

Master Thesis

How to teach reflective writing? Studying the contribution of autobiographic reflection in social
work education.

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Abstract

Reflection is an important part of social work education and its benefits for social workers are far-reaching. Yet, despite the benefits, students struggle to write proper reflections with the currently often-used core-reflection method. Thus, adaption in reflective education is needed. Autobiographic reflection was tested to have a positive influence on the professional development of social work students. Research suggests that the method of autobiographic reflection can have a positive effect on the professional development of social students. Therefore, this study aims to test the contribution that autobiographic reflection can bring to reflective writing capacity of social work students at Saxion University of Applied Sciences. Applying a quasi-experimental research design, second-year students were divided according to their classes in either the experimental condition (a combination of core and autobiographic reflection training) or the control condition (core reflection training only). After the respective training, students wrote a reflective essay which was permitted by them to be used for this study. Eventually, 98 essays were analyzed with regard to the reflective writing capacity on the basis of the NARRA. No significant differences between the two conditions have been found. Neither have age or gender been of influence on the effectiveness of the training program. It was noticed that the overall reflective writing skills of the students were low. Students receiving eight lessons on core reflection perceived significantly more helpfulness than students receiving four lessons on autobiographic reflection. This study indicates that an incorporation of autobiographic reflection training does not have a positive effect on the reflective writing skills. More research is needed to get more insight into the additional benefits of autobiographic reflection, like professional growth and increased self-perception. This study provides the first step into an adaptation of reflective education for social work students.

Keywords: Reflective writing skills, social work, core reflection, autobiographic reflection

How to teach reflective writing? Studying the contribution of autobiographic reflection in social work education.

Reflection becomes a more and more crucial part of modern education. Especially social work students benefit from the advantages reflection can bring up. Unfortunately, students keep struggling with writing proper reflective essays (Engelbertink, 2014). This study aims to test the additional value that autobiographic reflection training can bring into reflective education in order to increase the reflective writing skills in social work students. In the following, the term reflection is going to be defined in the context of professional development, followed by highlighting the benefits, and thereby pointing out the importance of reflection for social work students.

Although reflection is a fuzzy term that is difficult to define because of its vagueness (Vos & Vlas, 2000; Mansvelder-Logaroux, 2006), there is much research conducted in this field, and with this, just as many definitions exist. One recent definition comes from Mittendorff (2014) who describes reflection as “the procession of significant experiences, focused on new insights and entailed actions in the future”. Applied on the field of profession progress, reflection can be seen as an examination of capacities and motivation which are important for the career where present work-skills and personal values are central topics (Luken, 2010).

Reflection is a means to improve future actions, not a goal in itself which is perfectly visualized in Korthagen’s circle of reflection (Korthagen & Vasolos, 2010). Besides the improvement of skills and actions, the positive effects of reflection are far-reaching. Reflection improves two basic cognitive abilities, on the one hand critical thinking and on the other hand decision making (Wald et al. 2012; Tsingos-Lucas et al., 2017). These two basic capacities again increase the level of professionalism and the ability to keep learning even beyond school (Wald et al., 2012; Korthagen, 2011). Furthermore, Moniz (2015) stresses that reflection improves four

social skills, namely, empathy, communication, collaboration, and advocacy, which certainly are essential characteristics in the social occupational area. Ringel (2003) further supports these findings. According to her, social work can only be successful if there is a good working relationship (i.e. collaboration) between the client and the social worker, which in turn, underlies the importance of reflective ability in social work students.

Additionally, Ringel (2003) found reflection to have a positive influence on social work ethics and values. Social work values hereby include professionalism, client empowerment and self-determination (Allen, 1993). Again, these are surely crucial characteristics for the success of social work projects. As expected, reflection also helps raising awareness for one's own personal and social biases such as stereotypes or intolerance of ambiguity (Davis & Sherman, 1987), which again, can lead to a more culture-fair practice. This becomes even more important in times of globalization as well as refugee movements.

Summing up, reflection can potentially increase a) cognitive abilities (i.e. critical thinking and decision making), b) social skills, c) one's understanding of social work ethics and values, and d) the awareness for one's own biases. But, despite these advantages reflection is rarely used in a proper way. Students keep struggling with writing suitable reflection (Benammar, 2005). For several reasons, adequate reflection within the normal curriculum is problematic. For example, Korthagen (2011) states that there is simply a lack of time, which leads to reflections barely scratching the surface. In line with that, Benammar (2005) found out that students mainly evaluate experiences, rather than identifying their meaning. According to him, students focus too much on personal problems, instead of reflecting on their professional development.

Taken together, reflection offers a lot of potential benefits for students and their future professionalism (and might therefore eventually improve the well-being of clients) on the one hand,

but on the other hand, students and educational programs seem to fail to apply them correctly. Several studies (cf. e.g. Karkabi, Wald & Cohen, 2014) indicate that reflective writing is a skill that can be taught – rather than an inherent ability. Therefore, it is important that teachers learn to adequately and effectively teach their students how to reflect on their own thoughts and actions, even though this might be one of their greatest challenges (Tsingos-Lucas et al., 2017).

Reflection is often an obligatory part of social work study programs. But without visible benefits, this obligation might become a double-edged sword. Students might perceive it as nothing more than a bothersome or boring task which is done out of obligation. This obligation manifests in the finding, that there is a difference between what students write as an honest reflection with no grading following-up and what they write when they expect to be graded (Tsingos-Lucas et al., 2017). The student's attempt to write what they expect to be good for their grades limits the effectiveness and compromises the quality even more. The problem occurring subsequently, is addressed by Kelchtermans (2007). He states that students do not easily achieve the highest level of reflection, which was also labeled 'critical reflection' by Manen (1977). The effect is that reflection deteriorates all value in the students' eyes since they cannot consider reflection to be an addition that is useful in their education. Therefore, it is important to teach students how to reflect properly to let them perceive the added value, reflection brings into their education. In order to achieve a higher level of reflective skills, it should be defined what students are expected to write and how a critical reflection should look like.

Recently, Alsina et al. (2017) developed a rubric based on Korthagen's circle of reflection, which not only enables teachers to evaluate reflections on their level of criticism, but also provides assistance to students with writing critical reflections. According to their study, a reflection should contain a concrete and lived experience which is described in a contextualized manner and the

students describe their value judgments with nuances and with emotions. The reflection should also contain prior beliefs about oneself, the context and the profession. These beliefs and ideas should be connected to the experience and consequently evaluated and (if necessary) adapted. Questions and hypotheses should help challenging these prior beliefs. Eventually, new goals should be transformed into concrete learning objectives and at the end of the reflection, the implementation of these learning objectives should be discussed (Alsina, 2017). The study at hand focusses on the improvement of reflective skills in students through an adaptation of reflective education and the currently used methods.

Currently, core reflection is one of the most-used methods to teach reflective writing. This method of reflection is based on Bateson's model of reflection (Bateson, 1972). This model is also called the onion model due to the way it is built. It consists of five layers. Starting from the inside, it is a) level of mission, b) level of personal identity, c) level of belief, d) level of competence, and e) level of behavior. The sixth component, which is the environment, lies outside of the onion form (see also Appendix A). According to Korthagen and Vasolos (2005), the two outer components get most of the students' attention, possibly because the level of behavior as well as the environment are observable levels and are therefore easy to reflect on. Mittendorff (2014) states that the quality of a reflective essay is determined by the level the reflection strikes. Revisiting the method of core reflection, Korthagen and Vasolos (2005) define core reflection as a reflection which strikes the deepest two levels, namely the level of personal identity and the level of mission. With the help of core reflection, unknown core qualities can be discovered, not only in oneself but also in others (Korthagen & Vasolos, 2010). They can therefore improve one's behavior on both, the personal and the professional level. Core qualities are the stronger side of an individual (Ofman, 2000). According to Tickle (1999), such core qualities are empathy, compassion, flexibility, courage and

decisiveness. These core qualities show accordance with the exact same social skills that reflection can improve.

But there are downsides of core reflection as well. Although core reflection is an adequate method to detect (hidden) core qualities and to influence the deepest levels of Bateson's onion model students keep struggling at striking those deeper levels. Apart from that, social work students often encounter problems which are related to the outer levels, like their own behavior or competences. Korthagen (2010) adds, that students keep struggling when it comes to differentiating between which level should be reflected on. Students either try to go on deep levels when problems only regard outer levels, or they do not go deep enough. In turn, positive effects can be diminished. Moreover, it is relatively easy to improve behavior and competences on the basis of this method, but reflecting on deeper levels in order to get insight into the students' own (professional) identity is hardly achieved by social work students. But according to Beauchamp and Thomas (2009), an awareness for the importance of a professional identity as well as building a professional identity should be part of the educational process. So, to enable students developing a professional identity ideally by improving their reflective writing skills, the method of teaching reflection has to be extended and adapted.

A recently introduced method of reflection is autobiographic reflection. Autobiographic reflection demands the creation of a life story in order to get more insight into one's identity. In 2002, Bohlmeijer and Westerhof developed an autobiographic intervention called 'op verhaal komen', which roughly translates into 'coming to a story'. This intervention suggests that one should write life stories so as to organize and give meaning to their experiences to concretize their own identity (Westerhof & Bohlmeijer, 2010). In 2015, the academy of human and society (AMM) from Saxion University, under supervision of Monique M.J. Engelbertink adapted this intervention

to make it more applicable for social work students and named it 'uit je verhaal' ('express your story'). Autobiographic reflection follows consequently the process of autobiographic writing (i.e. writing about an experience or memory). After that, autobiographic reflection takes place, thus students reflect on their written stories. They ought to wonder about what this specific experience tells them about their identity or professional identity in a work-related experience. Adopting creative writing can improve the ability to write autobiographically as well. Instead of writing a story, students are offered the possibility to draw a painting or to write poetry.

Writing life stories has a number of positive effects for the writer. Not only can it help to cope with difficult experiences, since writing is one possibility to regulate emotions, but it also leads to more insight into one's motivations. Looking at experiences with a more distant view, autobiographical writing leads to more self-perception, well-being for the individual, and last but not least, growth. This is underpinned by Engelbertink (2014), who found that the adapted intervention was beneficial for social work students. She stressed that students participating in an autobiographic reflection course, reported growth in their professional development and an increase in self-confidence, but also limited these results by stressing there was no control group. Participants also reported that they experience a better self-perception after this intervention and that this had a positive effect on their work-related competences.

To sum it up, the importance of reflection, especially for students in the area of social work has been highlighted. Likewise, it is a known issue, that students keep struggling with reflecting deeply and critically, which suggest that an adaptation in reflective education has to take place. Comparing both reflective methods discussed, it becomes apparent that they differentiate in the way they try to adapt future behavior. Core reflection focusses more on improving actions by evaluating a specific past behavior and thinking about possible improvements. In contrast,

autobiographic reflection focusses on past experiences in the form of stories, without discussing a specific action and by that strengthening the (professional) identity in order to adapt future behavior. Autobiographic reflection also encourages students to tangle the deepest two levels of Bateson's onion model, thus the level of identity and the level of mission. Therefore, both reflective methods try to enable students to reflect as deeply as possible.

This paper deals with the following main research question: *To what extent does autobiographic reflection training contribute to the level of reflective writing skills of second-year social work students from Saxion University of Applied Sciences?* Autobiographic reflection might be a fitting addition to the currently used core reflection method, with regard to the proven positive effect on social work students and their professional identity. Given the positive effect of both reflective methods and the multitude of addressable situations, we expect students receiving core reflection training as well as autobiographic reflection training to slightly outperform students who only receive core reflection training. Moreover, we expect 'prior conceptions and beliefs' to be more explicit when students received autobiographic reflection training. In addition, we investigate whether there are differences between gender or age-groups when it comes to the extent of benefits. Two sub-questions can be derived: *How does the gender affect the contribution that autobiographic reflection brings to reflective writing skills? How does age affect the contribution autobiographic reflection brings to reflective writing skills?* We expect female students to have higher reflective writing skills in both conditions and to benefit more from autobiographic reflection training (Ottenberg, Pasalic, Bui & Pawlina, 2015). With regard to age, we expect reflective writing skills to be slightly better, the older the students are, since older students might have two advantages. They might have a) more experience in recalling and reinterpreting past events and actions and b) more experience with reflection in general. Aside from that, we want to

see whether gender or age do have an influence on the reflective writing skills in general. The third and last sub-question concerned the perceived helpfulness of the students with regard to the two methods. Thus, the third question is: *which reflective method is perceived to be more helpful with regard to the student's professional development?* Although we expect students to rate autobiographic reflection training highly helpful, we see it to be likely that the control group will consider core reflection more helpful, since they receive the double amount of lessons on this method.

Method

A quasi-experimental study with two arms was set up in order to examine the reflective writing capacity of social work students at Saxion University of Applied Sciences. The first arm was the experimental condition where students receive autobiographic reflection as well as core reflection training, the second arm is the control condition where students only receive core reflection training. The main outcome variable was the result of the content analyses of the reflective essays written by the students. Asking students about their age, their gender and their subjective perception of the helpfulness with regard to their professional development gives three additional variables, concerning the sub-questions of this paper.

Sampling and allocation

Every second-year social work full-time student from the Saxion University of Applied Sciences in Enschede was a potential participant of this study. This year had 24 groups including two euregional classes (i.e. classes including German students), with each group having a different teacher, which makes a total of 24 teachers for reflective education. All 24 teachers were asked whether they are interested to give the new form of reflective lessons, i.e. the combination of autobiographic reflection classes and core reflection classes. Beforehand, the researcher team

decided to have 7 classes participating in the control condition and 7 classes taking part in the autobiographic condition. In total, nine teachers were interested, of which seven were randomly chosen by the researcher team to give autobiographic reflection training. These seven teachers were then given the task to each choose one other teacher of the 17 remaining ones, one that resembles themselves in regard to didactical style, which would result in 14 participating teachers. Nevertheless, one teacher refused to participate in the control condition to spare the students from the reflective essay and the extra work load coming along. Therefore, we had 13 participating teachers, which makes 13 participating classes, seven in the experimental group and six in the control group. Thus, students were assigned to one of the two conditions according to the choice of their teachers. After following the training, all students were obligatorily assigned to write a reflection and students from the participating classes were asked whether they want to participate anonymously in this study. Eventually, students were able to fill in an informed consent, in case they agreed on participating (see Appendix B). For this study in particular, the researcher team randomly collected seven reflective essays per class in the experimental condition and eight reflective essays per class in the control condition, thus 49 and 48, which makes a total of 97 reflective essays. To round it up, one additional essay was randomly picked from the autobiographic condition and two essays were picked from the control condition, so that eventually 100 reflective essays were collected.

Intervention

Dividing the sample into two conditions, the control condition had to follow eight lessons on the currently used core reflection, while the experimental condition had to follow only four classes on core reflection but additionally, four classes on autobiographic reflection. Every lesson took three hours. After each of the four autobiographic reflection classes, the students were asked

to write about their a) childhood, b) adolescence, c) work and care, d) love and friendship, e) art of life or f) lessons of life as a homework and thereafter, reflect on what they wrote. Besides, Blackboard provided the possibility of sharing the added value a student perceived with other students. They also had the possibility to ask other students for feedback about their reflection.

When writing the final reflective essay, students from both conditions had to write this essay on the basis of six questions: a) Describe the situation. What happened precisely? b) Which consequences had this experience for you? c) How do you see yourself in this situation? Did you come to your own? d) What had this situation in common with other meaningful situations with regard to the development of your professional identity? e) What can you do in the next two weeks to strengthen your professional identity? What do you need in order to achieve this? How are you going to test your improvement? and f) Regarding the awareness and/or strengthening of your professional identity, what effect had this reflection? All questions are based on Korthagen's circle of reflection, but especially questions c and d aimed to bring benefits to students from the experimental conditions. The reflective essay was required to be about the students' professional identity (but could also have taken place in a private setting) and could be both, positive or negative. But in any case, the situation had to have an impact on the student.

Variable measurement

In total, we had four variables to be measured. First, we measured the reflective writing capacity of the students and secondly, we asked for the gender of the student. Thirdly, the students were asked about their age and finally, they were asked whether the respective method they participated in was helpful for them with regard to their professional development. The reflective writing skills were measured on the basis of a content analysis of the reflective essays. These content analyses were executed by means of the Rubric for Narrative Reflection Assessment, in

the following called NARRA (cf. Appendix C; Alsina, et al., 2017). The gender of the students was noted and the age of the students was measured continuously, and post-hoc divided into two age-groups, splitting them at the mean age. Eventually, the variable ‘perceived helpfulness’ was assessed. After finishing the obligatory writing assignment, all participating students were asked if the respective method (or both), were helpful for them with regard to the development of their professional identity. This question could be answered with a) yes, b) to some degree, or c) no. This means, the experimental group had to answer that question twice, for the core reflection lessons as well as for the autobiographic reflection lessons separately. This makes a total of three measurements (i.e. 8 lessons on core reflection, 4 lessons on core reflection and 4 lessons on autobiographic reflection).

Coding

According to Alsina et al. (2017), their rubric contains nine indicators, organized in four elements. Each indicator can be coded from 1 to 4, where level 1 implies the absence or low weight of the indicator and level 4 indicates the highest level of performance. The first element includes the selection and analysis of a situation, activity or experience that triggers the reflection. This element is divided into two indicators, namely 1.1. the identification and description of the focus and 1.2. the judgments made about the focus. The second element consists of prior conceptions and beliefs and therefore, the awareness of one’s own previous beliefs, knowledge and experiences. Element 2 is divided into three indicators: the specification, analysis and elaboration of beliefs and ideas about 2.1. oneself, 2.2. the context, and 2.3. the discipline or profession. The third element deals with inquiry and/or focus. Students should investigate possible actions through questions and hypotheses. This element is also divided into two indicators, which are focusing on questions and hypotheses and making inquiries about 3.1. the focus of the reflection and 3.2. the context. Last

but not least, element 4 contains the transformation. The student was supposed to set concrete learning objectives and future action plans and approaches to initiate a new reflective cycle. This element again is divided into two indicators, namely 4.1. the specification, argumentation and transformation of new learning goals and 4.2. the implementation and argumentation of new action plans (see also Appendix C).

The coding of the 100 reflective essays was executed by two independent coders who were blind to the condition. In order to get a sufficient inter-rater reliability, 10 essays were evaluated openly together, then compared and discussed. This process was repeated with independent evaluations until the inter-rater reliability exceeds 70% and was therefore sufficient. The first round consisted of 16 essays, followed by a second round evaluating 10 essays and the final round with 6 essays. After three rounds of evaluation and discussion, the inter-rater reliability was 72.2% on the basis of the joint-probability of agreement (Appendix D). When facing disagreement, the two raters discussed the controversy and adapted the format to prevent from the occurrence of further misunderstandings.

Data analysis

To analyze the evaluated reflective essays, the statistical program SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences, by IBM) was used. First of all, the evaluation forms were transferred into an SPSS-dataset which included a score for each indicator of the NARRA as well as the respective condition, the participant was in. Also, data about the gender and age, as well as the answer to the question regarding the helpfulness of the course was inserted. After that, with the help of SPSS, a total score of the NARRA for each participant was calculated by summing all indicator-scores representing the reflective writing skills. The same was done for the four elements, adding indicator-scores of the respective element. Eventually, a new variable was computed, which

included three newly formed age groups. In order to investigate gender differences between the two conditions a chi-square test was used. The same was done for age with the help of a Mann-Whitney-U test.

In order to compare the effectiveness of the course, a non-parametric test for two independent groups was executed. On the basis of the Mann-Whitney U test, all scores, the indicators, the elements and the total score were compared between the two conditions. To get insight into the influence of the gender and the age of the participants on a) the effectiveness of the two conditions and b) the obtained reflective writing skills, a two-way analysis of variance was executed. Finally, a one-way analysis of variance was executed in order to look at the perceived helpfulness with regard to their professional development. For all statistical tests, an alpha value of $p = .05$ was applied.

Results

In total, 98 essays (N) were applicable for analysis. One student rejected the task to reflect by considering himself unable to think of a situation to reflect on and one participant refused to give full particulars about his person, including age, gender and satisfaction with his or her professional development during the course. This leaves a sample of 49 essays per condition. Most of the participants were female (75.5%) and the majority of the students were around 22 years old ($M = 21.4$, $SD = 2.3$). On the basis of the mean age, two age groups were formed. Group 1 included every participant younger than 22. Group 2 consists of every participant older than 21 (see also table 1). A chi-square test of goodness-of-fit was performed to demonstrate that the distribution of gender was equal among the two conditions ($\chi^2(1) = 0.22$, $p = .64$). Likewise, there were no significant differences between the two conditions when it comes to the distribution of age groups ($MWU(49,49) = 1102.50$, $z = -0.81$, $p = .42$).

Table 1: Gender and age distribution among the two conditions for $N = 98$

| | Experimental | | Control | | Total | |
|----------------|--------------|-----------|----------|-----------|----------|-----------|
| | <i>n</i> | % | <i>n</i> | % | <i>n</i> | % |
| Gender: | | | | | | |
| Female | 36 | 36.73 | 38 | 38.78 | 74 | 75.51 |
| Male | 13 | 13.27 | 11 | 11.22 | 24 | 24.49 |
| Age: | | | | | | |
| ≤ 21 | 29 | 29.60 | 25 | 25.50 | 54 | 55.1 |
| > 21 | 20 | 20.40 | 24 | 24.50 | 44 | 44.9 |
| | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> |
| | 21.78 | 2.66 | 21.04 | 1.88 | 21.41 | 2.32 |

Executing a Mann-Whitney-test, no significant differences between the two conditions can be reported when looking at the total score representing the general reflective writing skills ($MWU(49, 49) = 1077.0$ $z = .89$, $p = .38$) and neither was there a significant difference between one of the four elements or their indicators (see table 2). The majority of the indicators, and therefore elements trended in favor of the experimental condition. Exceptions were formed by the indicator regarding the ‘inquiries about the context’ and by element 4 (i.e. the transformation into learning goals and action plans). What can be derived from the statistics as well is that, when taking the possible range into account, the average reflective writing skills of social work students in general was in the lower area. This becomes specifically apparent when looking at the total score representing the reflective writing skills, but also the single indicators ranged from 1 to 2 when looking at the mean. Exceptions were formed by indicator 1.1 concerning the ‘identification and description of the situation’ with $M = 2.41$ (respectively $M = 2.33$ for the control group) and by indicator 3.1 dealing with the ‘inquiries about the focus’ with $M = 2.16$ (respectively $M = 2.00$ for the control group).

Table 2: Means and Standard Deviations of Control and Experimental Group on Reflective Writing Skills

| | Condition | n | M | U | z | p |
|---|--------------|----|-------|---------|-------|-----|
| Element 1: Situation, activity or experience that triggers reflection. Selection and analysis of a situation over while the reflective process will be done (2-8)* | | | | | | |
| | Experimental | 49 | 4.18 | | | |
| | Control | 49 | 3.92 | 1056.00 | -1.06 | .29 |
| 1.1 Identification and description (1-4)* | Experimental | 49 | 2.41 | | | |
| | Control | 49 | 2.33 | 1106.50 | -0.74 | .46 |
| 1.2 Judgement about focus (1-4)* | Experimental | 49 | 1.78 | | | |
| | Control | 49 | 1.59 | 1056.50 | -1.14 | .25 |
| Element 2: Prior conceptions and beliefs; awareness of own previous beliefs, knowledge and experiences (4-12)* | | | | | | |
| | Experimental | 49 | 3.98 | | | |
| | Control | 49 | 3.76 | 1030.00 | -1.35 | .18 |
| 2.1 Beliefs about oneself (1-4)* | Experimental | 49 | 1.71 | | | |
| | Control | 49 | 1.67 | 1161.50 | -0.32 | .75 |
| 2.2 Beliefs about context (1-4)* | Experimental | 49 | 1.16 | | | |
| | Control | 49 | 1.06 | 1078.00 | -1.59 | .11 |
| 2.3 Beliefs about profession (1-4)* | Experimental | 49 | 1.10 | | | |
| | Control | 49 | 1.02 | 1126.50 | -1.38 | .17 |
| Element 3: Inquiring and/or focusing: Investigating possible actions of students through focusing and questions and hypotheses (2-8)* | | | | | | |
| | Experimental | 49 | 3.27 | | | |
| | Control | 49 | 3.27 | 1172.00 | -0.23 | .82 |
| 3.1 Inquiries about focus (1-4)* | Experimental | 49 | 2.16 | | | |
| | Control | 49 | 2.00 | 1032.50 | -1.42 | .16 |
| 3.2 Inquiries about context (1-4)* | Experimental | 49 | 1.10 | | | |
| | Control | 49 | 1.27 | 1026.50 | -1.88 | .06 |
| Element 4: Transformation: Set concrete learning goals and future action plans and approaches to initiate a new reflective cycle. Paradigm shift. Argumentation of these changes or the need for them (2-8)* | | | | | | |
| | Experimental | 49 | 2.98 | | | |
| | Control | 49 | 3.02 | 1188.00 | -0.10 | .92 |
| 4.1 Specification of learning goals (1-4)* | Experimental | 49 | 1.86 | | | |
| | Control | 49 | 1.80 | 1123.00 | -0.69 | .49 |
| 4.2 Implementation of action plans (1-4)* | Experimental | 49 | 1.12 | | | |
| | Control | 49 | 1.22 | 1099.50 | -1.12 | .26 |
| Total score (9-36)* | Experimental | 49 | 14.41 | | | |
| | Control | 49 | 13.96 | 1077.00 | -0.89 | .38 |

Results of a Mann-Whitney U test executed with a significance level of $p = .05$;

* possible range of the score

Gender

Conducting a factorial analysis of variance, the main effect of gender as well as the interaction effect of gender and condition on the reflective writing skills of social work students was tested. In doing so, none of the findings indicate a significant impact of gender on the reflective writing skills (see table 3).

Table 3: Analysis of Variance on the Impact (of the Interaction) of Gender and Condition on the Effectiveness of the Respective Reflective Training Condition, Denoted as Reflective Writing Skills in the Total Score as well as on the Elements and Indicators of the NARRA

| | | | <i>M</i> | <i>F</i> | <i>df</i> | <i>MS</i> | <i>p</i> |
|--|------------------------------------|-------------------------|----------------|----------|-----------|-----------|----------|
| Element 1: Selection and analysis of the chosen situation | Factor 1: Condition | Experimental Control | 4.18 3.92 | 1.10 | 1 | 1.71 | .30 |
| | Factor 2: Gender | Male Female | 4.13 4.03 | 0.07 | 1 | 0.11 | .79 |
| | Interaction: Condition x Gender | | 4.05 | 0.09 | 1 | 0.15 | .76 |
| Element 2: Awareness of own previous beliefs | Factor 1: Condition | Experimental Control | 4.11 3.76 | 1.20 | 1 | 0.60 | .28 |
| | Factor 2: Gender | Male Female | 3.58 3.96 | 5.28 | 1 | 2.64 | .02 |
| | Interaction: Condition x Gender | | 3.87 | 0.46 | 1 | 0.23 | .50 |
| Element 3: Investigation of possible actions | Factor 1: Condition | Experimental Control | 3.27 3.27 | 0.62 | 1 | 0.33 | .43 |
| | Factor 2: Gender | Male Female | 3.33 3.24 | 0.37 | 1 | 0.20 | .54 |
| | Interaction: Condition x Gender | | 3.27 | 2.24 | 1 | 1.19 | .14 |
| Element 4: Transformation into new learning goals | Factor 1: Condition | Experimental Control | 2.98 3.02 | 0.01 | 1 | 0.00 | .94 |
| | Factor 2: Gender | Male Female | 2.88 3.04 | 0.91 | 1 | 0.51 | .34 |
| | Interaction: Condition x Gender | | 3.00 | 0.27 | 1 | 0.15 | .61 |
| Total score | Factor 1: Condition | Experimental Control | 14.41 13.96 | 0.48 | 1 | 2.45 | .49 |
| | Factor 2: Gender | Male Female | 13.92 14.27 | 0.48 | 1 | 2.45 | .49 |
| | Interaction: Condition x Gender | | 14.18 | 0.12 | 1 | 0.63 | .73 |

Neither was there a significant interaction effect of gender and condition on the reflective writing skills. When taking a look at the main effect of gender on the sub-elements, we can see that gender had a main effect on the element 'awareness of own previous beliefs', thus element 2 ($F(1, 94) = 5.28, p = 0.02$). This main effect indicates that women do perform better when it comes to the 'awareness of one's own previous beliefs', compared to their male counterparts. This finding is independent of the training the participant received. An interaction effect of gender and condition on one of the elements was not apparent, suggesting that gender has no impact on the effectiveness of the training.

Age

Another two-way analysis of variance was conducted to compare the main effect of the age group and the interaction effect of age group and condition on reflective writing skills and its elements. There was no main effect of the age group on reflective writing skills to be found (cf. table 4). Neither were there any significant main effect of age on one of the four elements. Moreover, there was no interaction effect of age group and condition on the reflective writing skills and likewise, there was no interaction effect of age group and condition on one of the four elements.

Perceived helpfulness

A one-way analysis of variance was conducted to compare the perceived helpfulness of the received training with regard to their own professional development. Doing so, three measures were apparent, one for the control group, assessing core reflection training (8 lessons) and two for the experimental group, assessing core reflection training (4 lessons) and autobiographic reflection training (4 lessons). There was a significant effect of the training method on the perceived helpfulness of the students ($F(2, 144) = 5.38, p = 0.01$).

Table 4: Analysis of Variance on the Impact (of the Interaction) of Age Groups and Condition on the Effectiveness of the Respective Reflective Training Condition, Denoted as Reflective Writing Skills in the Total Score as well as on the Elements and Indicators of the NARRA

| | | | <i>M</i> | <i>F</i> | <i>df</i> | <i>MS</i> | <i>p</i> |
|--|---------------------------------|-------------------------|----------------|----------|-----------|-----------|----------|
| Element 1: Selection and analysis of the chosen situation | Factor 1: Condition | Experimental Control | 4.18 3.92 | 0.96 | 1 | 1.49 | .33 |
| | Factor 2: Age | Younger Older | 4.02 4.01 | 0.13 | 1 | 0.20 | .72 |
| | Interaction: Condition x Age | | 4.05 | 0.84 | 1 | 1.30 | .36 |
| Element 2: Awareness of own previous beliefs | Factor 1: Condition | Experimental Control | 3.98 3.76 | 1.59 | 1 | 0.80 | .21 |
| | Factor 2: Age | Younger Older | 4.00 3.70 | 3.81 | 1 | 1.92 | .05 |
| | Interaction: Condition x Age | | 3.87 | 1.73 | 1 | 0.87 | .19 |
| Element 3: Investigation of possible actions | Factor 1: Condition | Experimental Control | 3.27 3.27 | 0.01 | 1 | 0.00 | .93 |
| | Factor 2: Age | Younger Older | 3.24 3.30 | 0.12 | 1 | 0.07 | .74 |
| | Interaction: Condition x Age | | 3.27 | 1.19 | 1 | 0.64 | .38 |
| Element 4: Transformation into new learning goals | Factor 1: Condition | Experimental Control | 2.98 3.02 | 0.11 | 1 | 0.06 | .74 |
| | Factor 2: Age | Younger Older | 3.09 2.89 | 1.89 | 1 | 1.06 | .17 |
| | Interaction: Condition x Age | | 3.00 | 0.24 | 1 | 0.14 | .62 |
| Total score | Factor 1: Condition | Experimental Control | 14.41 13.96 | 0.65 | 1 | 3.27 | .42 |
| | Factor 2: Age | Younger Older | 14.35 13.98 | 0.58 | 1 | 2.92 | .45 |
| | Interaction: Condition x Age | | 14.18 | 1.24 | 1 | 6.27 | .27 |

In order to get more insight into the way the respective training method influences the level of perceived helpfulness, post hoc comparisons were executed, using the test 'Least Significant Difference' (LSD). This test indicates that participants receiving eight lessons of core reflection ($M = 1.82$, $Sd = 0.63$) considered the method to be significantly more helpful than people who received four lessons on autobiographic reflection ($M = 2.20$, $Sd = 0.61$). However, there was no significant difference to be found between eight lessons on core reflection ($M = 1.82$, $Sd = 0.63$) and four lessons on core reflection ($M = 2.00$, $Sd = 0.50$). Participants tend to be more satisfied with receiving four lessons on core reflection ($M = 2.00$, $Sd = 0.50$) than with receiving four lessons on autobiographic reflection ($M = 2.20$, $Sd = 0.61$), this difference however, was not statistically significant.

Discussion

This study aimed to test the contribution of autobiographic reflection when it comes to improving reflective writing skills of social work students. As stated, a significant positive effect on the students' reflective writing skills was expected. However, no evidence was found that autobiographic reflection training has a positive impact on the reflective writing skills defined by Alsina et al. (2017). Neither was there evidence that autobiographic reflection contributes to a single element or indicator of the NARRA. The results found are not in accordance with what was expected beforehand. Looking at the question regarding the interaction effect of gender and condition, we cannot report significant findings. Thus, there was no evidence that the effect of the tested methods depended on the gender of the participant, neither for the reflective writing skills in general, nor for one of the elements. Likewise, we found no main effect of gender on the reflective writing skills. What was found, though, was that women do perform better when it comes to the 'awareness of own previous beliefs', but there was no difference between genders regarding

the other three elements. Taking a look at previous research, females, on average score higher on reflective capacity (Ottenberg, Pasalic, Bui & Pawlina, 2015). These findings cannot be confirmed in this study. The second sub-question includes the interaction effect of age and condition as well as the main effect of age on the reflective writing skills and its components. We found neither significant interaction effects, nor significant main effects to report. Agreeing with our results, Naber and Wyatt (2014) found no differences in age regarding reflective capacity. Unfortunately, results regarding the interaction effect cannot be compared with other studies, since, to our knowledge, the incorporation of autobiographic reflection was not tested earlier. Finally, we can report a significant difference in perceived helpfulness when comparing the eight lessons on core reflection training and four lessons on autobiographic reflection training in favor of the core reflection training.

This study implies that the reflective writing skills do not decline when adding autobiographic reflective classes, although core reflection classes have been cut in half. This indicates that autobiographic reflection in combination with core reflection is at least as beneficial for students than core reflection training alone. However, the question remains why autobiographic reflection was less effective than expected.

One possible explanation lies in the training. Autobiographic classes were given by teachers, having no experience with this kind of reflection method. Teachers only received one workshop and the course instructions beforehand. It is possible that unexpected problems arose during the autobiographic reflection training. In order to get further insight, follow-up research should interview the teachers involved and identify possible problems. There is still the possibility, that the training itself was not as effective as expected due to a lack of experience of the teachers, especially compared to the familiar core reflection training. Alongside that, students might have

had a negative impact on the effectiveness of autobiographic reflection training. Employees of Saxion University of Applied Sciences reported the first year of social work education (2015/16) to be turbulent, since the curriculum was adapted. Students reported an unreasonable workload and even wrote a threatening letter in order to decrease the workload. Simultaneously, reflective education does not grant any study credits, so students might be less motivated in this course in general, which is likely to at least partially explain the low reflective writing skills that were observed. Aggravating for students following autobiographic reflection training, they had homework to do in order to grant success of the intervention. Students in the core reflection condition in contrast got no homework. Thus, the motivation of the students was potentially impaired by the high workload of the study so that especially, but not only students who had to deal with homework were even less motivated. In order to prevent students from a decrease of motivation, the time frame of reflective education training has to be adapted and granting study credits might also lead to higher motivation. A possible realization without grading the reflections with the common grading system would be to evaluate them on the basis of the NARRA with only the possibilities to fail or to pass. Getting granular on the time frame, it might not only improve the motivation of students but it also has to be taken into account that effects of other methods improving self-perception and professional growth, like mindfulness for example, only become apparent after weeks of practice (Davis & Hayes, 2011). The same might apply for autobiographic reflection, meaning that potential gains need more time to develop and spread. So, we need to conclude that further research on a bigger time scale has to be conducted. Taking a look at the instrument, the NARRA is a very recent rubric for evaluating reflective writing skills. Although it has been validated by Alsina, et al. (2017), there were no other studies conducted, yet. Therefore, it cannot be taken for granted that this rubric fits the two methods used in this study. The NARRA

focuses solely on the reflective writing capacity (Alsina et al., 2017), which is precisely what needed to be measured for this study, but the benefits of autobiographic reflection might exceed reflective writing skills. This means that the added value of autobiographic reflection not only lies in enhancing reflective writing skills but in the personal and professional development (Saxion, 2016). During a training conducted at Saxion University, students were able to gain more insight into their personality and identity. This knowledge about themselves is an essential part of reflective education and of the construction of a professional identity (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009) and it leads to another point to discuss. The enhancement of personal and professional development was observed among 4th year social work students, suggesting that either age or study experience might be of impact on the effectiveness of autobiographic reflection training. This study suggests that age does not affect the effectiveness of the training. So further research needs to be conducted, examining study experience as a possible mediator predicting the effectiveness of autobiographic reflection training.

The last sub-question dealt with the perceived helpfulness. We found that students considered eight lessons of core reflection training more helpful than four lessons of autobiographic reflection. There was no significant difference in perceived helpfulness between four lessons of autobiographic reflection and four lessons of core reflection. Since previous research (Engelbertink, 2014) report autobiographic reflection to be perceived more helpful than this study found, it is suggested that there are other factors influencing the perceived helpfulness. First, the difference in study experience might be of influence. Engelbertink's study included only 4th year students, while this study included only 2nd year students. Secondly, this study applied only 4 lessons of training on an obligatory basis, while Engelbertink's study worked with students who chose a minor program focusing personal and professional growth and lasted 5 months. What

argues for this hypothesis is the fact, that there was no significant difference found between core and autobiographic reflection when they both consisted of four lessons. In conclusion, this measurement needs to be replicated on a longer term, with more lessons. Furthermore, different years should be tested, including 2nd year social work students, 3rd year social work students and 4th year social work student.

Limitations

This study combined two methods of reflective training in order to increase reflective capacities in social work students. To our knowledge, the concept of trying to increase a) core qualities and b) the professional identity and self-awareness simultaneously has never been done before. Therefore, this study offers unique insights into an important matter. Noteworthy is the natural setting of data collection. Since students have lessons on core reflection anyway, barely anything changed in the eyes of the students. They could just follow their usual curriculum in their familiar college environment.

Putting the results into perspective, we can see that there are five broad deficiencies in this study. Firstly, a population of 100 students, although being a great number for qualitative data collection, limits statistical findings regarding their representativeness. Secondly, as already mentioned, the amount of four lessons per condition might just be too low. Thirdly, the method was as new for the teacher as for the students so that their teaching ability was limited, potentially leading to non-optimal results. However, since the teachers in question were experienced when it comes to reflective education, it is likely that they were able to deliver the material appropriately. Additionally, due to the sampling method, only motivated teachers participated. Fourthly, the rating of perceived helpfulness was done by means of a 3-point scale. The results ($M = 1.8$; 2.0, and 2.2 respectively) obviously show peoples' tendency to avoid extreme score. Moreover, the

scale does not provide sufficient differentiation. Lastly, it is noteworthy that inter-rater reliability barely reached the needed threshold with 72.2%.

Rubric for Narrative Reflection Assessment. As a recently published instrument, the NARRA not only brings advantages but also disadvantages for the researcher. Influenced by years of research, the NARRA is scientifically underpinned. Unfortunately, no studies were published, using this rubric. Therefore, no means can be compared and it is not specified, if and which specific reflective methods do not fit the evaluation of the NARRA. Sharing experiences, we made, the NARRA still needs some improvements. Starting at the inter-rater reliability, we had some issues when it comes to the description of the indicators and their specific levels. Some essays and a lot of discussion was needed in order to achieve a barely sufficient inter-rater reliability of 72.2%. Thus, especially the format of the NARRA needs major improvements to increase the usability. Moreover, the scoring of the NARRA showed in this sample mainly low scores with scores between level 1 and level 2. Although there is no mean to compare with, we expected second year students to score higher on reflective writing skills. Besides these difficulties, the NARRA covers major indicators for reflective writing skills and underpins this scientifically. Concluding the work with the NARRA, it seems to be an adequate instrument in its infancy. With some adjustments, it is a promising rubric to not only evaluate reflective essays, but also a helpful tool for students to improve their skills.

Implications

The result that both methods are equally effective when it comes to reflective writing skills encourages this field to examine the long-term effects of autobiographic reflection to potentially develop a reflective education program, which not only increases reflective writing skills, but also offers more benefits like increased self-perception and growth. Moreover, gender and age cannot

be considered to be influential variables that future reflective education programs need to take into account. This means that when developing education programs to promote reflective capacity, designers can focus purely on its content rather than having to consider these demographic variables. Additionally, this study has found the NARRA to be an appropriate means to its ends. Likewise, this study showed potential pitfalls when it comes the coding of reflective essays, like vague descriptions of the respective levels. Therefore, this study shows an effective way to use and improve on the NARRA in the future.

Conclusion

This study sheds light on an important topic. Increasing reflective capacities can lead to long-term positive effects for social workers and their clients. This study took the first step into the direction of combining different concepts and aspects of reflection. Even though this study was not able to find the expected increase of reflective writing skills in the experimental condition, no differences actually imply that autobiographic reflection is as effective as core reflection.

The results here can therefore open up a new direction of examining reflective abilities in school, eventually giving hints to adjusting the syllabus. Of course, more research – desirably on a larger scale to make it more representative – has to be conducted in order to identify effect sizes and other important factors such as the timing, the amount of application and the balance between autobiographic and core reflection. Here, long-term interventions may be crucial for proper measurements. The effects of long-term usage of autobiographic reflection, like personal and professional growth and increased self-perception are of great interest, in order to make clearer statements. It would also be helpful, to conduct more research on the NARRA so means can be compared and the reflective methods fitting the rubric can be specified.

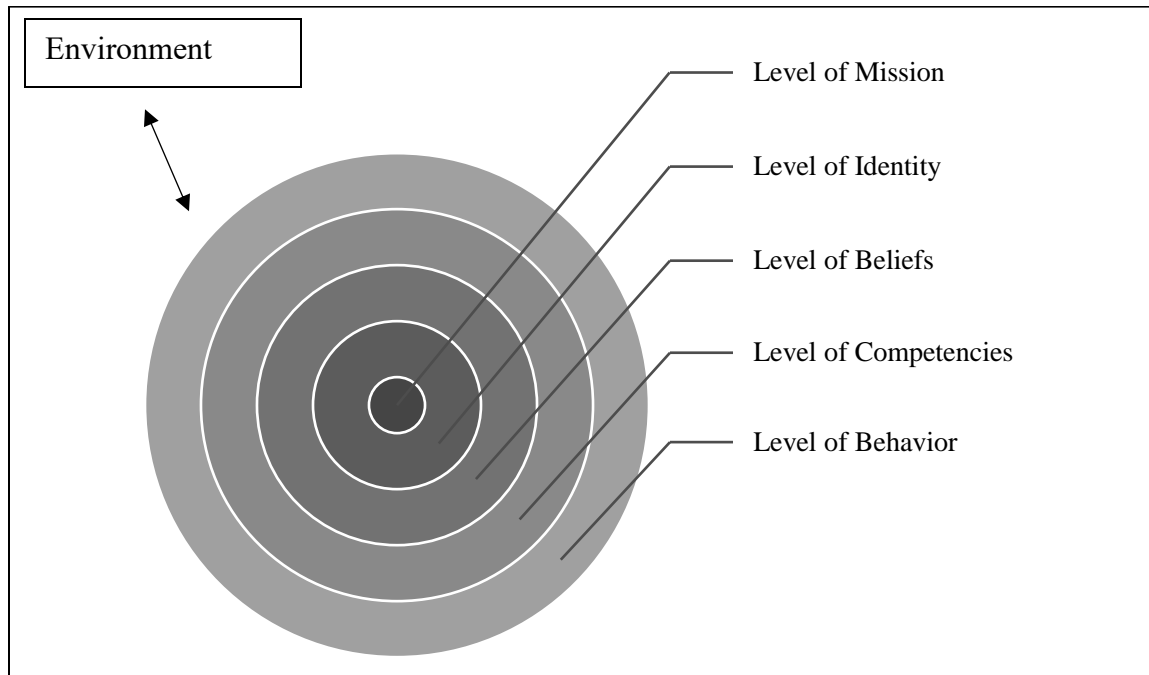
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Appendix A



The onion model according to Bateson presenting the levels of reflection

Appendix B

Afname procedure reflectie opdracht

De onderzoeker is gedurende het studiejaar 2016 – 2017 drie keer bij alle deelnemende klassen in de les geweest om de vragenlijsten digitaal af te nemen. Tijdens de tussenmeting (eerste les van lesperiode 3) heeft zij na de afnamen van de vragenlijsten de reflectie opdracht afgenomen. De onderzoeker heeft de opdracht als volgt uitgezet bij alle klassen Professionele Ontwikkeling (POW) van leerpakket 8.2:

“Aansluitend op de enquête gaan we nu een reflectie opdracht uitvoeren. Ik wil jullie eerst erop wijzen dat deze reflectie opdracht een onderdeel is van ons onderzoek naar de professionele ontwikkeling van tweede jaars social work studenten. Hiervoor hebben we een samenwerking met de UT. De vraag is of jullie straks jullie anonieme reflecties willen inleveren bij mij in deze envelop zodat het onderzoeksteam ze kan analyseren op jullie professionele ontwikkeling.

Als jullie hiervoor toestemming geven dan wil ik jullie straks vragen het toestemmingsformulier te ondertekenen en de gegevens in te vullen die hierop staan (o.a. studentnummer, geslacht en leeftijd). Denk hier maar rustig over na en ondertussen gaan we de reflectie opdracht starten als onderdeel van deze les”. Zie bijlage 3 voor het toestemmingsformulier voor de studenten in conditie autobiografische reflectie en zie bijlage 4 voor het toestemmingsformulier in de conditie kern reflectie.

De onderzoeker legt kort (in ongeveer 5 minuten) de begrippen uit die horen bij professionele identiteit (zelfbeeld, zelfvertrouwen, taakopvatting, werkmotivatie en toekomstperspectief). Deze bijlage staat ook op Blackboard (studentomgeving). Zie bijlage 2. In elke klas worden dezelfde voorbeelden gebruikt zodat de studenten op een zelfde manier uitleg krijgen.

“De opdracht is om een betekenisvolle situatie uit te schrijven rondom jouw professionele identiteit en/ of jouw professionele ontwikkeling. Bij voorkeur een situatie die de afgelopen maand heeft plaatsgevonden. Het is een situatie waarvan je zegt: ‘dit heeft mij geraakt’ of ‘hier zat veel emoties aan vast’ of ‘ik wist niet wat ik met deze situatie aan moest’. Deze situatie kan dus gaan op een positieve dan wel een negatief gekleurde ervaring en kan zich af hebben gespeeld in een privé situatie, op stage of binnenschools maar is wel duidelijk te koppelen aan hoe jij als professional ontwikkelt.

Probeer leesbaar te schrijven maar we zijn best goed in het ontcijferen van handschriften. Je hebt 30 minuten de tijd. Ik wens jullie veel succes”.

De onderzoeker deelt vervolgens de uitgeschreven opdracht uit (zie bijlage 1). In elk klas hebben de studenten tussen 15 minuten en 30 minuten de tijd nodig gehad om de reflecties uit te schrijven.

Bijlage 1 Reflectie opdracht voor student

Je schrijft een situatie uit rondom jouw professionele identiteit. Bij voorkeur een situatie die de afgelopen maand heeft plaatsgevonden. Het is een situatie waarvan je zegt: 'dit heeft mij geraakt' of 'hier zat veel emoties aan vast' of 'ik wist niet wat ik met deze situatie aan moest'. Je hoeft er nog geen inzicht in hebben gekregen, maar het mag wel.

Met behulp van onderstaande vragen ga je reflecteren op deze situatie. Deze situatie kan dus gaan op een positieve dan wel een negatief gekleurde ervaring. Het kan zich af hebben gespeeld in een privé situatie, op stage of binnenschools, maar is wel duidelijk te koppelen aan hoe jij je als professional ontwikkelt.

1. Beschrijf de situatie. Wat gebeurde er precies?
2. Welke consequenties had deze situatie voor jou?
3. Hoe zie jij jezelf in deze situatie? Kwam je tot je recht? Denk aan je ontwikkeling op het gebied van: zelfvertrouwen, zelfbeeld, taakopvatting, werkmotivatie en toekomstperspectief.
4. Wat is gemeenschappelijk in vergelijking met andere betekenisvolle situaties als je kijkt naar de ontwikkeling van jouw professionele identiteit (zelfvertrouwen, zelfbeeld, taakopvatting, werkmotivatie en toekomstperspectief)?
5. Wat kan je de komende twee weken minder of juist meer doen om je professionele identiteit te versterken? Wat heb je daarvoor nodig? Hoe toets je je vooruitgang?
6. Wat brengt deze reflectie jou als je het hebt over de bewustwording en/of versterking van je professionele identiteit?

Bijlage 2 Uitleg professionele identiteit

Professionele identiteit

Een professional heeft volgens Schilder (2012) een professionele identiteit als:

- hij weet wie hij is als social worker
- vertrouwen heeft dat hij dat kan waarmaken en
- competenties heeft om aan het werk te gaan.

De ontwikkeling van de professionele identiteit vindt plaats over de hele loopbaan van maatschappelijk werkers (Kwakman & Schilder, 2005; Zuithof, 2013). De bewustwording van de noodzaak tot het ontwikkelen van deze professionele identiteit en ook het bekwaam worden in het uitoefenen daarvan zal plaats moeten vinden in de opleiding (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Vloet, Jacobs & Veugelers, 2014).

We werken middels leerpakket 8.2 naar een bewustwording en versterking van je professionele identiteit. Je professionele identiteit wordt gevormd en beïnvloed door je identiteit.

Myra is al van jongs af aan geïnteresseerd is in mensen en hun emoties en gedrag. Ze was al snel het luisterend oor binnen haar vriendengroep. Op basis van deze ervaring heeft ze besloten een sociaal werk opleiding volgen.

Maar je professionele identiteit doet ook wat met je identiteit.

Myra gaat na haar opleiding social work werken met jongeren in een leefgroep. Ze komt erachter dat ze goed kan organiseren en dat ze dat leuk werkt vindt. Ze houdt het overzicht als er bijvoorbeeld een voorlichting moet worden georganiseerd met veel gastsprekers. Dit was een competentie waar ze zich niet bewust van was. Ze krijgt er vertrouwen in dat ze kan organiseren en vervolgens pakt ze in haar privéleven een coördinerende taak op als vrijwilliger binnen haar sportvereniging.

Je professionele identiteit is te onderscheiden in vijf componenten: zelfbeeld, zelfvertrouwen, taakopvatting, beroepsmotivatie en toekomstperspectief (Kelchtermans 2012).

Net als je identiteit is je professionele identiteit niet statisch maar blijft deze zich ontwikkelen. Indien je een sterke professionele identiteit hebt dan:

- ... weet je waarvoor je staat, je kent jezelf. Je weet waar je sterktes liggen en welke competenties nog minder ontwikkeld zijn. Je zelfbeeld wijkt niet veel af hoe anderen je zien (component zelfbeeld).
- ... heb je zelfvertrouwen waardoor je onbekende situaties met vertrouwen tegemoet gaat. Je bent tevreden over het werk dat je aflevert (component zelfvertrouwen).
- ... komt jouw taakopvatting overeen met hoe de instelling waar je werkt deze graag ziet en hoe de beroepsgroep deze omschrijft (component taakopvatting).
- ... heb je een heldere drijfveer om je opleiding/werk te kiezen, ben je gemotiveerd om de komende jaren deze baan te vervullen en je gaat met plezier naar je werk (component werkmotivatie).

- ... kan je je verwachte toekomstperspectief omschrijven en je voelt je goed bij dat toekomstperspectief (component toekomstperspectief).

Hieronder worden de vijf componenten van professionele identiteit verder toegelicht. Onderstaande tekst is vrij vertaald op basis van Kelchtermans (2012):

1. Zelfbeeld

Het zelfbeeld is de beschrijvende component: de wijze waarop de social worker/ professional zichzelf typeert als social worker/professional. Dit beeld is gebaseerd op zelfperceptie, maar in belangrijke mate ook op wat anderen teruggeven naar de betrokkene (bijv. in commentaren van collega's, cliënten, naastbetrokkenen en leiding). Het is dus sterk afhankelijk van hoe iemand door anderen gezien wordt.

2. Zelfvertrouwen

Nauw verbonden met het zelfbeeld is de evaluatieve component: het zelfvertrouwen. Deze component verwijst naar de mate waarin de professional tevreden is over zijn/haar werk ("Hoe goed doe ik mijn werk?"). Ook hier is sociale feedback van anderen - op de eerste plaats de cliënten en collega's - belangrijk.

3. Taakopvatting

De opvattingen van de professional over wat zijn of haar taak uitmaakt vormt de derde component. Dit is de normatieve component: wat een professional vindt dat hij/zij dient te doen om terecht het gevoel te hebben goed werk te leveren. Het spreekt voor zich dat functiebeschrijvingen en formele taakdefinities hier relevant zijn, maar die externe voorschriften zullen door de betrokkene altijd op een bepaalde manier geïnterpreteerd en geïnternaliseerd worden. In een aantal opzichten zal een professional zich ook teweerstellen tegen die externe definities van zijn werkgever of beroepsgroep. De taakopvatting verwijst dus naar het persoonlijk antwoord van de professional op vragen als: wat moet ik doen om een goede social worker / professional te zijn?; wat behoort tot mijn kerntaken als social worker?; welke taken erken ik als legitiem en wat weiger ik als mijn taak te beschouwen (en waarom?); enz. . De taakopvatting maakt duidelijk dat een professional zijn -en dus ook de professionele identiteit van een social worker - nooit een neutrale aangelegenheid is, maar altijd impliceert dat men waardegebonden afwegingen en keuzes maakt (Kelchtermans, 2012 benoemt hierbij Fenstermacher, 1990; Hargreaves, 1995; Oser, Dick, & Patry 1992). De taakopvatting omvat dus vertaald naar de social worker ook diepgewortelde overtuigingen over een goede social worker, over iemands persoonlijke morele verplichtingen en verantwoordelijkheden tegenover de cliënten. Wanneer die overtuigingen bevraagd worden dan voelen social workers zichzelf als persoon en als professional bevraagd. Evaluatiesystemen, ingrijpende beleidsvoorschriften, opgelegde vernieuwingen die een idee van 'sociaal werkerschap' (en dus

professionaliteit) weerspiegelt dat verschilt van of zelfs tegengesteld is aan de taakopvatting zullen een diepgaande impact hebben op het zelfvertrouwen en de beroepsvoldoening van professionals.

4. Werkmotivatie

De werkmotivatie vormt de conatieve component en omvat de drijfveren die social workers deden kiezen voor het beroep, doen beslissen om in het vak te blijven, dan wel om van beroep te veranderen. Kelchtermans wil hier ook beklemtonen dat de inhoud van die beroepsmotivatie kan evolueren in de tijd (zie bijv. Rots, Kelchtermans & Aelterman, 2012).

5. Toekomstperspectief

De laatste component in de professionele identiteit is het toekomstperspectief, namelijk de verwachtingen die de professional heeft voor zijn/haar beroepssituatie in de toekomst en hoe hij/zij zich daarbij voelt. Die verwachtingen geven meteen ook het dynamische karakter aan van de professionele identiteit. Dat is immers geen statisch of vastliggende essentie, maar het resultaat van de voortdurende betekenisvolle interacties van social workers met hun omgeving. Iemands oordelen en acties in het heden zijn altijd gekleurd door ervaringen uit het verleden en verwachtingen naar de toekomst. De social worker, als belichaming van zijn/haar professionaliteit, bevindt zich per definitie altijd op een bepaald moment in zijn/haar leven, met een specifiek verleden en toekomst (op basis van Kelchtermans, 1994, 2009).

Naast hun professionele identiteit bouwen professionals ook een ‘subjectieve theorie’ op. Dat persoonlijk geheel van kennis en opvattingen over hoe ze bepaalde beroepstaken of concrete momenten het best vormgeven, vormt als het ware de technische know how van professionals: hoe zou ik dit het best aanpakken/waarom zou dat de beste aanpak zijn?

De professionele identiteit en de subjectieve theorie vormen samen het zogenaamde “persoonlijk interpretatiekader”, namelijk het geheel van opvattingen dat opereert als een soort bril waardoor social workers concrete beroepssituaties waarnemen, er betekenis aan geven en erin handelen (zie o.m. Kelchtermans, 2009; ook bijv. van den Berg, 2002 gericht op leerkrachten).

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Appendix C

Narrative reflection rubric assessment, NARRA.

| Indicators | Rubric levels | | | |
|--|--|---|--|--|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Element 1: Situation, activity or experience that triggers reflection. Selection and analysis of a situation over which the reflective process will be done | | | | |
| 1.1 Identifies and describes the focus of reflection in a contextualized manner. | Does not identify any sources of reflection on a specific experience. Writes a dissertation that is rhetoric and decontextualized. | Identifies focus of reflection of a concrete and lived experience but it is trivial or not so important. Writes a description that is out of context. | Identifies a significant focus of reflection on a specific and lived experience. Writes description that lacks some elements of context. | Identifies one or more relevant focus of reflection on a concrete and lived experience. Writes a contextualized description. |
| 1.2 Makes judgements about the focus of reflection. | Does not make any value judgments. | Makes some value judgements, but they are simple and without nuances. | Makes one or more value judgements with nuances and/or with emotional engagement. | Makes one or more value judgements with nuances and emotional engagement. |
| Element 2: Prior conceptions and beliefs; awareness of own previous beliefs, knowledge and experiences | | | | |
| 2.1 Specifies, analyses and elaborates on beliefs or ideas about him/herself. | Does not specify prior ideas or beliefs about him/herself. | Specifies some prior ideas or beliefs about him/herself without further explanation. | Specifies prior beliefs or ideas about him/herself and analyses them. | Specifies prior beliefs and ideas about him/herself and analyses and evaluates them. For example, explains why he/she has reached these beliefs and relates them to personal experiences and analyses his/her history. |
| 2.2 Specifies, analyses and elaborates on prior beliefs or ideas about the context. | Does not specify prior ideas or beliefs about the context. | Specifies prior beliefs or ideas about the context without further explanation. | Specifies prior beliefs or ideas about the context and analyses them. | Specifies prior beliefs or ideas about the context and analyses and evaluates them. Specifies prior beliefs or ideas about the discipline or profession and analyses and evaluates them. |
| 2.3 Specifies, analyses and elaborates on beliefs or ideas about the discipline/profession. | Does not specify prior ideas or beliefs about the profession or discipline. | Specifies prior beliefs or ideas about the profession or discipline without explaining them. | Specifies prior beliefs or ideas about the discipline or profession and analyses them. | Specifies prior beliefs or ideas about the discipline or profession and analyses and evaluates them. |
| Element 3: Inquiring and/or focusing: Investigating possible actions of students through focusing and questions and hypotheses. | | | | |
| 3.1 Focuses on questions and hypotheses and makes inquiries about the focus of reflection. | Does not specify questions or hypotheses about the focus of reflection. | Specifies questions or general hypotheses about him/herself, but does not examine or argue them. | Specifies questions or hypotheses about the focus of reflection but does not expand them. The student does not | Specifies questions or hypotheses and also starts a process of investigation about the focus of reflection. |

| | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|
| 3.2 Focuses on questions and hypotheses and makes inquiries about the context. | Does not specify questions or explicit assumptions about the context. | Specifies assumptions or general questions about the profession or scientific discipline, but does not examine or argue them. | develop a process of investigation over the focus of reflection. Specifies and focuses on questions and hypotheses about the professional action but does not expand them. The student does not develop a process of investigation into the professional action. | Specifies focused questions and assumptions that can lead to a process of investigation into the profession or discipline. |
| Element 4: Transformation: Set concrete learning objectives and future action plans and approaches to initiate a new reflective cycle. Paradigm shift. Argumentation of these changes or the need for them. | | | | |
| 4.1 Specifies, argues and transfers new learning goals. | Does not specify new learning goals for the transformation of any belief, experience or prior knowledge (about himself, about the context or the profession). | Specifies learning goals for the transformation of some beliefs, experiences and/or prior knowledge (about himself, about the context or profession) but does not argue them. | Specifies learning goals for the transformation of some beliefs, experiences and/or prior knowledge (about himself, about the context or profession) and argues and transfers them without providing scientific evidence. | Specifies learning goals for the transformation of some beliefs, experiences and/or prior knowledge (about himself, about the context or profession), argues and transfers them basing them on scientific evidence. |
| 4.2 Implementing new action plans and supports them with arguments. | Does not implement improving alternatives of action | Implements improving alternatives, but does not argue them. | Implements improving alternatives, argues them with shortcomings and/or mistakes. | Implements improving alternatives and argues them without shortcomings and mistakes and closing the reflective cycle |

Appendix D

Inter-rater reliability

Round 1: 16 Essays

| | Agreement | Disagreement | Inter-rater reliability |
|--------------------|-----------|--------------|-------------------------|
| Indicator 1.1 | 8 | 8 | 50.00% |
| Indicator 1.2 | 7 | 9 | 43.75% |
| Indicator 2.1 | 10 | 6 | 62.50% |
| Indicator 2.2 | 14 | 2 | 87.50% |
| Indicator 2.3 | 16 | 0 | 100.00% |
| Indicator 3.1 | 6 | 10 | 37.50% |
| Indicator 3.2 | 9 | 7 | 56.25% |
| Indicator 4.1 | 12 | 4 | 75.00% |
| Indicator 4.2 | 10 | 6 | 62.50% |
| Total Score | 92 | 52 | 63.89% |

Round 2: 10 Essays

| | Agreement | Disagreement | Inter-rater reliability |
|--------------------|-----------|--------------|-------------------------|
| Indicator 1.1 | 7 | 3 | 70.00% |
| Indicator 1.2 | 5 | 5 | 50.00% |
| Indicator 2.1 | 7 | 3 | 70.00% |
| Indicator 2.2 | 7 | 3 | 70.00% |
| Indicator 2.3 | 9 | 1 | 90.00% |
| Indicator 3.1 | 5 | 5 | 50.00% |
| Indicator 3.2 | 7 | 3 | 70.00% |
| Indicator 4.1 | 7 | 3 | 70.00% |
| Indicator 4.2 | 9 | 1 | 90.00% |
| Total Score | 63 | 27 | 70.00% |

Round 3: 6 Essays

| | Agreement | Disagreement | Inter-rater reliability |
|--------------------|-----------|--------------|-------------------------|
| Indicator 1.1 | 3 | 3 | 50.00% |
| Indicator 1.2 | 3 | 3 | 50.00% |
| Indicator 2.1 | 4 | 2 | 66.67% |
| Indicator 2.2 | 5 | 1 | 83.34% |
| Indicator 2.3 | 5 | 1 | 83.34% |
| Indicator 3.1 | 4 | 2 | 66.67% |
| Indicator 3.2 | 4 | 2 | 66.67% |
| Indicator 4.1 | 5 | 1 | 83.34% |
| Indicator 4.2 | 6 | 0 | 100.00% |
| Total Score | 39 | 15 | 72.22% |