the expected outcomes of reflection are learning and enhanced personal and professional functioning. Furthermore, the literature research revealed that reflection is a difficult concept to explain, however, some similarities have

emerged. For instance, the exploration of experience and the analysis of feelings, the assumption that reflection will involve a changed perspective and action, elements of experimentation and review, and purposeful learning through experience.

1.3   Study setting

The site of the study is the HAN University of Applied Sciences (hereafter abbreviated as HAN), a vocational university of applied sciences. The HAN offers a unique Bachelor's programme Education in the Netherlands. This four years course educates students to become educational advisor, designer, developer, trainer and coach. The Han aims at educating committed training professionals that contribute to the development of employees and organisations. These professionals are recognizable by their know-how, consistent approach, and (self-) reflective ability and by an inquisitive and professional attitude (ILS-HAN, 2012). To achieve this, the HAN also devotes attention to reflective learning in their education and assessment. One aspect that plays a central role within this vision on education is personal development with regard to the job. According to the HAN personal development is a mean for the student to engage himself as efficiently and effectively as possible in the training-oriented environment in which he is employed. Working on personal development is divided by the HAN into three development areas: professional identity, learning competence and personal effectiveness. Among other things via reflection the HAN facilitates students in their personal development with regard to the job. The aim is the professional development of the student. The HAN recognizes the role of reflection as being important for professional development.

The HAN defines reflection as a process to "become aware, to think over and critically consider one's own actions, feel and think like an educational professional in training with the aim of learning, to strengthen the professional identity and personal effectiveness" (ILS-HAN, 2012). This definition is based on other definitions of reflection (Groen, 2011; Korthagen & Vasalos; 2002, and Van Woerkom, 2012).

The HAN implemented a reflective approach to bridge the gap between theory and practice. The motivation here is that learning professionals should be able to reflect well. To guide reflective learning students are offered a framework for reflection, *Reflection model Opleidingskunde*, developed by the HAN. This framework for reflection is based on the phase model of core reflection (Figure 3) from Korthagen and Vasalos (2005).

The Reflection model Opleidingskunde includes a question guide (Table 1) to structure and guide reflection. This question guide is based on the guiding questions from the model of core reflection (Korhagen & Vasalos, 2005), combined with two questions from the critical incidents method. The text that supports the questions provides an explanation for each stage of the reflection cycle.

Table 1: Reflection model Opleidingskunde - Question guide

Reflection model		Level
1: My meaningful situation		
Choose a situation out of your study, one that is important for you, in which you crashed, experienced a problem or a situation where something went particularly well. In other words, a situation that is worth for you to investigate further. We call this a meaningful situation. For example, this might be a situation or learning moment in cooperation with others, your internship, your study methods, and so on.		1, 2, 3
2: Looking back		
Objective review	**Subjective review**	1, 2, 3
Here you describe the actual event, still without your own judgment about it. What was the context of the problem?	After objectively look back to the meaningful situation you describe your own personal review of the situation.	
o Who were involved?		
o What was your role or task?	o What did I want to achieve?	

o What was the role or task of the other stakeholders?	o How did I behave in this situation? o What can the effect of my behaviour on others, and on the situation? o What thoughts went through me in this situation? o How did I feel?	
Phase 3. Become aware of the essence for me		
In this phase you investigate what for you is the essence in this situation. You take a closer look at yourself, as to learn more about yourself. Why was I acting like that? o Why was I behaving like that? o Why was I thinking and feeling like that? o Does it happen often that I act, think or feel that way? Do I recognize a pattern in this? o What qualities do I need or can I deploy stronger next time? o What discoveries about myself I do now? o So, what is the problem?	1, 2, 3	
o What qualities and pitfalls are affecting my acting, thinking and feeling? In a positive and negative sense?	3	
Phase 4: Develop alternative actions		
In this phase you investigate any other (and sometimes better) ways you can act in the future. This is done to reflect, among other things by yourself to others and to general knowledge about that which you encountered. o What will I do differently next time? o How am I going to deploy my qualities in this? o What learning needs or learning objectives do I see?	1, 2, 3	
o How would an experienced professional act in this situation? o What does the literature say? How can I use this knowledge? o Now that I have this information, what alternatives do I see?	2, 3	

The HAN acknowledges that the development of reflective skills or how to think reflectively is an iterative process. Therefore the HAN distinguishes between three competence levels at the study task reflection. On *level 1* students should be able to evaluate their behaviour, thinking and feeling, as well as their impact on the environment, formulate behavioural alternatives and learning points as a logical result of their evaluation. On *level 2* students should be able to evaluate their behaviour, thinking and feelings, as well as their impact on the environment, formulate behavioural alternatives and learning points on the basis of relevant literature or theory. On *level 3* students should be able to reflect, or they can reflect on their behaviour, thinking and feeling, but also on their underlying beliefs, recurring qualities and pitfalls and its impact on their environment. They should also be able to formulate behavioural alternatives and learning points on the basis of relevant literature or theory.

In the first year of the study students are introduced to the concept of reflection. Opleidingskunde has developed student portfolio to stimulate students to reflect on the aspects of becoming an educational professional. Reflection assignments are part of almost every subject in the curriculum. These reflection assignments offer students opportunities to practice and develop their reflective skills. The assignments involve a variety of reflective activities (Table 2). To further facilitate students' reflective learning, the HAN has developed an e-learning course in which is explained to the students what is meant by reflecting and how it can be done according to the framework for reflection. In addition, the e-learning module is a

practical tool for students who are learning how to address their reflective ability and are learning how to describe their experiences in reflective assignments.

Table 2: Courses with obligatory reflection assignments

Subject Professional task	Reflective activity	Purpose of reflection assignment	Year of study	Required level of reflection
Mentoring learners	Reflective journal (level 1) Reflection report (level 2, 3)	• capture critical events and experiences in training, coaching and intervision situations. • to reflect on the learning process at the personal level • to act as a channel for exploration between the student, peers and the class facilitator.	1 2 3, 4	1 2 3
Trainen	Reflection report (level 1, 2, 3)	• capture critical events and experiences in training situations as a trainer. • to reflect on the learning process in becoming a trainer • become consciously aware of their actions as a trainer in every moment.	1 2 3, 4	1 2 3
Educational design	Reflection report (level 1, 2)	• to give students space to reflect on themselves as educational designers. • students indirectly reflect on the course content. • focus is on the personal impact of the course content.	1, 2,	1, 2
Educational consulting	Reflection report (level 1, 2)	• to give students space to reflect on themselves as internal HRD advisors. • To reflect on the decision-making processes in organisations from solely educational, to more organisationally, logistically and financially aware actions.	3, 4	3
Practice learning	Reflection report	• to reflect on themselves as (collaborative) learners, • gain insight in ono's own behavior, thinking and feeling, impact on the environment and professional development. • become consciously aware of their learning needs.	1, 2, 3, 4	1, 2, 3
Proof of competence	Reflection report	• to reflect on the overall learning process at the personal level and on the development of the professional identity	3, 4	3

1.4   Personal reflections: My identity as a researcher

As a researcher I wanted to undertake a study that fits with what I do as an educational advisor, that is helping employers and employees with educational needs. I thought about undertaking a quantitative study that looked at impact, cause and effect and the measurement of an outcome. However, I did not think It would have produced the information I needed to improve my own practice. When I started writing my research proposal, the initial literature search confirmed my believes that a qualitative approach would

be more appropriate for a study on students' reflective experiences. My desire was to study a group of students who were engaged in reflective activities, hear what they thought and felt about it, and mirror what I already do as an educational advisor in other areas of work: facilitate, listen, question, interpret, reflect and act. I wanted to hear the students' voices without limiting what they wanted to say.

I find that a study like this requires personal commitment of the researcher at the phenomenon that is being investigated. Being an educational professional over the last ten years I have been aware of the conflicts and tensions coming from reflective exercise. In the basic course that I teach, I ask participant who in their daily life write planning permissions not only to just follow the regulations, but also to look at the applications from the applicants' perspective. Reflective commands are used as a means to practice this. In another course starting prosecutors are asked increasingly to weigh the interests of all parties involved in cases. A way they can become proficient in it is by reflecting on their actions and the impact of their actions. While I write this thesis, I realize what tension there can arise if you're asked to view your job in a 'holistic' way to while in your working environment you're constrained by rules, guidelines and laws on the basis of which you have to make a decisions.

As an educational advisor I have always promoted reflection as a way to work on your professional development. I know that my personal experiences with reflection are on the base of this belief. I consider this study therefore not only as a research, I see it also as a personal development process, in which I hope to find answers and new questions arise. I have also in the context of this study reviewed my views and perspectives with regard to reflection in the context of professional practice. Schön (1991) describes reflection as a continuing process, whereby you as a professional engage in a dialogue with your environment or with a question you are stuck with. This requires that you stay open for the effects of what you are doing and that it is clear for yourself why you do things in a certain way. I have not previously been so aware of my identities: a full-time working educational advisor, a part-time student, a mother of two teenagers, a wife; and just myself. Every day I experience that these identities are each other's competitor, one even more than the other. For the participants in this research I'm not only a researcher, I am also a colleague, or someone who understands their experiences or maybe assesses them. As an *insider* I have had my own experiences with reflection in the context of a study task.

Recently I realized why I find reflection so important, yet at the same time so difficult. During this study, I had to reflect on what I have understood from the experiences of the participants with reflections. I have tried to make sense of the participants making sense of their experiences. I've tried to view the experiences from multiple perspectives: as an advisor, lecturer, participant and peer. Doing this I had to take into account the vague boundaries between my professional and personal identities and my *objective* role as a researcher. This consideration is also embedded in my methodological choices during the research.

In acknowledging that the values, interpretations and assumptions of the researcher will always influence the research, I consider myself an educational professional who operates from an interpretive and constructivist position. Wanting to explore opinions, viewpoints and experiences has led to a qualitative, phenomenological research approach. This approach focuses on the mapping of subjective human experiences; it focuses on how an individual experiences the world (van Manen, 2005). I have therefore opted for Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), according to Smith and Osborn (2003; p. 51) a qualitative approach which aims at exploring "in detail how participants are making sense of their personal and social world" and for research questions, methodology and data collection and analysis methods that support this approach. This is evidenced by exploring opinions and experiences of individuals about learning reflection. Understanding their views and experiences therefore gets priority over quantifying variables or hypothesis testing during the research.

1.5   Research purpose and research questions

To understand the development of becoming an reflective educational professional, or to understand the experiences involved in this process of professional development, educators need to know how student educational professionals experience making meaning of their early experiences of themselves as educational professionals. In a constructivist view, students discover and construct meaning from active

experiences where they make sense from what they already know and build upon background knowledge (Heidegger 1966; Dewey, 1991). Educators need to understand how the students experience being a reflective educational professional so they can to create opportunities for learning the being of a reflective educational professional. If educators do not understand how students make meaning of early professional experiences, they will not know how to enhance learning.

As an educational advisor, I am concerned with how students learn to be reflective, because the reflection process is such a vital part of being an educational professional.

The purpose of this study was to understand the experiences of students who were engaged in reflective activities in an educational setting, from their own perspective. An enquiry into the backgrounds, perspectives and problems that students face when practicing reflective skills in assignments, requires a study, which explores the perspectives of the students themselves. The participants identified the main issues of the study. The study focused on the reflective process and the way it was experienced by students.

The research question is a link between the phenomenological approach and the procedures of data collection and analysis:

What is the experience of being engaged in reflective activities in an educational setting from the perspective of students?

The following areas of interest were explored:
- How the participants currently describe the concept of reflection
- Whether participants experience changes in their view of reflection as a result of reflective practice
- The participants view on the role of instruction programs on acquiring reflective skills
- The participants view on faculty's support and guidance during reflective activities
- The participants view in reflective assignments in the development of reflective skills
- The participants view and experiences' regarding what is needed for reflective practice.

These guiding questions are not specific questions to be answered, but rather, they are those that suggest themselves at the beginning of the study as being the most productive guides to generate data relevant to the central area of interest. These guiding questions will guide the data collection process.

1.6   Scientific and practical relevance

The audience for this study includes lecturers and educational designers of higher education. Information gathered in this study may inform the audience of higher education professionals about the unique reflective needs of diverse student population. A primary audience for this study includes lecturers and educational designers of the HAN.

This study can contribute to the understanding of opportunities and resources that students need when learning to reflect on their practice in the following ways:
- It can contribute to the understanding of how students develop reflective skills in an educational context.
- It can contribute to the development of a shared vision among educators about assessments for reflective practice that match the reflective skills of the students.

The participants in the research may benefit from the study through self-reflection on their higher educational journey.

1.7   Structure of the thesis

In this introductory Chapter I provided background information about reflection in education by exploring relevant existing literature highlighting the role of reflection in education. I also explained the rationale and aims of the study, the research question, and its significance for educators and my position as a researcher including the decision to adopt an IPA approach.

Chapter two is where I present the epistemological and theoretical underpinnings of the research followed by the specific research methods used to collect and analyse the data and the ethical considerations of the study.

In Chapter three I present the inductively derived themes from the data along with my analysis and interpretations.

In Chapter four I discuss the themes in relation to the existing literature. I also consider the trustworthiness and transferability of the study findings and I suggest implications for education practice and further research. At the end of the Chapter I reflect on the research and the research process.

2 Methods

2.1 Introduction

An appropriate methodological approach is of great importance in scientific research; it gives direction to the research questions, units of analysis, data sources, and analysis tools and ultimately supports the findings. The purpose of this study was to understand the experiences of students who are engaged in reflective activities in an educational setting, from their own perspective. This research explored the reflective experiences of students by answering the question:

What is the experience of being engaged in reflective activities in an educational setting from the perspective of students?

The following questions guided the research:
- How can the concept of reflection be described?
- What do students reflect upon?
- What is the structure of assessments for reflection?
- What are important similarities and differences within and between assessments?
- Do instruction programs on reflection improve the skill level in students' reflective reports?
- How does students experience learning how to reflect in instruction programs?

This Chapter describes the research procedures I used to answer the research questions. It describes the study's philosophical underpinnings and assumptions, the study's methodological approach and the actions I took to ensure trustworthiness throughout the study. It also describes the selection of the participants, the data collection methods, the analysis of the data and the ethical considerations of this study.

2.2 Choosing a qualitative research approach

A qualitative approach is appropriate, if the aim of a study is to understand how individuals perceive a particular issue (Patton, 2002). It involves detailed exploration and analysis of a particular topic. There are several key understandings that underpin qualitative inquiry: ontology, epistemology, methodology (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Crotty, 1998; Creswell, 2007) and methods (Crotty, 1998; Creswell, 2007). Ontology refers to questions of reality or real existence or how we believe reality exists. Epistemology refers to the nature of the relationship between the knower or would-be knower and what can be known (Guba & Lincoln, 1994) or "how we know what we know" (Crotty, 1998, p. 8). Methodology is concerned with how the researcher can find out what he believes can be known (Guba & Lincoln, 1994), while methods refer to how evidence about reality can be collected (Crotty, 1998; Creswell, 2007).

Guba and Lincoln (1994) suggest the importance of research paradigms when conducting a study. A research paradigm is a framework that guides the research process of a study. A paradigm can be viewed as a set "of basic beliefs (or metaphysics) that deal with ultimates of first principles" (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 107). It consists of beliefs and assumptions about how we should approach research. A qualitative research paradigm usually includes the ontological, epistemological and methodological aspects of the study (Guba, 1990). Crotty (1998) provided a theoretical framework for research; he identified four elements of the research process: epistemology, theoretical perspective, methodology and methods. Furthermore, Crotty (1998) explains that there is an interrelationship between the theoretical stance adopted by the researcher, the methodology and methods used, and the researcher's view of the epistemology.

2.3   Research paradigm

I chose an interpretivist paradigm, sometimes referred to as constructivist paradigm, for this study. A paradigm where there is no objective truth and meaning only occurs in relation to the mind (Crotty, 1998). As Lincoln and Guba (1985) emphasise, this has several implications for the study. Firstly, the research has to "produce multiple constructed realities that can be studied holistically" (Lincoln & Guba 1985, p. 37). Secondly, the primary data collection instrument should be a human to be able to interact with participants to reveal their multiple constructed realities. Thirdly, the research should be done in a natural setting. Fourthly, the researcher should be the key instrument for collecting data. Fifthly, the focus of the research has to be the identification of the contextualised meaning of the participants multiple views to create a collaborative reconstruction from the multiple realities.

2.3.1 Implications for this study

In this study I was the researcher, the human research instrument (Creswell, 2007). I interacted with all participants and was able to realise a holistic study of all students' reflective realities. As a trained professional educational consultant with 20 years of experience in interviewing, assessing and recognizing themes of stories which are the foundation of qualitative research (Patton, 2002); I focused on getting the participants stories by becoming a partner with the participants. I possess similar experiences as the participants of the study; I graduated from the HAN with a Bachelor's degree in Education. In addition to this, as a part-time and a fulltime student I have been engaged in several reflective activities during my education. Besides my experiences as a student, I have tutored adults in vocational courses that I have taught. These experiences have given me an insight into some reflective demands students face. I have used this asset to stimulate engaging dialogue with the participants of this study during the interviews. With the information I collected, I formed a tentative reconstruction of the participants' reflective experiences. I presented these findings to the participants for comments to ensure that their meaning has been accurately captured and to gain more insights.

2.4   Ontological and epistemological assumptions

Ontology, the study of being (Crotty, 1998; Gray, 2009), concerns questions about the nature of social reality, "what exists, what it looks like, what units make it up and how these units interact with each other" (Blaikie, 2000, p. 3). Ontology attempts to distinguish what constitutes true knowledge, how it can be acquired, and how it can be communicated. The ontological assumptions of this study are based on a relativist philosophy. Relativists emphasize the diversity of interpretations that can be applied to the world, they believe that knowledge is a social reality, value-laden and it only becomes known through individual interpretation (Gray, 2009).

Epistemology is philosophically linked to ontology and is concerned with the theory of knowledge (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). A constructivist philosophy underpins the epistemological assumptions of this research. Constructivist research is relativist, transactional and subjectivist (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Relativists emphasize that there is no objective truth and that the world can be interpret in diverse ways (Crotty, 1998). Transactional refers to knowledge being constructed through interaction between humans and their world, and developed and transmitted within a social context (Berlin, 1987). Constructivist believe that a person constructs his or her own reality and that humans develop a sense about what occurs as they engage with the world they are interpreting. In subjectivists research the world, including the psychological world of research participants, is positioned as unknowable. The role of the researcher is to construct an impression of the world as they see it (Ratner, 2008). The participants own experiences are the main area of research for this study.

2.5   Theoretical perspectives: Hermeneutic phenomenology

Studying a phenomenon - in this case reflection – suggests, by definition, phenomenology. Applied to research, phenomenology is the study of the nature and meanings of phenomena (Finlay, 2009) or the study of experience (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009). Phenomenology "differs from almost every other science in that it attempts to gain insightful descriptions of the way we experience the world pre-

reflectively, without taxonomizing, classifying, or abstracting it" (Van Manen 1990, p. 9). The essence of phenomenological research is a reduction of individuals' experiences with a particular phenomenon to a description of the universal essence of that phenomenon (Creswell, 2007). Phenomenological research has its roots in the philosophical traditions of Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger (Cresswell, 1994). In the descriptive tradition, conceptualized by Edmund Husserl (1859-1938), it is believed that phenomenological research suspends all personal opinions, is related to consciousness, and is based on the meaning of the individual's experience (Creswell, 1994). In the interpretive tradition, conceptualized by Martin Heidegger (1889-1976), it is believed that in phenomenological research one's fore-structures (background, values, experiences) cannot be eliminated from understanding and interpreting. A researcher needs to account for these interpretive influences (Creswell, 1994; Dowling, 2007; Smith et al., 2009).

Other existential phenomenological philosophers who influenced the development of phenomenological research are Merlau-Ponty and Sartre (Smith et al., 2009). Sartre's concern was the "developmental processual aspect of human being" (Smith et al., 2009; p. 19). Merlau-Ponty was concerned with the relationship between the body and the world. In Merlau-Ponty's view humans see themselves as different from everything in the world, because their sense is holistic and focused on looking at the world, not on being subsumed in the world. An individual can observe and experience empathy for another, yet he or she can never share the other's experiences, because the experiences are not lived through (Smith et al., 2009). According to Sartre an individuals is always in a process of becoming rather than being. In this action-oriented process, an individual has the freedom to choose, while being responsible for his or her own choices (Smith et al., 2009).

2.5.1 Hermeneutics

Heidegger, whose interest was existence and the meaning of being (Crotty, 2005; Smith et al., 2009), developed interpretive phenomenology by extending hermeneutics, the philosophy of interpretation (Creswell, 1994; Dahlberg, Drew & Nystrom, 2008). Heidegger adopted ontology, the science of being and rejected epistemology, the theory of knowledge (Creswell, 1994). According to Dahlberg, Drew and Nystrom (2008), the critical question for Heidegger was: What is being? Heidegger studied the concept of being in the world rather than knowing the world, broadening hermeneutics. Heidegger believed personal awareness was intrinsic to phenomenological research and that it was impossible to negate our experiences related to the phenomenon under study (Dahlberg, Drew & Nystrom, 2008). He argued that human existence is a more fundamental notion than human consciousness and human knowledge. Heidegger's interpretive phenomenology explains that the essence of human understanding is hermeneutic, and that our interpretation of everyday world determines our understanding of it. A central component of hermeneutic phenomenology is the method of understanding a text, and thereby interpreting its meaning (Smith, 2007). Gadamer (1900-2002), another influential hermeneutic phenomenologist, was concerned with the influence of the researcher's fore-structures on the interpretation of the phenomenon (Smith, et al., 2009). Gadamer proposed that a researcher's pre-judgments and biases should be made explicit in hermeneutical research (Dowling, 2007; Smith, et al., 2009).

A hermeneutical research approach focuses on the reflexive and existential aspects by examining the experience of self, place, time, physicality and relations of a person (Scott, 1996; Stanley & Wise, 1993). In this study, students are engaged in meaningful *action-orientated projects*, reflective activities, to develop their identity and to achieve their goal of becoming an educational professional. The focus of this process should be on finding their true sense of self and transform into the professionals that they have the potential and the will to become. Students education could be regarded part of their existential project.

2.6   Methodology: Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)

Crotty (1998) argues that the theoretical stance of the researcher informs the methodology, it provides a context for the process and a ground for logic and criteria. He explains that a researcher should consider a number of important issues before choosing the methodology. These issues involve what the researcher wants to discover about the phenomenon and the kind of data that is required. I am interested in exploring

students' experiences with reflective activities in an educational context. I acknowledge that participants are experts on their own experiences and that these experiences will be influenced in turn by a wide range of factors and the subjective nature of these experiences. Based on these issues I concluded that an interpretivist approach would be appropriate for this study, because understanding another person's experience of a phenomenon requires an interpretation.

I decided to choose an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (hereafter called IPA) approach (Smith, 1996; Smith & Osborn, 2003; Smith et al. 2009). IPA theoretically origins from phenomenology and hermeneutics (Laverty, 2003,); it aims at gaining a deeper and richer understanding of the nature or meaning of our everyday lived experience, offering insight rather than theory (Van Manen, 1997). IPA aims to understand experience through the insights provided by the research participants themselves, those best suited to provide it (Reid, Flowers & Larkin, 2005).

As the aim of the study was to explore students' experiences with reflective activities in an educational context I felt IPA was appropriate as an analytical tool for the following reasons:

Firstly, IPA aims at capturing and exploring the meanings that participants give to their own experiences, or how they make sense of their experiences (Smith et al. 2009). When employing IPA, the researcher tries to make sense of the participants trying to make sense of their experience, this is known as a double hermeneutics (Smith & Osborn, 2003; Smith et al. 2009).

Secondly, IPA is also idiographic by nature. Through detailed and rigorous analysis of each participant's interview, IPA provides an interpretative, transparent and reflective account of the outcome and a plausible interpretation of the experience of each of the participants involved and shared aspects of experiences across the participant group.

Thirdly, IPA is concerned with personal experience but also involves interpretation, involving a consideration of context. This research focused on the experiences of students engaged in reflective activities and how they experience the development of their reflective skills in the educational context. An important step is considering the nature and the circumstances of the reflective activities within the school context.

Fourthly, the phenomenon that is being studied is reflection, which is conceptualized as a way of making meaning in life (Mezirow, 1991). IPA is considered of positive use when the topic being studied is: *'dynamic, contextual and subjective, relatively under-studied and where issues relating to identity, the self and sense-making are important'* (Smith & Osborn, 2007: p. 520).

2.7 Methods

2.7.1 Participants

2.7.1.1 Research population

The site for this study was the HAN University of Applied Sciences. The rationale for selecting only one university, complies with IPA's aim to develop deeper understanding of a phenomenon shared by a group. As I did not aim for generalization in this study, nor did I want to create universal or generalizable theory (Smith et al., 2009), it was not necessary to choose more than one university. In IPA research, homogenous samples are used to explore a phenomenon that is shared by a group.

2.7.1.2 Recruitment

Initial access to the potential participants was obtained through the administration of the Opleidingskunde department. I provided the administration with a copy of the research protocol and the inclusion and

exclusion criteria, so they should be aware of what the study involved and which students could be suitable for participation. The administration identified 12 students and provided me with their names and institutional e-mailadresses. I contacted these potential participants by e-mail, sent them copies of the information brochure (Appendix B) and asked if they wanted to take part in the study.

I received low response to this initial recruitment strategy. I think that this may have been a result of using the information brochure (Appendix B) as a recruitment tool. The information brochure needed to be lengthy in order to incorporate all the information necessary to allow participants to give informed consent. To some individuals the information brochure might have been too long and it is likely that they simply did not read it as it was too long.

As a result of the poor response to recruitment, I decided to adjust my recruitment procedure recruitment in order to complete the project. I had originally proposed to recruit eight participants; at this point I had only completed two interviews. I approached the administration to find out if it was possible to recruit participants through the newsletter for students. After the invitation was published in the newsletter I managed to increase my sample to four. Based on Smith et al. (2009), who emphasise that IPA studies should focus on a detailed account of individual experience, which benefits from a small number of cases, I decided to stop recruiting participants. Smith et al. (2009), recommend that a sample between three and six participants is reasonable for a student at undergraduate or master's level using IPA.

2.7.1.3 Inclusion and exclusion criteria

In keeping with IPA requirements, I selected the participants purposively. Participants had to be persons who were receiving an applied university education at the HAN with a mayor in Education.

All participants must have been engaged in reflective activities in an educational setting and had the potential to articulate their experiences (Creswell, 2007). Participants indicated that they had completed the e-learning course Reflection and they had completed several reflective reports that the lecturers had graded above average.

Being under the age of 18 was an exclusion criterion. I believed adult participants would have the advantage of the capacity to critically reflect (Mezirow, 2000), in addition to being able to give consent for themselves. However, as all of the participants that volunteered were over the age of 18, it was not necessary to exclude anybody for this reason. I also planned to exclude individuals if they were unable to give informed consent, however I did not have to exclude anybody for this reason.

2.7.1.4 The sample

In an IPA study the sample is small, homogenous and purposively selected because they share the experience of a particular situation, event or condition (Willig, 2008). The sample size is contextual and should be considered on a study-by-study basis, according to Smith et al. (2009). As a rough guide they suggest between three and six participants for an undergraduate or master's level. Homogeneity does not refer to sample characteristics, but more to participants' shared experience, which is important for an IPA study.

The sample consisted of four students from the Bachelor's programme Education. Each student had been engaged in reflective activities in the Education programme.

2.7.2 Data collection

A study of the backgrounds, perspectives and problems that students face when practicing reflective skills in assignments, asks for the students' opinion with regard to reflection. To analyse in detail how participants perceive and make sense of their experiences I needed a flexible data collection instrument (Smith & Osborn, 2003; Smith et al., 2009). Smith et al. (2009) suggest the use of semi-structured interviews for IPA studies.

2.7.2.1 Semi-structured interviews

The interviews were conducted through an e-mail exchange. This seemed appropriate because of the meta-cognitive characteristics of the phenomenon under study. I wanted the participants to think about their experiences and write their meaning about these experiences, what they thought and felt about the process, down in their own words in their own time and space.

An initial review of relevant literature guided my construction of the interviews (e.g. Smith & Osborn, 2003). I designed an interview outline (Appendix A) consisting questions around 4 topics: *Concept of reflection, Role of instruction programs on reflection, Role of faculty support, Role of reflective assignments*. The largest part of the interviews in this study was initially guided by the topics in the interview outline. The first topics covered the participants' perception of the concept of reflection. This was done to find out if they grasped the concept of reflection. Participants were also questioned about their engagement in reflective activities and the support they received or did not receive. I also used follow-up questions to clarify topics in depth. At the end of every interview each participant was encouraged to talk about topics that he or she would want to bring up that was not covered during the interview. Each participant could answer the questions at a convenient time, due to the e-mail driven nature of the interviews. The nature of the response provided the direction the interviews took, the length of the interviews was not determined in advance.

The procedure of how the semi-structured interview was conducted is outlined below:
1. The participant was briefed on the purpose of the study, the data collection methods and activities and the voluntary nature of his or her participation.
2. The participant also received an information brochure (Appendix B) and a consent letter (Appendix C) for use of the data from the interview and their reflective reports in the research. With the information brochure participants were informed about purpose of the study, confidentiality and anonymity at participation in the study, contacts, and the structure of the interviews and the period in which the interviews would take place and the use of reflective reports.
3. After the signed consent letter was received, I started the interview.
4. As an introduction, I explained my background and my interest in the study to establish a friendly and comfortable atmosphere before going into the main questions.
5. After the introduction I continued with a general question about reflection.
6. During the interview I used follow-up questions to clarify topics in depth. These questions were general, non-directive and non-specific probes, such as, "Could you elaborate on that, please?" or "Would you like to add anything to that point?".
7. I ended the interview by asking the participant for any additional issues, comments, complaints or suggestions that he/she might want to raise and I thanked the participants for the time they spent on the interview.
8. I made a transcript of each interview, putting into brackets not relevant questions or remarks about procedures or other issues.
9. I returned transcripts of the interviews to the participants for verification.

2.7.2.2 Documents

I studied reflection assignments and anonymized reports to inform the research on students' reflection process. I searched for similarities and differences in reflection topics, reflection objects, type of reflection activity and guidance. These documents gave insight in the reflection process and I used them as a way to enrich the interview data.

2.7.3 Data analysis

I used Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) (Smith & Osborn, 2003; Smith et al., 2009) to analyze the interviews. The basic process in IPA is the move from the descriptive to the interpretative, with the final aim of developing an account, which makes sense of the meaning participants make of their lived experience (Smith et al., 2009). I focused on the participants' unique experience with reflective activities and on what all participants engaged in reflective activities had in common within their experience. Supervision was gained from one researcher experienced at using qualitative methods.

IPA method usually proceeds through several iterative stages or steps (Smith et al., 2009). As a novice researcher I needed more structure in order to manage the collected data. I followed the steps outlined below:
- Stage 1: Reading and rereading the transcript
- Stage 2: Initial noting
- Stage 3: Developing emergent themes
- Stage 4: Searching for connections across emergent themes

I used computer software (Microsoft Excel) to analyze the data, as the data was already 'digitalized' due to the e-mail nature of the interviews. By using the software, I was able to set up tables (columns, rows and cells) to easy track data.

2.7.3.1 Individual case analysis

I analyzed each interview in-depth individually, according to IPA's idiographic nature (Smith et al. 2009).

First, I read and re-read the transcript line-by-line to become familiar with the interview context.

Second, I highlighted passages in the text that seemed to contain something that was meaningful to the participant. I copied the highlighted text into separate file, constructed a table and placed every meaning unit into a separate cell. These meaning units were chunks of text that held a comment or passage that expressed a particular aspect of an experience the participant was trying to describe. These varied in length and were typically a sentence or two. I added a column to the table and made initial notes in the column, descriptive comments on initial thoughts about the content, linguistic comments on language use, use of capital letters and punctuation marks and conceptual interrogative comments (Smith et al. 2009). I analyzed all four interviews in this way.

Third, to identify emergent themes I re-read the transcript and made a second column to note the emergent themes. At this stage, I worked more with my notes and the meaning unit than with the transcript. I did visit the original transcripts to keep in touch with what the participants said in the interview (Smith et al., 2009, p. 91). I wrote out the emergent themes in the second column in a separate cell every time they appeared.

Fourth, I grouped related themes together to form clusters. Smith et al. (2009) suggest how subordinate and superordinate themes can be identified. I employed abstraction (putting like with like and develop a new name for the cluster); subsumption (where the emergent theme itself becomes a superordinate

theme as it draws other related themes towards it); contextualization (identifying the contextual or narrative elements within an analysis) and function (themes are examined for their function).

At this stage, I found it difficult to develop superordinate themes for each individual, so I went to my supervisor for advice. I sent him the results of my interpretative process to ensure that it could be followed from the raw data to the themes. He advised me to keep moving themes around until I was satisfied. A lot of moving around with themes followed with some emergent themes moving from one subordinate theme to another. This was an iterative process whith an particular focus on the meaning of the themes in relation to the research question. I returned to the transcript continually in order to achieve this.

This part of the process clarified my thinking about some of the themes so I was sure the theme was something unique to the experience of students who were learning how to reflect. Some subordinate themes were re-named and three superordinate themes emerged for each participant.

Finally, for each participant I made tables up of the superordinate themes linking each subordinate theme to sections of raw data and I re-read the original transcripts to ensure that interpretations were supported by the participants' accounts. I send those findings to the participants and I invited them to comment on the interpretations I made.

2.7.3.2 Cross case analysis

To find patterns across cases I looked across individual cases (superordinate and subordinate themes for each participant's case) to identify superordinate themes for the group. The superordinate themes for the group were the same superordinate themes that individual participants shared. However, there were differences in the number of subordinate themes. The master table of themes for the group is shown in Chapter 3 Findings.

2.7.4 Ethical considerations

Creswell (2009) emphasizes that a researcher must anticipate ethical issues that may arise during the qualitative research process. In this phenomenological study I collected data from people, about people. This data consist of sensitive and deep answers to questions, meanings, statements and opinions. To protect the reputation and the position of the participants I applied the following procedures:

1. I submitted the research proposal to the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Behavioural Sciences for approval prior to the research.

2. I sent students who met the criteria and that had been identified by the administrative service an invitation e-mail to participate in the study. In the invitation I included the information brochure (Appendix B) and explained the research objectives, the data collection methods and activities and the voluntary nature of their participation.

3. After I received an affirmative answer, I sent the participant an information brochure (Appendix B) and a consent letter (Appendix C) for use of the data from the interview and their reflective reports in the research. With the information brochure participants were informed about the purpose of the study, confidentiality and anonymity at participation in the study, contacts, and the structure of the interviews and the period in which the interviews would take place and the use of reflective reports.

4. After I received the signed consent letter, I started with the interviews.

5. I made interpretations of the data available to the participants. The final decision regarding use of the data rested with the participant.

2.7.5 Trustworthiness

To establish quality in qualitative research, researchers are advised to consider different criteria than those for assessing the validity and reliability of quantitative work (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 2002; Smith et al. 2009; Creswell, 2009; Patton, 2002; Yardley, 2008). I have chosen to present the quality principles that I feel are appropriate to my study and that underpin the principles of IPA methodology. These principles are (i) credibility, (ii) transparency and coherence, (iii) commitment and rigor, (iv) impact and importance and (v) sensitivity to context. In the following paragraphs, I will describe these principles.

Credibility refers to the degree to which participants recognise the reported research findings as their own meanings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I used peer debriefing and member checks as primary strategies to establish credibility (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 2002; Creswell, 2009). Peer debriefing involves asking support of skilled colleagues to discuss suppositions and findings of a study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I send the anonymised interview fragments and concept and final conclusions to a peer researcher who is experienced in phenomenological methodology in order to get constructive criticism. Member checking is used to determine the accuracy of the findings in qualitative research (Creswell, 2009). I provided written transcription of the interview and the findings to the participants for review and verification to ensure that their meaning has been accurately captured. Each participant had to agree with his or her transcript, before I finalized the findings. The credibility of a research can also be increased by a defined, clear and appropriate selection of the participants (Patton, 2002). I employed purposeful sampling to ensure the selection of participants who have experience with reflecting on practice.

Transparency and coherence may be achieved by clear description of all the steps taken in the research process when the study is written (Smith et al., 2009). The report of my research therefore includes a presentation of the steps taken in the recruitment process and the steps of the analysis. By taking a hermeneutic phenomenologist position, I acknowledge that my experience and fore-understanding is embedded in my interpretations (Heidegger, 1966). To achieve transparency, I included a discussion of my epistemological position, my position on reflective practice, and reflections on the data collection and analysis stages.

Commitment and rigor refers to the thoroughness of data collection and analysis and the reporting of the research findings (Smith et al., 2009). The careful recruitment of participants, the interviews of a consistent and high quality, and a commitment to the analysis demonstrated adherence to this principle of commitment. As indicators of rigor, I present examples in Chapter 3 of the ways the participants' experiences differed and were similar.

Impact and importance refers to whether the reader finds something interesting or useful in the report (Smith et al., 2009). A first measure of assessing whether my findings have validity was to invite my supervisor to read parts of the initial report and provide feedback. A second measure was to invite participants to read parts of the initial report and provide feedback.

Sensitivity to context can be established through demonstrating sensitivity to the existing literature and theory, the context in which the study is situated and the material obtained from the participants (Smith et al. 2009) and through an ethical relationship with the participants (Yardley, 2008). I addressed sensitivity to context in two ways: firstly, the review of relevant literature in Chapter 1 demonstrates that this research

is exploring new topics of an unexplored phenomenon. Secondly, according to the idiographic nature of IPA, through the use of semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions I encouraged the participants to freely express themselves without hinder or pressure. By conducting and describing an in-depth analysis and supporting my arguments with verbatim extracts I gave participants a voice in the study and allowed the reader to check my interpretations (Smith et al., 2009)

2.8   Chapter summary

In this Chapter I presented my rationale for choosing an interpretivist paradigm and for using interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) to guide data collection and analysis in this study. I elaborated on my relativist ontological and constructivist epistimological assumptions, and on the theoretical perspectives that influenced the methodological approach of this study. I provided information on the research population, the sampling procedure and on the data collection and analysis procedures. Furthermore, I gave consideration to the ethical issues that arose in this study and on the strategies I applied to enhance the quality of this study. In the next Chapter I present the findings of the study.

3 Findings

3.1 Introduction

In this Chapter I present the key thematic findings through the use of an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis. I will give insight into some of the methodological tools that used during the analysis process, in order to produce data that is embedded within the epistemological stance of the thesis.

I will present all the themes in a table (

Table 4) that exposes the hierarchy of the themes, a manner that is traditionally within an IPA study. In addition I will explore he themes and illustrate eacht theme with by verbatim extracts from the interviews. These themes do not cover all aspects of the participants' experience with reflective activities in an educational context; I acknowledged that they are a subjective interpretation and that other researchers may have focused on different aspects of the accounts. While these were themes common to the four participants, there were also areas of divergence and difference, some of which are also commented upon.

3.1.1 Participants

Four participants were recruited for this study. The pseudonyms I have created for the participants are Els, Gerard, Nicole and Irma. The sample varied according to year and type of study and gender.

Table 3: Participants

Participant pseudonym	Year of study	Type of study	Gender
Els	1	Fultime	Female
Nicole	3	Parttime	Female
Irma	4	Fulltime	Female
Gerard	4	Parttime	Male

3.1.2 Themes

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) of the four semi-structured interviews resulted in the emergence of three superordinate themes describing students' experience of becoming a reflective educational professional: *Understanding of reflection, Engaging in reflective activities* and *Adapting*. Each superordinate theme consists of subordinate themes. Table 3 shows the superordinate themes with their related subthemes

The first superordinate theme *Understanding of reflection* describes participants' concept of the reflection process or what they understood by the term reflection. In order to understand the lived experience each of the participants had with reflection I needed to uncover their knowledge of the concept reflection. *Understanding of reflection* emerged as a powerful theme capturing the meaning the reflection process or the term reflection for the participants. It acquired a superordinate status as its meaning was further elucidated through the related subordinate themes: *Focus on an event or an experience, Give meaning to what happened, Evaluate how meaning was given, Consider other meaning,* and *Draw conclusions.*

The second superordinate theme *Engaging in reflective activities* describes participants' experiences once they have started with reflective activities. It represents the emotional journey of participants struggling with reflective activities and their need for support. All participants in this study indicated that learning how to reflect includes experiencing a variety of feelings, both negative and positive. Some participants felt unprepared and lacked skills needed to make sense of their reflective activities. The participants' ability to reflect involved a combination of skills, self-evaluation, knowledge, learning, peer support and understanding one's own strength. *Engaging in reflective activities* is discussed in the subordinate themes: *Support, Understanding* why and *Assessment.*

The third superordinate theme *Adapting* describes what participants' acknowledge as being important aspects of engaging in reflective activities and what is needed to continue reflective practice activities. The HAN has developed student portfolios to stimulate students to reflect on the aspects of being an educational professional. Reflection assignments are part of almost every subject in the curriculum. These reflection assignments offer students opportunities to practice and develop their reflective skills. The assignments involve a variety of reflective practice activities. This Superordinate theme has three subordinate themes: *Reflective approach, Learning reflection* and *Resources needed.*

Table 4: Table of Superordinate and Subordinate Themes

Superordinate Themes	(3.2) **Understanding of reflection**	(3.3) **Engaging in reflective activities**	(3.4) **Adapting**
Subordinate Themes	(3.2.1) Focus on an event or an experience	(3.3.1) Support	(3.4.1) Learning reflection
	(3.2.2) Give meaning to what happened	(3.3.2) Understanding why and how	(3.4.2) Reflective approach
	(3.2.3) Evaluate how meaning was given	(3.3.3) Assessment	(3.4.3) Resources needed
	(3.2.4) Consider other meaning		
	(3.2.5) Draw conclusions.		

In the following sections I will present an explanation of the themes, supported by verbatim extracts from the transcripts. To improve readability of the extracts, I have made some minor changes. I have indicated missing material by dotted lines within brackets (...). To protect the anonymity of the participants, I have removed or changed all identifying information, and I have used pseudonyms.

3.2 Superordinate theme: Understanding of reflection

The superordinate theme *Understanding of reflection* describes participants' concept of the reflection process or what they understood by the term reflection.
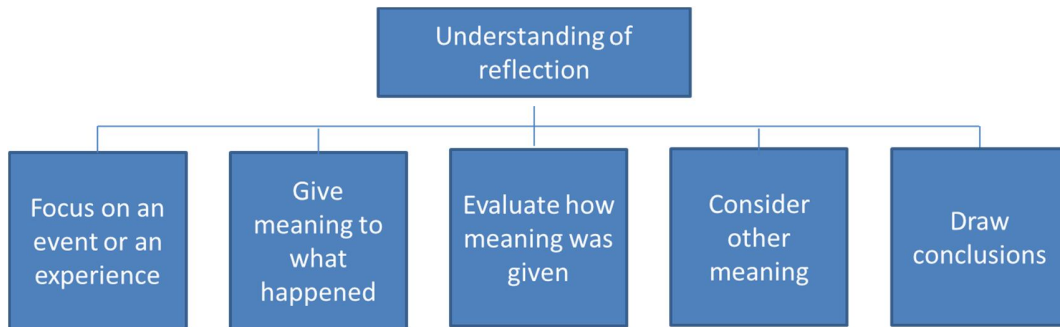

Figure 5: Superordinate theme Understanding of reflection

3.2.1 Focus on an event or an experience

The subordinate theme *Focus on an event or an experience*, links reflection to a specific event or an experience. The theme was represented by three of the four participants, but was a strong one. Participants identify different facets of this experience or event. Three participants made a connection between reflection and taking a step back or looking back at a situation.

> "*To me, reflecting means looking back on a particular situation or problem.*" (Irma).

Nicole conceptualized that to her reflecting starts from introspection. Introspection involves a person in a solitary self-dialogue in which he probes personal meanings and emotions (Loughran, 2006). It is a predominantly individualistic and personal exercise in which one tends to focus on one's own thoughts, feelings, behaviours and evaluations. Introspection is often used during professional education and training where learners are taught how to reflect, using structured models of reflection (Reynolds and Vince, 2004).

> "*For me, reflecting is a way of looking back on my behaviour and its impact on the other with an introspective look.*" (Nicole)

For Els reflecting is a way of looking back at a situation to recollect and describe what happened:

> " *When looking back, I try to call to mind what was happening, what I was doing or not doing, why I acted, or behaved that way.*" (Els)

Continuing with her exploration of focusing at an event, Els explains that just having a part in the event is important, not the importance of the part. Because having a role in a situation provides an opportunity for reflection.

> "*I think you can also reflect on a situation in which your personal contribution was not great or your present not important for the other/group. After all, sometimes you take an observational role, which can sometimes be particularly important and you can also reflect on that.*" (Els).

3.2.2 Give meaning to what happened

Give meaning to what happened contributes to our understanding of how participants make sense of what has been focused on. This sub-theme emerged for two of the four participants. Participants explain this as a way of observing their behaviour or their actions. To Gerard this is a deliberate activity:

> *"Reflection for me, is consciously consider what has taken place." (Gerard).*

Irma emphasises that one should do this without judgement. To her reflecting means that you:

> *" (...) look at your own actions WITHOUT judgement. Thus, looking at the steps and the result, and the effect of your action."*

> *" (...) look at what is, or has been in this case. Because you do this without judgment, you can look at it neutrally and really see what was there. If you have an opinion about your own actions or the situation or problem, then in fact, you put on glasses and you look through those glasses at the situation. Because of that, you are no longer reflecting freely."*

Being able to look without judgement is therefore considered a prerequisite for reflection and for development by Irma. She explains:

> *(...) reflecting is about personal development, you can only be open to growth fully, if you can look at your process without judgment."*

According to Huston (2007) "the act of pure observation occurs without judgement" (p. 97). Huston argues that when we dispense our judgement based on past experience and simply observe what is (what is actually said or done, what is seen, heard, smelled, tasted or touched) we will be allowed to notice things we would have overlooked.

3.2.3 Evaluate how meaning was given

Evaluate how meaning was given emerged as a sub-theme for all four participants. Participants consider it a way to judge their performance based on their conceptions of what has gone well or what has gone bad. Examine one's thoughts believes, assumptions & opinions when one evaluates how meaning was given to an event, appeared to be a common ideology for the participants. This was articulated by all participants:

> *"You can reflect on a shallow level by questions such as: what did I do, what was the situation, how did I respond. But you can always go to a deeper level by asking yourself questions that are related to your process. You need insight for this. Insight in your actions, where it comes from and relate that to existing beliefs and values, and what effect did it have on you, etc. That way, you go much deeper into a reflection report." (Irma)*

> *"In the end, we also act on our norms, values, beliefs, and experiences." (Irma)*

> *"And I'm not sure if I'd call it levels but I think there are several layers in it." (Irma)*

> *"I examine my thoughts / beliefs and feelings (...)." (Nicole)*

> *"Reflection for me is learning how to ask the right questions. Am I able to ask the right questions? When do I touch the essence? How do I frame my question? How do I set criteria for myself? When is a situation meaningful, with enough 'flesh on the bone'?" (Gerard)*

Gerald summarizes that the result of this process is *"(...) realising what was successful and what wasn't successful. What went well, what went less?"*

Els examines her thoughts in relation to her actions:

> *"But I also look at what I thought. For example, about what I really wanted to do or sometimes you think a say but say b." (Els)*

She reflected on how she assesses her behaviour by looking at other's behaviour:

> *Sometimes I can admire someone, for example, because of decisiveness, clearly summarising, asking critical questions. Then I think: I want to do/get/learn that! But sometimes, I just find someone repulsive because he / she will not let the other or me finish talking, or is doing other things at the same time. Then I think: that is not how I want to be, because it bothers / annoys me or it does not reflect my values and standards of how you deal with each other.*

This ability to be able to use someone else's actions to inform one's behaviour emerged as a theme only in the analysis of Els her interview.

3.2.4 Consider other meaning

Consider other meaning is a part of the reflection process. In the reflective practice approach adopted by the HAN, it can be obtained through literature and by asking feedback from others. Students are supposed to use information from a wide variety of sources from the worlds of research and practice. The important issue here is not the source but its utility. Students may find relevant information in research studies or other publications and workshops or formal study. Observations or discussions with colleagues may serve a similar purpose.

Sometimes feedback from others is a starting point for reflection.

> *"I notice that when I reflect, I let the way another sees me play a major role. For example, if my practice supervisor indicates that I can be more self-directed. Then, I start reflecting on it, in the sense of: how can I do this differently? Often, I don't ask myself the question: What do I think of that, myself? I notice that I want to meet the expectations of a superior."* (Nicole)

In this context reflection is not necessarily conceived as a process of learning but rather as a way of adapting skills to develop responses in the future. Although learning from feedback was a key element, the way it was articulated by Nicole it seemed to focus more on a certain outcome rather than on an experience of reflection. This also shows that when she starts with reflection activities, she does not present directness, one of the three basic attitudes required for reflection, (Dewey 1933). Instead of waiting for another's judgement, according to this attitude, one should trust the validity of his or her experience without spending a lot of time worrying about the judgements of others.

Thinking about reflection in this context involves touching on the personal and emotional aspects of self-reflection, it requires participants to examine their role in relation to others, and their own personality or background. Nicole continued exploring her role in relation to feedback from others. She made a connection between the influence of others meaning or feedback and her desire to understand the situation from another person's perspective.

> "*For me reflecting has (now that I think of it, since my childhood) become a way to, when someone gives me feedback, adjust myself so that I still get the recognition. It has become a tool in order to prevent rejection." (Nicole)*

As Nicole reflects further, she explains that during the interview she realized that he starting point of her reflection process is often the feedback of others.

> *"When I write a reflection report of the study, 9 out of ten times it is about the feedback that I got from the other. As if the feedback from the other is a standard for me. Now that I think about it, I*

realize how deep this goes. When I look at my reflection report for the subject Mentoring learners (coaching course), then at this moment I am reflecting on the feedback from others again."
(Nicole)

Through the interview dialogue, Nicole has reflected on her reflection process, writing a reflection report, and realized that her response to feedback is a habit she has applied without questioning it (Schön, 1983). She recognizes how her reflection process is being directed. Mezirow (2000) argues that by far the most significant learning experience in adulthood involve critical self-reflection. Critical reflection requires reassessing the way we have posed problems and reassessing our own orientation to perceiving, knowing, believing, feeling and acting. It is concerned with the reasons for and the consequences of what we do. Nicole is also learning about some aspects of the way she is learning; she is meta-learning.

Els explains that she also uses theory to make sense of her performance. Her comment reflects the schools position that reflection at a higher level, Level 2, should be based on certain theoretical insights. By using theory students provide evident that they are examining their role in relation to a wider theoretical context.

> *"(...), what 'is appropriate' in terms of theory (though of course it has been drilled in by Education, that that must be based on theory). (*Els)

3.2.5 Draw conclusions

Reflection in this context focused on determining whether particular actions need to be done better or need to be improved in the future. Reflection as a way to identify where one can develop certain skills, what one could do differently or how to change once behaviour was articulated by two participants:

> "*That affects my feelings, thoughts, and sometimes my actions. I think of what I would or wouldn't do in a similar situation. Then, I think if next time I would act differently in a similar situation, but mostly what I would want to do and what I expect to change for myself thereby, but sometimes also for the other.*" (*Els)

> *"Reflection is a way for me to see if I should change my behaviour and how I could and would."*
> *(Nicole)*

Gerard, like other participants, explained reflection as a way to identify alternatives for behaviour and ways to apply these alternatives in future situations. He highlights that reflection in his view is a way to find out what can be applied in a situation, without necessarily having to rely on theoretical abstract knowledge. Reflection should focus on learning how to integrate theory and practice and on learning directly applicable knowledge for practical situations. His quotes highlight this:

> *"(...) what could be better in the future and hereby determine alternatives from which a choice can be made."*

> *"I want to learn from practical experiences and preferably in an inductive way, thus from concrete to abstract. I'm more interested in practical applications than in abstract theories."*

> *"(...) application of knowledge, in particular learning what is directly applicable in a practical situation."*

Participants' quotes show that they agree on that reflection asks for willingness to examine one's own role in a situation. In their view on reflection participants show they support the view that reflection occurs on several stages. This reflects the key elements of reflection according to Schön (1983): active engagement in intellectual processes, exploration of problems or experiences, and a subsequent changed perspective or new insights.

The findings in this superordinate theme demonstrated the many ways in which participants understand reflection. This theme ties into the next one, because from their description about reflection it became apparent that for many participants, the focus was on analysis of problematic situations.

3.3   Superordinate theme: Engaging in reflective activities

The superordinate theme *Engaging in reflective activities* describes participants' experiences once they have started with reflective activities.
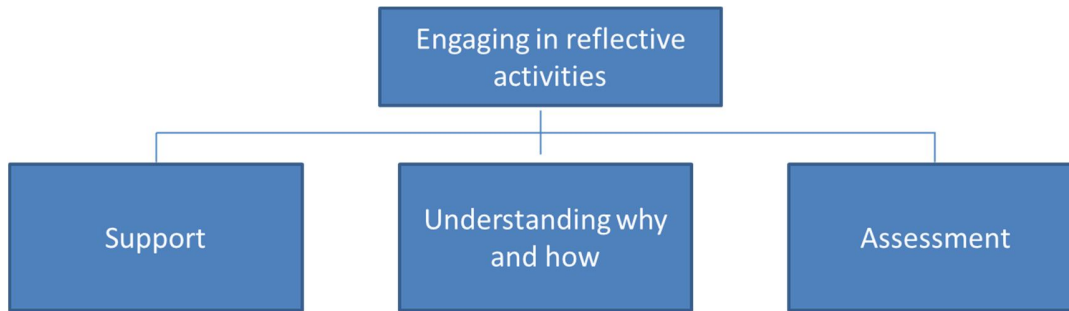
Figure 6: Superordinate theme Engaging in reflective activities

3.3.1 Support

Participants indicate that they are required to reflect on their experiences using frameworks. The HAN developed a reflection framework, *Reflection model Opleidingskunde (*Appendix D*),* to help students go beyond description of their practice and focus on identifying and explaining issues in their practice. With the framework, the HAN intended to support the students in developing more in-depth and detailed explanations of their practice. Other currently used frameworks are the reflection model Korthagen (Figure 3) and Kolb Learning cycle (Kolb, 1984). The use of a framework for reflection is proven to be useful; participants are pleased with the structure provided by the frameworks. The following quotes illustrate this point:

"I actually use the model from Korthagen. Anyway, we must reflect in the programme on the basis of a reflection model. The use of this model is also encouraged in the programme. On the one hand it gives direction to write your reflection report in a structured way ..... on the other hand it also takes away some creativity. What I like about this model, is that there are actually five steps to follow and you can shape these yourself. Other models, as an example STARR, I find somewhat inconsistent and sometimes they have a lot of questions and steps which I personally seem to lose the way." (Irma)

"A reflection model helps me to analyse a situation well. Now I prefer Korthagen myself, more because I haven't yet tried STARR or KOLB. I figured out Korthagen and I know how to reflect. The model gives me, in particular structure while reflecting and helps me with the sort of questions that I want/need to ask myself each step." (Els)

"I think it is important to work with an own model, that suits me. Now that I have acquainted with Korthagen, I find it nice to use it. Korthagen is based on breaking patterns. And Kolb is more on the practical experience. I notice, that with the model based on Korthagen and provided by the Education programme, I don't reflect in a cycle. You're going to reflect on the basis of a situation." (Nicole)

While participants are satisfied with the framework, there are issues concerning the requirement of answering specific questions that may seem rigid. Irma's quote illustrates this point:

"A reflection is also your experience and your story, if you need to take a closer look at this and need to pull it apart because in a model there are certain steps or questions, sometimes the essence can get lost I think." (Irma)

The participants indicate that the HAN introduced the *Reflection model Opleidingskunde,* but did not teach the students how to interpret the questions or how to respond to them. This was consistent with Els, who experienced a lack of clarity when she started using the framework.

"In the beginning of the programme I did miss some explanation, what exactly was expected from me. It occurred to me that in my previous education programme (...) the same models were used, but the expectation of what you needed to tell was much lower/less deep." (Els)

The provision of a framework does not automatically improve the quality of one's reflection. Gerard indicates that when he use a framework to guide his reflection, he experiences a reactive learning process and he finds himself moving in the same cycle.

"Before this I have used a model such as STARR, Korthagen or Kolb, whereas I (still) have no preference. With these models, primarily a reactive process on paper happens with me. I knew well how to learn from mistakes (single loop), but remained too long in this phase. From my surroundings I got little to no advice or help on how I could get out there the best way. I kept spinning around in circles on the same level."

He reflects further:

The Education department offers reflection, according to Kolb, only for one learning style, and that's just not my preference.

Another supporting tool is the e-learning course on reflection that is offered by the HAN. The e-learning course is considered a fun and useful tool to understand the basics. The following quotes illustrate this point:

"I find the e-learning course accessible; technically some things could be improved. But substantively, I realized what was expected from me by the HAN concerning reflection on the different levels. The online course (...) provides guidelines between the different levels, which helps me." (Els)

"I followed the e-learning. It gave me a good insight into how to reflect. In particular, by indicating what not to do when you're reflecting. I received no new information, since I had already read reflection guide. For me, the e-learning course is a pleasant way to gain knowledge, because it's more visual." (Nicole)

"In itself, they did this nicely. On the other hand I find it a description of Korthagen's reflection model, thus so far it doesn't add much further for me." (Irma)

Els identified peer support as an important part of her reflective experience. She decided to ask support from an experienced peer when she got a low grade for a reflective assignment:

"I sat down with a classmate who is very good at reflecting. She asked me questions, and we used those questions to reflect on one of my situations together. In the same week the e-learning course (...) from the HAN was mentioned to me. (It is a pity it was available only in February instead of in September, but anyway, that's how it turned.). Following the module and the conversation with my classmate, it became clear to me what was expected from me. The amply sufficient assessment confirmed that."

Asking support from a peer reflects the three attitudes Dewey (1933) identified as prerequisite for reflective thinking. Els displayed *wholeheartedness* by approaching a peer without fear of being judged. By actively seeking for support she displayed *open-mindedness* in exploring other perspectives. By wanting to learn from a knowledgeable peer, as a professional she showed *responsibility* for improving her practice.

Another issue with support was the lack of specific or more detailed information, feedback and guidance from teachers. Gerard reported that a lack of guidance resulted in low grades or failing in first assignments. Sometimes feedback provided by teachers did not provide the clarity he needed, which lead to frustration. His following quotes illustrate this point:

> "On my cry for help, I was referred to literature and the e-learning course developed by HAN (several times by different teachers). You guessed it, this not what I prefer also."

> "After I received written feedback on my reflection reports, I didn't know what I did wrong, or what I did well.

> (...) the lack of a level provision, guidance; and not hearing a cry for help are the ingredients for insufficient results.

3.3.2 Understanding why and how

Participants struggle with understanding why they need to reflect and how reflective practice may be of benefit. Gerard's quote illustrates this:

> *"To me, reflecting over the past three years means the most effort for the least return."*

Gerard struggled with not knowing how to proceed once he had written his experiences. Negative experiences with reflective practice led to feelings of being lost and a negative attitude against reflective practice:

> *" (...) I lingered for a long time in my outer world. I knew well how to learn from mistakes (single loop), but stayed too long at this stage swimming. From my surroundings I got little to no guidance or help on how I could get out there the best. In a sense, I remained turning around in a circle on the same level."*

> *For me reflecting is also swimming with a request for help."*

> *A feeling of find-it-out-yourself got to me. I was unable to find a connection with what the programme required from me in relation to reflection. Due to this negative experience, I developed an aversion to reflection."*

> *I dug deeper into my iceberg personality due to a form of helplessness, because at a certain point it started gnawing away my self-confidence. "Is this the intention of reflection?" I'm sure it is not, because then I'm going to associate reflection with a negative feeling. Learning should be fun above all, pfffft ...... not.*

> *"Reflecting in my eyes was a paper tiger and looked up against it."*

In addition to feeling lost in this reflective process Gerard indicated that a pivotal learning experience served as a catalyst in his reflection process; this pivotal learning experience seemed to motivate him to change the way he reflected. Essentially, triggered by this personal learning experience, Gerard found himself reflecting and he managed to improve the quality of his reflection process:

"In the process of getting to know myself better, I have learned to formulate initiatives out of this reactive process. For a long time, I lingered in my outer world. To move from the outside world to the inside world, during an investigation into mourning and the mourning process I came across a spiritual approach. This appealed to me and this is what I needed for my inner reflection and what I've missed. Inner reflection is helping me, a living being, to become aware of the present movements of my soul. What inspires me? Where do my passion and motivation come from? Why am I committed to a respectful relationship and approach?

The shift in reflective thinking for Gerard involved an individual process of capturing his own interpretation of a learning event. It brought him readiness to reflect, an affective element described by Taylor (2010). Taylor (2010, p. 66) explains that readiness to reflect comes from "silence within oneself", "knowledge of concepts and a willingness to practice skills" and it when a person "takes time, makes time, makes efforts, is determined, has the courage, and knows how to use humour". Gerard's quote highlights this:

"Inspired acting, (being) as an educational consultant, facilitator, educator, coach, trainer, and advisor but above all as a human being, is not possible without a spiritual antenna for your own soul, in my opinion. By diving very deep into the iceberg (McClelland), rediscovering myself, listen to myself and really come home, I know the origin, who I am, and I am better able to act pro-active. This form of (deep) inner reflection gives me much more than the, in my eyes, superficial reflection [reflection based on a framework]."

"This spiritually reflecting, to me it means seeking silence, taking a walk in nature, reading poetry or mystical texts. I call this spiritually reflecting and for me it forms an interface between two worlds. On one side, the scientific world of measuring and knowing, of counting and classifying, of designing and advice. On the other side, the poetic world of not knowing, not understanding and not catching, but longing. For me, reflecting on this level especially means deep thinking to oneself."

3.3.3 Assessment

The quality of students' reflections is configured by assessment criteria and professional standards (Appendix E: Toetskader Reflecteren). Participants reported they are required to reflect on a range of topics or situations and on their development. These reflections involve writing about thoughts, feelings, attitudes and experiences. The written reflections need to be submitted and are assessed and 'judged' by teachers. Participants understand that assessment is an important part of their reflective journey. They experienced that assessments are a useful way to learn how to review what happened or how to question themselves and can be a valuable moment for feedback:
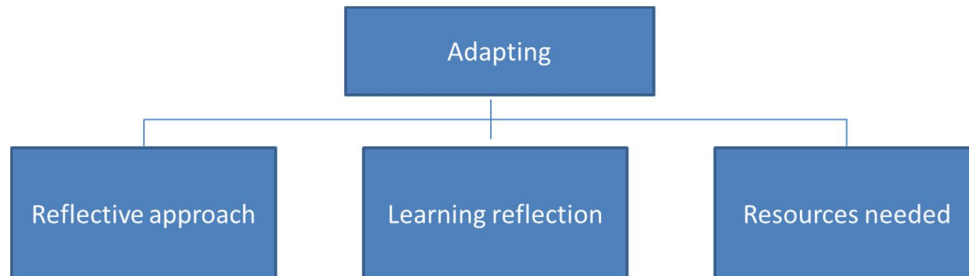
"The moment I got an F for a reflection report, it was clear to me that I did it incomplete." (Els)

While participants differ in terms of that what improves the quality of their reflections, they do agree on the need to question themselves. Gerard wonders how he should be assessed in his personal reflections. He questions if assessment of a written reflection is a good way to assess his reflective capacity.

"How do you assess reflective ability? How do you assess reflection on my professional identity, my learning competence and my personal effectiveness? With a reflection report?"

This theme demonstrated that students participate in a lot of obligatory reflective activities in their journey to become educational professionals. The nature of these activities, the increase of skills and knowledge, the emotional impact of these experiences and other personal experiences should develop an understanding of why reflective practice should be encouraged and supported. This theme also highlighted the need for support and guidance, especially when students get stuck in the reflection process. When negative thoughts arise as a result of reflection Boud et al (1985) suggest that some form of cathartic discussion is needed.

3.4   Superordinate theme: Adapting

```
                    ┌─────────────────────┐
                    │      Adapting       │
                    └─────────────────────┘
          ┌──────────────┼──────────────┐
┌──────────────────┐ ┌──────────────────┐ ┌──────────────────┐
│ Reflective approach│ │ Learning reflection│ │  Resources needed │
└──────────────────┘ └──────────────────┘ └──────────────────┘
```

The superordinate theme *Adapting* describes what students acknowledge as being important aspects of engaging in reflective activities and what is needed to continue reflective practice activities. Participants are overall satisfied with the opportunities embedded in the learning activities. Most of the participants indicated a desire to continue reflective activities.

3.4.1 Learning reflection

The subordinate theme *Learning reflection* represents the view whether and how one can learn how to reflect and how one can learn how to improve the quality reflection process. Learning how to reflect in this context focused on the question if reflection is a skill that one can acquire and how reflective practice can lead to change via self-awareness.

Irma doubts whether reflection is a skill and therefore if it can learned:

> *"I wonder if reflection is a skill. I think that having insight into something cannot be taught."*

She identifies insight in the concept of reflection as the key to enhance reflective skills. To gain insight one can use tools, ask for advice or answer questions. This could improve the level of the reflective process. The quality of the reflective process is also connected to self-awareness. Irma illustrates this:

> *I do think that if you get more insights into something, your awareness grows making it easier to reflect on a deeper level. Moreover, I wonder whether it's different for every situation. In every situation there are possible new blind spots for yourself and therefore sometimes you can clearly reflect on one situation while on another situation your reflection will be shallower. But then, on the other hand, it is the purpose of reflecting to figure that out. Perhaps for me this is the conclusion: you can learn how to reflect, but above all, you can learn by your own awareness.*

Irma's doubt is supported by Moon (1999) who argues that reflection should not be perceived by the students to be a new or different skill. It should become part of the learning process. Moon suggests that classroom activities which encourage reflection on the students own learning skills and abilities should be part of their general learning and that techniques such as peer and self-assessment could help facilitate reflective abilities.

Gerard reflects on his own experience of being a supervisee to reflect on how he thinks reflection should be learned. He explains how a reflective report can be improved through the provision of feedback:

> *"Reflection reports initially look like travel reports, and 'then this' and 'then that'. Feedback on errors is to improve the content and less on the process that is happening inside the person. The next steps are often individually. With every individual I go more and more into the process and deeper into the iceberg."*

Gerard articulates that learning how to improve the quality of the reflection process can be achieved by asking *"yourself the right questions, which I believe is the crux. This can be learned (...)."*

Gerard reflects further showing that he realizes that his reflective approach is not suitable for everyone and that it is important to offer different approaches.

> *"Well, my solution is not the best solution and that is my biggest concern at the form of reflection that is provided to us at the HAN."*

In saying this, he reflects the ideology that some learners may have a learning style that predisposes them towards reflection (Kolb, 1984), so different approaches may be required with different students.

3.4.2 Reflective approach

Participants spoke about their preferences for a reflective approach that would match their own learning styles and learning needs.

Irma highlights that she would prefer a reflection method that matches the learning style of every student. She prefers an oral method, because this provides opportunities for a more in-depth inquiry. This can lead to a more affective reflection process by involving emotions and feelings.

> *"Maybe find another method that is more suited for students."*

> *"Oral reflection, in which there is room for in-depth questions. So you are more likely to feel and learn how reflection is." (Irma)*

Gerard reflects on his experience in a course when he articulates how he likes to learn. He highlights how reflection is designed in the current courses and on the sort of guidance he would benefit from the most.

> *"For every learning unit it is determined on what subjects one should reflect. The professional competences are central here. I think this works fine, it's clear and it gives direction. Besides, there remains plenty of room for additions here and to transfer them to meaningful situations. What I do miss are the criteria for a meaningful situation."*

For Gerard a nurturing, supportive environment is important, a safe place where he is able to explore his reflecting process:

> *"When I was typing your question, words crossed my mind immediately. Words that I have heard or read about in recent years in the Education programme: baseline assessment, provide customized service, the individual central, and inquiry based learning. When designing or developing educational documents it was appreciated that these concepts were applied. During the Proof of competence a crawl-walk-run approach was used. I came in crawling and was taken by the hand into the process of my proof of competence. During the weeks and the course meetings I learned how to walk and practiced at home a lot. After I finished the course I continued running. Sometimes I fell, but my supervisor was always there to help me. Finally I am able to get up in the morning, walk outside and go for a run without falling. Next year I am a skilled and independently operating educational consultant, able to apply everything I have learned. I have missed this learning process in reflecting."*

Gerard is aware of his needs and he highlights his preference of learning experientially and elaborates on this further:

> *"I want to learn from practical experiences and preferably in an inductive way, thus from concrete to abstract. I'm more interested in practical applications than in abstract theories."*

"As (...) an adult part time student I prefer application of knowledge, in particular learning what is directly applicable in a practical situation."

Gerard also expressed the need for personal contact, a step-by-step approach and the provision of feedback when he explained how he coaches junior colleagues in their reflective journey. He emphasized the important role that feedback play in this:

My practical example: When I explain reflection in an abstract way, the majority of learners in my workplace look at me as with a question mark above their heads. I pick up this signal, let them read not so good examples and ask them to comment. So there is personal contact. I approach this positively and allow them to make improvements in small groups. This is presented to the group and voilà, the first attempt is made within two hours. After this I tell them to write down a meaningful event and I discuss this with each individual. On the basis of a detailed reflection model (...) that includes prepared questions, I let them make a reflection report, which they send me by e-mail. I provide them with feedback and then we can take the next step." (Gerard)

Gerard also expressed that he would like the approach to be demand-driven. The learner should be allowed to take initiative in the learning process, while being offered structural guidance during the whole academic journey:

"In my eyes it should be clear beforehand what the objective (s) of the reflection assignment is (are). I'd like to know myself, what the benefit is to draw my intrinsic motivation from. For an educational institution it is important that there are concrete criteria for an assignment. How are we going to measure and what are we going to measure. Learners could profit from discussing customized reflection assignments with a supervisor. I think of an exploration of reflection methods and options. Which reflection method suits me best? Determine together which one is going to be selected to serve the reflective preference from the learner. Guidance in the reflection process on the entire performance during the learning process of the study, not per learning unit but interdisciplinary. This will give room to respond on slow demands. Besides the professional competencies you could think of questioning the identity of an educational consultant. Questions like: What would an educational consultant do? What would an educational consultant just not do? What is a good educational consultant in your eyes? What do you think are the criteria for an educational consultant?"

Nicole found that learning how to reflect required hands-on training opportunities that are based on a cyclic reflective process:

"A good reflection assignment is one that makes you look back on your own thinking (beliefs), feelings and doing on the basis of a practice/learning situation. And that you start experimenting and doing on the basis of learning. And then you reflect on this, so that as a result a cycle starts"

She proposed a structured course in early stage of the programme as a way to develop reflective skills:

A learning course dedicated to reflection (combined with writing a theoretical underpinning) at the beginning of the programme. How do you do that? What theories are there? What models can you use? Four lessons on reflection and four theoretical underpinnings." (...) in which you compare different theories with each other."

3.4.3 Resources needed

Resources that are needed to support reflective practice are described in different ways, but most indicate that structure and guidance are needed.

Els described the idea of structured reflective assignments:

I notice that I like it when a reflection consists of several steps, making it clear in which order I can best reflect on a situation. And if there are a number of questions asked in a reflection assignment, it encourages me to go in-depth sufficiently. That way, reflective thinking is switched on in my case and I find it easier to ask other questions thereby."

Els indicated the use of examples as being very helpful:

"An example of someone else's reflection always helps me well. Then I know what is expected of me: what kind of questions and what kind of answers are involved in reflection? By reading a brief example, I can relate the necessary elements from reflection to my own reflection"

Nicole liked the idea of being able to reflect in peer groups through intervision.

"I think intervision is a good way to reflect to. Educators should stimulate students by providing opportunities to form intervision groups through Scholar [learning management system]. If necessary, there could be a kick-off with a supervisor."

Gerard identified structured mentoring and guidance as helpful resources to support reflection. Guidance and mentoring could decrease gradually according to the learners' needs and growth. He prefers that guidance and mentoring should be based on personal contact between the learner and the mentor and to keeps things practical:

"At the start of the study, guidance should be provided. Guidance decreases gradually according to more independency of the learner. This depends on the learner. Initial contact should be personal and my preference is to maintain this personal contact. There could be chosen for written contact, but this will become a paper tiger."

Gerard prefers a form of assessments where he can reflect on his professional work through his beliefs and values.

"With regard to assessment, at first I think of an assessment before a review of a written document that will be marked. Personally, I think I could make a combination with professional ethics. Moral (self) reflection can easily be combined and within this there could be a search for the own identity with reflection questions for such as: What values are important to you in your (future) profession? What values do you see reflected in our Dutch culture? What values have been provided to you in your education? What values in themselves are important for you"

3.5   Chapter summary

In this Chapter, I presented the findings of the study. I used interpretative phenomenological analysis in order to understand the participants' experience; I interviewed four participants to understand their experiences better.

Through the semi-structured interviews, three superordinate themes were listed: Understanding of reflection, Engagement in reflective activities and Adapting. I presented each theme along with its subthemes. The findings indicated that participants have a good conceptual understanding of the reflection process. Reflective practice is considered a challenging emotional learning experience that includes a variety of feelings, both negative and positive, and most participants insisted on the importance of guidance and support in this process. Participants acknowledge that reflective practice is an important aspect of becoming a professional and they care for opportunities to practice and develop their reflective skills.

In the following Chapter, I will discuss the findings related to literature, future research, and implications for education and practice.

4 Discussion

4.1 Introduction

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to understand the experiences of students who are engaged in reflective activities in an educational setting, from their own perspective. This was carried out through analysing semi-structured interviews using an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA).

Few qualitative studies have examined how students experience being engaged in reflective activities, and it was therefore hoped that the current study would add to existing knowledge in this area. The main research question was:

What is the experience of being engaged in reflective activities in an educational setting from the perspective of students?

The following areas were explored in relation to the main research questions.
- How the participants currently describe the concept of reflection
- Whether participants experience changes in their view of reflection as a result of reflective practice
- The participants view on the role of instruction programs on acquiring reflective skills
- The participants view on faculty's support and guidance during reflective activities
- The participants view on reflective assignments in the development of reflective skills
- The participants view and experiences' regarding what is needed for reflective practice.

This Chapter sets out to discuss the findings of the study in relation to existing theory. It further provides an exploration of the significance of the study, implications for practice, methodological issues and suggestions for future research. The Chapter closes with a final reflexive commentary.

4.2 The findings and existing literature

4.2.1 Understanding of reflection

Reflected in the findings is participants' good understanding of the concept of reflection. Participants make a connection between reflection and personal development that includes raising self-confidence, improving knowledge and learning from mistakes (Reynolds and Vince, 2004). Participants described a reflection process that consists of several steps; this reflects the way the reflection process is described in most common reflection models (Rogers, 2001). Rogers (2001) in his analysis of seven influential models of reflection revealed four key requirements for reflection according to the reflection models: (1) active engagement on the part of the individual; (2) unusual or perplexing situations or experiences; (3) examination one's responses, beliefs, and premises in light of the situation at hand; (4) integration of the new understanding into one's experience.

Within this theme, the participants all agreed that reflection involves taking a step back to look at a situation or an event. This view marks an important aspect of how students conceptualise reflection. Most participants were not able to describe the concept of reflection without thinking about or looking at a particular event, like they needed a point to define the parameters from. The focus on an event or an experience can also be the result of the guiding questions used in reflection models. These guiding questions require the student to recollect a specific event or situation as a starting point for their reflection. This is also consistent with the view that unusual or perplexing situations trigger reflection.

Participants shared the view that to give meaning to what happened, one should consciously review the situation without judgement. Participants explained this as a way of observing their behaviour or their actions, with the notion that that more insights is gained when one dispenses judgement based on past experience (Huston, 2007). When participants described the examination of thoughts, believes assumptions & opinions, they focused on conceptions of what had gone badly and what had gone well. Reflection was mostly described as looking back to identify weak points in order to understand what had happened in order to meet specified criteria.

The participants' accounts revealed the use of literature and feedback from others to inform improvement of their performance. Asking feedback on one's performance can be seen as a way of gaining a different perspective on a situation (Scharmer & Kaufer, 2013). This requires an open mind, an open heart, and an open will. An open mind makes us able to suspend old habits of thought, an open heart lets us empathize, or see a situation through the eyes of someone else and with an open will, we can let go and let the new come (Scharmer & Kaufer, 2013). Dewey (1933) argues that the four attitudes required for reflection are directness, open-mindedness, responsibility and whole-heartedness. These attitudes should drive individuals toward a critical examination of their own practice. For a novice educational professional it means being able to trust the validity of the own experience without spending a lot of time worrying about the judgements of others, trusting in the validity of one's own experience without spending a lot of time worrying about the judgements of others; being willing to consider more than one side of an argument and fully embrace and attend to alternative possibilities, carefully consider the consequences of actions and willingness to accept those consequences and approach each situation with a view to learning something new.

Participants recognize particular strengths and weaknesses in their knowledge and understanding and adapt their response not just to improve but to understand and find alternative approaches to resolve new and existing problems. The findings revealed that participants consider examination of their role in relation to others, and their own personality or background as a part of their reflection process. This involves thinking about how feedback from others informs what students knew about themselves and their individual style of learning.

In the context of the present study, the participants' description the reflection process appear to remain in the lower hierarchical levels or stages of the reflection process, the content and the process levels according to Mezirow (2000) or level 1 and 2 according to the competence levels described by the HAN (Appendix C). Mezirow (2000) argued that by far the most significant learning experience in adulthood involves critical self-reflection, this is a higher level of reflection. Critical reflection requires reassessing the way we have posed problems and reassessing our own orientation to perceiving, knowing, believing, feeling and acting. It is concerned with the reasons for and the consequences of what we do. Participants consider reflection as a way to identify where one can develop certain skills, what one could do differently or how one could change one's behaviour. One participant suggested that the aim of this is to learn how to integrate theory and practice. This reflects the key elements of reflection according to Schön (1983): active engagement in intellectual processes, exploration of problems or experiences, and a subsequent changed perspective or new insights.

4.2.2 Engaging in reflective activities

In order to engage in reflection, active participation of an individual is required (e.g. Moon 2004; Procee 2006; Schön 1983). The findings highlight how the participants' ability to reflect evolved through a combination of skills, self-evaluation, knowledge, learning, peer support and understanding one's own strength. The participants consistently described that learning how to reflect includes experiencing a variety of feelings, both negative and positive. Some participants felt unprepared and lacked skills needed to make sense of their reflective activities.

Most participants explained they completed reflections because they had to as part of the curriculum and internships, not because of the value they placed on the process. This may negatively affect one of the

main functions of reflection, which is learning from one's own experiences (Dewey 1993; Procee 2006; Schön 1983). An important goal of reflective activities is that students learn how to understand themselves, how they have learnt during self-development and how they can apply that learning to practical scenarios. Participant described how they struggled with understanding why they need to reflect and how reflective practice may be of benefit. Negative experiences with reflection appeared to have led to feelings of being lost and a negative attitude against reflective practice. It is common that students who are engaged in reflective practice in an educational process experience a level of confusion and doubt. Dirkx and Mezirow (2006) explained how personally relevant learning experiences that we find personally meaningful, may challenge our existing ways of thinking, believing, or feeling at a deep and fundamental level. Because these kinds of learning experiences are also deeply emotional, evoking powerful feelings, such as fear, grief, loss, regret, and anger, but also sometimes joy, wonder, and awe, they may leave us feeling deeply moved or shaken to our core. These personally meaningful learning experiences represent what Mezirow (2000) referred to as a 'disorienting dilemma' in his transformative learning theory. Mezirow (2000) argues that a disorienting dilemma makes us realize that our current frames or reference are not working productively and that reflection is needed to make meaning. To make meaning we have to bring order to the experience and integrate it with what we know. This will help us to avoid the threat of chaos and the anxiety we experience when we are not able to understand our environment within the light of our previous experiences (Mezirow, 2000). For Mezirow (2000), learning could be considered transformative if it caused the learner to restructure the frames of reference built up over a lifetime of cultural assimilation.

Korthagen and Vasalos (2005) emphasize that successful (core) reflection is difficult without guidance and support and that guidance leads to better understanding of the reflection process. However, the findings raise questions of how students are supported in their reflective practice by teachers. Participants often did not feel that adequate support, guidance and preparation in order to promote and support reflective practice (Dewey, 1933; Korthagen, 2005; Procee, 2006) were provided by the teachers. The framework for reflection provided by the HAN is proven to be useful; it provided participants a forum for and an awareness of reflection. While the framework allowed participants to begin examining their practice, it did not support them in becoming autonomously critically reflective about their practice. Participants indicated they needed coaching on how to reflect on their practice, using the framework. That also included guidance in making connections among their beliefs, their practice and standards for their practice (Leijen, Lam, Wildschut, Simons & Admiraal, 2009).

One participant indicated that the use of the framework led to single-loop learning. With single-loop learning, according to Argyris and Schön (1974), the underlying causes of a problem are neither recognized nor addressed. This is an ineffective when one wants to change his behaviour, because the underlying assumptions that reinforce the ineffective behaviors are never examined. Double-loop learning examines these underlying assumptions, as part of the problem-solving process (Argyris and Schön, 1974), resulting in an understanding of these underlying assumptions. With this knowledge in hand, the practitioner begins with reconceptualization (Argyris and Schön, 1974). Reflection based on analysis within the framework should lead to double-loop learning. The guiding questions within the framework should foster the depth of reflection and ensure that students address a range of issues, however, there should be a balance between providing more guidance to encourage students to reflect more deeply and giving them freedom to use the reflection in a way they find most helpful. This reflects Procee's (2006; p. 249) argument that "reflection in education is a unique activity. It demands, on the one hand, that students adopt an "autonomous" attitude and, on the other, that teachers adopt a "coaching" attitude".

Another supporting tool is the e-learning course provided by the HAN. The e-learning course is considered a useful tool to understand how to use the reflection framework. Participants indicated that they might have also responded differently to the reflective framework questions if they had been introduced to e-learning module before they started with reflective activities in the first year of their study. The e-learning course was provided to them during the academic year. Having additional time with the e-learning course might have provided the participants with a deeper understanding of the framework.

Support from peers is much more significant in reflective practice than I originally understood; this was experienced by one participant. This is supported by the idea that, in addition to the requirements of active involvement, reflection needs to happen in a community, in interaction with others (Dewey 1933; Procee

2006). Sharing reflective experiences will support learning from others ideas and perspectives. This helps individuals to develop their own perspectives further. According to Carrington and Robinson (2006) getting into dialogue with a trusted friend can uncover the deeper aspects of thinking that are needed for a higher level of reflection. This reflects Hatton and Smith's (1995) findings that those who based writing on dialogue with a critical friend demonstrated a higher level of reflection.

The quality of students' reflections is configured by assessment criteria, frameworks for reflection and professional standards (Appendix C: Toetskader Reflecteren). Participants explained that assessments are an integral part of their reflective practice. While participants differ in terms of that what improves the quality of their reflections, they do agree on the need to question themselves in order to improve their skills and professional behaviour. Assessments can be considered valuable moments for feedback, that motivate students by recognising the effort they put in reflective activities (Creme, 2005). However, the literature shows there is no agreement on the use of assessment. Research undertaken by Hatton and Smith (1995) explains the significant influence of assessments on students' reflection. In this research, student teachers were asked to reflect on their school-based experiences, one group was required to write a reflective essay that was to be assessed, another engaged in debrief sessions with a member of staff trained to prompt reflective thinking and a third discussed personal experiences with their peers. The findings showed that in the relatively open context of peer discussion the most reflection took place, the debrief session with a member of staff enabled some reflection, whereas the assessment context had a constraining influence on the student teachers' reflection. This effect of assessment on reflection is supported by others researchers. Boud and Walker (1998) emphasize that the combination of asking students to be vulnerable and assessing them within the same task can undermine reflection and promote self-censorship. Creme (2005) argues that assessment of reflection kills off the very qualities that reflection is intended to foster. She continues that because reflective writing frees the writer up to experiment with self-construction, it deserves an interested, empathetic and most importantly non-judgemental reader. Creme (2005) proposes that reflective writing should be encouraged through formative feedback.

4.2.3 Adapting

Participants spoke about their preferences for a reflective approach that would match their own learning styles and learning needs, to indicate whether and how they want to continue reflective activities. This is consistent with previous research that reflection activities should be varied in order to address different learning styles (Eyler, Giles, Schmeide, 1996) and that the design of reflective activities can influence the learning outcome (Bringle & Hatcher, 1999). It also reflects the view that students should be taught how to reflect when they start with reflective activities and that the amount of guidance and structure should depend on the student's reflective skills and learning style (Dubinsky, 2006; Freidus, 1997). Students with less experience and skills may need more highly structured reflection activities, while students who are comfortable in the reflection process may experience highly structured reflection activities as restrictive. An interesting finding that raises questions about the way reflection is currently integrated in the curriculum is the participants' desire for a separate structured course on the development of reflective skills in the first years of the programme. From the literature we learn that this could support the development of reflective skills from a surface level toward a deeper level (Taylor-Haslip, 2010; Hill, Davidson & Theodoros, 2012). It may be interesting in the future to look at how reflective practice in an educational context could be shaped to fit students' needs.

4.3   Implications and recommendations

In this section, I present how reflective practice in an educational context could be shaped based on the findings of the study. These implications do not only apply for HAN University, but also for higher education in general. With the context of the study (Chapter 1), I have provided a portrait of reflective practice in an (higher) educational setting. This makes it possible for readers to judge the relevance of the following implications to other settings.

4.3.1 Implications for education

Students need to develop deeper levels of critical thinking or reflection in order to question their professional values, beliefs, assumptions and understandings of their professional practice. This will result in the development of their own authentic understandings and perspectives of being a professional. To facilitate students' reflective needs the right way, may require a shift in the reflective approach. Perhaps the focus should be on the development of a reflective environment, that encourages students to adopt a reflctive stance to their future profession. Educators need to consider what is needed to meet the reflective needs of students highlighted in this study.

Reflection is more than a rational proces based on a reflection model. The findings have shown that when a model is used, it is important that all students understand the model to engage in reflective practice fully. I would recommend that before students start with reflective activities they should start with learning what reflection is (Korthagen & Vasalos, 2005). Educators are responsible for educating students about reflection, reflection theories and approaches. Part of the meaning making of an experience involves understanding why one needs to reflect. Educators can help students understand how reflection is defined or what is meant by reflection (or preferably critical or core reflection as discussed in Chapter 1), what the benefits of reflection are, and how a reflection model should be used in order to structure and deepen reflections This will prevent students from just answering each question in a model, and eventually deepen their understanding of the reflection process.

Reflection involves feelings, instincts and spirituality. Students should be encouraged to further develop their reflective skills. The way participants in this study described the reflection process, they did not directly address critical reflection levels or the hierarchical levels taught by the HAN. In order to reach a higher or more critical level of reflection or to reach core reflection, educators may need to teach or coach students on how to deepen their reflections (Dubinsky, 2006; Dewey, 1933; Mezirow, 2000; Korthagen & Vasalos, 2005). This may require a review of the curriculum concerning reflection. Students need sufficient opportunities to reflect on their becoming as educational professionals. It should be clear to students what key competencies, attitudes, content areas, or skills they need in their future profession and how reflective exercise can help them integrate this new learning with existing knowledge. This means that there should be explicit learning goals for reflective practice. Reflective skill building should preferably be an explicit focus of the reflective exercises.

Educators are encouraged to create a conductive learning environment for reflective practice. Reflective exercises should be authentic in order to enhance reflective skills. I am aware that it not always possible to meet individual learners' needs, however the findings suggest that when students are restricted in their reflective practice, they can develop negative feelings towards reflection. Students should be encouraged to examine their reflective preferences in relation to reflection methods, guidance and suport and to explore and adopt reflection strategies that are congruent with their needs.

A support structure can be helpful for students in a reflective process. The finding suggest that shared reflection is better than individual, because others see things the reflectors cannot see (Branch & Paranjape 2002). Students need others to help them re-construct negative feelings that can arise after being engaged in reflective activities. This support structure can be achieved through peer support, supervision and pre-reflective preparation. In addition, structured support and guidance can be offered through evaluation of reflective activities. Feedback motivates and it informs students about their progress (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). Thus, a feedback and evaluation system should be a part of a reflective approach. Peers and supervisors can give feedback individually or in groups. Part of the reflection process is to consider other perspectives of an experience, feedback provides multiple perspectives on the experience and it offers alternative interpretations.

Students don't always have positive experiences with reflection. Negative feelings as a result of reflection can be disturbing and should be adressed in a proper way. The findings suggest that students could gain from reflecting on their practice and understandings of their self and their profession, when teachers supervise them. Therefore, it is recommended that all teachers are encouraged to supervise students in

the development of their reflective practice. Teachers must be trained in the supervisory role and the benefits of their supervisory role for the students.

4.3.2 Suggestions for further research

Research on the reflective experiences of students is scant. For educators more research needs to be done on the facilitation of reflective activities or reflective development of students. Future studies could address the limitations of this study. The sample in my study was limited to students of the HAN University. Another location could produce different findings.

Future studies could also be done focusing on the development of reflective skills from adolescents. It would be interesting to find out more about the experiences of younger students, for example secondary school students, who do not possess the adult capacities needed for critical thinking (Mezirow, 2002) or core reflection (Korthagen & Vasalos, 2005).

4.4   Research issues arising from the study

A potential limitation of this study was the sampling procedure. I requested that the Opleidingskunde department provide names of students who they believed would be willing and able to articulate their reflective experience clearly. Some of these students, however, were not willing to participate in the study. As a result, the recruitment of participants primarily relied on volunteers who were willing to reflect and discuss their experience. After the second interview, I felt comfortable that the participants were indeed reflective and able to articulate their experiences and thus could be considered *information-rich*.

Another potential limitation of this study could be the lack of representativeness and small sample size used. I recruited four participants who were students of the same Education Programme from the HAN University with a sample of three women and one man. Representativeness is not a goal in IPA research; IPA researchers are more interested in producing in-depth analyses of small groups' stories (Smith and Osborn, 2003; Brocki & Wearden, 2006). I am aware that the participants' ability to articulate their reflective experiences and their willingness to share information in an honest and open way may affects the findings. Following Smith's (1999) advice, from an idiographic perspective I looked for patterns across the participants cases, while I tried to acknowledge the specific elements of the individual participant. The themes derived from the four interviews are best understood as part the recalled experiences of the four participants and may be used to view reflective experiences of other students. However, the findings are not necessarily generalizable to or predictive of all students' reflective experiences. The study focused on students who were in a process of professional (educational) development and consequently the findings must be viewed as being temporally and circumstantially situated, as well as being limited by the small, homogeneous sample. IPA sampling, being a purposively broadly homogenous small sample, can provide more interesting perspectives, such as a more personal perspective of the phenomenon within an adequate context (Smith and Osborn, 2003).

Another limitation is that during the study my focus of attention may have been biased, as I am not objective. My preconceptions may have affected the study in every step of the process; when designing the interview guide, during the interviews, in the analyzing of the data and the presentation of it. My focus during the interviews sometimes may have depended on the focus in the interview guide too much, which may have influenced the findings. Therefore, the findings of the study must be regarded as a combination of the researchers' preconceptions and focus of attention, and the participants' responses to these, as well as additional information they have provided.

IPA is without doubt, subjective (Brocki and Wearden, 2006). To address issues related to validity and reliability, Reid, Flowers and Larkin (2005) suggest methodological steps to establish qualitative good practice. In acknowledgement of the interpretative role of the researcher in IPA, I kept self-reflective notes during the research. This was a way for me to identify pre-existing assumptions that I had befor I started analyzing. Following Smith and Osborn's (2003) guidelines, I distinguished between the participants'

original account and my interpretations as a researcher and provided verbatim extracts from the transcripts. This allows the reader to assess the interpretations I made.

4.5   Final reflections

Looking back upon the more than twelve months that I have been engaged in the creation of this thesis, I find that my relationship to the area changed as the interviews progressed, the analysis took shape and finally I got engaged in the writing of the thesis. The separate experiences of the participants along with the combined experiences of this thesis have changed how I look at my own identity as an educational professional. According to Moustakas (1990), a researcher grows self-awareness during a qualitative research process. During the process of analysis and writing the thesis, I realized that most of all I want to become a reflective educational professional. I realize that the proximity of the material and the impact it had on me could be an issue. Knowing that I acknowledge that although some of the participants have gone through a similar reflective experience that I have, does not mean that their experiences are the same as mine. I experienced the analysis of the findings and the writing of this thesis as an exercise in balance between avoiding too many assumptions, yet, still allowing my familiarity with the area to be of use.

As I reflect on my research strategy, I am aware that the philosophical perspective that I have developed during my education and through my profession has influenced it. As an educational professional I see myself as an integrative practitioner who operates from an interpretive and constructivist position, believing that there is no objective and absolute *truth* about anything, there are rather perceptions, ways of seeing and constructions. I believe that this philosophical perspective has heavily influenced my research.

The intention of the research question was to explore students' experiences of reflective activities. Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) seemed a suitable approach for investigating how students are making sense of their personal and professional experiences (Smith and Osborn, 2003). The exploration of the student's experiences has challenged me as a student and as an educational professional. However, I have enjoyed carrying out this phenomenological research method.

REFERENCE LIST

Argyris, M., & Schön, D. (1974). Theory in Practice. *Increasing professional effectiveness*, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Argyris, C., & Shön, D. A. (1996). *Organizational Learning II*, Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.

Attride-Stirling, J. (2001) Thematic networks: an analytic tool for qualitative research. *Qualitative Research* 1: 385-405.

Baeten, J. (2009). *Virtual Action Learning*, *Een opleidingsconcept over Samenlerend Produceren met ICT*. Breda: Citowoz.

Bain, J. D., Mills, C., Ballantyne, R., & Packer, J. (2002) Developing Reflection on Practice Through Journal Writing: impacts of variations in the focus and level of feedback. *Teachers and Teaching, 8* (2), 171 - 196.

Berlin, J. (1987). *Rhetoric and Reality: Writing Instruction in American Colleges, 1900-1985*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 1987

Biggs, J. B. (2003) *Teaching for quality learning at university : what the student does.* Buckingham: SRHE & Open University Press.

Blaikie, N. (2000). *Designing Social research: The Logic of Anticipation*. Cambridge: Polity.

Boud, D. (2001). Using journal writing to enhance reflective practice*. New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education, 90*, 9-17.

Boud, D. (2010). Relocating reflection in the context of practice. Chp 2 in Bradbury, H., Frost, N., Kilminster,S. & Zukas, M. (Eds.) (2010) *Beyond Reflective Practice: New Approaches to Professional Lifelong Learning*. London: Routledge. pp 25-36.

Boud, D., Keogh, R., & Walker, D. (1985) 'What is Reflection in Learning?', in D.Boud, R. Keogh and D. Walker (eds) *Reflection: Turning Experience into Learning,* pp 7-17. London: Kogan Page.

Boud, D., & Walker, D. (1998), Promoting Reflection in Professional Courses: the challenge of Context, *Studies in Higher Education*, Vol. 23, No. 2, 191-206.

Boyd, E., & Fales A. (1983). Reflective learning: the key to learning from experience. *Journal of Humanistic Psychology, 23* (2): 99-117.

Branch, W. T., & Paranjape, A. (2002). Feedback and reflection: Teaching methods for clinical settings. *Academic Medicine, 77*(12), 1185-1188.

Bringle, R. G., & Hatcher, J. A. (1999). *Reflection in service-learning: Making meaning of experience.* Educational Horizons, 77(4), 179-185.

Brocki, J. M., & Wearden, A. J. (2006), A critical evaluation of the use of interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) in health psychology. *Psychology and Health. 21*(1): 87–108 DOI: 10.1080/14768320500230185

Bulman, C., & Schutz, S. (Eds) (2004) *Reflective Practice in Nursing.* Oxford: Blackwell.

Carrington, S., & Robinson, R. (2006). Inclusive school community: Why is it so complex? *International Journal of Inclusive Education, 10,* 323- 334. doi: 10.1080/13603110500256137

Chilban, J. (1996). *Interviewing in Depth: the Interactive-Relational Approach.* Thousand Oaks, California: Sage

Clandinin, D.J., & Cave M.T. (2008). Creating pedagogic spaces for developing doctor professional identity. *Medical Education, 42:765–770.* doi: 10.1111/j.1365-2923.2008.03098.x

Creme, P. (2005). Should student learning journals be assessed? *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education, 30*(3), 287-296.

Creswell, J. W. (1994). Research design*: Qualitative & quantitative approaches.* (15th edn), Sage, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage

Creswell, J. W. (2007) *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (2nd). Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Pearson Education, Inc.

Creswell, J. W. (2009). *Research Design: Qualitative, quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches.* Los Angeles, CA: Sage

Crotty, M. (1998). *The Foundations Of Social Research: Meaning and Perspective in The Research Process.* London: Sage

Dahlberg K., Drew N., & Nystrom M. (2008). *Reflective lifeworld research.* (2nd edn), Studentlitteratur, Sweden.

Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (1985). The General Causality Orientations Scale: Self-Determination in Personality. *Journal of Research in Personality, 19,* 109–134.

Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (2002). Overview of Self-Determination Theory: An Organismic Dialectical Perspective. In E. L. Deci, & R. M. Ryan (Eds.), *Handbook of Self-Determination Research* (pp. 3- 33). New York: The University of Rochester Press.

Dewey, J. (1910). *How We Think.* Boston. D.C. Heath

Dewey, J. (1966)*. Democracy and Education: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Education.* New York: Free Press. (originally published in 1916).

Dewey, J. (1933). *How We Think.* Boston. D.C. Heath

Dewey, J. (1993). How we Think: *A Restatement of the Relation of Reflective Thinking to the Educative Process.* Boston: D. C. Heath.

Dirkx, J. M., Mezirow, J., & Cranton, P. (2006). Musings and reflections on the meaning, context, and process of transformative learning: A dialogue between John M. Dirkx and Jack Mezirow. *Journal of Transformative Education, 4*(2), 123-139

Dochy, F., Segers, M., & Buehl, M. M. (1999). The relation between assessment practices and outcomes of studies: The case of research on prior knowledge. *Review of Educational Research, 69*(2), 145–186.

Dowling, M. (2007). From Husserl to van Manen. A review of different phenomenological approaches. *International Journal of Nursing Studies, 44*, 131-142.

Dubinsky, J. (2006). The Role of Reflection in Service Learning. *Business Communication Quarterly*, 69, 3, 306-311.

European Commission (2008). *The European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (EQF).* Belgium.

Eyler, J., Giles, D. E., Jr., & Schmiede, A. (1996). *A practitioner's guide to reflection in service-learning.* Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University

Eyler, J. (2001). Creating Your Reflection Map. *New Directions for Higher Education*, 114,.35-43.

Finlay, L. (2009). Debating phenomenological research methods. *Phenomenology & Practice, 3*(1), 6-25.

Freidus, H. (1997). *Reflection in Teaching: Development Plus.* Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association. Chicago, IL: March 24-28.

Gibbs, G. (1988). *Learning by doing.* London: Further Education Unit.

Gibbs, G. R. (2007). Analyzing qualitative data. In U. Flick (Ed.), *The Sage qualitative research kit.* London: Sage.

Goodman, J. (1984). Reflection and Teaching Education: A case study and theoretical analysis. *Interchange,* 15 (3) pp 9 – 26.

Grant, A., Kinnersley, P., Metcalf, E., Pill, R.; & Houston, H. (2006). Students' views of reflective learning techniques: an efficacy study at a UK medical school, Medical Education, 40

Gray, D. (2009). *Doing Research in the Real World* (2nd ed.). California: Sage Publications.

Groen, M. (2011). *Reflecteren de basis. Op weg naar bewust en bekwam handelen.*Groningen/Houten: Wolters Noordhoff.

Guba, E. G. (1990). The alternative paradigm dialog. In E. G. Guba (Ed.), *The paradigm dialog* (pp. 17-30). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Guba, E. G., & Lincoln, Y. S. (1989). *Fourth generation evaluation.* Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Guba, E. G., & Lincoln, Y. S. (1994). Competing paradigms in qualitative research. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 105-117). Thousand Oaks, C.A: Sage.

Guba, E. G., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2005). Paradigmatic controversies, contradictions, and emerging confluences. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln, *The Sage handbook of qualitative research* (3rd ed., pp. 191-215). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Hattie, J., & Timperley, H.(2007). *The Power of Feedback*. Review of Educational Research March 2007, Vol. 77, No. 1, pp. 81–112 DOI: 10.3102/003465430298487.

Hatton, N., & Smith, D. (1995). Reflection in Teacher Education: Towards Definition and Implementation. *Teaching & Teacher Education, 11* (1), 33-49.

Heidegger, M. (1966). *Discourse on Thinking.* New York, NY: Harper & Row.

Higgs, J. (1988). Planning learning experiences to promote autonomous learning. In: Boud, D (Ed.) Developing student autonomy in learning. Sydney, Australia: Kogan Page. 40-58

Higgs, T.V. (2003). Constructing images of ourselves? A critical investigation into approaches to learning research in higher education. British Educational Research Journal, 29 (1), 89-104.

Hill, A., Davidson, B., & Theodoros, D. (2012). Reflections on clinical learning in novice speech–language therapy students. *International Journal of Speech and Language Disorders, 47*(4), 413-426

Huston, T. (2007). *Inside-out: Stories and methods for generating collective will to create the future we want.* Cambridge: Mass.: SoL Publications.

Husu, J., Toom, A. & Patrikainen, S. (2009). Enhancing student teachers` reflective skills and thoughtful action. Paper presented at the 13th *Biennial Conference of the European Association for Research on Learning and Instruction* (EARLI). Amsterdam, the Netherlands.

ILS-HAN (2012). *Strategisch beleidsplan 2012-2016; 'Vakmanschap, verbinding en vertrouwen'*

Kember, D., Leung, D.Y.P., Jone's, A., Yuen Loke, A., McKay, J., Sinclair, K., ... Yeung, E., (2000), Development of a Questionnaire to Measure the Level of Reflective Thinking. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, Volume 25 (4)

Kinkhorst, G. (2010). Didactische ontwerpregels voor reflectieonderwijs. *Onderwijsinnovatie, maart* 2010.

Klenowski, V. (2002). *Developing Portfolio's for learning and assessment.* London: Routledge/Falmer

Kolb, D. (1984). *Experiential Learning: experience as the source of learning and development.* Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall

Korthagen, F. A. J., Kessels, J., Koster, B., Lagerwerf, B., & Wubbels, Th. (2001). *Linking Practice and Theory: The Pedagogy of Realistic Teacher Education.* Mahwah NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Korthagen, F.A.J., & Vasalos, A. (2002). Niveaus in reflectie: naar maatwerk in begeleiding. *VELON-Tijdschrift voor lerarenopleiders* 23(1), p. 29-38.

Korthagen, F. A. M., & Vasalos, A. (2005). Levels in Reflection: Core reflection as a means to enhance professional growth. *Teachers and Teaching: theory and practice,* 11(1), 47 71.

Korthagen A. J., & Vasalos, A. (2009). From reflection to presence and mindfulness: 30 years of developments concerning the concept of reflection in teacher education. *Paper presented at the 13th Biennial Conference of the European Association for Research on Learning and Instruction (EARLI).* P. 1-17. Amsterdam, the Netherlands

Laverty, S. M. (2003). Hermeneutic phenomenology and phenomenology: A comparison of historical and methodological considerations. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 2*(3).

Levine, R. B., Kern, D. E., & Wright, S. M. (2008). The Impact of prompted narrative writing during internship on reflective practice: a qualitative study. *Advance in Health science education,* 13, 723-733.

Leijen, Ä., Admiraal, W., Wildschut, L., & Simons, P. R. J. (2008). Pedagogy before technology: What should an ICT intervention facilitate in practical dance classes? *Teaching in Higher Education,* 13(2), 219 231.

Leijen, Ä., Lam, I., Wildschut, L., & Simons, P. R. J. (2008). Pedagogical practices of reflection in tertiary dance education. *European Physical Education Review*, 14(2), 223 241.

Leijen, Ä., Valtna, K., Leijen, D. A. J., & Pedaste, M. (2012).How to determine the quality of students reflections? *Studies in Higher Education*, 37(2), 203 217.

Leijen, Ä., Lam, I., Wildschut, L., & Simons, P. R. J. (2009). Difficulties teachers report about st reflection: Lessons learned from dance education. *Teaching in Higher Education,* 14(3), 315 326.

Leijen, Ä., Lam, I., Wildschut, L., Simons, P. R. J. & Admiraal, W., (2009). Streaming video to enhance students'reflection in dance education. *Computers & Education,* 52(1), 169 76.

Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, EG. (1985). *Naturalistic Inquiry*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.

Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (2000). Paradigmatic controversies, contradictions, and emerging confluences. In: Y. S. Lincoln & E. G. Guba (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 163-188). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Lopez, K.A., & Willis, D.G. (2004) Descriptive versus interpretive phenomenology: their contributions to nursing knowledge. *Qual Health Res 14*: 726-735

Loughran, J.J.(2006). *Developing a Pedagogy of Teacher Education: Understanding teaching and learning about teaching*. London: Routledge.

Lyons, N., Hyland, A., & Ryan, N. (2002). *Advancing the scholarship of teaching and learning through a reflective portfolio process: the University College Cork experience* (Cork, Ireland, University College Cork).

Mann, K., Gordon, J., & MacLeod, A. (2009). Reflection and reflective practice in health professions education: A systematic review. *Advances in Health Sciences Education: Theory and Practice, 14*(4), 595–621. doi: 10.1007/s10459-007-9090-2

Mansvelder-Longayroux, D. D., Beijaard, D., & Verloop, N. (2007). The Portfolio as a Tool for Stimulating Reflection by Student Teachers. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 23*, 47-62.

Maso, I. (2001). Phenomenology and ethnography. In: P. Atkinson, A. Coffey, S. Delamont, J. Lofland, & L. Lofland (Eds.), *Handbook of ethnography* (pp. 136–144). London: Sage

Mason, J. (2002). Qualitative Interviewing: asking, listening and interpreting. In: T May (ed) *Qualitative Research in Action,* pp 225-241 London: Sage.

Mezirow, J. (1981) A Critical Theory of Adult Learning and Education. *Adult Education. 32*, 3-24

Mezirow, J. (1990) *Transformative dimensions of adult learning.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Mezirow, J. (1990). How Critical Reflection Triggers Transformative Learning. In: J. Mezirow (ed.) *Fostering Critical Reflection in Adulthood: A Guide to Transformative and Emancipatory Learning* pp 1-20. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Mezirow, J. (1991). *Transformative dimensions in adult learning.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Mezirow, J (1997). Transformative learning: Theory to practice. In: P. Cranton (Ed.), *Transformative learning in action: Insights from practice* (pp. 5-12). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Mezirow, J. (2000). Learning to think Like an Adult. In: Mezirow, J and Associates *Learning as Transformation: Critical Perspectives on a Theory in Progress*, San Fransisco, Jossey-Bass

Mezirow, J. (2006). An overview of transformative learning. In: P. Sutherland & J. Crowther (Eds.), *Lifelong learning: Concepts and contexts* (pp. 24-38). New York: Routledge

Mezirow, J., & Taylor, E. W. (2009). *Transformative learning in practice: Insights from community workplace, and higher education.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Mittendorff, K., Jochems, W., Meijers, F., & Brok, P. den. (2010). Differences and Similarities in the Use of the Portfolio and Personal Development Plan for Career Guidance in Various Vocational Schools in The Netherlands. *Journal of Vocational Education & Training, 60* (1), 75-91.

Moon, J. (1999). *Reflection in learning and professional development.* London: Kogan Page.

Moon, J. (2004), A Handbook of Reflective and Experiential Learning, Routledge

Moon, J. (2005) *Guide for Busy Academics No. 4: Learning Through Reflection.* Higher Education Academy.

Moustakas, C. E. (1990). Heuristic research: *Design, methodology, and applications*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Munhall, P. L. (2007). A phenomenological method. In P. L. Munhall (Ed.), *Nursing research: A qualitative perspective* (pp. 145-210). Sudbury, MA: Jone's and Bartlett.

Patton, M. Q. (1990). *Qualitative evaluation and research methods* (2nd ed.). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research & evaluation methods* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Procee, H. (2001) Competenties en onderwijs – een conceptuele analyse

Procee, H. (2006) Reflection in education: A Kantian Epistomology. *Educational Theory, 56*(3), 237-253.

Punch, K. (1998). *Introduction to Social Research: Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches*. London: Sage Publications.

Ratner, C. (2008). Cultural psychology and qualitative methodology: Scientific and political considerations. *Culture and Psychology, 14*(2). Retrieved from http://cap.sagepub.com

Reid, K., Flowers, P. & Larkin, M. (2005). Exploring the lived experience. *The Psychologist*, 18, 20–23.

Reynolds, M., & Vince, R. (eds.) (2004) *Organising reflection*. Aldershot, Surrey: Ashgate.

Rogers, R. (2001). Reflection in Higher Education: A Concept Analysis. *Innovative Higher Education,* 26(1), 37–57.

Rodgers, C. (2002). Defining reflection: Another look at John Dewey and reflective thinking. *Teachers College Record,* 4(4), 842 66.

Rodgers, C. (2006). Attending to Student Voice: The Impact of Descriptive Feedback on Learning and Teaching. *Curriculum Inquiry 36.*2: 209–37.

Sartre, J. P. (2007/1943) *Being and nothingness.* London: Routledge.

Scharmer, O., Kaufer, K. (2013). *Leading from the Emerging Future: From Ego-System to Eco-System Economies*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Press.

Schön D. A. (1983) *The Reflective Practitioner*. New York, NY: Basic Books.

Schön, D. A. (1987) *Educating the Reflective Practitioner*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass

Schön, D. A (1991) *The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think in Action*. Aldershot: Arena.

Scott, D. (1996) Methods and data in educational research. In Scott, D. and Usher, R. (eds.) *Understanding educational research.* London: Routledge. Pp. 52 – 7

Skovholt, T. M., & McCarthy, P. R. (1988). Critical Incidents: Catalysts for Counselor Development. *Journal of Counseling and Development,* 67 (October): 69-72.

Smith, J. A. (1996) 'Beyond the divide between cognition and discourse: using interpretative phenomenological analysis in health psychology', *Psychology and Health, 11*, 261–71.

Smith, J. A. (2004). Reflecting on the development of interpretative phenomenological analysis and its contribution to qualitative research in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 1,* 39–54.

Smith, J. A. (2007). Hermeneutics, human sciences and health: linking theory and practice. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies on health and Well-being. 2*: 3 – 11.

Smith, J. A. & Eatough, V. (2006). Interpretative phenomenological analysis. In: G. Breakwell, C., Fife-Schaw, S., Hammond & J.A. Smith (eds) *Research Methods in Psychology*, (3rd edn). London: Sage.

Smith, J. A., Flowers, P., & Osborn, M. (1997). Interpretative phenomenological analysis and the psychology of health and illness. In: L. Yardley (Ed.), *Material discourses of health and illness.* London: Routledge

Smith, J. A., Flowers P., & Larkin, M. (2009). *Interpretative phenomenological analysis: theory, method, research.* London: Sage.

Smith, J. A., Flowers, P., & Larkin, M. (2013). *Interpretative phenomenological analysis: Theory, method, and research*. Los Angeles, CA: Sage.

Smith, J. A., Harré, R., & Van Langenhove, L. (1995). Idiography. In: J.A. Smith, R. Harré, & L. Van Langenhove (eds.), *Rethinking psychology* (pp. 56-69). London: Sage.

Smith, J. A., Jarman, M., & Osborn, M. (1999). Doing interpretative phenomenological analysis. In: M. Murray & K. Chamberlain (Eds.), *Qualitative health psychology: Theories and methods.* London: Sage.

Smith, J. A., & Osborn, M. (2003). Interpretative phenomenological analysis. In: J. A. Smith (Ed.), *Qualitative psychology: A practical guide to research methods.* London: Sage.

Smith, J. A., & Osborn, M. (2007) Pain as an assault on the self: an interpretative phenomenological analysis. *Psychology & Health*, 22, 517-34.

Smith, J. A., & Osborn, M. (2008). Interpretative phenomenological analysis. In: J. Smith (ed.)*, Qualitative psychology: A practical guide to research methods* (pp. 53-80). London: Sage.

Stanley, L. & Wise, S. (1993) *Breaking Out Again : Feminist Ontology and Epistemology.* London, Routledge

Stokking, K., Schaaf, M. van der, Leenders, F., & Jong, J. de (2004). *Meten van Reflectie bij Studenten.* Paper ORD.

Taylor, S. J., & Bogdan, R. (1984). *Introduction to qualitative research methods: The search for meanings.* New York: John Wiley.

Taylor, B. J. (2006). *Reflective practice. A guide for nurses and midwives.* New York: Open University Press.

Taylor, B.J. (2010). *Reflective Practice For Healthcare Professionals: A Practical Guide.* Berkshire: Open University Press.

Taylor-Haslip, V. (2010). Guided reflective journals depict a correlation to the academic success of nursing students. *Teaching and Learning in Nursing , 5,* 68-72.

Van Manen, M. (1984), Theory of the Unique: Thoughtful Learning for Pedagogic Tactfulness. In: Milburn, G. and Enns, R. (eds.) *Curriculum Canada.* University of British Columbia.

Van Manen, M. (1990). Researching lived experience: Human science for an action sensitive pedagogy. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Van Manen, M. (1995). On the epistemology of reflective practice. *Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice*, 1(1), 33 50.

Van Manen, M. (1997). *Researching lived experience.* London: Althouse Press

Van Manen, M. (2005) Fenomenologie: een kwalitatieve stroming met een verscheidenheid aan tradies, Kwalon 10 (1) 30-36.

Van Woerkom, M. (2012) Reflectie. In Simons, P. R. J. & de Ruijter, M. (eds.). *Canon van het leren.* p. 469-479. Dordrecht: Springer

Von Glasersfeld, E. (2005). Introduction: Aspects of constructivism. In: C. T. Fosnot (Ed.), *Constructivism: Theory, perspectives, and practice* (2nd ed.)., (pp. 3-7). New York: Teachers College Press.

Wainwright, S. F., Shepard, K. F., Harman, L. B., & Stephens, J. (2010). Novice and Experienced Physical Therapist Clinicians: A Comparison of How Reflection Is Used To Inform The Clinical Decision-making Process. *Physical Therapy,* 90 (1), 75-89.

Welch, M. (1998) Phenomenology and hermeneutics. In: Polifroni EC, Welch W (Eds), *Perspectives on Philosophy of Science in Nursing: An Historical and Contemporary Anthology*. (pp. 235-246). Lippincott Williams & Wilkins, Philadelphia.

Willig, C. (2008) *Introducing qualitative research in psychology*. (2nd ed.) Maidenhead: Open University Press.

Yardley, L. (2008). Demonstrating validity in qualitative research. In J. A. Smith (Ed.), *Qualitative Psychology: A practical guide to research methods* (pp. 234-251). London: Sage.

Zachary, L. (2000). *The mentor's guide: Facilitating effective learning relationships.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Zorn, C., & Lepp, M. (2011). Swedish & US nursing students reflect on their transition to authenticity: Interactive television network across the Atlantic.Virginia Henderson International Nursing Library. Retrieved from http://hdl.handle.net/10755/180135

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW OUTLINE

I. Concept of reflection
   a. Explore the students' meaning of the concept
   b. Explore students' view on reflection
   c. Explore how students view on reflection has developed or changed
   d. Identify the objects that students reflect on

II. What role do instruction programs on acquiring reflective skills have in the development of reflective skills?
   a. Identify instruction programs on learning how to reflect
   b. Explore how faculty services above could have been more supportive

III. What role does faculty support and guidance have in the development of reflective skills?
   a. Identify faculty support or guidance systems
   b. Explore how faculty might have been more supportive toward goals
   c. Explore how the student used the faculty

IV. What role does the reflective assignments have in the development of reflective skills?
   a. Explore assignments, particularly those classes that the student felt were useful in the development of knowledge and skills needed to reflect on practice
   b. Specifically explore the factors in those classes that enhanced their educational reflective experience
   c. Explore how the student used the assignments

APPENDIX B: OPLEIDINGSKUNDE'S CURRENT MODEL OF STRUCTURED REFLECTION (2014)

1   **Mijn betekenisvolle situatie**

Kies een voor jou belangrijke situatie uit je studie waarin je vastliep, een probleem ervoer, of juist een situatie waarin iets bijzonder goed ging. Oftewel: een situatie die voor jou de moeite waard is om eens verder te onderzoeken. We noemen dit een betekenisvolle situatie.

Dit kan bijvoorbeeld een situatie of leermoment zijn in de samenwerking met anderen, je stage, je studieaanpak, enzovoorts.

2   **Terugblikken**

Objectieve terugblik

Hier beschrijf je de feitelijke gebeurtenis, nog zonder jouw eigen oordeel erover te geven.
- o   In welke context speelde het probleem zich af?
- o   Wie waren erbij betrokken?
- o   Wat was jouw rol of taak?
- o   Wat was de rol of taak van de andere betrokkenen?

Subjectieve terugblik

Na het objectief terugkijken naar de betekenisvolle situatie, beschrijf je jouw eigen, persoonlijke terugblik op de situatie.
- o   Wat wilde ik bereiken?
- o   Hoe gedroeg ik mij in deze situatie?
- o   Wat kan het effect van mijn gedrag zijn op anderen, en op de situatie?
- o   Welke gedachten gingen door mij heen in deze situatie?
- o   Hoe voelde ik mij erbij?
- o   Welke overtuigingen heb ik die mijn gedrag, denken en voelen hebben beïnvloed?

3   **Bewust worden van de essentie voor mij**

In deze fase onderzoek je waar voor jou in deze situatie de essentie ligt. Je gaat jezelf nog meer onder de loep nemen, om zo meer over jezelf te leren. Waarom handelde ik zo?
- o   Waarom gedroeg ik mij zo?
- o   Waarom dacht ik zo en voelde ik mij zo?
- o   Gebeurt het vaker dat ik mij zo gedraag, denk of voel? Herken ik hierin een patroon?
- o   Welke kwaliteiten en valkuilen beïnvloeden mijn handelen, denken en voelen? In positieve en negatieve zin?
- o   Welke kwaliteiten heb ik nodig of kan ik sterker inzetten de volgende keer?
- o   Welke ontdekkingen doe ik nu over mezelf?
- o   Wat is dus het probleem?

4   **Ontwikkelen van handelingsalternatieven**

In deze fase onderzoek je op welke andere (en soms betere) manieren je in de toekomst kunt handelen. Dit doe je onder andere door jezelf te spiegelen aan anderen en aan algemene kennis over datgene waar je tegenaan bent gelopen.

- o   Hoe zou een ervaren beroepsbeoefenaar in deze situatie handelen?
- o   Wat zegt de literatuur hierover? Hoe kan ik deze kennis gebruiken?
- o   Nu ik deze informatie heb, welke alternatieven zie ik dan?

Beoordelingscriteria

Niveau 1
1. *De student evalueert aan de hand van een reflectiemodel het eigen gedrag, denken en voelen en het effect daarvan op de omgeving.*
2. *De student formuleert passende handelingsalternatieven en daaruit voortkomende leerdoelen*

Niveau 2
1. *De student evalueert aan de hand van een reflectiemodel het eigen gedrag, denken en voelen en het effect daarvan op de omgeving.*
2. *De student formuleert passende en op relevante theorie of literatuur gebaseerde handelingsalternatieven en daaruit voortkomende leerdoelen.*

Niveau 3
1. *De student reflecteert volgens een reflectiemodel op het eigen gedrag, denken, voelen en onderliggende overtuigingen, en het effect daarvan op de omgeving.*
2. *De student formuleert passende en op relevante theorie of literatuur gebaseerde handelingsalternatieven en daaruit voortkomende leerdoelen.*

Bekwaamheidsniveaus

Niveau 1 (leerjaar 1)
Op niveau één is de student in staat zijn eigen functioneren te evalueren; de student kan zijn eigen gedrag benoemen in een voor hem betekenisvolle leersituatie. De student kan het effect van zijn gedrag op de betrokken omgeving in die situatie benoemen. Vanuit deze analyse kan de student passende alternatieve handelingswijzen benoemen voor toekomstige en vergelijkbare situaties.

Niveau 2 (leerjaar 2)
Op niveau twee is de student in staat zijn eigen functioneren te evalueren met betrekking tot een door hem concreet geformuleerde, betekenisvolle situatie. De student kan zijn eigen gedrag te benoemen in deze voor hem betekenisvolle leersituatie. De student kan het effect van zijn gedrag op de betrokken omgeving in die situatie benoemen. De student is ook in staat zijn eigen handelen en gedrag te spiegelen aan ervaren beroepsbeoefenaren en relevante theorie en of literatuur met betrekking tot zijn betekenisvolle situatie. Vanuit deze analyse kan de student op basis van passende, op theorie en/of relevante literatuur gebaseerde alternatieve handelingswijzen benoemen voor toekomstige en vergelijkbare situaties.

Niveau 3 (leerjaar 3 en 4)
Op niveau drie is de student in staat op zijn eigen functioneren te reflecteren met betrekking tot een door hem concreet geformuleerde, betekenisvolle situatie. De student kan zijn eigen handelen en gedrag en het effect ervan op de betrokken omgeving benoemen in deze voor hem betekenisvolle leersituatie. De student betrekt daarbij zijn onderliggende kwaliteiten, valkuilen en overtuigingen en heeft zicht op hoe deze zijn gedrag en handelen in deze en vergelijkbare situaties beïnvloeden. De student is ook in staat zijn eigen handelen en gedrag te spiegelen aan ervaren beroepsbeoefenaren en relevante theorie en of literatuur met betrekking tot zijn betekenisvolle situatie. Vanuit deze analyse kan de student passende, op theorie en/of relevante literatuur gebaseerde alternatieve handelingswijzen benoemen voor toekomstige en vergelijkbare situaties.