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GOING TO THE CORE: DEEPENING REFLECTION BY CONNECTING THE PERSON TO THE PROFESSION

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The real art of discovery consists not in finding new lands, but in seeing with new eyes. (M. Proust)

Abstract

This contribution deals with the question of how reflection of practitioners can be deepened. Due to the pressures of day to day practice, they often focus on 'quick fixes.' We describe several steps in the development of an approach to reflection aimed at overcoming this tendency. These include a more balanced attention to thinking, feeling and wanting as the sources of behavior, the distinction of six layers of reflection in the so-called 'onion model', a shift in the content of reflection from the past to the ideal future, and finally a focus on presence and mindfulness. In the resulting concept of Core Reflection, a specific method is used for dealing with inner obstacles to the actualization of personal qualities.

25.1 Introduction

There is a well known song by Aretha Franklin, entitled *Think!* To date, this seems to be the key issue in the field of professional development, as this whole handbook on reflective inquiry shows. On the basis of case studies in seven organizations, Van Woerkom (2003) concludes that critical reflection is indeed pivotal to job-related learning in a variety of professions.

However, we have to be careful. Reflection as it is currently being used in professional settings and in educational programs for professional development, does not always lead to optimal learning or the intended professional development. Sometimes reflection seems to be used by practitioners as merely a technical tool generating quick, but often ineffective, solutions to problems that have been only superficially defined. If we look closely at how many practitioners reflect, we see that if there is any time for reflection at all, work pressure often leads to a focus on finding a 'quick fix' - a rapid solution for a practical problem - rather than shedding light on the underlying issues determining the situation at hand. While this may be an effective short-term measure in a hectic situation, there is a danger that one's professional development may eventually stagnate. As Schön (1987) argues, practitioners may unconsciously develop standard solutions fitting in with their personal perception of situations, so that the accompanying strategies become frozen. The practitioner will then no longer be in the habit of examining these strategies or the analyses once made of the problems they face. This means that more structured reflection is important in promoting deep learning and sound professional behavior. It also supports the development of a *growth competence* (Korthagen et al. 2001, p. 47): the ability to continue to develop professionally on the basis of internally directed learning.

Dewey (1933) already emphasized the need for such careful and structured reflection as a basis for deep learning. In this contribution, we will deepen this idea, and link it to the *person* of the professional. At the same time, we will bridge the gap between a kind of detached thinking about our actions and the actions themselves, bringing the concept of reflection closer to notions such as presence, awareness and mindfulness.

We will first describe our original ALACT model of reflection, its origins, and the manner in which it has been applied in many countries. Although the model has proved itself to be effective in overcoming the 'quick-fix' way of dealing with practical problems, we will also take a critical look at the drawbacks of this approach to reflection, drawbacks that seem to be inherent to many other approaches to reflection as well. This discussion will also help us to look at what is essential in the concept of reflection, and how this essence can be strengthened. This will lead to a discussion of the concept of *Core Reflection* and its connection to the current literature on *presence*. Finally, we will discuss our experiences with supervising and training people in using Core Reflection, and the implications for practice in a variety of professions.

25.2 Understanding the relation between practice and reflection

As Calderhead and Gates (1993, p. 2) already stated many years ago, the essence of reflection is that it enables professionals "to analyze, discuss, evaluate and change their own practice". Indeed, in the work of practitioners, reflection is always linked to practice. In almost all approaches to reflection, one can

distinguish a mutual relation between reflection and practice as depicted in Figure 25.1, a relation that is cyclic, because through reflection one develops new insights that help to improve one's behavior in practice, behavior that can in turn be reflected on, etcetera.

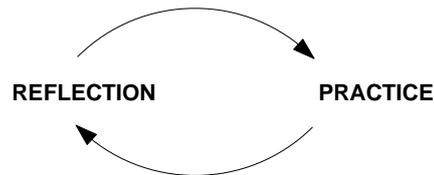


Figure 25.1: The cyclic relation between practice and reflection

In order to develop practical guidelines for making this cyclic relation work for practitioners, many authors build on the model developed by Kolb and Fry (1975), who described four phases: (1) experience, (2) reflective observation, (3) abstract conceptualization, and (4) active experimentation. This model, however, seems to be more useful for describing the analytic processes needed for a better *understanding* of practice than for improving the relation between the person of the practitioner and his or her work environment, i.e. for enhancing *personal effectiveness*. This is firstly caused by the fact that the model overemphasizes the role of abstract concepts, at the cost of concrete and more individual notions and images determining the practitioner's behavior when dealing with practice (cf. Clandinin 1985; Connelly and Clandinin 1984), which are often strongly rooted in his or her personal history (Carter and Doyle 1996; Kelchtermans 1993). As a consequence, a person may develop abstract concepts that help to understand practice without being able to develop a more fruitful relation with it. An example is the student teacher who understands concepts such as 'care' and 'trust' and their significance for the relationship with students in the classroom, but who fails to develop such relationships, because of an image of the classroom as 'a dangerous place to be' (something not unusual in novice teachers).

This problem is related to a second limitation of the Kolb and Fry model, namely its emphasis on cognitive analysis. In the context of teachers' professional development, Day (1999, p. 69) concluded that the model "fails to take account of the need for developmental links between cognitive, emotional, social and personal development in the journey towards expertise in teaching" (Day 1999, p. 69). In the everyday work of teachers, their behavior is not only guided by cognitive thinking, but may be influenced as much by their emotions (Damasio 1994; Hargreaves 1998a, 1998b; Sutton and Wheatley 2003; Van Veen et al. 2005), and their personal needs (Deci and Ryan 2000). This is something that seems to be true in many other professions as well, especially in professions building on a direct practitioner-client relationship. In sum, if we take the person of the practitioner seriously as the central instrument through which practice takes form, we have to take into account that personal frames of reference, emotions and

needs determine both practical work situations and the practitioner's reflections on these situations. Moreover, it is not only the practitioner who brings his or her 'whole being' into the work situation: their clients, too, are human beings with *their* personal frames of reference, emotions and personal needs. It is the interaction between all such aspects which makes the work of many practitioners complex. This clarifies the limitation of an approach to reflection aimed at a type of conceptualization that is not connected with both the person of the practitioner and his or her clients, and their relationships.

25.3 The ALACT model of reflection

25.3.1 The model

At the beginning of the 1980s, this helped us in reframing the relation between practice and reflection and in giving the person and his or her personal concepts, emotions, and needs a more central position in this relation. Korthagen (1982, 1985) published an adaptation of the model of Kolb and Fry, which has since been used in many teacher education programs throughout the world (see for example Brandenburg 2008, Hoel and Gudmundsdottir 1999, and Jones 2008). This model describes the ideal process of learning in and from practice with the aid of five phases: (1) Action, (2) Looking back on the action, (3) Awareness of essential aspects, (4) Creating alternative methods of action, and (5) Trial, which itself is a new action and thus the starting point of a new cycle (see Figure 25.2). This five phase model is called the *ALACT model* (named after the first letters of the five phases).

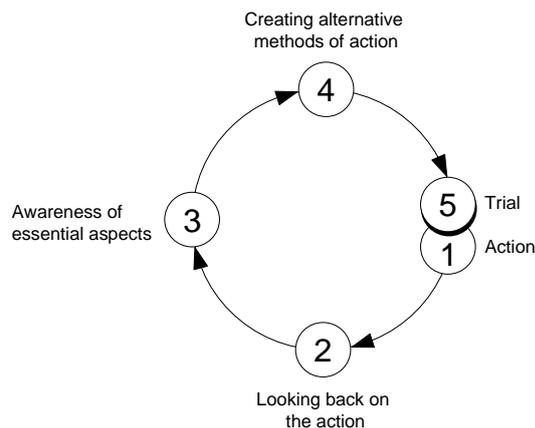


Figure 25.2: The ALACT model of reflection

25.3.2 The case of Judith

Here is an example (derived from Korthagen et al. 2001, pp. 44-45) of a student teacher in secondary education, Judith, going through the phases of the ALACT model, under the guidance of a teacher educator:

Judith is irritated about a student named Jim. She has the feeling that Jim is always trying to avoid having to do any work. Today she again noticed this. In the preceding lesson, the children were given an assignment for three lessons to work on in pairs, and at the end to hand in a written report. Today, during the second lesson, Judith had expected everyone to be hard at work on the assignment, and to be using this second lesson as an opportunity to ask her help. However, Jim appeared to be busy with something completely different. In the lesson, she reacted by saying: "Oh, so again you are not doing what you should be doing.... I think the two of you will again end up with an insufficient result!" (*Phase 1: action*)

During the supervision, Judith becomes more aware of her irritation and how this influenced her action. When the supervisor asks her what might have been the effect of her reaction on Jim, she realizes that her irritated reaction might, in turn, have caused irritation in Jim, probably causing him to be even more unwilling to work on the assignment. (*Phase 2: looking back*) The supervisor also asks Judith what she knows about Jim's interests and his behavior in other classes, and she realizes that in fact she has very little knowledge of this.

Through this analysis, she becomes aware of the escalating negativity evolving between her and Jim, and she starts to realize how this leads into a dead-end road (*Phase 3: awareness of essential aspects*). She starts to realize that the escalation taking place between her and the student, is contrary to what she really wants: a relationship with Jim that is beneficial to learning. This makes Judith feel sad, but she does not see a way out of this escalation. Her supervisor shows an understanding of Judith's struggle. She also introduces some theoretical notions about escalating processes in the relationship between teachers and students, such as the often recurring pattern of 'more of the same' (Watzlawick et al. 1974) and the guidelines to de-escalate by changing this pattern and being more empathetic or by deliberately giving a positive reaction. This is the start of *phase 4: creating alternative methods of action*. She compares these guidelines with her impulse to be even more strict and put more constraints on Jim. Finally, she decides to *try out (phase 5)* a more positive and empathetic approach, which starts by asking Jim about his plans, as she becomes aware of the fact that she does not know at all what he really wants. This is first tried out within the supervision session: the supervisor asks Judith to practice such reactions and includes a mini-training in using 'feeling-words'. If the results of this new approach are reflected on after trying it out in the real situation with Jim, phase 5 becomes the first phase of the next cycle of the ALACT model, thus creating a spiral of professional development.

25.3.3 Nine fields

First of all, this case illustrates that the reflection process is not so much aimed at abstract conceptualization, but at more awareness in Judith of what is really going on between her and the student, in other words at developing *relational awareness*. To develop such awareness, Judith has to become aware of her thoughts, but also of her emotions and needs, and how they influence her behavior. But she also has to understand the situation from the student's point of view (what does the student think, feel, want), which for many novice teachers is a big step to take. Hence, Korthagen (2001a) has elaborated phase 2 of the reflection process by means of the technique of 'the nine fields' (Figure 25.3):

0. What is the context?	
1. What did you want?	5. What did the other(s) want?
2. What did you feel?	6. What did the other(s) feel?
3. What did you think?	7. What did the other(s) think?
4. What did you do?	8. What did the other(s) do?

Figure 25.3: Concretizing questions for phase 2 of the ALACT model.

Field # 0 deals with looking back on what was relevant in the whole context, for example Jim's interests and his behavior in other classes. The supervisory process described above shows how the other eight fields (1-8) play out in the reflection process and help Judith develop the necessary relational awareness: she becomes aware of the fruitless escalation taking place and of her own contribution to it. The technique of the nine fields is thus helpful in realizing a connection between phase 1 and phase 3.

The example also shows that in phase 3, a need for more theoretical elements can emerge (abstract conceptualization in terms of Kolb and Fry). Theory can then be introduced by an educator or supervisor, but if the personal dimension of the five-phase process is taken seriously, the choice of this theory as well as its translation into practice needs to be tailored to the specific needs and concerns of the practitioner and the situation under reflection.

Korthagen (2001a) emphasizes that in the supervision of practitioners, it is not enough for supervisors to help them go through the ALACT model. He calls this 'helping to reflect'. More important is 'helping to learn *how* to reflect', which means that the ownership of the reflection process should gradually be put into the hands of the practitioner. In order for this to happen, it is important that the practitioner is aware of the underlying principles of the reflection process, especially of the five phases of the ALACT model, and of the nine fields of Figure 25.3 that help the reflection move from phase 1 to 3. If teachers acquire this insight and the skills to go

through the phases of the ALACT model on their own, they develop a *growth competence*: the ability to direct their own professional development. This can also help them to play an active role in future change processes in their work environment and thus promote their *innovative capacity* (Wubbels and Korthagen 1990).

25.4 Drawbacks of traditional conceptualizations of reflection

The ALACT model has been used in teacher education for many years. In the Netherlands, where it was developed, it is at present the main reflection model in most programs of teacher education and in a few programs of nursing education. It also appeared useful to educators and students in many other countries, such as Australia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Israel, Norway, and the United States, where many teacher educators have been using it either as an additional or as the key framework for promoting reflection in teachers, nurses, and other professional groups. During the many years of international experience with the ALACT model, the model itself also appeared to have some weaknesses, although these often seem to have to do more with the way it is being used than with the model itself. It also became clear that these are weaknesses not so much inherent to the specific approach to reflection, but to the way in which the whole concept of reflection is commonly being conceptualized world-wide. In other words, through close scrutiny of the weaknesses of this specific view of reflection, we believe we have discovered a couple of essential issues in the way the concept of reflection is being used, also within other approaches, which need to be addressed.

In the next sections, we will discuss these issues, together with the steps taken to overcome these weaknesses. These steps have gradually led to what is now called *Core Reflection*, and an adaptation of the ALACT model (the Core Reflection model).

25.5 Process and content

25.5.1 Improving the ALACT model

A first weakness of the way in which the ALACT model is often being used, is that while reflecting by going through the five phases, practitioners still focus on finding quick solutions and not so much on the underlying phenomena in the practical situation under reflection. In such cases, phase 1 of the model is an experience that was dissatisfying, for example a discipline problem in a teacher's classroom, phase 2 (looking back) is nothing more than the conclusion that it was a bad experience, phase 3 (awareness of essential aspects) is that the kids should

have been more quiet, phase 4 (creating alternative methods of action) that stricter teacher behavior is needed. If in phase 5 (trial) such a 'reflection' appears not to work out well, student teachers often start to criticize the ALACT model for not being very helpful. As we have already noted, such reactions to models for reflection are not confined to the ALACT model. Already many years ago, Hoy and Woolfolk (1989) concluded that students often consider reflection as impractical and unhelpful in solving their problems, while being unaware of the fact that this first of all has to do with the *quality* of their reflection.

Hence, a first step towards further improvement of our concept of reflection, was the insight that the ALACT model is a helpful *process model*, but that it does not support the practitioner in knowing *what* to reflect *on*, and that this can easily make the reflection somewhat superficial. Especially in complex and recurring problematic situations, a type of reflection which only focuses on one's previous and future behavior is counterproductive. As many authors emphasize, strong professional development processes should include the possibility of second-order changes, i.e. changes in the underlying sources of behavior (Levy and Mary 1986). In order for such more transformational changes to take place, deeper layers need to be touched upon (see also the conclusion section of this chapter).

For this reason, we have supplemented the ALACT model with a model describing possible contents of reflection at six different levels.

25.5.2 The onion model

This so-called *onion model* is a variant of the Bateson model; see Dilts 1990 and Korthagen 2004¹ and is presented in Figure 25.4.

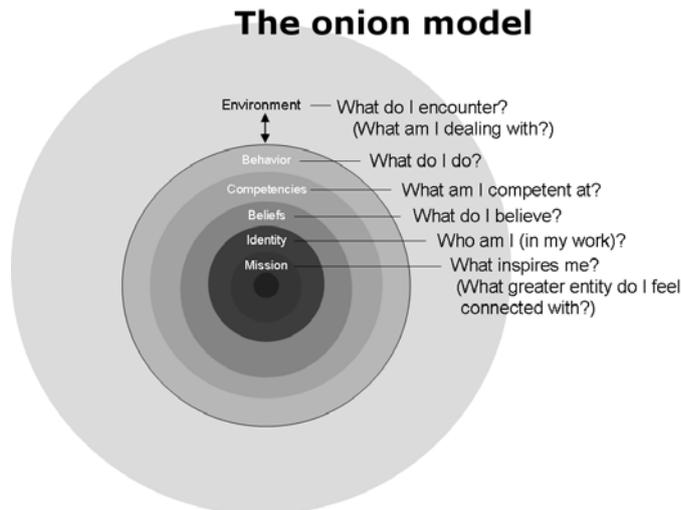


Figure 25.4: The onion model showing six levels of reflection (© Korthagen & Vasalos, 2005)

We can explain the meaning of the six levels with the aid of Judith's case, described in section 3. This case not only shows the five phases of the reflection process, but also illustrates on what kinds of content the reflection can focus:

1. *The environment*: this refers to everything that Judith encounters outside of herself. In her case, it means Peter and the way he behaves (note that his *behavior* is an aspect of Judith's *environment*), but also the whole context Judith finds herself in, which includes e.g. the whole classroom setting, the curriculum, and the school culture with all its implicit and explicit norms.

2. *Behavior*: the reflection may focus on less effective behavior, such as an irritated response, as well as possibly more effective behavior (e.g. showing empathy).

3. *Competencies*: for example, the competency to respond empathetically.

4. *Beliefs*: perhaps Judith believes that Peter is not motivated or even that he is trying to cause trouble. (Novice teachers often assume that pupils are 'testing' them.) With the term beliefs we refer to assumptions about the world around us, which are often unconscious.

We will now discuss two levels that are not explicitly touched upon in the example, although one may notice that they are implicitly embedded in the supervisory conversation:

5. *Professional identity*: for Judith it may be important to reflect on how she views her own professional identity (Beijaard 1995), i.e. what kind of teacher she thinks she is and what kind of teacher she wants to be. Does she want to be a kind of strict police officer, or does she aim at being a stimulating guide and supportive person to students?

6. *Mission*: reflection at this level would even go one step further and would deal with questions such as why Judith decided to become a teacher in the first place, or even what she sees as her calling in the world. In essence, this level is concerned with what inspires us, and what gives meaning and significance to our work or our lives (see for an elaboration of the issue of the teacher's calling e.g. Hansen 1995; Korthagen 2004; Palmer 1998). Whereas the level of identity has to do with how we experience ourselves and our self-concept, the level of mission is about "the experience of being part of meaningful wholes and in harmony with supra-individual units such as family, social group, culture and cosmic order" (Boucoulas 1988, p. 57-58). Hence, this is also the level of meaning making in a religious sense.

It is interesting that although the latter two levels seem to be implicitly present in the supervision of Judith as described in the case, they are not brought to an explicit level in the conversation. Based on an analysis of many supervisory sessions in a variety of professions, we have come to believe that this very often is the case. It appears as if supervisors or coaches are hesitant to touch upon these levels, as they are often considered as belonging to a more private domain, or because they are associated with therapy. We think that this is regrettable, as in

this way many opportunities for deep professional learning could be missed. As soon as people are more in touch with their own identity and mission, this not only creates a change of perspective towards the daily hassles of the profession, but it also opens up doors to more transformational changes. It may also lead to new types of behavior that are more in line with people's missions and inner potentials.

The latter issue refers to the essence of the onion model: as soon as a person is more in touch with the inner levels, this can begin to influence the outer levels. Once such a link between the 'inside' and the 'outside' is established, the reflection process starts helping to connect the 'core' of the person to effective behavior in the outside world. This is why we have coined the term Core Reflection for reflection in which all the levels of the onion model are being connected.

25.6 From a focus on problems to a focus on strengths

We noticed that by stimulating in teachers this connection between their 'inner core' and their interaction with the outer world, something interesting happened in how they experienced work situations. People started to become more enthusiastic and motivated for the profession. Even more importantly, they seemed more happy with the impact and effectiveness of their behavior, and so did their educators or supervisors. We decided to start empirical studies into this phenomenon (see e.g. Meijer et al. 2008), and found that the process resulting from a stronger connection between the various onion levels could be framed in terms of the concept of *flow*. Flow has been described by Csikszentmihalyi (1990) as a state of being completely in the here-and-now, optimally connecting the demands of the situation with one's inner capacities. In other words, the onion model appeared not only an instrument for deepening the reflection process, but also for creating more flow in student teachers, and hence more enthusiasm for 'doing reflection', and for enhancing more effective teaching.

Our experiences with the new Core Reflection approach stimulated our interest in the work of Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, and we were excited to learn that around the turn of the millennium, together with Martin Seligman, he developed a new branch of psychology, called *positive psychology*, in which the notion of flow has taken a central position in the thinking about human growth. Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000, p. 7) argue that positive psychology is a reaction to the fact that for too long psychologists have focused on pathology, weakness, and damage done to people, and hence on 'treatments'. Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi emphasize that "treatment is not just fixing what is broken; it is nurturing what is best" (p. 7). Hence, they point towards the importance of people's personal strengths, such as creativity, courage, perseverance, kindness, and fairness (Seligman 2002; Snyder and Lopez 2007). Almaas (1986, p. 148) refers to such qualities as "essential aspects", which he considers absolute in the sense that they cannot be further reduced to something else, or analyzed into more

basic constituents. He emphasizes that there is a wide variety of such qualities. We can identify dozens of them if we look at people from this perspective. Much work in positive psychology has focused on naming and categorizing such qualities.

A central focus in positive psychology is the idea that people can use their personal qualities to optimally act in the world, so that their actions are both effective and personally fulfilling.

This made us very aware of a second weakness in the way the ALACT model is often being used, namely the tendency to focus on problematic aspects. Phase 1 of the model, which means the experience to reflect on, often became synonymous to 'a problematic situation'. This is again a tendency that is not so much inherent only to our own approach, but which seems to surface in almost all approaches to reflection. People often have the habit of lingering longer with things that went wrong than with successes. A side-effect is that somehow this fosters a feeling of inadequacy in them. Research has demonstrated that such a focus on weakness and deficiencies leads to a narrowing of available action tendencies (Fredrickson 2002; Fredrickson and Losada 2005): the person is inclined to think within the boundaries of the problematic framework (see also Levenson 1992). To put it in everyday terms: through negative emotions about their experiences, people tend to move into a kind of 'tunnel thinking'. As noted above, in positive psychology the focus is not so much on deficiencies and problems, but on strengths. In our own practices of promoting reflection, this has helped us to see that when people apply Core Reflection, and thus link the various onion levels with each other, they often arrive at a state of flow, and get more in touch with their personal strengths. In conclusion, our discovery was that a basic characteristic of Core Reflection is that it helps people to actualize their personal strengths. Following Ofman (2000), we decided to name these strengths *core qualities*. According to Ofman, such core qualities are always potentially present in the person.

It is interesting to note that until recently, educators and educational researchers seem to have had little awareness of the key role of such qualities in professional development: "In policy and practice the identification and development of personal qualities, at the interface between aspects of one's personal virtues and one's professional life, between personhood and teacherhood, if you will, has had scant attention" (Tickle 1999, p. 123). In the context of teaching, Tickle mentions such qualities as empathy, compassion, love, and flexibility. These are indeed essential qualities for teachers, qualities seldom appearing in the official lists of important basic teaching competencies.

To us, it became important to support practitioners not only to reflect on the various onion levels, but also to use this Core Reflection to become more aware of their core qualities. This new view of reflection concurs with what Fredrickson (2002) calls the *broaden-and-build model*, and aims at the state of optimal functioning that we can refer to as flow.

25.7 From reflection as ‘thinking’ to awareness of the whole human being

A next step in the further development of our approach emerged through the insight that, to many practitioners but also to their educators, reflection is often synonymous with *thinking*, or - at best - structured thinking. Although the specification of phase 2 of the ALACT model presented in Figure 25.3, is helpful in bringing awareness of feelings and needs into the reflection process, it often leads to *thinking about feelings*, instead of what Damasio (1999, p. 279-295) calls *feeling the feelings*. This probably has to do with the fact that much of professional education takes place within academic settings, where there is a strong emphasis on rational thinking. However, as already discussed in section 2, teachers - and probably all professionals working with other people - are as much guided by their emotions and needs as they are by their thinking (Hargreaves 1998a, 1998b; Deci and Ryan 2000; Evelein et al. 2008). In an empirical study into informal learning of teachers, Hoekstra (2007) concluded that the emotional and motivational factors determining teacher behavior have been rather undervalued in the literature, and in our general thinking about professional development. Recent research in neurobiology, too, has yielded strong evidence for the close relations between cognition and emotion in humans in general (e.g. Immordino-Yang and Damasio 2007).

We noticed that the tendency to focus on rational thinking had serious consequences for the actualization of core qualities. People may cognitively *know* or *understand* that they possess the quality of care, or the quality of decisiveness, but this is rather different from *being in touch* with these qualities, really experiencing your strengths and acting upon them. Moreover, if there is an obstacle to actualizing one's core qualities, this also requires more than just cognitive insight into these obstacles. For example, a teacher who has an inhibiting belief such as 'I can never deal with this class', needs more than merely cognitive awareness of the limiting impact of this belief: she needs to really *feel* that through this belief, she makes herself weak and vulnerable, and how beneficial it is to reconnect with the feelings related to her core qualities of courage, vision and decisiveness, in order to let go of the inhibiting belief.

In short, our analysis led to the insight that a focus on strengths alone is not sufficient, but that what is needed is cognitive, emotional and motivational awareness of both one's strengths, and of one's *inner* obstacles to the actualization of one's strengths. Of course, we realize that *external* obstacles (for example an unmotivated class) are also highly relevant and can trigger these internal obstacles (for example in the form of inhibiting beliefs or inhibiting self-concepts), but we believe that for self-directed professional growth to take place, the inner obstacles to the realization of one's full potential in particular deserve careful attention within the reflective process.

25.8 From a focus on the past to a focus on the future

There is a famous Kierkegaard quote: "Life can only be understood backward, but it must be lived forward." His message seems self-evident, and indeed, in our professional field the idea is very common that we can only develop an understanding about ourselves and our environment by looking back on our experiences. In fact, this notion is intrinsically so much linked to the concept of reflection that it took us quite a while before we began to discover its weakness. Although we do not want to suggest that it is not important to learn from your past experiences, it is also relevant to see that the common view of reflection always creates a distance between the here-and-now and the reflective process: in fact what we normally reflect on, is something that happened in the past, even though this 'past' may have taken place a few seconds ago. Hence, this creates the risk that our awareness is limited by the *past* experience and its features, for as Osberg and Biesta (2007) describe it, we tend to view reality from the specific perspective of *what has happened*. Especially when the past situation is being experienced as negative, the person reflecting can easily be drawn into the 'tunnel thinking' we discussed above, which has been shown to be almost automatically induced by negative feelings (Fredrickson 2002). This often leads to a 'reactive' way of dealing with reality, which is – according to Fredrickson – accompanied by a lack of creativity. In such situations, it is not self-evident that we are in touch with our strengths, our core qualities.

Of course, the ALACT model does not force us to only reflect on negative situations. We can also reflect on successful experiences, and one important way to help people get into touch with their core qualities is exactly a focus on successes instead of failures. On the other hand, we cannot close our eyes to the fact that people quite often want to take time to reflect on situations experienced as negative: they trigger our wish to understand the past. But even then, there is no need to stick to an analysis of what went wrong, especially not if we notice that the reflection process described by models such as the ALACT model is always also aimed at *anticipation*: phase 4 of the ALACT model is focused on developing new courses of action leading to greater success. This implies that during the reflection process, the person has some kind of ideal situation in mind, which he or she will try to reach in phase 5. The idea to focus more on this ideal situation appeared to create a breakthrough in the Core Reflection approach. We discovered that it is not always necessary to first analyze the problematic features of a situation in full depth in order to arrive at a notion of the ideal situation. Reflection on one's ideal may even be a very effective way of understanding the essence of the problem the person encountered. This led us to take successes or ideals as the starting point of the reflection process, instead of problematic situations. As we can see a success as a situation coming close to one's ideal, a more general way of describing our new insight is that it is very effective to start a reflection process aimed at finding one's strengths and at a creative process, by focusing on the 'ideal situation'. Such an approach appears to bring people into touch with

positive feelings and their natural potential for flow, as demonstrated by Meijer et al. (2008). This concurs with the empirical finding that positive feelings foster creativity (Fredrickson 2002).

This new step in the development of our approach solved two problems simultaneously. First, it helped us to get rid of the negative feelings often associated with the situations people reflect on, and thus with the ‘tunnel effect’ in the person reflecting. Second, it solved the problem of how people can become aware of their core qualities if they have not been in touch with them during the situation reflected on (which is often the case). If a person describes his or her ideal situation, and if this person is not only cognitively engaged in this projection into the future, but also emotionally and motivationally in touch with this ideal, the step towards becoming aware of the core qualities embedded in one’s ‘ideal functioning’ will suddenly be very small. For example, if in the case of Judith (see section 3), she would describe her ideal situation as one in which she would have a good relationship with Jim and in which Jim would be more motivated for the lessons, and if she would *feel* how it would be if this would happen (*emotional awareness*), and if she would also feel her strong desire to achieve this ideal (*motivational awareness*), she could easily discover her core quality of care. And if not, an experienced supervisor, competent at promoting Core Reflection, could help her become aware of the fact that this quality is implied in her ideal.

The fact that ideals and core qualities are so closely connected is in line with the onion model. Ideals often resonate with the most inner level of mission: they have to do with our deepest desires, our sense of meaning in life, and thus with our core, our full potential as human beings.

The steps in the development of our view of reflection which were described above, can be summarized in an adaptation of the ALACT model which we first published in Dutch in 2001 (Korthagen 2001b), and later in English (Korthagen and Vasalos 2005). It is represented in Figure 25.5.

It is important to emphasize once again that this model does not function well if the person reflecting uses it as a purely mental exercise: in each stage, thoughts, feelings and needs (or desires) have to be addressed, and brought into full awareness.

What we are talking about here is the important shift from looking back on a situation to becoming aware of one’s ideal and one’s core qualities connected to it, which helps to create more professional fulfillment, and “vocational vitality” (Intrator and Kunzman 2006a, p. 17). We can still call this reflection, but it is rather different from analyzing past experiences in order to learn from them.

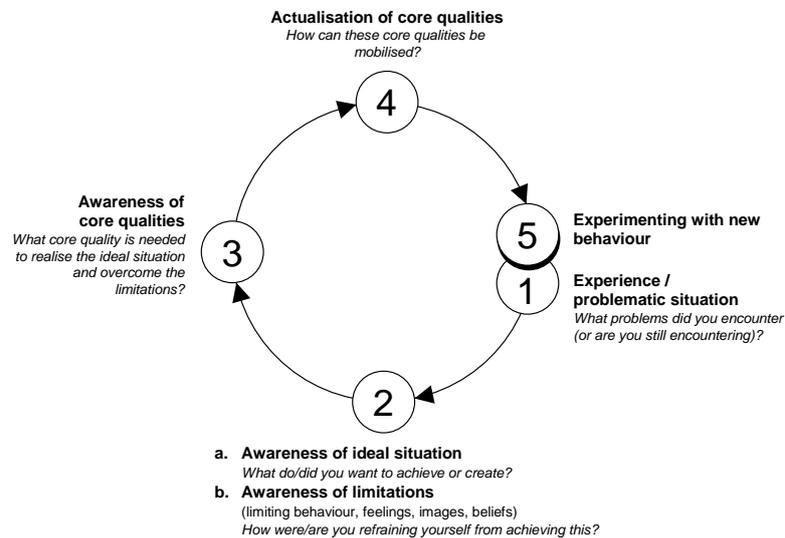


Figure 25.5: Phase model of Core Reflection (Korthagen & Vasalos, 2005)

25.9 Presence and mindfulness

This brings us to a final and crucial step in the development of Core Reflection which we wish to discuss, and which will be the main focus of the remainder of this contribution. Above, we have talked about the shift from reflection on the past towards awareness of our ideal future, as a means of getting into touch with personal strengths, and of overcoming the inhibitions or obstacles preventing people from realizing their ideals. Yet a more crucial step is to shift from both reflecting on the past or the future to a focus on the *here-and-now*. What we aim at is overcoming the gap between the here-and-now and the past, and even the gap between the here-and-now and the future, and at using our human capacity in reflection to realize our full potential in the here-and-now.

Senge et al. (2004) and Scharmer (2007) have proposed a revolutionary view on human development that makes this possibility concrete. We will use their “Theory U” to explain how Core Reflection may be used for the step towards realizing one’s full potential in the here-and-now. Our discussion is based on a slight adaptation of the U-model developed by Senge et al. (2004), which is shown in Figure 25.6. The horizontal arrow in the model represents the standard manner in which our thinking often tries to find solutions to problems. Scharmer (2007) describes this as the “*downloading*” of solutions from our brain. These solutions are always ‘old’ in the sense that they have been stored in our memory as

condensed former experience, and they limit our potential to find fundamentally different approaches. As David Bohm said, “normally, our thoughts have us rather than we are having them” (Bohm 1994). Indeed, this phenomenon is what we referred to above as the tunnel thinking often restricting us in finding creative new solutions. Such tunnel thinking may even take place when thinking about our ideals, as we are often restricted by our previous experiences when thinking about the future. As Osberg and Biesta (2007) formulate it very clearly, the past is always limiting our awareness of what *might become real*, but never has been.

How can we overcome this limiting influence of the past on our reflection on what can be created *now*? Senge and his colleagues advocate a couple of measures. First, it is important to *suspend* our tendency of trying to find a solution (compare our own discussion at the beginning of this chapter on the tendency in practitioners to find quick-fixes to problems). They state that effective professional behavior requires a deeper process which they describe with the U-turn shown in Figure 25.6.

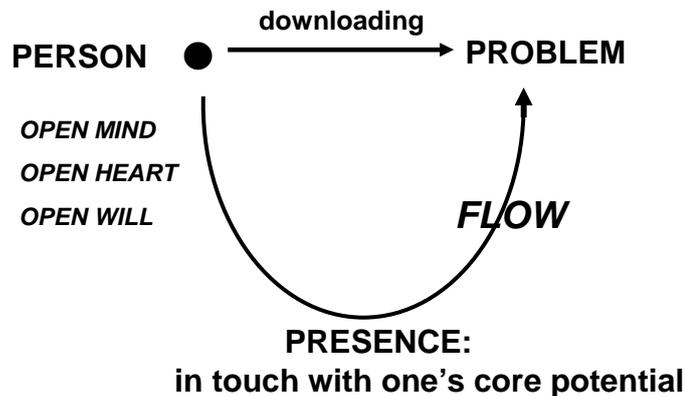


Figure 25.6: Downloading versus the U-turn

Second, the alternative they propose is based on reflection with what they call an open mind, an open heart, and an open will. This concurs with our above discussion on the importance of including thinking, feeling and wanting in the reflection process. This leads to a deepening of the reflection process, described by the U-shape in Figure 25.6. At the bottom of the U, the practitioner arrives at a state of being that Senge and his colleagues call *presence*. Rodgers and Raider-Roth (2006, p. 267) give the following definition of presence, which we will use in our further discussion:

“Presence from the teacher’s point of view is the experience of bringing one’s whole self to full attention so as to perceive what is happening in the moment.”

Hence, presence is a state of being in which one is sensitive to the flow of events (Rodgers 2002, p. 235). Greene (1973, p. 162) called it ‘wide-awakeness’. Presence is related to the concept of *mindfulness* (Germer et al. 2005; Kabat-Zinn 1990), a concept originating from Buddhism, and which is currently rapidly influencing western psychology (Brown and Ryan 2003). Mindfulness can be understood as “full awareness” (see e.g. Mingyur Rinpoche 2007), and differs from *conceptual* awareness in the sense that “its mode of functioning is *perceptual* or *prereflexive*” (Brown and Ryan 2003).

On the basis of the state of presence, and through the connection with one’s core potentials in the here-and-now, a creative process can surface bringing the person into a state of flow in which new possibilities are enacted. The type of ‘solution’ to the problem that comes into being through this U-shaped process is of a much higher quality than a solution based on mere ‘downloading’. But even this is a limiting way of describing the process and the outcome: the new way of relating to the problem is not so much a ‘solution’, but *a new way of being* in relationship with the problem, and it is not so much a matter of higher quality according to some professional criterion, but a matter of actualizing one’s full potential in the here-and-now. This is a creative process in which we overcome “historical ways of making sense” (Senge et al. 2004, p. 13). As a result, the future emerges from the present, as Osberg and Biesta (2007) describe it. They argue that through this process, possibilities can come into being that “are inconceivable from what has come before, are *created* or somehow *come into being* for the first time” (p. 33). In line with this, Senge et al. (2004, p. 13) cite W. Brian Arthur, noted economist of the Santa Fe Institute, who said: “Every profound innovation is based on an inward-bound journey, on going to a deeper place where knowing comes to the surface.”

25.10 Presence in practice

How can we use these ideas to improve reflection? What does it mean in a practical sense?

First, it shows us the possibility that the practitioner reflecting is not so much concerned with what *has happened* or what he or she would *like to happen* (the past or the future), but is present with full awareness of *what is in the here-and-now*, both inside and outside himself. If the practitioner has an open mind, open heart, and open will, then personal strengths, insights and possibilities can surface creating a new relationship between the practitioner and the environment. Below, we discuss an example derived from an empirical study into such an approach to reflection.

In this study, we followed one individual student teacher, Paulien, during her first year of teaching in secondary education, in which she was supported in developing ‘presence while teaching’, as we have come to name it. This support

took place in the form of seven supervisory sessions with one of the developers of the Core Reflection approach (Angelo Vasalos). Based on audio taped supervisory sessions, Paulien's logbook, and two semi-structured interviews, the relation between supervisor interventions and Paulien's professional development was analyzed, which indeed revealed a development towards more presence. Below, we will present a few excerpts from the process that took place, a process more fully documented in Meijer et al (2008).

At the start of the year, Paulien describes her problem as follows:

I just can't seem to focus on the essence of a lesson. It's too chaotic: in class as well as in my head.

During the first supervision session, the supervisor, Angelo, notices her tendency to ignore the value of successes, and to focus all of her attention on problems and the related negative feelings:

Angelo: ... I notice that the moment I give you positive feedback, you seem not to receive this, you seem not to let it get through to you. You seem to back away from it...

[...] I find it interesting to address your essential qualities or core qualities here: I see a lot of playfulness, excitement in you as you are talking about the students and how you stimulate them, and I see how you enjoy their motivation at that very moment. These are some of the qualities that I notice. And as we are talking about what exactly happens at that moment in that classroom, then I see you provoke humor in these students. That's an important core quality. I also see the quality of involvement: everybody is extremely involved in the task, the assignments you give them. So now I'm curious: what does it do to you to see these qualities in yourself and in your students? So, in the lesson you give, you know how to evoke and activate these qualities, in yourself as well as in your students. [...]

Paulien: Well, yes, now you mention this, I knew of course, as I said earlier, that the lesson just went well, and I was thinking how can I hold on to this. And the fact that you now label this, I think, well, it seems to become a bit more tangible or understandable. [...] Apparently, I've done something that made it go that way, but what? I understand that a bit better now. It also reassures me a bit, apparently it's not a coincidence if it should happen again. Maybe I can even prepare myself for it.

[...]

Angelo: So we might say that it is important to perceive and recognize these qualities? To be able to differentiate between them, label them, analyze them and reflect on them? Isn't this important?

Paulien: Yes, I feel so now, yes. It eventually is. Even though I told so many people about what happened.

Angelo: Mm.

Paulien: But I now think *this* is what happened, yes. And I like this, I mean, I can think about the situation from a different angle, I like that.

Here we can see a shift taking place in Paulien, from a limited perception of the situation towards an attitude of an ‘open mind, open heart, open will.’ During the first session, Paulien gradually becomes more aware of the importance of recognizing and appreciating her core qualities and the influence of this awareness on her students. It also becomes clear that although she can recognize some of her core qualities during the supervision, i.e. after the teaching experience, she does not feel them consciously *while teaching*. In fact, during her lessons she is not very aware of herself at all. Paulien writes in her logbook:

One way or another, I seem not to be in the center of my teaching, I wait for what’s going to happen, *let* it happen to me as it were. Why do I do it like this? [...] I seem to more or less “protect” myself, apparently I don’t have the guts to be completely *in* my lesson?

Here Paulien becomes more aware of her *not* being present in the here-and-now, which at the same time promotes her desire to be more fully present. During the next days, she starts ‘to move down the U’: through a more open mind, open heart, and open will, she becomes more aware of herself, her ideal and her core qualities, but this also creates confusion and anxieties. She wonders: “If I start to feel more, can I still function well?” During the supervision, it becomes clear that this is a fundamental obstacle: Paulien is afraid to feel her feelings (compare section 7), as she believes that if she opens herself fully to her feelings, she might not be able to cope with them when they are negative. She is afraid of being overwhelmed by her feelings (and even fears that she might faint), and thus tends to stick to rational thinking. After this obstacle has been explored in the supervision session through *thinking* about it, *feeling* the feelings around the theme, and focusing on *wanting* (how does Paulien really want to be), a breakthrough is visible in Paulien’s logbook:

When Merel [a pupil] told me last week that the lesson was chaotic, I tried at that moment to feel my feelings in the here-and-now. I managed to do so for a moment, but I immediately felt dizzy, very unpleasant. Apparently, the mechanism to protect myself is not there for no reason. What did I protect myself from? Let me recall the situation... if my feeling is right, I think I wanted to protect myself from a feeling of being rejected... Yes, that’s it, that’s how I felt. Strange, when I think this through, this is kind of weird. Merel did not reject me (as a person) at all, she only judged part of my behavior, namely my not acting when there is chaos in the classroom... Insight! Oh, this feels great, I feel much calmer now. Why do I do this only five days later? Why can’t I do this any sooner? Even during the lesson, as Angelo would like me to? Yes, yes, uncertainty, fear to get hurt... but if I hadn’t done this little exercise now,

I would have entered the classroom a lot more negatively tomorrow, I think. I don't *have* to change as a person, I "just" have to learn some behavioral stuff. Well, this sounds a lot less threatening...

What is apparent in this logbook fragment is that Paulien starts to connect *thinking* about her experiences with *feeling* the feelings, and that she also becomes more aware of what she *wants*. In other words, she becomes more autonomous in balancing her cognitive, emotional as well as motivational awareness in her reflection.

In the supervision, Angelo helps her to further develop her awareness of both her ideal of being fully present in the here-and-now, in touch with her core qualities, and her inhibiting pattern of 'not feeling':

Angelo: So what would it be like if you would not believe this thought of "I might faint" anymore? But instead see the thought just as it is: an assumption that is definitely wrong, a misconception. The whole idea that you might faint because of certain feelings is just ... a misconception, which only has an effect if you believe in it.

Paulien: It would mean that I would have confidence in... just in me. That I would know I wouldn't faint in those kind of moments. That I would manage. That it would be okay.

Angelo: If you just stick to that. How would *that* be. What do you feel?

Paulien: Yes, that's an extremely happy feeling. That's really... it really makes me happy.

Angelo: What exactly triggers that happy feeling?

Paulien: The idea that I do not have to be afraid.

This episode is an example of phase 2 of the Core Reflection model, in which both the ideal and the inhibition get attention. One can see this as a technique of contrasting two opposite poles: the organic expansive movement of our inner potential versus our inhibiting conditioned behavioral and thought patterns. Naturally, the human organism always strives for a reduction of the tension between these poles, which helps to create a breakthrough.

Under Angelo's guidance, Paulien starts to differentiate herself from her feelings: she experiences that she *has* feelings, but she also experiences that she *is more* than her feelings (a principle formulated by Assagioli 1965). She starts to recognize her potential of being fully present in the here-and-now as being more fundamental than both her mental constructs and the emotional effects of these constructs. Through this awareness, her capacity to stay in the here-and-now, while feeling the feelings, is growing:

Paulien: I feel kind of pleased that I allow myself ...[to feel]. I AM allowed to not like certain things!

Angelo: That sounds very accepting! “I AM allowed to not like certain things.”

Paulien: Yes!!

Paulien: It’s allowed! [...] In fact, it would be rather strange if I didn’t feel it that way!

Angelo: Great! You’re beaming with joy!

Paulien: I’m really happy, yes! (laughs) Yes, you know, when I think this over, and feeling like this, it’s not just me for which it’s much more pleasant, but also for my pupils.

Here we can see the right side of the U-turn take form. In Paulien’s logbook, key words are “self-acceptance” and “I am not my feelings”. One week later, her logbook shows that she gradually starts daring “to be herself” while teaching:

I notice on all fronts that I’m feeling more “me” among the students. I felt great and totally “present”. [...] I was aware that I felt relaxed. And that precisely this relaxed feeling made me feel really “free” in my actions in class. I noticed that this felt relaxed and “natural”.

A couple of weeks later, she writes:

I feel stronger every minute, it feels like I’m more and more the manager of what we are doing in class. I’m more and more in charge, while on the other hand I feel I’m more and more letting pupils take charge as well.

During the final supervisory sessions, Angelo supports Paulien’s autonomy in Core Reflection and being present, by (1) promoting reflection on the *meaning* of presence, (2) stimulating Paulien to *imagine* how it would be to be always fully present in the classroom, (3) helping her to *deconstruct* inhibiting beliefs that suppress the experience of presence, and (4) making the Core Reflection theory explicit. This leads to conversations such as the following:

Paulien: I do believe that I *am* much more, that more and more I learn to genuinely *be*. It gives such a happy feeling [laughs]. It specifically comes to me in sudden realizations. Then there is this sudden insight and then BANG, I *am*. Something like that. Then I’m very aware of, well, yes, of *me*

Angelo: And what does this mean to you, when you teach from this sense of being, or, being a teacher who’s able to teach from her inner sense of being? Imagine you would always be able to teach from your sense of being, your inner self? What would this mean?

Paulien: Well, it would save so much of your energy. If you’re really yourself – I know it’s strange, but it’s really hard to be yourself – but if you finally succeed in being yourself, everything just comes naturally.

But I find it very difficult, when I loose touch with myself, to reconnect with myself.

Angelo: It's just an imaginary construction in your mind. At such a moment, first you have to recognize it, then you have to name it, reflect on it, and then you have to connect to it. *Then* the process will start from the inside, from yourself.

Paulien: So, what you're actually saying is that this feeling that nothing really touches me, so this dissociating that I'm doing, that this is just something I created myself?!

Angelo: Yes, you were not born that way, you acquired it.

Paulien: O well, then I *immediately* want to get rid of it, it's so irritating! It's very annoying.

Angelo: It's very annoying indeed. And you don't want it.

Paulien: No!

In an interview at the end of the supervisory process, Paulien describes her newly developed potential for presence:

Paulien: Well, yes, for example, during a lesson in which I forget to be myself so to speak, I notice this during the lesson, and I can do something about it.

Interviewer: Could you describe this? I find that interesting. How do you notice this? What is this "noticing"?

Paulien: Well, that I *hear* myself talking. I hear myself and then I think something like "how would she finish this sentence?" Like I'm thinking about myself in the third person, something like that.

Interviewer: So you notice that this is happening, and what happens then?

Paulien: Then I don't panic like I used to.

Interviewer: You don't panic.

Paulien: No, then I'm thinking "oh, here I'm doing it again." And then I immediately think "well, I don't want this, and I don't need to, it's nonsense". And then I turn around as it were... then I start focusing on the fact that I don't want this, and sometimes I need some time to do so, but that's okay, I do take that time now. Earlier, I felt "well, I need to finish this sentence no matter what, or I need to finish my story", a very stressful feeling, but now I will think "okay, I need some rest now". And then I can call this 'being present' to the fore really easily. It just comes. In the beginning I needed some deep breaths to do so, and to focus on my stomach... I know this sounds strange, but that's how it goes for me.

When in a final interview, Paulien was asked what to her was the essence of the whole learning process, she said:

This sense of *being-while-teaching* was what I felt to be the most crucial aspect of my process of becoming a teacher.

25.11 Essential characteristics of Core Reflection aimed at a state of presence

We believe Paulien's last quote is a powerful way of phrasing the significance of the notion of presence for professional behavior. It can be generalized to other professions by stating that the essence of 'professional presence' is *the state of being fully present while behaving professionally*.

In their analysis of the approach used in the case of Paulien, Meijer et al. (2008) formulate the following seven tenets of Core Reflection as fundamental to the supervisory process:

1. Promoting awareness of ideals and core qualities in the person related to the situation reflected on, as a means of strengthening awareness of the levels of identity and mission.
2. Identifying internal obstacles to acting out these ideals and core qualities (i.e. promoting awareness of a disharmony between the onion levels).
3. Promoting awareness of the cognitive, emotional and motivational aspects embedded in 1 and 2.
4. Promoting a state of presence in which the person is fully aware (cognitively and emotionally) of the friction between 1 and 2, and the self-created nature of the internal obstacles.
5. Trust in the process taking place from within the person.
6. Support of acting out one's inner potential within the situation under reflection.
7. Promoting autonomy in using Core Reflection.

Underlying these tenets are a couple of assumptions about the nature of professional development aiming at a state of being while acting professionally. We will now discuss three fundamental assumptions.

1. Deep professional development requires an integration of the personal and the professional domain.

In order for fundamental professional development to take place, including second-order changes, we believe it is impossible to completely separate the personal and the professional, as Paulien's case illustrates. This could lead to questions about the boundary between supervision and therapy. One might worry about the risk that integrating the personal and professional domain opens up a 'dangerous area', which we should leave to therapists....

We believe that the source of this worry may be that most people associate 'going deeper' with delving into problems and traumatic experiences. However,

this is exactly what Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000) point to as the traditional, ineffective view of psychology on human growth. Core Reflection, in contrast, aims at building on people's strengths, and on the positive feelings triggered when people are feeling in touch with their strengths. Through this, they can get into another state of being, which creates flow. We believe that there is nothing dangerous about this, and that it can even be dangerous *not* to support people struggling with severe professional problems, in getting in touch with their core potential.

Of course, Core Reflection can have consequences beyond the professional domain. For example, it may make people aware of an absence of presence in all kinds of situations in their lives, or their more general inhibiting beliefs, for example "I am not important enough" or "They will not like me." In other words, no neat and watertight boundary can be drawn between professional core issues and personal biographical material. This need not mean that all kinds of personal issues should become the focus of the professional learning process. In our view, the focus of professional development processes should be *professional* functioning, but in order to reflect in full depth about this professional functioning, more personal patterns as well as personal strengths need to be addressed.

2. Deep professional change can take place without dealing with biographical issues

Core Reflection is based on a fairly radical view of how one can deal with deeply engrained inhibiting patterns in a person. Let us take as an example Paulien's core belief about herself: "If I start to feel, I may faint." This can be seen as a belief at the identity level of the onion model. It may be a 'frozen belief', perhaps developed earlier in life when there was insufficient internal and external support to 'survive' amidst strong negative feelings. Traditionally, a variety of therapeutic approaches focused on working with these past experiences. Basic to the Core Reflection approach is, however, the notion that this is not necessary, and that you can learn to fully deal with such a core belief and rediscover your core potential if you 'unfreeze' by:

- a. starting to fully *feel* the negative, limiting impact of the core belief on your functioning in the here-and-now,
- b. *feeling* your own presence in the here-and-now as a state prior to that belief (Almaas 1986),
- c. *understanding* the belief as a powerless mental construct, and
- d. developing the *will* to no longer let the belief guide you.

This leads to a sense of joy, which is typical for the right side of the U-turn, in which practitioners start to discover the power of their own state of presence, in the midst of their professional functioning. It may create a sense of fulfillment as well as a feeling of relief, the latter through seeing inhibiting patterns and inhibiting mental constructs from the perspective of who one really is. In terms of the onion model, one could say that the person then reaches the innermost circle in

Figure 25.4, thus beyond each of the six onion levels, which in fact are all constructions of the mind.

3. Supervising Core Reflection requires a combination of a directive and a non-directive approach

Supervision is crucial to the Core Reflection process, at least initially. When it comes to issues such as ideals, core qualities or presence, it may take a long time before people start to become aware of such issues by themselves, let alone that they are able to use them as an incentive for deliberately changing their everyday behavior and reflection. In most cases, some directed form of reflection and clearly focused support in going through the various phases of Core Reflection is necessary, especially in order to help people refrain from repeating ineffective patterns over and over again (e.g. in the case of Paulien her tendency to avoid feeling her feelings). It is important to emphasize, however, that the direction the supervisor gives is not so much oriented towards certain criteria for specific professional behavior the practitioner should demonstrate. A supervisor applying Core Reflection should in our view give clear directions with regard to the *reflection process* rather than regarding the actual professional behavior aimed at. What this actual behavior looks like can only be discovered by the supervisee, by becoming aware of his or her professional ideals. And we believe that a supervisor should be fairly non-directive when it comes to the formulation and enactment of such ideals by the supervisee. The only really important criterion in a process of Core Reflection is whether the supervisee starts functioning more from a state of presence.

In short, Core Reflection implies that the core of the person reflecting takes the lead in what is to emerge, but in order for this to take place, a supervisor should take the lead in structuring the process through which this core and its potential can be opened up. We can also summarize this by stating that the essence of Core Reflection is to build the process on the supervisee's own concerns, directing the supervisee towards his or her strengths. During such a process, well-known non-directive interventions such as respect, empathy, and acceptance are essential (Rogers 1969).

25.12 Conclusion

25.12.1 Shifts in the views of reflection

In this contribution, we have described shifts of perspective regarding the concept of reflection. Shifts that took place over many years, under the influence of our experiences with the ALACT model of reflection and new psychological insights. We believe that through our discussion, we have highlighted various

important issues deserving the attention from everyone involved in promoting various approaches to reflection. Most fundamental in the discussion are the broadening of the focus of reflection based on the six levels of the onion model, the step towards reflection as a means of enhancing personal strengths and possibilities, and the shift from a view of reflection as the rational analysis of past experiences towards an emphasis on being fully present and aware in the here-and-now. We can summarize these shifts as follows (Table 1):

<i>Traditional view of reflection</i>	<i>Core Reflection</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reflection on problems - Focus on the past - Focus on the situation - Focus on cognitive thinking/ rationality - Focus on the outer levels of the onion model - Final goal: clear analysis of the situation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reflection on possibilities and ideals - Focus on the here-and-now and the future - Focus on personal strengths - Focus on presence as well as awareness of thinking, feeling, wanting and the environment - Focus on all levels of the onion model and their alignment - Final goal: being <i>in</i> the situation with full awareness of thinking, feeling and wanting, leading to a free flow of core qualities

Table 25.1: Shifts in perspective on reflection

25.12.2 Reflection and transformational learning

Through these shifts, we believe reflection becomes a key instrument in transformational learning, i.e. learning in which we experience “dramatic, fundamental change in the way we see ourselves and the world in which we live” (Mirriam, et al. 2007; compare Cranton 2006, and Mezirow 2003). Through Core Reflection, changes can take place that go beyond gradual adjustments in professional behavior (first-order change), and can thus be seen as “second-order changes”, defined by Levy and Mary (1986, p. 4-6) as transformative change. They state that “second-order change is a multidimensional, multi-level, qualitative, discontinuous, radical organizational change involving a paradigmatic shift” (p. 5). This is exactly what can be observed when all levels of the onion model are included in the change process and brought into alignment, as we have seen in the example of Paulien.

We believe that if a person reaches the state of presence, we can even talk about a higher level of change, which we suggest calling *third-order change*. It is

characterized by a breakdown of all fixed beliefs about reality and the ability to see reality with fresh eyes, including completely new possibilities (Almaas 2008).

This implies that we propose a view of professional development aimed at deep forms of learning, but not in the sense in which traditional therapeutic approaches conceptualize ‘going deep’, i.e. by putting an emphasis on traumatic childhood experiences. On the contrary, in Core Reflection ‘going deeper’ refers to the joyful adventure of awakening to the richness of the present reality, discovering new possibilities, and focusing on the positive feelings connected with one’s inner potential, and one’s inner sources of inspiration. Such strong positive feelings and fresh insights are usually not triggered when the learning process only focuses on the outer levels of the onion model, i.e. when first-order change is the goal.

As an illustration, we cite a few evaluative remarks from North-American teachers, who attended a workshop in Core Reflection. Their words mirror what we have just discussed:

- Personally, [I learned] a set of skills I feel will be empowering, professionally, a set of connections to people and ideals which I feel will deepen and lighten my experience of work.
- I gained a sense of self-identity, freedom from limiting beliefs, empowerment to fulfill my life purpose.
- You would not know how much profound impact you’ve done to me personally and professionally.
- Since returning, I have told colleagues and students that in my many years as an educator, I think this has been the most powerful and transformative experience I have ever had.
- The techniques of Core Reflection are really limitless in their application.
- The biggest benefit for me has been learning new tools for refocusing problems and obstacles into strengths.
- This has been the most profound, influential workshop I’ve ever had in my life. It presented me with, no, immersed me in an ideal vision for my work, my teaching and my way of being that. I now feel inspired and equipped to bring into being, one small but sure step at a time.

25.12.3 Connection between the personal and the professional

As Rodgers and Raider-Roth (2006, p. 271) explain, the key to presence is being present to oneself and the environment simultaneously. Here the interesting point is that contact with the outside world is enhanced through a deeper awareness of the self (Almaas 1986, 2008; Senge et al. 2004). This is where in our view the important connection between the professional and the personal element in professional functioning takes place (cf. Intrator and Kunzman 2006a, 2006b). Such a connection is important, since many authors emphasize that a strong divide between the personal and the professional may lead to an ineffective friction in a

professional's identity (Beijaard et al. 2004; Nias 1989). According to Palmer (2004), it is in this sense essential for professionals to "live divided no more".

25.12.4 A global perspective

In discussing the concepts of presence and connectedness, Senge and his colleagues even go one step further and relate them to a need for more connectedness between human beings and the outer world. They consider global problems such as the rapid diminishing of our natural resources and fast climate change, as crucial signs that humans have become too focused on manipulating the outside world, and have lost the necessary connection with their inner being. Humankind has come to see the inside as separated from the outside, a phenomenon Einstein called an optical delusion of our consciousness. In terms of the onion model: we have become used to focusing on the outer layers, on using the environment and on our acting in the world in such a manner that we can 'gain' most out of it, but the connection between the layers is lost. As a result, Senge and his colleagues believe that the world may be heading towards its final destruction, which they call the 'requiem scenario'. They state that what is needed is "profound change in people, organizations and society," a change in which we develop "a new capacity for observing that no longer fragments the observer from what is observed" (p. 211). This is why Senge and his colleagues consider connectedness as the defining feature of a new world view:

(...) "connectedness as an organizing principle of the universe, connectedness between the 'outer world' of manifest phenomena and the 'inner world' of lived experience, and, ultimately, connectedness among people and between humans and the larger world." (p. 188)

Looking back from this perspective at the developments in our thinking about reflection described in this chapter, it may strike us that we are faced with challenges beyond those of individual professional behavior and learning. The described shifts in perspective regarding the essence of reflection may not only be fundamental to a new view of what it means to behave and learn professionally, but may ultimately be pivotal to the needs of the world at large.

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