MASTER THESIS

Community learning and collaboration of students and teachers in honours education communities

A multiple embedded case study in Dutch higher

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COMMUNITY LEARNING AND COLLABORATION OF STUDENTS AND TEACHERS IN HONOURS EDUCATION COMMUNITIES

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Acknowledgements

Presented here is the master thesis “Community learning and collaboration of students and teachers in honours education communities”. The research was conducted within the Honours Approach of Saxion University of Applied Sciences in Enschede. It was written as a graduation thesis for the Master Educational Sciences & Technology at the University of Twente (UT).

In one of the courses, the advantages of doing a graduation thesis for an external party was explained. Specifically, for both parties. Both the external party as the University would expand their network and are able to combine theoretical knowledge with practical implications. It was also explained that being caught in between as a student can be straining, as both parties have their own standards and expectations. Although I have experienced and recognized parts of this explanation, it never felt (too) strained. Where I had the UT supervisors as experts on experts on both research and the topics, the Saxion supervisors were always very clear with their expectations and ready to help establish contacts within the organization. Because of this, I have developed myself from a surface learning student to an independent critical thinker and debater, or more specifically, a professional. My thanks goes out to these supervisors, for their time, patience, feedback and discussions.

My last thanks go out to the people who made my environment as pleasantly as possible. My parents, who were able to fulfil roles as (but not limited to) chauffeur, carpenter and Michelin-star restaurant cooks to optimize my (learning) environment. To my former colleagues at Saxion for the trust and inspiring work meetings. To my new colleagues at the UT for the space and opportunity to learn while graduating. To Rules as Fun and Project Chroma, where I could escape into a different fantasy world from time to time. To Veerle, for all the critical roles. To the cast, crew, orchestra and creatives of Stichting In Spe, where I had Anatevka as a second home. To Marike, Vivian & Wout for the opportunities to act, sing and dance to my heart’s delight at Theatre Association NEST. To Simon, Saskia, Matthew and Rita for the walk and talks. To Marloes, for all the ‘Wie is de Mol’ contests and discussion. To Leanne, ‘*wat moat ik sûnder dy’.*

It is finished.

Summary

Honours programs arose in the 1980's to fulfil the wish of educational institutes to help exceptional and excellent students to develop their knowledge and skills where regular education struggles. Together with the relevance of honours in higher education, the focus on communities within education is also relevant. Other social constructivist theories state that the development of knowledge is dependent on an authentic and social context. Saxion has recognised this need for community and has expressed interest in building on their community practices for both the improvement of their own education as well as filling the gap on knowledge on educational communities consisting of both students and teachers in their Saxion Honours Approach.

This study sought out to improve the community learning within the Honours Approach, appraising the current curriculum against existing learning theories and learning community theories. The conclusion is an advice and how to improve and adapt community learning and collaboration between students and teachers within the Honours Approach. Furthermore, recommendations are established concerning what success factors should be further researched in community learning research.

The advice for community learning and collaboration within the Saxion Honours Approach is to make participants, be it teacher, student or organization, aware of the experiential learning cycle in combination with the reflective dialogue cycle, real versus simulated learning and collaboration factors found among the researched communities. For the experiential learning cycle in combination with the reflective dialogue cycle, it should be recommended to coach one another through the different phases and not to linger in one phase too long, as it could be detrimental to the overall learning process.

List of abbreviations

CL – Community learning

ELT – Experiential Learning Theory

LC – Learning Community

HP – Honours Programme

M - Mean

PLC – Professional Learning Community

RQ – Research Question

SD – Standard deviation

TDT – Teacher Design Team

UT – University of Twente

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Cause for research

'Bright students are often unchallenged as instructors tend to concentrate on students who are having difficulty understanding course content' (McKeague et al., 1984)

Honours programs arose in the 1980s to help exceptional and excellent students develop their knowledge and skills in ways that regular education could not (Achterberg, 2005; Byrne, 1998; McKeague et al., 1984). Honours education can be implemented as an expansion of existing curricula or as a deepening of a specific subject (Kool et al., 2017; Tarasova, 2019). Worldwide, honours education has been implemented for different reasons. Universities implement honours education to be more competitive in attracting high-performing students (Byrne, 1998; Tarasova, 2019, p. 40). Furthermore, most universities focus on bringing these ambitious students together to becoming educated members of a democratic society (Tarasova, 2019, p. 40). These students take on this extracurricular work for their future citizenships and careers, while universities and governments aim for students to contribute to their country's economic welfare and prepare them for the work field (Byrne, 1998; Kool et al., 2017). Honours education can also positively affect teachers and members of the workforce as it allows them to gain new insights and inspiration. This is achieved as a result of the ambitious learning processes of students (Wolfensberger & Pilot, 2015).

Together with the relevance of honours education, the focus on communities within education is also relevant. Wenger (2000) emphasized his theory of communities of practice by stating that communities represent the social blocks in society that determine the competency of employees in practice. Other social constructivist theories maintain that the development of knowledge depends on an authentic and social context (Brown & Campione, 1994; Ramsten & Säljö, 2012). In honours education, specifically, learning communities are emphasized in many honours programmes throughout the world (Kiley et al., 2009; Kuh, 2001; Lanier, 2008; Scott et al., 2017; van Ginkel et al., 2015; Zubizarreta, 2008)

Saxion has recognised this need for community and has expressed interest in building on their community practices to improve their education.

1.2 Organizational context

Saxion started implementing educational formats for gifted and motivated students in 2010. To describe the honours education curriculum at Saxion, the ten curriculum components from van den Akker (2013) were used (Figure 1). These were established through personal communications with programme coordinators (R. Middelburg, personal communication, January 21, 2021; Holterman-Nijenhuis et al., 2020).

Figure 1

Curriculum components of the Saxion Honours Approach

Vision	**The development of students through authentic environments, community learning and reflection.**
Aims and objectives	The aims and objectives include the development of students to specifically prepare them for being engaging members of society. Specific goals differ per honours community and is based on the content and students' choices.
Content	The content depends on the type of honours programme and the assignments that are presented in the work field. For example, in a 'teacher's education' honours community, content could include a case from a primary school.
Learning activities	Learning activities depend on the type of honours programme. A chemical honours community could include experiments with different fluids, while communities with sociological themes could include cases from society. A common theme is learning by doing and experiencing, which includes reflection on the process and implementing gained knowledge in the future.
Teacher role	The teacher role is that of a coach who assesses and assists in the learning process while focusing less on the end product. This part is assessed by clients from the work field.
Materials and resources	Materials and resources differ between communities in the same way that was described for learning activities.
Grouping	Concerning grouping, the success factor of community learning is mentioned. This includes students from different

	years and teachers acting as coaches. Teachers ask students questions about their processes and what they can learn from them personally and professionally. Students are also expected to ask similar questions of their coaches.
Location	The meeting/lecture location is usually a spacious classroom at Saxion, but during the COVID-19 pandemic, an online platform was utilised.
Time	Students are expected to spend, on average, seven hours a week on the honours programme. Four of these hours include a physical or online meeting/lecture. The remaining three are spent conducting research and engaging in preparation and reflection.
Assessment	Students are expected to reflect on their work for authentic assignments. The product is not necessarily the most important part; learning outcomes can also arise from reflecting on making mistakes in the process.

As described in the section on vision (or rationale) from Figure 1, which is treated as a major orientation point by combining the other nine parts (van den Akker, 2013), it is expected that students develop themselves through authentic environments by using community learning through community-assigned learning goals, group assignments, dialogue and reflection. There is no lecturer who acts as an expert and prepares the content and lectures as in traditional education. The approach of the honours education programme at Saxion consists of these four success pillars: 1) authenticity, 2) development, 3) community and 4) reflection, which, together, equal the Saxion Honours Approach (Figure 2).

Figure 2

Pillars of the Saxion Honours Approach

Note. Adapted from 'Succesfactoren van honoursonderwijs als inspiratie voor regulier HBO-onderwijs' by S. Holterman-Nijenhuis, 2020, p.4.

The community aspect of Saxion honours has been formed over years of experiences and pragmatic decisions but lacks a solid backbone based on scientific research. Meanwhile, the Honours Approach scored high in appreciation among its students (Holterman-Nijenhuis et al., 2020).

In the Honours Approach, the community consists of students, teachers, researchers and members of the work field (Holterman-Nijenhuis et al., 2020). The programme is defined in terms of roles and time and emphasises values, safety and the importance of communities in the learning progress (Holterman-Nijenhuis et al., 2020). However, there is little scientific research on the Saxion Honours Approach that highlights the importance of the community pillar, specifically how the community forms the way it does and how learning takes place within the communities (Holterman-Nijenhuis et al., 2020).

1.3 Exploration and definition of the research problem

The potential effect that communities have on educational improvement has been pointed out in literature for teachers as well as honours students. Teacher practices are influenced by different factors of effective professional development for teachers, including collaboration, active learning strategies and reflective dialogue (Doğan & Adams, 2018; Vescio et al., 2008). Reflective dialogue and collaboration are also intended to be part of the Saxion Honours Approach as reflection and community, respectively (Figure 2). Honours communities are specifically assumed to stimulate the learning and development of their students, fulfil social and emotional needs, facilitate meeting spaces with professionals and organise extracurricular activities (van Ginkel et al., 2015).

With little theoretical building on the community pillar in the Honours Approach, it is difficult to pinpoint what makes community learning effective, how it influences reflection and authenticity and vice versa (Figure 2) and what improvement steps can be made in the future. As community learning is central to the Honours Approach, it is important to know what theories and their aspects are already, perhaps unconsciously, being applied and what other theories can be applied to further improve the community pillar.

To improve the community pillar of the Honours Approach, we compared the current Honours Approach to existing learning theories and learning community theories. The conclusion provides advice on the expansion of the theoretical background of the community pillar (Figure 2) and the improvement and adaptation of the current communities within the Honours Approach without sacrificing the existing high appreciation of the students and teachers (Holterman-Nijenhuis et al., 2020).

Aside from the practical relevance of the Honours approach, bridging a noticeable gap within scientific literature was also relevant. Research into honours and excellence programmes in higher education is much scarcer than research into community learning. A search within Eric EbscoHost for general honours education in higher education resulted in 140 results from 1983 onwards, with mentions of community learning in honours education being even scarcer. Furthermore, searching for general community learning in higher education resulted in more than 4000 results from 1971 onwards, but the results focused mostly on teachers' professional development and communities; student outcomes were often used as the outcome variable (Prenger et al., 2017; Vescio et al., 2008). Most research about professional learning communities (PLCs) focuses on the correlation between teacher performance and teacher development and student outcomes (Doğan & Adams, 2018). Research about communities consisting of students

and teachers is scarce. In contrast, the honours education programme at Saxion treats teachers more as coaches or peers, which provides a fascinating insight into a different form of education within communities. Because students and teachers in the Saxion Honours Approach are expected to act as peers as much as possible, research into teacher PLCs was also added into the theoretical framework, as this is research into communities in higher education consisting of peers (Christ et al., 2017).

1.4 Preliminary research questions

Based on the context and the initial construct of a theoretical framework, several questions emerged. Although the Honours Approach did not have a significant scientific base for their community pillar, this does not necessarily mean that it was not being approached successfully. It did raise a question concerning what teaching and learning activities were already being implemented within the learning community and what improvements were still possible. Furthermore, although the roles of students and teachers as peers and the role of teachers as coaches were established in the intended organisational context, it was unclear if these experiences were also achieved in the implemented and attained curriculum (van den Akker, 2013). This led to two preliminary research questions:

Which learning and teaching activities that are part of community learning and forming are applied within the current Honours Approach?

How do community learning experiences differ between the different roles within the community?

Based on this context, the first step consisted of creating a theoretical framework and comparing this to the existing community practices at Saxion. These factors were derived from current and former participants. These participants included students, teachers and work field experts. The goal was to explore what community learning and forming factors were already being applied, which ones were deemed successful and why they were working according to the participants.

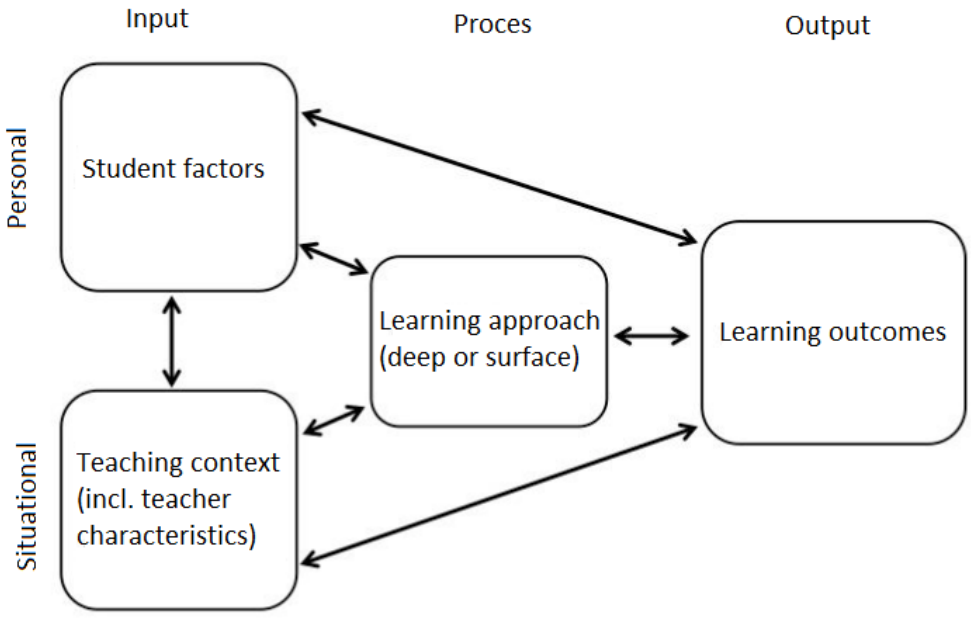
2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Biggs's 3P Model

As research into honours education communities is still scarce, we combined scientific literature on honours education with research on different learning communities in higher education. Although the curricular spiderweb by van den Akker (2013) provides an overall view of the curriculum, this research focused more specifically on a framework for the learning and teaching activities within an honours community. The 3P model of teaching and learning that was developed by Biggs (2003) was used to visualise and summarise the combined conclusions from earlier studies concerning community learning while also distinguishing between student and teacher characteristics (Figure 3).

Figure 3

An adapted version of the 3P model of teaching and learning.



Note: Adapted from 'Teaching for quality learning at university.' by Biggs, 2003, p.19.

The 3P model structures three different phases: the presage (input), process and product (output) phases. The model also describes the relations between these phases. It presents the relationship between student characteristics and the teaching context,

which includes teacher characteristics (Biggs, 2003; Freeth & Reeves, 2004). From left to right, these characteristics influence the general educational process and, in turn, the output in terms of learning outcomes while also showing that every group of factors include each other (Figure 3). This means, for example, that the output phase also influences the process and input phases. This model has been used as a validated instrument in studies on academic teaching and learning in a wide array of academic disciplines (Freeth & Reeves, 2004; Han, 2014). Although this model was initially used for formal classroom education, it has also been successfully implemented in online and community learning environments, including research on honours education (Haverilla, 2012; Jansen & Suhre, 2015; Reeves & Freeth, 2006).

2.2 Input

2.2.1 Student factors

The input phase of the 3P model (2003) consists of student factors and teaching contexts. Student factor examples include prior knowledge and experiences, motivation and demographics (Biggs, 2003). Motivation can be distinguished as being intrinsic and extrinsic (Williams & Williams, 2011). While intrinsic motivational factors are involvement, curiosity and social interaction, extrinsic factors include compliance, competition and work avoidance (Williams & Williams, 2011). Research about honours education generally describes some of these student characteristics. Honours students are described as '… highly motivated, academically talented, intrinsically- inspired, advanced, and curious…" with a passion for learning, broad interests and excitement about new ideas and a deeper drive to learn (Achterberg, 2005, p. 81; Kaczvinsky, 2007; Subotnik et al., 2011). This aligns with the factors of prior knowledge and motivation, which were mentioned by Biggs (2003). Furthermore, the specific mention of high motivation and curiosity aligns with the high correlation concerning intrinsic motivation in research that was determined by Prenger et al. (2017). Finally, the perception of group belonging among fellow teachers and students has been demonstrated to positively correlate with product quality (Jansen & Suhre, 2015).

2.2.2 Teaching context

Teaching context is the second part of the input phase in the model of teaching and learning (Biggs, 2003). It includes learning objectives, assessments, learning climate and teaching style (Biggs, 2003). It is also used to describe the characteristics of teachers (Han, 2014).

The objectives of honours education are generally the development of the knowledge and skills of excellent students, specifically in cases where regular education cannot (Achterberg, 2005; Byrne, 1998; McKeague et al., 1984). Honours education also brings talented students together in a learning community and trains them to become educated members of a democratic society (Tarasova, 2019, p. 40). Other learning objectives include higher-ordered thinking and modern skills such as creative thinking, role-taking in groups, cooperation sensitivity and effective research (Lanier, 2008; Tarasova, 2019; Zubizarreta, 2008). As a concrete example from practice, Illinois State University has categorised the learning objectives into six 'honours learning' dimensions. These dimensions include 'critical thinking, interdisciplinary learning, information fluency, creative productivity, leadership development (and) intercultural competence' (Tarasova, 2019, p. 42).

Assessing the learning objectives can be done using rubrics that focus specifically on higher-ordered thinking and skills (Lanier, 2008). Aside from conducting a formal assessment with observations made by teachers, an indirect assessment can be conducted by performing surveys and interviews with students. This is consistent with Kuh's research (2001, pp. 3–4) and the limitations provided by Jansen and Suhre (2015), who stated that although students are capable of judging their activities and academic processes, their judgments should be combined with observations and general assessments of student work. This way, weaknesses in teaching and learning can be identified faster (Jansen & Suhre, 2015).

The learning climate can be described as the facilitation of education (Biggs, 2003). Van Ginkel et al. (2015) mentioned the culture of excellence, which treats students as 'high potentials'. Prenger et al. (2017) included group composition as part of their input phase, which is also described as any facilitation that is provided. This factor can be linked with supporting factors of teacher design teams (TDTs), which include team interaction, goal alignment, activities and organisation (Binkhorst et al., 2015, 2017). Aspects of team interaction include an open atmosphere of communication, mutual support, feedback, participation and effort and overall coherence (Binkhorst et al., 2017). This is consistent

with the shared feeling of community and ownership that characterises many honours education communities (van Ginkel et al., 2015). Goal alignments include having one or multiple shared goals among team members and explicitly stating these goals (Binkhorst et al., 2015, 2017). Similar characteristics such as shared passions for challenges and excellence are aspirations in honours communities, because honours students are described as more ambitious, more motivated and have a larger need for challenge then students in traditional education (van Ginkel et al., 2015).

Activities can be split between activities inside of meetings, like sharing information or holding discussions, and activities outside of the formal context, such as the search for relevant articles or writing materials for meetings (Binkhorst et al., 2015, 2017). This is similar to the shared interaction repertoire in honours communities (van Ginkel et al., 2015). An organisation consists of context-specific aspects like planning, actual time spent, group size and consistency (Binkhorst et al., 2017), as is the case within honours communities (van Ginkel et al., 2015).

Teaching styles in honours education are generally described as being different from the teaching styles that are found in regular higher education courses. Honours students are described as being unique from ‘regular’ students as they need more challenging learning opportunities (Achterberg, 2005; Kaczvinsky, 2007; Subotnik et al., 2011; Zubizarreta, 2008). Teachers are also required to stimulate higher-ordered thinking by handing out more freedom and responsibilities and spending more time with students who try to think unconventionally to make them ‘grow, learn the value of feedback, and embrace high expectations for themselves and others’ (Zubizarreta, 2008, p. 109). An overview of teaching context factors and examples of their subfactors can be found in Figure 4.

Figure 4

Teaching context factors and subfactors

Learning objectives	Assessments	Learning climate	Teaching style
• Knowledge • Modern skills • "Honours learning" • Higher-order thinking • Becoming democratic society members	• Observation Rubrics • Surveys • Interviews • Self-reports	• Culture of excellence • Interaction • Goal alignment • Activities • Organisations	• More challenging learning opportunities • Authenticity • Student freedom and responsibilities • Patience and time

2.3 Process

2.3.1 Learning and teaching activities

The process phase is described as the learning activities that students adopt (Figure 3) (Biggs, 2003; Remenick, 2018). Because the 3P model is circular, both the input and output factors influence the process and vice versa. Other researchers have specifically included instructional activities and strategies in the process phase (Han, 2014). Some examples of learning activities include the use of educational games (Tarasova, 2019) and interdisciplinary case studies (Zhu & Baylen, 2005). Generally, a distinction is made between deep learning and surface learning (Biggs, 2003; Han, 2014; Remenick, 2018). Deep learning is characterised as critically examining new information and making connections, while surface learning is described as accepting information uncritically and not forming connections (Biggs, 2003; Houghton, 2004). As honours programmes around the world differ due to the specific learning activities they facilitate, it is difficult to pinpoint specific activities to incorporate into the model. Examples from the Illinois State University include seminars, contracts, explorations, research and travel (Tarasova, 2019, p. 42).

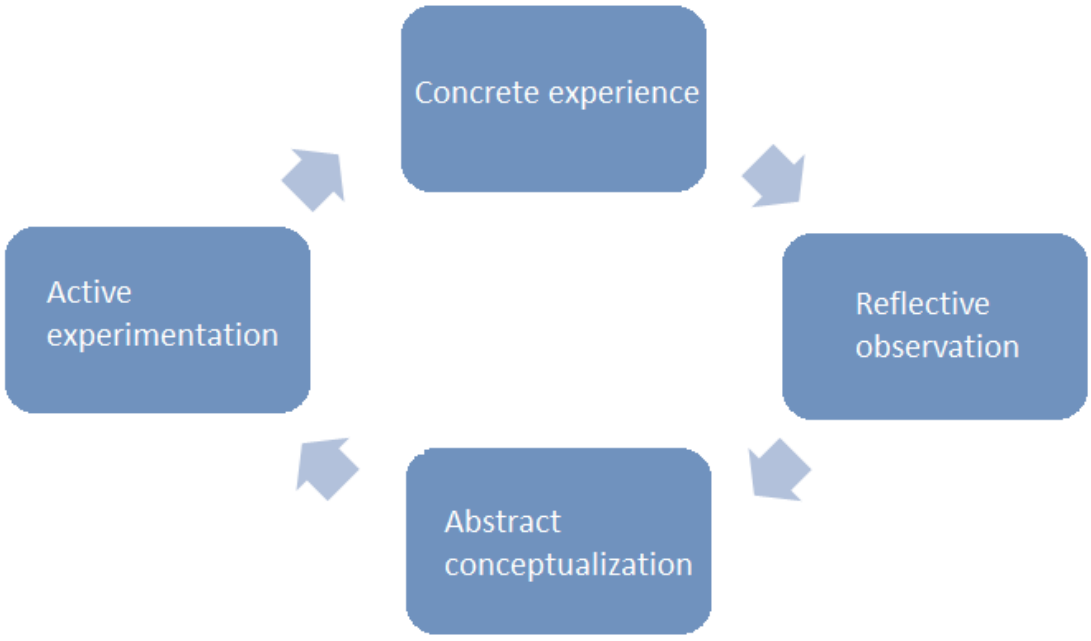
The existing learning activities within the Saxion Honours Approach as mentioned by the programme coordinators share a common theme of experiential learning and

constructivism (R. Middelburg, personal communication, January 21, 2021; Figure 1). Experiential learning emphasises cognitive learning and the learners' subjective experiences (Dochy et al., 2012, p. 54). Kolb and Kolb (2005) identified experiential learning propositions as the main goal of learning as a process, but not in terms of outcomes. They build on interactions between reflection, action, feeling and thinking (Dochy et al., 2012, p. 55; A. Y. Kolb & Kolb, 2009). The programme utilises a constructivist approach, assuming that knowledge is created by the learner and is not merely copied. Specifically, constructivism maintains that learners construct new knowledge based on prior knowledge, ideas and experiences (Nola & Irzik, 2016, p. 175; Piaget, 1971). Moreover, the importance of interactions between peers and adults can help learners acquire knowledge and skills through the zone of proximal development, meaning that learners go through a process to eventually apply their knowledge and skills without assistance from instructors (Seifert & Sutton, 2009).

An educational model in which constructivism and experiential learning are combined is the experiential learning theory (ELT) that was created by Kolb and Kolb (2009). They proposed a cycle of modes: concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualisation and active experimentation in ELT (Dochy et al., 2012, p. 56). An overview is presented in Figure 5.

Figure 5

Kolb's Cycle of Experimental Learning



Note: Adapted from "Experiential learning theory: A dynamic, holistic approach to management learning, education and development" by Kolb & Kolb, 2009, p. 44

Learning in ELT consists of creating knowledge: it comprises the process of assimilating new experiences and accommodating existing knowledge to new experiences (Dochy et al., 2012; Piaget, 1971). Learning has been described as a 'holistic process of adaption to the world' that consists of a learner's thinking, perceiving, feeling and behaving' (Dochy et al., 2012, p. 55). For the modes of ELT, concrete experience consists of a person carrying out a specific action and being aware of its effect, such as conducting a physics experiment (Dochy et al., 2012; A. Y. Kolb & Kolb, 2009). Other examples of learning activities include simulations, observations and films (Svinicki & Dixon, 1987). The act of reflective observation is mostly defined by re-examining and evaluating a past experience (Dochy et al., 2012; A. Y. Kolb & Kolb, 2009). This can happen through personal journals, logs, discussions and brainstorms (Svinicki & Dixon, 1987). Abstract conceptualisation, in the case of the physics experiment, could be used to propose adjustments to an experiment based on reflecting, writing papers or constructing models (Dochy et al., 2012; A. Y. Kolb & Kolb, 2009; Svinicki & Dixon, 1987). This leads to active experimentation in which adjustments are then implemented and used

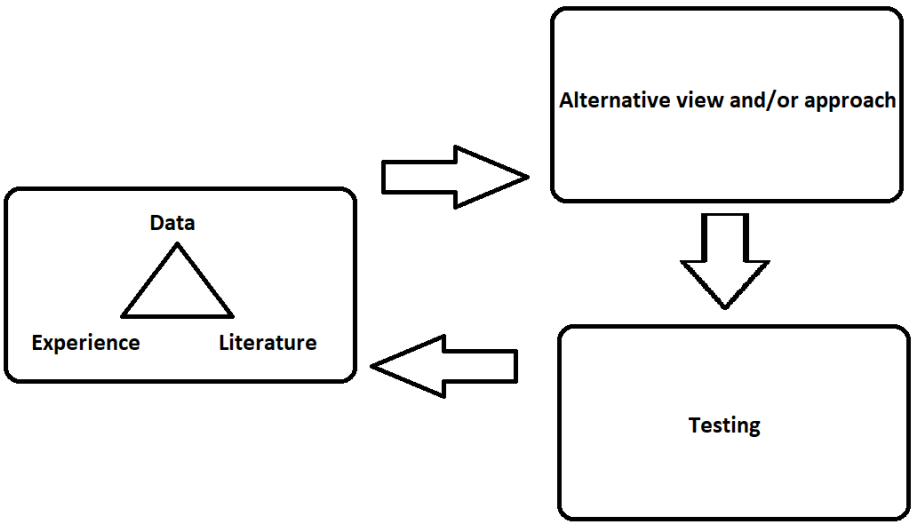
to create new experiences such as case studies, projects and homework (Dochy et al., 2012; A. Y. Kolb & Kolb, 2009; Svinicki & Dixon, 1987).

Applying all four of these modes to an honours curriculum would be consistent with the aforementioned goal of higher-ordered thinking (Lanier, 2008; Tarasova, 2019; Zubizarreta, 2008). However, critique of these modes include that these learning activities can still be described as being too broad to conceptualise or being ascribed to multiple modes (Bergsteiner et al., 2010). Learning activities could be described as both active experimentation and concrete experience, based on a subjective point of view. Bergsteiner et al. provide some examples to objectively distinguish learning activities in these modes. For example, the difference between watching an experiment versus doing one describes the difference between the student as a receiver (passive) or as an actor (active). Bergsteiner et al. (2010) distinguished between simulated and real situations and scaling passive (reading and hearing) to active experiences (watching and doing).

Another learning approach that fits an experiential learning approach comes from PLC research into reflective dialogue in learning communities. Reflective dialogue of teachers, specifically, refers to dialogue that improves student development, instruction and curricula by creating knowledge (Katz & Earl, 2010; Prenger et al., 2017; Vescio et al., 2008). The initialisation of reflective dialogue consists of combining experience, literature and data (Meijlof, 2018; Schildkamp et al., 2016). By becoming aware of the key points within this dialogue, one can establish alternative views or approaches that, in turn, can be tested in practice (Korthagen & Vasalos, 2005; Meijlof, 2018). An overview is presented in Figure 6.

Figure 6

Model of reflective dialogue in a learning community



Note: Adapted from 'Reflective Dialogue in Professional Learning Communities' by I. Meijlof, 2018, p.8.

2.3.2 Community activities

A learning community (LC) is 'an intentionally developed community that will promote and maximize learning' (Lenning & Ebbers, 1999, p. 8). Distinctions can be made between LCs based on curricula, specific courses and residential, student or virtual LCs (Lenning & Ebbers, 1999, p. 10). LCs are meant to improve student learning and experiences inside as well as outside of the classroom and stimulate collaboration between students and professionals (Love, 2012; Zhu & Baylen, 2005). LC core practices value community and diversity, along with active learning, reflection and assessments (Smith et al., 2004, p. 97).

A distinction has been made in scientific literature between LCs and community learning. Community learning (CL) differs from LC as it includes collaboration with local communities and is not restricted to educational settings (Zhu & Baylen, 2005). CL has the added focus of participating in civic life while building on students' 'knowledge, skills, confidence and capacity for life-long learning and continuous services to the community' (Zhu & Baylen, 2005, p. 254). This aligns with the goals of honours education, which also focuses on students becoming educated members of a democratic society (Tarasova,

2019, p. 40). Saxion aims to include local members of the workforce in the development of their honours students, fitting the community aspect of Saxion learning communities (Holterman-Nijenhuis et al., 2020).

Other factors concerning collaboration have been found to significantly impact development in research into teachers' professional development in professional learning communities (Prenger et al., 2017). Collaboration factors have surpassed regular information-sharing and are centred on engaging peers in 'opening up their beliefs and practices to investigation and debate' (Katz & Earl, 2010, p. 30; Prenger et al., 2017).

2.4 Output

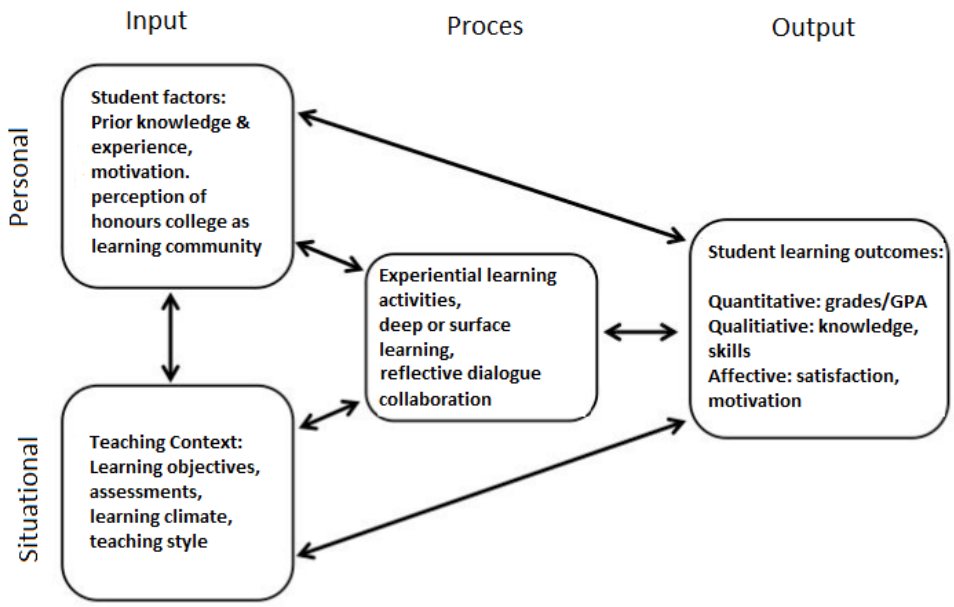
The output phase is the final phase of the 3P model of learning and teaching (Biggs, 2003). It comprises learning outcomes. Several methods for distinguishing these outcomes have been highlighted in the literature. These outcomes can be distinguished as being one of three types: 1) quantitative, qualitative or affective; 2) internal or external or; 3) cognitive and non-cognitive (Biggs, 2003; Han, 2014; Remenick, 2018). Generally, these distinctions are either made using grades or GPAs and satisfaction and motivation. Researchers who have studied professional development in networked PLCs have also mentioned output factors such as satisfaction, knowledge, skills and attitude (Prenger et al., 2017). As with learning activities, specific learning outcomes can differ between different educational institutions. Generally, the learning objectives of honours education programmes include developing modern skills and higher-ordered thinking and helping students become democratic society members. An example that was provided by the Illinois State University utilises six dimensions of qualitative and affective learning outcomes: critical thinking, interdisciplinary learning, information fluency, creative productivity, leadership development and intercultural competence (Tarasova, 2019, p. 42).

2.5 3P Model for Honours Community Learning & Teaching

Based on several previous studies that focused on community learning and/or honours education, the 3P model (Biggs, 2003) was used as a framework to incorporate different factors into one model (Figure 7). Other factors from community learning were also included.

Figure 7

The 3P Model for Honours Community Learning & Teaching



Note: Adapted from 'Teaching for quality learning at university.' by Biggs, 2003, p.19.

Besides student factors such as prior knowledge and experience, intrinsic and extrinsic motivation and the perception of honours colleges as learning communities were added into the framework. The teaching context already consisted of learning objectives, assessments, learning climates and teaching styles (Figure 7). For this research, the learning climate was expanded upon using research about PLCs and teaching styles and research about honours education.

The process in the original 3P model consists of learning activities (Biggs, 2003). Honours education activities at Saxion involve incorporating the modes of experiential learning (A. Y. Kolb & Kolb, 2009) and the distinction between deep and surface learning. In addition to PLC research, reflective dialogue and collaboration are part of the process.

The framework in Figure 7 assisted in answering the research questions stated in Section 1.4, which were adapted based on the theoretical framework:

- *How are process aspects of community learning and collaboration applied within the current Honours Approach?*
- *How do community learning experiences differ between the different roles within the community?*

3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Approach

The first goal was to assess the process aspects of community learning and collaboration applied within the current Honours Approach. These factors were established in the theoretical framework (Figure 7). Secondly, because the 3P model (Figure 7) distinguishes between student factors and teaching context, the perceived experiences of both students and teachers were also studied to assess differences, strong points and potential for improvement concerning collaboration within a learning community. For this, a qualitative method was chosen where communities were studied in depth. The dominant part of this research comprised a qualitative design that utilised semi-structured interviews and open observations in natural field settings (Baarda et al., 2009; Dooley, 2009, pp. 247–249). Moreover, information was derived from several sources of documentation. These included teachers' group reflections, organisational validation documents and student products (reflections, portfolios, papers, art pieces and movies)

Yin (2003, pp. 40, 52) described four types of case studies and highlighted the embedded multiple-case study as a means for analysing different embedded units within cases in a specific context. We focused on observing and interviewing participants from several different communities within the Honours Approach and included both teachers and students.

Of the nine communities within the Honours programme, three were included in this research, which is an accepted number in multiple embedded case study research (Schoch, 2020). Purposeful sampling provided the opportunity to focus on specific characteristics within honours education, such as community specific collaboration factors and learning activities (Patton, 2002; Schoch, 2020; van Ginkel et al., 2015). Sampling was conducted in collaboration with the organisation of the Top Talent Programme and programme coordinators. Three distinctly different communities were chosen for their difference in content, teaching methods and student's regular education programmes.

3.2 Participants

Three communities participated in the study. A community typically consisted of twenty students and three teachers; one teacher also acted as a coordinator. Out of every

community, three to five respondents were included in each group interview based on availability and participation in the observed session. These interviews always included at least two students. Students participating in the honours programme have a grade average at least 7 out of 10. Students were between the ages of 19 and 30 (*M [age]* = 21,8, *SD* = 2,34, *Confidence Interval [95%]* = 21.7576 ±0.797 [±3.66%]).

3.3 Instruments

To ensure data triangulation and strengthen the construct validity of a case study, gathering data using different instruments is recommended (Yin, 2018, p. 128). Therefore, three different instruments were used for this research (Table 5). First, documentation was gathered about the honours curriculum, which was also used to triangulate with findings from other instruments. Documentation was gathered through correspondence with the organisation and coordinators of the Honours Approach. The documentation included agendas and notes from meetings, accreditation forms, recruitment posters, assessments and reflections that were completed by students. Findings from news clippings, reports and internet searches were only added when they significantly added to the research.

Second, an observation was conducted to observe the process of honours education in their natural setting. An educational meeting of the honours community was observed by a researcher who did not engage with the participants. This way, the process could be observed with the least external interruptions. The observation checklist can be found in Appendix A.

Finally, group interviews were conducted with students and teachers to determine how aspects of the process (Table 3) were already being applied within the Honours Approach. This provided the opportunity to gain clarity in process aspects observed in the observation, ask about process aspects that might not have appeared in the observation. Furthermore, it provided the participants with the opportunity to clarify answers, give additional comments. For the interviewer, it provided the opportunity to ask more in-depth questions or clarifications. The process characteristics served as a guideline for the observations (Appendix A) and the initial interview questions (Appendix B). Dutch and English versions were established and implemented based on the needs of the students. In the end, only the Dutch version was used. For readability, the English version has been included in the appendices (Appendix B).

Table 5

Data triangulation

3P Model Phase	***Documentation***	***Observation***	***Interviews with community***
Process			
Experiential learning modes	X	X	X
Deep or surface learning	X	X	X
Reflective dialogue	X	X	X
Collaboration	X	X	X

3.4 Procedure

The respondents participated voluntarily. All the participants were only interviewed after they provided their informed consent (Appendix C).

The coordinators of the selected honours communities were invited via e-mail to be part of the open observations and semi-structured interviews with at least two of their students. After being observed during their regular sessions, the respondents were interviewed so that they could share their perspectives on how community learning and collaboration are now being practised. These meetings and the observation took place on different days to not further strain the participants and because the observations formed the basis for community-specific questions.

A summary of the observation was given at the start of the interview. This way, participants were able to validate the data gathered in the observation. Furthermore, one student and one teacher per community were asked to be contacted through e-mail afterwards, once, if the data analysis of the observation and the interview led to follow-up questions. Due to COVID-19, these interviews took place on an online platform. The interviews were recorded with the participants' permission and informed consent. As mentioned, the communities' meetings were also recorded and reviewed in the same manner without the researcher's active participation using open observations. These observations led to several follow-up questions in the interviews. By using different methods of instrumentation and comparing the data (i.e., the convergence of evidence), and the author triangulated the data concerning process aspects (Table 5)

The procedure and instruments were approved by the ethical committee of the Faculty of Behavioural Management and Social Sciences of the University of Twente under application number 210226.

3.5 Data analysis

Yin (2003) described three general strategies for analysing the evidence gathered in case studies. These strategies are 1) relying on theoretical propositions, 2) thinking about explanations and 3) developing a case description (Yin, 2003). In this study, the theoretical propositions were established first. These propositions served to assess the community learning and collaboration within the Honours Approach. Improvements and suggestions for both the theoretical models and the Honours Approach at Saxion could be established based on the outcomes. Explanations were established after every case was analysed and assayed to the other three cases.

The observations and group interviews were recorded, transcribed and analysed using ATLAS.ti 9. Based on the elements in the theoretical framework, we used deductive coding to analyse the transcripts (Dooley, 2009). Codes as created from the theoretical framework and are presented in Tables 6 and 7. Specifically, transcripts that were coded as experiential learning modes (Table 6) were reviewed in a second round as real or simulated and by level of activity (Table 7). A fellow student who was not involved in the study coded >12,% of the data from the interviews to determine Cohen's kappa measuring inter-rater reliability (Dooley, 2009). This has also been described as investigator triangulation in case study research (Yin, 2018, p. 128). Cohen's kappa was 0,72 after one round of revision and discussion, which is deemed as substantial (Landis & Koch, 1977). This further strengthened the reliability of the research.

To ensure reliability, validity and overall credibility, several measures were taken. These included investigator triangulation (Yin, 2018, p. 128), data triangulation (Yin, 2018, p. 128), seeking out similarities and differences between communities (Morse et al., 2016), extensive record keeping of transcripts and videos (Long & Johnson, 2000), engaging with expert researchers to reduce research bias (Sandelowski, 1993) and respondent validation (Long & Johnson, 2000).

To further ensure internal and external validity, the data analysis method 'explanation building' (Yin, 2018) was used. Specifically, the iterative nature of explanation building was implemented. In this explanation building, every community was independently assayed to the process aspects in Figure 7, Table 6 and Table 7. Based

on the data, explanations are presented per community (Appendix E). After the three communities were independently explained, similarities and differences were established to build up a case for possible revisions. These revisions could be implemented as suggestions for improvement for the Saxion Honours Approach, suggestions for further research over time for the Honours Approach or suggestions for further research into community learning and honours learning in general.

Table 6

Process aspects of the 3P model for honours community learning & teaching codebook

Column	Class	Code	Label
Experiential learning modes	Concrete experience	EXP-CE	Carrying out a specific action and being aware of its effect, such as conducting a physics experiment.
	Reflective observation	EXP-RO	Re-examining and evaluating a past experience.
	Abstract conceptualisation	EXP-AC	Proposing adjustments to previous reflections, such as analysing a manual.
	Active experimentation	EXP-AE	Implementing adjustments to create new experiences.
Deep or surface learning	Deep learning	DS-D	Critically examining new information and making connections.
	Surface learning	DS-S	Accepting new information uncritically without connecting it to previous experiences.
Community process factors	Reflective dialogue	COM-REF	Dialoguing to improve student development, instruction and curricula by creating knowledge through combining experience, data and literature.

	Collaboration	COM-COL	Surpassing regular information sharing and centring on engaging peers in 'opening up their beliefs and practices to investigation and debate'.

Table 7

Passive/active distinctions and types of experiences within ELT modes codebook

Column	Class	Code	Example
Passive  Active	Reading	EXP-READ	Reading about a physics experiment.
	Hearing	EXP-HEAR	Listening to a podcast about a physics experiment.
	Watching	EXP-WATCH	Watching a video about a physics experiment.
	Doing	EXP-DO	Conducting a physics experiment.
Experience	Real	EXP-REAL	Buying and selling stocks on the stock market.
	Simulated	EXP-SIM	Buying and selling stocks within a simulated environment.

4 RESULTS

In this section, the findings and explanations for the experiential learning modes, deep and surface learning and community process factors will be presented. These process aspects of community learning and collaboration are the basis for answering research question 1 *(How are process aspects of community learning and collaboration applied within the current Honours Approach?)*. To answer the second research question (*How do community learning experiences differ between the different roles within the community?*), student-teacher collaboration and expectations across experiential learning modes, deep and surface learning and community process factors will be presented. A full overview of the results for each community with quotes can be found in Appendix D.

For each explanation, it was determined if the explanation was shared among communities or if an alternative or conflicting explanation could be found. It was expected that when explanations were shared between communities, they would have a greater support base for answering the research questions and create concrete advice. Conflicting or alternative explanations could either serve as contradicting evidence or as opportunities to explain why they were not found in another community.

4.1 Experiential learning modes

All three communities demonstrated evidence of the use of the experiential learning modes and their transitions in general. Specifically, the transition from *reflective observation* to *abstract conceptualisation* was witnessed in all of the communities. This was mostly shown when (usually) a teacher would ask what the next step would be after reflecting on an experience. Indeed, all three communities utilised the role of the teacher as an instigator of moving to a new phase through questions or feedback.. *Reflective observation* was specifically deemed an important process in HP in two of the three communities. Students and teachers expressed the importance of critically examining feelings and experiences. In one of the communities, it was specifically established that reflection as a process was more important than reflection as an actual end product (such as a reflection report). Another community made use of reflective observations by making students keep a reflection portfolio. Students were encouraged to reflect on educational meetings, learning experiences and personal growth and write or draw this in this personal portfolio. *Concrete experience* made every experience as authentic as possible. Especially experiences that were *real* (such as the physically meeting in an external

location such as a bonsai tree shop) were deemed more educational then *simulated* experiences (such as in online meetings). Of the four modes, *active experimentation* was not observed directly in the first two communities. However, it was observed in the third community, where end products were being presented. Here, for example, students would freely experiment with character studies, use of multimedia and other art forms, which originally started on the concrete experience of reading a book. An overview of the explanations concerning the experiential learning modes in honours communities can be found in Table 8.

Table 8.

Explanations concerning the experiential learning modes in honours communities

Experiential learning modes	**Communities**		
Explanations	**1**	**2**	**3**
The experiential learning modes and their transitions are visible in the honours programme.	✓	✓	✓
Active experimentation is shown in the general process but not the sessions themselves.	✓	✓	✗
Reflective observation is deemed an important part of the HP process.	✓		✓
Teachers can assist the educational process by 'nudging' students to complete the next experiential mode.	✓	✓	✓
Concrete experiences benefit students by being as meaningful and authentic as possible.		✓	✓
Reflective observation benefits from focusing less on the result and more on the process.		✓	
Reflective observation takes place in the form of a reflective portfolio.			✓
Abstract conceptualisation is the result of reflective observation or dialogue.	✓	✓	✓
Abstract conceptualisation is a pre-phase of active experimentation.	✗	✗	✓
Active experimentation is exhibited in sessions where end products are presented.			✓

Note: A 'V' indicates that a explanation was established for a community. An 'X' indicates that an alternative or conflicting explanation was presented elsewhere.

4.2 Deep or surface learning

Deep and *surface learning* were displayed differently in each of the three communities. The first community emphasised the importance of not focusing too much on the outcome as the process may suffer from it. Furthermore, some members of the first community stated that meeting online instead of in-person led to participants being less critical and involved in the learning process. The second community emphasised the importance of being critical in dialogue. It also demonstrated that younger participants seemed to be less critical than older participants and that students seemed to be less critical in the observed sessions with the teacher. This, however, was not demonstrated in the group interview, during which students gave examples of critically examining and, in turn, accepting the teacher's feedback or going their own way:

> Teacher doesn't even ask what he can help with. He just sits down and joins in. And in the questions he asks, you think, 'Oh, yes, he will help you'. In this way, he just joins in like anyone who [inaudible], but maybe Teacher has a little more knowledge of certain things, which gives you more depth than when you're with students who are, for example, still new in certain subjects. So that's nice. (Student 3)

In the third community, finally, *deep* and *surface learning* were scarcely mentioned. One of the students did emphasise the importance of being critical but mostly of others:

> And I notice it in myself now too—I didn't do that in the first year—but now I'm starting to adopt that more and more, just asking each other critical questions, or if you see that someone is struggling with something but is not aware [of] that themselves, to possibly ask a question there, to make him or her think. (Student 2)

An overview of the explanations concerning *deep* and *surface learning* in honours communities can be found in Table 9.

Table 9.

Explanations concerning deep learning and surface learning in honours communities

Deep learning or surface learning	Communities		
Explanations	1	2	3
A focus on the outcome instead of the process may lead to more surface learning.	✓		
Meetings that are conducted online contribute to more surface learning and less deep learning.	✓		
Deep learning takes place during dialogue in sessions.		✓	
A difference in experience can lead to surface learning for less experienced members of a community.		✓	
Deep and surface learning are demonstrated in the observations but not in the transcripts of the interview.	✗	✓	
Deep and surface learning are scarcely demonstrated in the observation or the group interview.	✗	✗	✓

Note: A 'V' indicates that a explanation was established for a community. An 'X' indicates that an alternative or conflicting explanation was presented elsewhere.

4.3 Community process factors

Reflective dialogue was not featured heavily in the observations of HP meetings, nor in the group interviews. Evidence to support the claim that parts of reflective dialogue took place was found in all of the three communities when the teacher generally helped students transition to the next phase of the *reflective dialogue cycle*. Generally, students would stick to sharing experiences, and would not contemplate alternative views, unless asked if these experiences changed anything for them by the teachers. A specific example was the teacher asking students if they would shop differently after watching a documentary on sustainability.

In two of the three communities, it was established that the teacher fulfilled the role of a conversational partner rather than that of a traditional lecturer. Furthermore, the evidence demonstrated that having more and diverse views within a community leads to a richer educational experience. In this group reflection, experiences were shared. As with *deep* and *surface learning*, it was emphasised that meeting in real life benefits the reflective dialogue more than meeting online does.

Moreover, although sharing of experiences took place, none of the three communities used any form of literature, and only one specifically used data in addition to its members' experiences. As mentioned before, meetings would consist of mostly sharing experiences and not linking these to possible alternative views.

Other findings included students emphasising the importance of reflection and dialogue in HP in comparison to their original studies, where reflection was mostly used as an end assignment that was graded. It was also found that equal amounts of speaking time in reflective dialogue were desired. One participant stated, 'Everyone who needs it should be able to speak their minds or at least have an equal amount of attention and time for it'. Finally, the teacher was identified as having the potential for asking deeper questions and surpassing superficial questions. An overview of the explanations concerning *reflective dialogue* in honours communities can be found in Table 10.

Table 10.

Explanations concerning reflective dialogue in honours communities.

Reflective dialogue	**Communities**		
Explanations	**1**	**2**	**3**
Reflective dialogue surpasses reflective observation as more views are discussed.	✓	✓	
Reflective dialogue in the HP consists of mostly data and experiences leading to alternative views but scarcely contains literature.	✓		
Teachers can assist the educational process by 'nudging' students into the next phase of reflective dialogue.	✓	✓	✓
Meeting in real life benefits collaboration and group reflection in comparison with online meetings.	✓	✓	
The teacher in the HP has the role of a coach and/or conversational partner instead of a traditional teacher (1.1.3).	✓	✓	
Reflection is desirable in regular education instead of as an end product for honours students.	✓		
Group reflection should allow participants to speak for an equal amount of time.		✓	
Group reflection in the HP consists of shared experiences but not data or literature.	✗		✓
Reflective dialogue presents the opportunity to avoid asking superficial questions.			✓

Note: A 'V' indicates that a explanation was established for a community. An 'X' indicates that an alternative or conflicting explanation was presented elsewhere.

The equality factor was also established when collaboration was generally discussed. Two of the three communities emphasised the importance of equality when asked about forming a community. All three communities also emphasised the importance of openness in a group and the creation of trust. Other factors that were identified included shared passion, the presence of curiosity, the diversity of views, connectivity and accessibility, the sense of belonging and safety. Although different factors were found in different communities, no conflicting explanations were found that suggested that these factors would not benefit other communities. An overview of the explanations concerning *collaboration* in honours communities can be found in Table 11.

Table 11.

Explanations concerning collaboration in honours communities.

Collaboration	**Communities**		
Explanations	**1**	**2**	**3**
Openness of the group	✓	✓	✓
Shared passion	✓		
Creation of trust	✓	✓	✓
Presence of curiosity	✓		
Diversity of views	✓		
Shared goals		✓	
Equality		✓	✓
Connectivity and accessibility			✓
Sense of belonging			✓
Safety			✓

Note: A ‘V’ indicates that a explanation was established for the community. An ‘X’ indicates that an alternative or conflicting explanation was presented elsewhere.

5 DISCUSSION

5.1 Conclusions

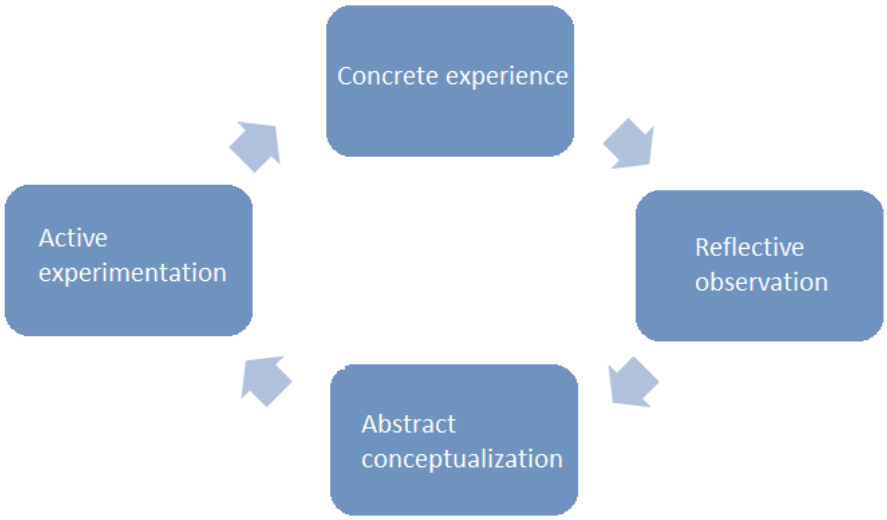
In Section 1.4, two research questions were formulated based on the definition of the problem and the organisational context. Based on a theoretical framework, a method was established to find the answers to these research questions. This included observing HP meetings, reading HP documentation and conducting group interviews with students and teachers. The results, which were established in Chapter 4, will act as a basis for answering these questions.

5.1.1 Learning and teaching activities for community learning and collaboration

The first research question (Section 1.4) sought to explore what teaching and learning activities were already being implemented within the Saxion learning community and where improvements were still possible. As was established in Section 4.1, the experiential learning modes (specifically *concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualisation* and *active experimentation*) and their transitions (Figure 8) were visible in honours communities.

Figure 8

Kolb's Cycle of Experimental Learning



Note: Adapted from "Experiential learning theory: A dynamic, holistic approach to management learning, education and development" by Kolb & Kolb, 2009, p. 44

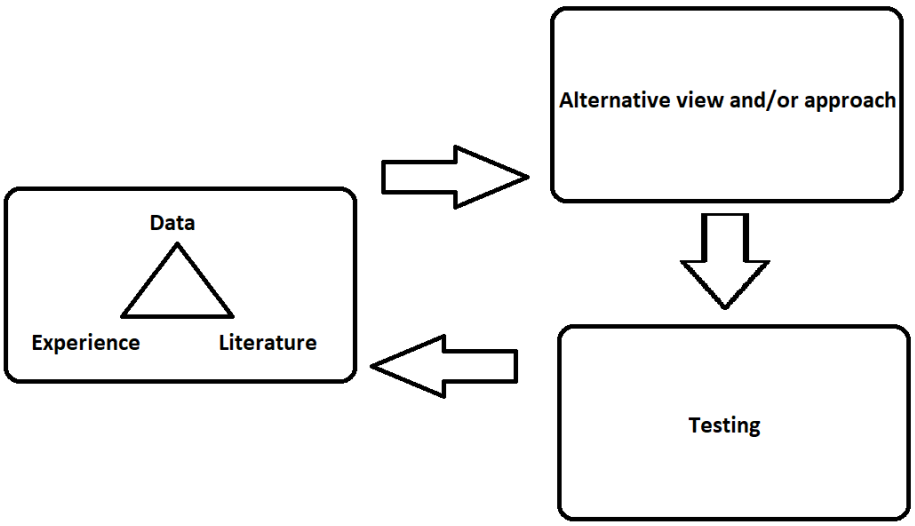
Concrete experiences were found to be mostly beneficial, because participants appreciated experiences were as authentic as possible. *Reflective observations* were also deemed essential, although they were implemented in different ways. *Abstract conceptualisations* and *active experimentations* were less prominent in the process, which led to the conclusion that these modes are currently not implemented as much as *concrete experiences* and *reflective observations*. The transitions between these modes were mostly achieved through the teachers' deliberate actions, for example by providing feedback or the use of critical questions, mostly concerning next steps to take. This observation indicates that students do not necessarily move through these phases independently or that they are unaware of them.

Concerning *deep learning* and *surface learning,* the different communities delivered different results. However, COVID-19 has forced the honours communities to host their activities online instead of in person. It was established that their dialogue has been hindered because of this, while the same dialogue motivates the deepest learning in HP sessions. It was theorized by participants that this implementation has led to less critical thinking and dialogue, which, in turn, has led to more surface learning and demonstrates the importance of meeting in person instead of hosting activities online. Furthermore, focusing on the process instead of the outcome within the HP provides more possibilities for deep learning.

This same perceived dialogue was also featured when examining *reflective dialogue*. Here, It was also established that meeting in person has an added benefit for the learning process in comparison to meeting online. As with *experiential learning*, *reflective dialogue* also consists of a cyclical process, as established in Section 2.3.2 (Figure 9).

Figure 9

Model of reflective dialogue in a learning community



Note: Adapted from 'Reflective Dialogue in Professional Learning Communities' by I. Meijlof, 2018, p.8.

However, as with the experiential learning cycle, the teacher had to nudge students to begin the next phase, which led to the same explanation as the one that was discussed regarding the experiential learning cycle. Namely, students do not necessarily move through this cycle independently or are unaware of it. This finding also suggests that a prolonged period of time spent in one of the phases might be detrimental to the learning process. It is also possible that students may not be able to fully envision the next phase. Mostly, the students focused on their experiences and sometimes on data (in the form of a sleeping journal) but never on the literature. Because of this, although we can speak of reflection taking place during group dialogue, reflective dialogue as established in literature (Figure 9) hardly take place in the honours communities.

Several factors arose when researching *collaboration* within the HP communities. Of these factors, the *openness of the group*, *creation of trust* and *equality* were observed in more than one of the communities. Other factors included *shared passion, the presence of curiosity, the diversity of views, connectivity and accessibility, a sense of belonging* and *safety* when opening up their beliefs and practices to investigation and debate in

collaboration. These factors, along with reflective dialogue, were beneficial in surpassing regular information sharing and forming a community.

5.1.2 Learning experiences between the different roles within the community

The second research question focussed on the differences between roles within the community. As was mentioned in Section 5.1.1, the teacher in all of the communities was the person who instigated the transitions in the cyclical processes of *experiential learning*, as well as *reflective dialogue*. Furthermore, the teacher fulfilled the role of a conversational partner or coach instead of the role of a traditional teacher who provides instruction, as stated by both the teachers and students in the group interviews. This led to the explanation that the teacher must be aware of the cyclical processes and remind students, directly or indirectly, to keep moving the process forward. Because most students wish for equality in a relationship with a teacher, one could establish that the cyclical progress could also be established by other students and not only by the teacher.

It was also established that less experienced students, such as first-year students, generally were less likely to ask critical questions or critically inspect what more experienced students provided during the dialogue. The same can be said for older students who engaged in dialogue with their teachers. This makes them more vulnerable to *surface learning*. Therefore, the participants had to be reminded to be aware of the risk of less experienced members being less critical than their peers.

5.2 Reflection & recommendations

The underlying paragraphs serve as the closure of the thesis. In Section 5.2.1, a reflection is provided on the conducted research. Section 5.2.2 provides general recommendations for Saxion and higher education institutions concerning honours communities; these recommendations are based on the conclusions that are provided in Section 5.1. Finally, Section 5.2.3 summarises the suggestions and recommendations for further academic research about learning communities.

5.2.1 Reflection on research

To ensure reliability, validity and overall credibility, several measures were taken. These included investigator triangulation (Yin, 2018, p. 128), data triangulation (Yin, 2018, p. 128), seeking out similarities and differences between communities (Morse et al., 2016), respondent validation, extensive record keeping of transcripts and videos (Long &

Johnson, 2000) and engaging with expert researchers to reduce research bias (Sandelowski, 1993).

Nevertheless, some limitations need to be acknowledged. This research focused on three of the nine communities within the Saxion Honours Programme. Although the results were shared among the different communities, there were also specific results that only applied to specific communities. This might be because the different communities were not as homogenous as would be expected from a higher education context. An in-depth review of a specific community process factor (such as collaboration) might have led to more shared results.

Furthermore, the choice was made to conduct the group interviews on another day than the one when the meetings were being observed. Although this was a valid choice that was made to avoid straining the participants, it led to planning issues. To counter this, a summary of the observed session was provided by the research leader and specific questions concerning the observed meeting were added for every community (Appendix B).

The use of documentation did yield some data to compare with data from group interviews and observations (Appendix D). However, in comparison, this share was significantly smaller. When specific students were not able to join the group interviews, a question list was provided to them to answer in their own time. Although this removed the option of asking more in-depth questions, it did serve as a way to collect more data. The use of self-reflection in a reflection portfolio was already being applied for one of the communities. Although this would not serve as a substitute for the group interview, it did provide a valuable addition to the data, possibly more so than the documentation did. Given that honours students are considered to be more intrinsically motivated than students in general, this might act as a method for future researchers who study honours communities in higher education.

5.2.2 Recommendations for further research

Research about honours and excellence programmes in higher education is much scarcer than research about community learning in the teacher professional development context. Most researchers in professional learning communities focus on the correlation between teacher performance and teacher development and student outcomes (Doğan & Adams, 2018). Research about communities that consist of both students and teachers is scarce. Because the honours education programme at Saxion treats teachers more as

coaches or peers, it provides fascinating insight into a different form of traditional education within communities. The collaboration factors that were presented in Table 14 detail some similarities between the existing research about PLCs and TDTs and team interaction (Binkhorst et al., 2015, 2017) and the research about honours communities (van Ginkel et al., 2015). Factors that were not included specifically in that research but arose here are *equality*, *a sense of belonging* and *safety*. It is recommended to further assess the factors, their interdependency and the exact correlation each of the factors has on honours community learning.

Furthermore, it has been established that the transitions in cycles of *experiential learning* and *reflective dialogue* were mostly made when a teacher initiated them. This led to the question regarding whether a central authoritative figure is needed to initiate transitions or if a similar decision can be made as a group decision (and if so, how). Further research into the role or absence of an authoritative figure could lead to fascinating insights.

Reflective dialogue was not found to be an integrated part of the HP process. It was hypothesized that a combination of *experiential learning* (in which *reflective observation*, *abstract conceptualisation* and *active experimentation* have already been established phases) and the collaboration factors presented in Table 14 attribute to the effectiveness of reflective dialogue. However, although reflection and dialogue did take place, because little data and no literature were discussed we cannot speak of *reflective dialogue*. The dialogue where reflection took place was still highly appreciated by the participants in comparison to traditional reflection assessments in higher education. This does leave two questions. First, the significance of the use of data and literature in comparison with individual experiences and if they are to be an essential or optional part of reflective dialogue. Second, if reflective dialogue is a process that is aimed for during these sessions. Reflective dialogue has the potential to be an important part of the experiential learning cycle (Table 12). Future research could further determine the added benefit of reflective dialogue in the experiential learning cycle.

Table 12

Transitions in the experiential learning cycle and reflective dialogue cycle.

From	To	Actions ELT & reflective dialogue
Concrete experience	Reflective observation	Analysing the experiences, data and/or literature. Being aware of essential aspects.
Reflective observation	Abstract conceptualisation	Creating connections with existing knowledge. Creating an alternative view and/or approach.
Abstract conceptualisation	Active experimentation	Formulating and testing explanations.
Active experimentation	Concrete experience	Implementing findings from experimentation.

Note: Adapted from 'Experiential learning theory: A dynamic, holistic approach to management learning, education and development' by A. Y. Kolb & A. Kolb, 2009, and 'Reflective Dialogue in Professional Learning Communities' by I. Meijlof, 2018.

Finally, as discussed in Section 5.1.1, including open questionnaires that are based on the group interview questions should be used when conducting further research into honours communities in higher education as they proved to be at least as valuable as the documentation. These questionnaires should be utilised in addition to observations in natural field settings and group interviews, which proved to be effective. Although individual interviews were considered for this research, the dialogue between participants, which led to more discourse data, added value to this research. It is, naturally, recommended to make sure that all participants have the chance to react and speak within a group interview and be aware of the possible risk of participants not being willing to speak out in front of their peers. In this research, the added value of group interviews in comparison with individual interviews is demonstrated. Possibly, within a group of highly motivated students, sending an individual questionnaire might provide more data. This was done when students who were planned to participate could, due to unforeseen circumstances, not participate in the group interview anymore. However, these students choose to not respond further.

5.2.3 Recommendations for Saxion and higher education

To improve the community pillar of the Honours Approach, this research appraised the current Honours Approach against existing effective learning community theories. The conclusion provides advice on how to expand the theoretical background of the community pillar (Figure 2) and how to improve and adapt the current communities within the Honours Approach without sacrificing the existing high appreciation of the students and teachers (Holterman-Nijenhuis et al., 2020). Indeed, the students within the honours community highly appreciated the format, which includes parts of experiential learning, a responsibility for designing their learning processes, reflective dialogue and collaboration factors. These aspects should not be sacrificed as they are highly valued.

This research focussed on the process phase of the model for learning and teaching (Figure 7). Saxion can make further use of this model for further research into the other aspects of learning and teaching (*input* and *output*) as well as relations between the phases.

Based on this research, it has become clear that, although experiential learning and the sharing of experience in reflective dialogue do take place within honours communities, specific parts of the cycles are not fully implemented. Concerning experiential learning, *concrete experiences* and *reflective observations* were mentioned and observed multiple times, while *active experimentation* only took place in specific contexts. *Abstract conceptualisation* only seemed to be applied subconsciously. To make full use of the experiential learning cycle, participants in the honours communities should be made aware of this cycle and the transitions that can be made (Figure 8). In a stronger sense this can be said for the cycle within reflective dialogue (Figure 9). The use of more perspectives, specifically data and literature, and the awareness for the following phases (*creating an alternative view and/or approach* and *being aware of essential aspects*)would add to the overall learning experience. Overviews of both of these transitions are summarised in Table 12.

Furthermore, meaningful and authentic learning experiences, as opposed to simulated experiences, should be kept, as these were deemed as more educational then simulated experiences (Table 13). However, during coding, it was established that the activity levels proposed by Bergsteiner et al. (2010) were not distinct enough in this situation to provide results or conclusions. A meeting online would feature *reading* of the chat, listening (*hearing)* of another person, while *watching* peers. It could be that the

online setting did not lend itself for such coding. It can still be recommended for the Saxion Honours Approach to be aware of the different activity levels provided by literature.

Table 13

Distinctions within experiential learning modes.

Aspect		**Example**
Experience	Real	Buying and selling stocks on the stock market.
	Simulated	Buying and selling stocks within a simulated environment.
Passive  Active	Reading	Reading about a physics experiment.
	Hearing	Listening to a podcast about a physics experiment.
	Watching	Watching a video about a physics experiment.
	Doing	Conducting a physics experiment.

Finally, several factors concerning collaboration in honours communities arose during this research. Although these were not all specifically observed in all the communities, they can serve as a best-case analysis. These collaboration factors should be considered while forming a community and making community-forming decisions accordingly. Similar factors in the have shown a positive effect to the effectiveness of learning communities (TDT's) and honours communities (Binkhorst et al., 2015, 2017; van Ginkel et al., 2015). An overview and example quotes from participants are presented in Table 14, while detailed results for each community can be found in Appendix D.

In conclusion, the advice for further strengthening the community pillar for the Saxion Honours Approach is to make participants, be it teacher, student or organization, aware of the experiential learning cycle in combination with the reflective dialogue cycle (Table 12), the authenticity of learning (Table 13) and collaboration factors found among the researched communities (Table 14). For the experiential learning cycle in combination with the reflective dialogue cycle, it should be recommended to coach one another through the different phases and not too linger in one phase too long, as it could be detrimental to the overall community learning process. If Saxion wishes, it could lay more emphasis on the use of data and literature to fully implement reflective dialogue, as defined in scientific literature (Meijlof, 2018; Prenger et al., 2017). Finally, younger participants should be further motivated to critically examine new information. With these

recommendations, we feel secure that Saxion has the potential to improve upon their existing honours community learning process for all participants involved.

Table 14

Collaboration factors in honours programmes and example quotes.

Collaboration factors	Example quote(s)
Openness of the group	'It's a tight group, and you notice very quickly people felt at home fast and everyone could give their opinion'. 'Everyone is very open, and you get these, like, deep conversations'.
Shared passion	'As a person, you are passionate about something. And that passion, you transfer to fellow students, and they will be curious'.
Creation of trust	'And because you get to know each other, also student[s] from the first year, you create a kind of trust'. 'And when you have to share something like, "what makes you sad", you don't do that instantly, so that takes some time to get used to'. 'We have the guts to show ourselves'.
Presence of curiosity	'We are very curious. We want to learn. We want to see from each other'.
Diversity of views	'What we experience in a group which has the diversity of different academies, that brings a whole new thinking perspective'.
Shared goals	'But I also have projects where I am really working so intensively with people and working towards something, and we are all not necessarily on the same page, but we all want to achieve something. Where we

	can also critically address each other about things, I really feel a community and bond there. But I think it's mostly in the peer group for me'.
Equality	'… it has to be a self-serving community, where we work from a set of principles. And those principles are based on equality and dialogue'.
Connectivity and accessibility	'You will leave, but you are still connected, so to speak. And you can see that they want that too because the third years have made an Instagram page: ok, here you have all our contact details… this is us, a picture of us…'
Sense of belonging	'You will leave, but you are still connected, so to speak. And you can see that they want that too because the third years have made an Instagram page: ok, here you have all our contact details… this is us, a picture of us… We also want to remain accessible to each other in a certain way; we also want to stay connected, and that is, of course, very cool'. "And then she said, "Yes, but, but I, I belong here". That is starting to sink in more and more, and that means that we have really created that group feeling well, that people really just dare to share in our community, and that she really had the feeling of "gosh, you know, this is a very special group, but I belong; I just can't believe it actually". Yes, I thought that was one of the best experiences, actually'.

Safety	An example was also presented by a former participant who contributed to an unsafe environment by not listening to others' opinions or asking questions when they did not agree (*Note:* The exact quote was not shared to protect this participant's privacy).

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APPENDIX A: OBSERVATION CHECKLIST

Column	Class	Label	Examples	Timecodes: observations in favour	Timecodes: Observations against
Experiential learning modes	Concrete experience	carrying out a specific action and being aware of its effect, such as conducting a physics experiment	simulations, observations and films		
	Reflective observation	re-examining and evaluating a past experience	personal journals, logs, discussions and brainstorms		
	Abstract conceptualization	Proposing adjustments to previous reflections, analysing a manual	Model building, model critiques,		

			papers, analogies		
	Active experimentation	Adjustments are implemented to create new experiences	Case studies, homework, projects		
Deep or surface learning	Deep learning	Critically examining new information and making connections	Asking questions concerning new information		
	Surface learning	Accepting new information uncritically without connecting them to previous experiences	Passive behaviour / not responding to new information or discussion points		

Community process factors	Reflective dialogue	The dialogue to improve student development, instruction and curriculum by creating knowledge	Dialogue which leads to new or stronger insights, explanations or conclusions		
	Collaboration	surpasses regular information sharing and is centered on engaging peers to “opening up their beliefs and practices to investigation and debate”	working together with peers or teachers instead of individually		

Observations for further questions	

Timecode	Class	Description

APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS (TRANSLATED)

Starting questions	**Expected class**	**Notes**
I have observed the lesson on X , If I could summarize, I would say this are the general outlines. What would you define as a typical honours meeting?	Experiential learning modes	
What are the most important things you have learned or experienced within this lecture?	Experiential learning modes	
And in general within your time in the Honours Approach?	Experiential learning modes	
How did you achieve that knowledge? What activities did you go through to get that end result?	Experiential learning modes Deep or Surface learning	
What takes the most of your time within the honours approach?	Experiential learning modes Deep or Surface learning	

Starting questions	Expected class	Notes
What are the best experiences you have concerning honours? Why?	Experiential learning modes Deep or Surface learning Community process factors	
What were the most difficult? Why?	Experiential learning modes Deep or Surface learning Community process factors	
How would you say the honours meetings are different from your general studies?	Experiential learning modes Deep or Surface learning Community process factors	
Specifically, how is learning different from your general studies?	Experiential learning modes Deep or Surface learning Community process factors	
How does collaboration work within honours meetings?	Experiential learning modes Community process factors	
Is there a difference between collaborating with either students or teachers? Or students and teachers? What?	Experiential learning modes Community process factors	

Starting questions	Expected Class	Notes
Do you feel there is room to talk about how to improve your process, a product, or the curriculum itself? Can you give an example?	Experiential learning modes Community process factors	
Is there a difference when talking with either students or teachers? Or students and teachers? What is the difference / why do you think there is no difference?	Experiential learning modes Community process factors	
What forms of reflection are being applied within the Honours approach?	Experiential learning modes Community process factors	
community – specific question based on observation		
community – specific question based on observation		

APPENDIX C: INFORMED CONSENT FORM (ORIGINAL)

Informatieblad voor interviews en observaties voor het onderzoek 'Professional development in honours education communities'

Doel van het onderzoek

Dit onderzoek wordt geleid door Robert Middelburg.

Het doel van dit onderzoek is

- het uitbreiden van de wetenschappelijke basis voor community learning in de Saxion Honours Approach
- het vergelijken van de bovengenoemde wetenschappelijke basis met de praktijk om een specifiek advies te schrijven aan het Top Talent Programme van Saxion

Hoe gaan we te werk?

U neemt deel aan een onderzoek waarbij we informatie zullen vergaren door:

- Een reguliere meeting van het honours onderwijs te observeren.
- U te interviewen en uw antwoorden te noteren/op te nemen via een video-opname. Er zal ook een transcript worden uitgewerkt van het interview.

Potentiële risico's en ongemakken

- Er zijn geen fysieke, juridische of economische risico's verbonden aan uw deelname aan deze studie. U hoeft geen vragen te beantwoorden die u niet wilt beantwoorden. Uw deelname is vrijwillig en u kunt uw deelname op elk gewenst moment stoppen.

Vergoeding

U ontvangt voor deelname aan dit onderzoek geen vergoeding.

Vertrouwelijkheid van gegevens

Wij doen er alles aan uw privacy zo goed mogelijk te beschermen. Er wordt op geen enkele wijze vertrouwelijke informatie of persoonsgegevens van of over u naar buiten gebracht, waardoor iemand u zal kunnen herkennen.

Voordat onze onderzoeksgegevens naar buiten gebracht worden, worden uw gegevens zoveel mogelijk geanonimiseerd, tenzij u in ons toestemmingsformulier expliciet toestemming heeft gegeven voor het vermelden van uw naam, bijvoorbeeld bij een quote.

In een publicatie zullen anonieme gegevens of pseudoniemen worden gebruikt. De video-opnamen, formulieren en andere documenten die in het kader van deze studie worden gemaakt

of verzameld, worden opgeslagen op een beveiligde locatie bij de Universiteit Twente en op de beveiligde (versleutelde) gegevensdragers van de onderzoekers.

De onderzoeksgegevens worden bewaard voor een periode van 10 jaar. Uiterlijk na het verstrijken van deze termijn zullen de gegevens worden verwijderd of worden geanonimiseerd zodat ze niet meer te herleiden zijn tot een persoon met uitzondering van de video-opnamen. Deze worden vernietigd zodra ze niet meer nodig zijn voor de afronding van het onderzoek.

De onderzoeksgegevens worden indien nodig (bijvoorbeeld voor een controle op wetenschappelijke integriteit) en alleen in anonieme vorm ter beschikking gesteld aan personen buiten de onderzoeksgroep.

Tot slot is dit onderzoek beoordeeld en goedgekeurd door de ethische commissie van de faculteit BMS.

Vrijwilligheid

Deelname aan dit onderzoek is geheel vrijwillig. U kunt als deelnemer uw medewerking aan het onderzoek te allen tijde stoppen, of weigeren dat uw gegevens voor het onderzoek mogen worden gebruikt, zonder opgaaf van redenen. Het stopzetten van deelname heeft geen nadelige gevolgen voor u.

Als u tijdens het onderzoek besluit om uw medewerking te staken, zullen de gegevens die u reeds hebt verstrekt tot het moment van intrekking van de toestemming in het onderzoek gebruikt worden indien deze niet ter herleiden zijn tot u als persoon.

Wilt u stoppen met het onderzoek, of heeft u vragen en/of klachten? Neem dan contact op met de onderzoeksleider.

Robert Middelburg – r.middelburg@student.utwente.nl

Voor bezwaren met betrekking tot de opzet en of uitvoering van het onderzoek kunt u zich ook wenden tot de Secretaris van de Ethische Commissie van de faculteit Behavioural, Management and Social Sciences op de Universiteit Twente via ethicscommittee-bms@utwente.nl. Dit onderzoek wordt uitgevoerd vanuit de Universiteit Twente, faculteit Behavioural, Management and Social Sciences. Indien u specifieke vragen hebt over de omgang met persoonsgegevens kun u deze ook richten aan de Functionaris Gegevensbescherming van de UT door een mail te sturen naar dpo@utwente.nl.

Tot slot heeft u het recht een verzoek tot inzage, wijziging, verwijdering of aanpassing van uw gegevens te doen bij de Onderzoeksleider.

Door dit toestemmingsformulier te ondertekenen erken ik het volgende:

1. Ik ben voldoende geïnformeerd over het onderzoek door middel van een separaat informatieblad. Ik heb het informatieblad gelezen en heb daarna de mogelijkheid gehad vragen te kunnen stellen. Deze vragen zijn voldoende beantwoord.

2. Ik neem vrijwillig deel aan dit onderzoek. Er is geen expliciete of impliciete dwang voor mij om aan dit onderzoek deel te nemen. Het is mij duidelijk dat ik deelname aan het onder- zoek op elk moment, zonder opgaaf van reden, kan beëindigen. Ik hoef een vraag niet te beantwoorden als ik dat niet wil.

Naast het bovenstaande is het hieronder mogelijk voor verschillende onderdelen van

het onderzoek specifiek toestemming te geven. U kunt er per onderdeel voor kiezen wel of geen toestemming te geven. Indien u voor alles toestemming wil geven, is dat mogelijk via de aanvinkbox onderaan de stellingen.

3. Ik geef toestemming om de gegevens die gedurende het onderzoek bij mij worden verzameld te verwerken zoals is opgenomen in het bijgevoegde informatieblad. Deze toestemming ziet dus ook op het verwerken van gegevens betreffende mijn gezondheid/ras/etnische afkomst/politieke opvattingen/religieuze en of levensbeschouwelijke overtuigingen/lidmaatschap van vakbond/seksueel gedrag/seksuele gerichtheid en/of over mijn genetische gegevens/biometrische gegevens.	JA	NEE
4. Ik geef toestemming om tijdens het interview opnames (geluid / beeld) te maken en mijn antwoorden uit te werken in een transcript.	☐	☐

5. Ik geef toestemming om mijn antwoorden te gebruiken voor quotes in de onderzoekspublicaties.	☐	☐
6. Ik geef toestemming om mijn echte naam, voor zover bekend, te vermelden bij de hierboven bedoelde quotes.	☐	☐
7. Ik geef toestemming om de bij mij verzamelde onderzoeksdata te bewaren en te gebruiken voor toekomstig onderzoek en voor onderwijsdoeleinden.	☐	☐
Ik geef toestemming voor alles dat hierboven beschreven staat. *(belangrijk: vul dit <u>niet</u> in als het antwoord op een van de vragen van 4 t/m 7 'nee' is, anders is het formulier onbruikbaar)*	☐	
Ik ontvang graag een samenvatting van de resultaten op onderstaand mailadres: Mailadres:	☐	☐

Naam Deelnemer:

Naam Onderzoeker:

Robert Middelburg

Leeftijd: … jaar

Handtekening:

Handtekening:

Datum:

Datum:

APPENDIX D: RESULTS PER COMMUNITY

1.1 Honours programme: Community A

This community focusses on personal development and growth where students decide the structure and learning goals of the curriculum (Saxion, 2020a). No prerequisite content knowledge is required. One of the general goals is to teach students skills that surpass their regular curriculums, touching on multiple subjects and themes. One of the key factors is experiencing, having meetings outside of the school building. It is specifically mentioned that locations can also be 'special' even abroad (Saxion, 2020a). In the observed session, students watched the documentary "Seaspiracy" beforehand. In the session, the students and one teacher discussed the documentary based on statements presented by the presenter of the session. The presenter was an alumnus from the same Honours Programme.

1.1.1 Experiential learning modes

In the observed session, the *concrete experience* was shown as the watching of the documentary, which took place beforehand. In the interview, students expressed that the real experiences, such as visiting an external location instead of classroom, led to some of the best and educational experiences. Student 3 replied: "…the experience of talking with a neurologist from the local hospital, who's super busy, but made time in their agenda for me just because I mailed that person" . The teacher added to this by stating that students should aim high when they have these experiences:

> Teacher: …just go do it and set those goals high! So, you invite a lot of people who you might or might not know, and surprisingly a lot also come, like, the marketing manager of a famous chocolate brand, because, yeah, we wanted to learn more about that and he says yes, so you're talking the whole evening with them.

Another student expressed that it is not only actually achieving having contact, but also the process of inviting someone: "and if it doesn't work, it doesn't work. It doesn't matter. You can say that you tried, and what if the person does say 'yes'?".

Students expressed they were able to form their own critical opinions on watching the documentary. This *reflective observation* was deemed essential for participating in the

session. This was also shown in the session by discussing the documentary in separate smaller groups. Reflection also comes forward in documentation, where after every semester, the students' reflective skills are assessed based on learning goals. These vary from self-evaluation to evaluating with knowledge gained from dialogue with other perspectives.

Abstract conceptualization was shown to have taken place after instances that were labelled as *reflective observation*. In this session, for example, the teacher and students pointed out that there should be solutions to a fishing problem (reflective observation). Specifically, it consisted of fish dying unnecessarily in the sorting process. They then presented a possible solution for this problem (abstract conceptualization):

> Teacher: You think for yourself; there should be a way to do that less cruel.
> Student 1 and 2: Yes
> Student 1: Maybe the fish could first be brought to an aquarium and then be sorted there? I guess that's more expensive, but also a lot more sustainable.

This progress from reflective observation to abstract conceptualization is also mentioned in the following group interview:

> Student 4: Because the documentary itself….really makes you think, and that leads to thinking about it with each other and talking about sustainability etcetera, that made it an educational and clarifying session"
> …
> Student 4: …we talked about sustainability and after a while you're discussing clothes (…) you look further, not only to just fish, but how sustainable you already are.

The experience of discussing the documentary was comprised of simulated statements. However, it did lead to some form of real experience, linking sustainability to a topic that is closer to the students.

Active experimentation was not entirely visible in the context of the documentary and the session itself. However, active experimentation did present itself in instances mentioned by the students in another way; mainly that students themselves were

responsible for the sessions and they had the freedom to create new experiences in their own way, although this can still feel challenging:

> Student 6: There are no limits. In the end you can do anything you want, it's really your own choice.
>
> …
>
> Student 6: But that's the beauty of the HP (Honours Programme), because in the regular curriculum, the teachers and teacher teams create the programme, but in HP, we have a sense of "We students are leading and decide what we want to learn and ask and see"
>
> …
>
> Student 6: The fact that you have to decide for yourself and think of things yourself, that is still a challenge for me; creating your own path.

1.1.2 Deep or surface learning

The difference between *deep* and *surface learning* was mostly shown in if and how critically participants treated new information. In the honours community meeting, *deep learning* was mostly shown by disagreeing with the statements presented. For example, one of the statements stated that the consumers plastic waste share was minimal compared to that of ships. One of the students replied that, if 56% was caused by ships, something else was responsible for the remaining percentage. A similar view and the importance of critically examining new information was also stated in the group interview by a student: "…you can't always accept everything you're being told and think that's correct. You should always critically view what everyone says".

Surface learning mostly took place because all of the meetings were now done online or when comparing HP to the regular curriculum. For the online sessions, one of the students remarked that discussing statements has become the norm and there are not a lot of other options, without exploring these other options. Concerning the regular curriculum, the teacher remarked:

> Teacher: …what I notice is that, when students walk in, they have a narrow view of the world. They came from their own environment, and there's nothing wrong with that you know, but they've been in there for years during high school where you've build your own friend group. You stick with them and then that's fine.

In comparison with the regular curriculum, one student noted: “It’s like a kind of fear. Because you want to say something, because you have an opinion. But that teacher also has to grade me, so I’d better not say anything”.

1.1.3 Community process factors

In the observation, *reflective dialogue* was noy featured heavily. The presenter started to ask about the first reactions from students after they watched the documentary. Students expressed their own feelings (“shocked”) and what they already knew or didn’t know. The presenter then also asked what specific moment this came from. Later, when a student expressed her own experience of companies that kept secrets, the presenter asked for clarification on which the student clarified and expressed an alternative approach to the problem. When discussing, the students and teacher linked this to another initiative for cleaning up plastic. Here, new data became part of the reflective dialogue. In the end of the session, the teacher and students discussed alternatives for buying more sustainable food or keeping a more critical eye on what companies are selling the food.

In the interview, *reflective dialogue* was mainly mentioned as sharing views among other students. It was also mentioned that this often led to educational discussions, because no one automatically agrees with each other. One of the key points mentioned is that students follow different educational tracks, which lead to differing views and more discussion. The teacher clarifies : “There are a lot of people who think differently on a subject, which makes you, if done correct, think for yourself some more too”. When asked about doing it correctly, students stipulated that the space for sharing your own passions and viewpoint was deemed as most important: “when there’s space to discuss after…to correctly share each other’s passion and to get to know each other better”. In the interview, it was also specified own experience and data are a big part of the reflective dialogue and how it leads to differing views. Literature was not mentioned and the actual testing in practice was not mentioned.

Collaboration was shown in the interview and consisted of the openness of the group, *the sharing of passions, creating of trust, the presence of curiosity* and the *diversity of views* (Table 15).

Table 15

Collaboration factors in Honours Programme “Community A”

Collaboration factors	Example quote
Openness of the group	"It's a tight group and you notice very quickly people felt at home fast and everyone could give their opinion" "Everyone is very open and you get these, like, deep conversations"
Sharing of passion	"As a person, you are passionate about something. And that passion, you transfer to fellow students and they will be curious"
Creating of trust	"And because you get to know each other, also student from the first year, you create a kind of trust" "And when you have to share something like 'what makes you sad', you don't do that instantly, so that takes some time to get used to" "We have the guts to show ourselves"
Presence of curiosity	"We are very curious. We want to learn. We want to see from each other"
Diversity of views	"What we experience, in a group which has the diversity of different academies, that brings a whole new thinking perspective".

Other findings that were established in the group interviews include the importance of meeting in person instead of online: "creating a bond is more tricky …. There is no room for other conversations in between and afterwards". As mentioned in the paragraphs before, it is also established here that the teacher has a coaching role: "and of course you're motivated by the teacher to do that" and "and yeah… that motivates and hypes me up so much and you share that with the teacher who also gets hyped". When asked about the role of the teacher, this is also mentioned by one of the students: "I think that the teacher gives a little push in a direction, but in the end it's the student who picks it up and analyses it more deeply".

1.1.4 Summary

Based on the paragraphs above, explanations have been established for this community (table 16).

Table 16

Explanations of Honours Programme "Community A"

Process aspects	Rival explanations
Experiential learning modes	The experiential learning modes and its transitions are visible in the Honours Programme (1.1.1)
	Active experimentation is shown in the general process, but not the sessions themselves (1.1.1)
	Reflective observation is deemed an important part in the HP process (1.1.1)
	Teachers can assist the educational process by 'nudging' students in the next experiential mode (1.1.1 and 1.1.3)
Deep/surface learning	A focus on the outcome instead of the process may lead to more surface learning (1.1.2)
	Meetings done online contribute to more surface learning and less deep learning (1.1.2)
Community process factors	Differing views are considered to be more educational (1.1.3)
	Reflective dialogue surpasses reflective observation as more views are discussed (1.1.1 and 1.1.3)
	Reflective dialogue in the HP consists of mostly data and experience leading to alternative views, but scarcely contain literature (1.1.3)
	Teachers can assist the educational process by 'nudging' students in the next phase of reflective dialogue (1.1.3)
	Ideal collaboration consists of the sharing of passions, creating of trust, the openness of the group and the presence of curiosity (1.1.3)
	Meeting in real life has an added benefit to collaboration and reflective dialogue in comparison with online meetings (1.1.3)
	The teacher has the role of coach and/or conversational partner instead of a traditional teacher (1.1.3)

1.2 Honours programme: Community B

According to documentation, this community focusses on three core values. These include equality in the dialogue, meaningful collaboration and true attention for the individual in the collective. One of the general goals is not work with general learning objectives or goals, but with the realisation of values. It is stated that all activities are based on personal development in a safe environment where the individual can express themselves, strengthening the collective in the process (Mardjan, 2019). The observed session consisted of a workshop on graduating and doing research and a meeting a with pre-established peer group. The workshop consisted of third year students and the peer group consisted of first, second and third year students.

1.2.1 Experiential learning modes

In the observed session, concrete experience was shown when students presented a sleep diary experiment that they have been doing. They discussed their findings and their methods. In the interview, concrete experience was present when a student mentioned that the process was deemed more important than the outcome when asked about reflecting with peers on the process: “Student 2:…. but I think the process has a more important part, and more like: “what do you get out of it as a person” ”. Furthermore, an example was presented where the members of the community went to Brussels and re-enacted the meetings of European institutions. The students were mostly motivated because of the positive attitude of their peers when re-enacting this experience. The teacher emphasized the importance of the authenticity: “But I think it’s about meaningful experiences that are as authentic as possible; such as issues that are happening in real life.”

Reflective observation is already part of the process within the Honours community by making use of a portfolio. Furthermore, the wish was extended at the end of the session to discuss findings of personal reflections with other peer groups. In the interview, students expressed importance of reflective observation within their own personal development:

> “I think I’ve learned to altogether look at myself to see what I want, where my strengths lie and where I have much to learn. But also, where do I want to develop myself? What I also learned, for example, is learning how to fail, because I can still be perfectionistic and focussed on the result”

This focus on the result instead of the process was also mentioned when pressed on the difference between HP and the regular education:

> “In high school, I would never go the extra mile and then I went to HP and I got to work in a way that fitted with me as person (…) and because of less pressure and more space and freedom, I learned that my own way of being and doing things is okay”

Another important part where reflective observation differs between HP and the regular education is the difference between focussing on the process or the result. Students would state that reflection as a means for conversation are wanted in their regular education, instead of an end product in itself.

In the observation of both the workshop and the peer group, it was apparent that the teacher had an important part in passages that were coded as abstract conceptualization. As per the experiential learning cycle, this was mostly followed after passages by students labelled as reflective observations. This was also mentioned by the students in the interview. In the workshop, this was mostly shown by the teacher explaining definitions or asking them of the students. In the peer group, this was shown by asking what has to happen after the reflection.

Furthermore, in the interview, abstract conceptualization in turn was labelled together with or closely followed by active experimentation, as per the experiential learning cycle. The teacher specified, in a specific instance, that this led to the students designing a course for teachers to help improve education. Although this does show active experimentation in the general process, it was not apparent in the observations themselves.

1.2.2 Deep or surface learning

Deep learning was shown in the workshop by critically examining the aforementioned sleep experiment. When discussing that the experiment was performed on one test subject, it was questioned if there could be other factors involved that would only apply to a specific person or persons with specific conditions. These forms of critically asking questions or asking to restate questions was more apparent in the peer group sessions. However, in the peer group meeting, it was also shown that younger years would earlier accept feedback from older years or the teacher without critically asking

questions, which was then labelled as surface learning. In the interview, there were little to no instances where deep or surface learning were labelled.

1.2.3 Community process factors

In the observation, reflective dialogue was not featured as described in literature, although there was reflection in dialogue form. Specifically when two students started presenting and discussing their own sleep experiment, reflective dialogue consisted of question being asked about literature and data. It also consisted of suggestions being given for additional literature. When the students talked about how different research methods also lead to different experiences and data, the teacher asked the additional questions “what makes this research” and “what makes it scientific research”, leading to alternative views when discussed among the other students. In the peer group, reflective dialogue mostly consisted of sharing of own experiences and less data and literature. Again, questions by the teacher led to the discussing of alternative views. In the interview, the importance of reflective dialogue is emphasized by both the teacher and the students:

> “Teacher: But a more important role is starting the dialogue between students in a sensible way, so that they can experience the richness of dialogue in their own dialogue. Then, I am both a coach and a conversational partner. So I think along, we discuss with each other”

> “Student: I like that there is a lot of room to reflect upon: why does it make you experience it like that, why does it feel like that, and that you get the space to have a conversation about that with each other. And that you also get critical questions, that you might not get in your bachelors, so you can really dig deeper”

Students did note some improvements concerning their own reflective dialogue. They mentioned that sometimes, the questions were asked but it proves difficult to operationalize further steps, mentioning it “all stays at the microlevel”. Furthermore, a difference in commitment was also mentioned as hindering for the process, stating that “everyone who needs it, should be able to speak their minds or at least have an equal amount of attention and time for it”. Finally, students and the teacher expressed the need for reflection and reflective dialogue a means and not an end in their regular studies, stating that “there’s a cycle you go through with critical reflection. The experience is central”.

Collaboration was shown in the interview and consisted of the openness of the group, creating of trust, a shared goal and equality (Table 17)

Table 17

Collaboration factors in Honours Programme "Community B"

Collaboration factors	Example quote
Openness of the group	"Even though it rotates every year, it's still a very tight group, because you come together and ask each other critical questions, but aside from that we're still friends (…) , that you're really a tight group
Creating of trust	"…so you also need to show some sensitivity. That way, it's not 'I'm failing' , but 'it doesn't work as well'. Those conversations are needed to make people feel included"
Shared goal	"But I also have projects where I am really working so intensively with people and working towards something and we are all not necessarily on the same page, but we all want to achieve something. Where we can also critically address each other about things, I really feel a community and bond there. But I think it's mostly in the peer group for me."
Equality	"…it has to be a self-serving community, where we work from a set of principles. And those principles are based on equality and dialogue"

Other findings that were established in the group interviews include the importance of meeting live instead of online, the benefits of having an interdisciplinary group of students with different educational backgrounds. As mentioned in the paragraphs before, it is also established here that the teacher has a role as a conversation partner:

“Student 3: Teacher doesn't even ask what he can help with. He just sits down and joins in. And in the questions he asks, you think: oh, yes, he will help you. In this way. He just joins in like anyone who [inaudible] but maybe Teacher has a little more knowledge of certain things, which gives you more depth than when you're with students who are, for example, still new in certain subjects. So that's nice.”.

When asked about the role of the teacher, it is mostly mentioned that the teacher asks questions and can nudge people in a certain direction, “but in the end, it’s still our project”. The teacher emphasizes that it is not his role to see students reach a certain learning objective: “in the end, it only matters that they have been learning”.

1.2.4 Summary

Based on the paragraphs above, explanations have been established for this community (table 18).

Table 18

Explanations of Honours Programme “Community B”

Process aspects	Explanations
Experiential learning modes	Concrete experiences benefit from making them as meaningful and authentic as possible (1.2.1 and 1.2.2)
	Teachers can assist the educational process by ‘nudging’ students in the next experiential mode (1.2.1 and 1.2.3)
	Reflective observation benefits from focussing less on the result and more on the process (1.2.1)
	The experiential learning modes and its transitions are visible in the Honours Programme (1.2.1)
	Active experimentation is shown in the general process, but not the sessions themselves (1.2.1)
Deep/surface learning	Deep learning takes place during dialogue in sessions (1.2.2)
	A difference in experience can lead to surface learning for less experienced members of the community (1.2.2)
	Deep and surface learning is shows in the observations, but not in the transcripts of the interview (1.2.2)

Community process factors	Reflective dialogue surpasses reflective observation as more views are discussed (1.2.1 and 1.2.3)
	Teachers can assist the educational process by ‘nudging’ students from reflective dialogue to a next phase of the reflective dialogue (1.2.3)
	Reflective dialogue is wished for in regular education instead of an end product in itself by honours students (1.2.1 and 1.2.3)
	Reflective dialogue should present the opportunity for participants to speak for an equal amount of time (1.2.3)
	Ideal collaboration consists of the openness of the group, creating of trust, the a shared goal and equality (1.2.3)
	Meeting in real life has an added benefit to collaboration and reflective dialogue in comparison with online meetings (1.2.3)
	The teacher has the role of coach and/or conversational partner instead of a traditional teacher (1.2.3)

1.3 Honours programme: Community C

According to documentation, this community focusses on development of the participant's potential in the context of global citizenship (Saxion, 2020b). The community combines various disciplines such as philosophy, literature, and anthropology and focusses on exchanging perspectives and reflecting on global issues (Saxion, 2020b). The main activities include narrative, dialogue, meaningful learning and higher-order thinking skills like analysing, exploring and evaluating (Saxion, 2020b). The curriculum is co-designed by both the teachers and the students within the community (Saxion, 2020b).

In the observed session, students showed the end products of their 10-week project, such as self-made movies, products form an art project and a Kahoot based on mental health.

1.3.1 Experiential learning modes

In the community, a distinction is made between 'act' and 'think'. Act corresponds with the concrete experience and active experimentation in the experiential learning cycle, while think corresponds with reflective observation and abstract conceptualization. Concrete experience was mostly observed in the form of the participants experiencing each other's presentations, labelled as the activity level of watching. These included watching videos, painting or art pieces or participating in a Kahoot. In the interview, it is explained that other experiences include lectures or workshops by external parties or organizing a group meeting with refugees living in The Netherlands.

The other side of 'act', active experimentation, was shown quite often in the observed session. After reading the book 'Mrs. Galloway', activity level reading, students experimented by writing from the standing point of one of the characters, making a character analysis or making a theatrical performance. This led to the activity level of doing. In the interview, it is explained that the overall framework, in this example the book, is extended by the teachers, but the product itself is chosen by the students . Other examples include organizing a symposium or writing short stories: "then we had an assignment where we were supposed to write a short story, based on equality and inequality, and from that story we made a short video with it with sounds and everything".

Reflective observation was only noted as the reflections students showed when reading the book 'Mrs. Galloway'. In the interview, it is explained that students use a personal reflection portfolio called 'Bildungsboek'. Students are motivated to write their own reflections and thoughts and only share its contents with other members of the

community when they choose for themselves to do so. Other reflection was mostly shown in dialogue (1.3.3).

Abstract conceptualization was mostly shown as the pre-phase of active experimentation, such as the aforementioned character study of ‘Mrs. Galloway’. In the interview, it is mostly shown as the results of personal or group reflection: “If something really fails, then we go and watch what has failed and why it has failed and why that happened and hoe we could do better next time?” On itself, it was not labelled in either the observation or the group interview.

1.3.3 Deep or surface learning

Deep and surface learning were not labelled in the group interview. In the observation, deep learning was only shown in the presentation of “Mrs. Galloway”, where a student made connections between the book and real-life experiences. In the group interview, the importance of asking critical questions is mentioned to motivate other participants to think:

> Student 2: “And I notice it in myself now too - I didn't do that in the first year - but now I'm starting to adopt that more and more, just asking each other critical questions or if you see that someone is struggling with something, but is not aware that themselves, to possibly ask a question there, to make him or her think”

1.3.3 Community process factors

In the observation, some form of reflective dialogue was shown during the presentations in the group chat. When art pieces were presented in the programme “Discord”, participants could ask questions about experiences in the group chat. This was later also done during the Kahoot. However, literature and data was not used in reflective dialogue as specified in academic research. The teachers nudged the dialogue towards awareness of essential aspects by asking students what they specifically learned from the experiences. In the group interview, reflective dialogue was featured as an important aspect of the honours community. The students mention the role of the teachers is to give advice:

> Student 2: “If we have ideas or if we have doubts about things, then we discuss that before we do it with the teachers and they say: ‘well oh, have you already thought about this or that’ or just ‘yes, that's a good idea, go forward with that idea’”

Another important part of the perceived dialogue is to train participants to surpass superficial questions and answers and to motivate participants to dig deeper and to keep asking questions. An example is given of a campfire session:

> Teacher: “I believe we all had to bring a book that was very important to us and it was not said beforehand why, just take a book that is very important to you, and then we would sit around a campfire with everyone, and then one by one actually, everyone went to talk about their book and then discuss: (…) why do you like it? Well, that's actually pretty superficial. (…) but then people were asked and talked about it like hmmm yes, why is this really relevant to you? And then you go a bit deeper and later also: what have you learned from this book? And then you are actually quite vulnerable anyway, but because it happens so gradually.”

Collaboration was mostly discussed in the group interview and consisted of the openness of the group,, creating of trust, connectivity/accessibility and sense of belonging (Table 19).

Table 19

Collaboration factors in Honours Programme “Community C”

Collaboration factors	Quote
Openness of the group	“And then, after you've said that, you have an open feeling. And then, because everyone has really listened carefully, you already have a bit of community building there - in something as simple as telling about a book.”
Creating of trust	“because (…), in the lessons we sometimes also talk a bit about personal parts and such, so then you get to know each other better during (…) those evenings and then (…) it's easier to talk about it afterwards.”

Connectivity/accessibility	“you will leave, but you are still connected, so to speak. And you can see that they want that too, because the third years have made an Instagram page: ok, here you have all our contact details this is us, a picture of us (…). We also want to remain accessible to each other in a certain way, we also want to stay connected and that is of course very cool.”
Sense of belonging	“And then she said: yes, but, but I, I belong here. That is starting to sink in more and more and that means that we have really created that group feeling well, that people really just dare to share in our community and that she really had the feeling of gosh you know, this is a very special group, but I belong, I just can't believe it actually. Yes, I thought that was one of the best experiences actually”

Other findings that were established in the group interviews include the framework of the collaboration between teachers and students. As mentioned in 1.3.1, teachers do have a say in the framework in which an assignment or activity is executed, but in the end, it is the students who fill in how they want to accomplish this. An example is also presented of a former participant who attributed to an unsafe environment by not listening to other opinions or asking questions when they didn’t agree.

1.3.4 Summary

Based on the paragraphs above, explanations have been established for this community (Table 20).

Table 20

Explanations of Honours Programme "Community C"

Process aspects	Explanations
Experiential learning modes	The experiential learning modes and it's transitions are visible in the Honours Programme as 'act' and 'think' (1.3.1)
	Active experimentation is shown in sessions where end products are presented (1.3.1)
	Reflective observation is deemed an important part in the HP process (1.3.1)
	Reflective observation takes place in the form of a reflective portfolio (1.3.1)
	Abstract conceptualization is shown as a pre-phase of active experimentation or the result of reflective observation or dialogue (1.3.1)
Deep/surface learning	Deep and surface learning is scarcely shown in the observation or in the group interview (1.3.2)
Community process factors	Reflective dialogue in the honours programme consists of sharing experiences, but not data or literature (1.3.3)
	Teachers can assist the educational process by 'nudging' students from reflective dialogue to a next phase of the reflective dialogue (1.3.3)
	Reflective dialogue presents the opportunity to avoid asking superficial questions (1.3.3)
	Ideal collaboration consists of the openness of the group, creating of trust, connectivity/accessibility, sense of belonging, direct feedback, safety and equality (1.3.3)