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Relationships are the Alpha and Omega

An exploration of the descriptions of nurturing and healthy learning environments given by teachers at adult education centres' youth departments

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Abstract

This master's thesis is an exploratory study of the descriptions of nurturing and healthy learning environments given by teachers at adult education centres' youth departments. The study has a qualitative method design based on transcendental phenomenology. Five teachers from an adult education centre's youth department were interviewed using semi-structured interviews. The resulting data were coded and analysed to draw out the essences of the teachers' lived experiences. Four essences were distilled from the results; relationships and how to work with them, trauma and the effects of being a young refugee on schooling, teacher strategies to combat these effects, and the teachers' efforts to buffer the systematic challenges of being a young refugee. These four themes contribute to the creation and maintenance of nurturing and healthy learning environments. Relationships, whether between teachers and pupils, interpupil, or intercolleague, were the clearly the most important elements for these teachers at this time in this school.

Abstrakt

Denne mastergradsoppgaven er en eksplorativ studie av beskrivelsene av omsorgsfulle og helsefremmende læringsmiljøer beskrevet av lærere på voksenopplæringscenterets ungdomsavdeling. Studien har en kvalitativ metodedesign basert på transcendental fenomenologi. Fem lærere fra en ungdomsavdeling på et voksenopplæringscenter ble intervjuet ved hjelp av semistrukturert intervju. De resulterende dataene ble avkodet og analysert for å trekke ut essensene til lærernes levde erfaringer. Fire essenser ble destillert fra resultatene; relasjoner og hvordan å jobbe med dem, traumer og effekten av å være en ung flyktning i skole, lærerstrategier for å bekjempe disse effektene, og læreres innsats for å være en buffer mot systematiske utfordringer ved å være en ung flyktning. Disse fire temaene er med å bidra til å skape og vedlikeholde omsorgsfulle og helsefremmende læringsmiljøer. Forhold, enten mellom lærere og elever, eller mellom elevene seg imellom, var de klart viktigste elementene for disse lærerne på dette tidspunktet i denne skolen.

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 Project Title

An exploration of the descriptions of nurturing and healthy learning environments given by teachers at adult learning centers' youth departments.

1.2 Background

I work at an adult education centre and last academic year I taught in the youth department. This is a department for young adults between the ages of 16 and 24 who need to complete their basic education before going on to upper secondary school. The youth department is located on a different campus to the rest of the adult education centre and is relatively self-contained in a local upper secondary school. There are many reasons as to why the youth department is separate from the main centre, one of the reasons is that these young refugees have experienced a lot of potentially traumatic events and many exhibit symptoms of trauma. Some of these symptoms can be posttraumatic stress, anxiety, and depression (Eide, K. 2012. p.237). According to the annual report from the Department of Children and Families' Unaccompanied minors' section, 45% of the pupils at this youth department who came as unaccompanied minors have such severe problems processing these traumatic events that they should receive professional psychological treatment (Barne- og familietjenestens omsorgsenheten, 2018). They base this figure on the ASEBA assessment carried out on 218 adolescents who arrived in Norway as unaccompanied minors (Barne- og familietjenesten Omsorgsenheten, 2018). A separate report by Pastoor also finds a similar proportion of young unaccompanied minor refugees needing psychiatric treatment (Pastoor, 2016).

A study in Sweden found that young refugees' current situation in their host country plays as big a role - or bigger than - their experiences of war and being on the run (Almquist and Broberg 1999). This means the school needs to work with purpose to give the pupils the best environment for learning - a salutogenic learning environment. The teachers need to use individually adapted strategies to allow each pupil to learn (Eide, K. p.225). Central to these adaptations are the ways teachers and support staff interact with the pupils and how classes are structured.

I found working with young adults in the adult education system to be a completely new way of working, and my everyday working life was significantly different to how it had been as an upper

secondary school teacher in a mainstream upper secondary school. Adapted education (*tilpasset opplæring*) is a central principle of the Norwegian education system and is legislated for in §1-3 of the Education Act (Education Act, 2006). All pupils must be given the opportunity to learn and increase their knowledge. Teachers and schools can use a variety of methods to adapt learning and ensure that all pupils benefit from an environment that includes them. To my mind working with young adult refugees in the adult education systems requires a huge amount of adapted education. I am very interested in exploring how other teachers in the same type of department describe healthy and nurturing learning environments and the ways they use adapted education, especially in light of the symptoms of trauma many of the pupils may exhibit.

1.3 Research Problem and Aim

The aim of my research project is to look into how teachers with classes of young adult refugees describe nurturing and healthy learning environments for their pupils. I have chosen to undertake this project because of my experiences teaching young adult refugees and the challenges I faced teaching them. There is not enough research into this topic. There are few studies that directly discuss the teaching of young adult refugees and the specific challenges facing them and their educators. Given the large number of young refugees entering the Norwegian education system from 2015 (SSB, 2017), this is a timely topic that urgently needs more research.

The percentage of young refugees who exhibit symptoms of trauma is much higher than the general population of 16-24 year olds (Barne- og familietjenesten Omsorgsenheten, 2018, Pastoor, 2016 contra Bakken, 2018, pp.80-83), leading me to believe that teachers working with young adult refugees over time will have developed specific ways of creating nurturing and healthy learning environments. I am interested in learning more about what teachers observe and how they create and maintain nurturing and healthy learning environments. I want to see if it is possible to identify one, or more, core essences from these descriptions. To do this the project will research how the teachers describe the school environment and the challenges they face creating and maintaining healthy learning environments for this specific pupil group.

2.0 Theory

Before carrying out research into how teachers from adult education youth departments describe nurturing and healthy learning environments there are a few terms that need to be defined. The legal parameters of the education young adult refugees are offered needs to be established. The purpose and role of schools needs to be looked at; what should schools be offering? This study is concerned with nurturing and healthy learning environments so the theory that will be discussed here is mostly to do with the holistic nature of schools and the importance of schools as salutogenic environments. The pupil base needs to be examined too, the effects of being a refugee will be discussed as will trauma and the possible effects of complex trauma on adolescent refugees. Finally a framework and series of methods and strategies called trauma informed care will be discussed as a way to help understand how and why traumatised adolescents exhibit the behaviours they do.

2.1 Educating Adolescent Refugees

2.1.1 Legalities

Children who arrive in Norway after they are 16 years old don't have the same rights as refugee children who arrive when they are under 16 years old and who are covered by §2-1 of the Education Act (Education Act. 2016). The Education Act §3-1 gives adolescents right to further secondary school education once they have completed their basic, compulsory education. The individual municipalities decide if the young adolescents have fulfilled the requirements of basic education (Pastoor, L. 2012). Not all young refugees who arrive in the same situation receive an education in the same format, due to the variation across municipalities. The vast majority receive an education the legalities and constraints of which are legislated for in §4A (Education Act. 2016). Further information about the legalities and role of the school for young adult refugees is discussed in the section "The role of schools for adolescent refugees" further on in this thesis. The school visited in this study educates their pupils in line with the requirements of §4A.

2.1.2 The Purpose of Schools

Schools convey norms and values through the teachers' behaviour and pedagogical methods (Nordahl, T. 2010. p.55). The teaching practices, values and expectations that schools convey will have different consequences for pupils with different backgrounds - pupils with similar values and attitudes to the values and attitudes of the school will find it easier to understand and assimilate into the schools context than pupils with different backgrounds (Nordahl, T. 2010. p.55). Schools, like all lived arenas, exist within a context. The context is the relationships and interactions which

occur within the school system (Nordahl, T. 2010. p.55). The most important relationships are the social ones: between classmates and teachers. As well as relationships other aspects of the schools context are the curriculum studied, the economic resources the school has, and the school's physical building and its upkeep (Nordahl, T. 2010 ch.2). Relationships between teachers and pupils and between pupils themselves make up the learning environment of the school and are especially important (Nordahl, T. 2010. p.55). This study is interested in how nurturing and healthy learning environments are created and maintained, so this is the context that will be examined most thoroughly here.

It has been shown that the most important factor in determining a child's educational success is their parents' educational attainment (Hattie. 2009. in Nordahl, T. 2010. p.62). This means that schools are reproducing the social systems that exist in wider society. Schools don't contribute to equalising social differences, they are accused of upholding societies social differences. This is called social reproduction and something that is neither intended or desired, but nevertheless occurs (Nordahl, T. 2010. p.59). This is especially important to remember when examining how teachers in adult education centres' youth department create nurturing and healthy learning environments because all of the pupils in these departments are refugees and as such come from marginalised groups that are disproportionately affected by poverty and low social involvement (Pinson, H. & Arnot, M. 2007., Keddie, A. 2012). The pupils at these departments don't have parents who were educated within the same system that they are now being educated in.

Schools must be safe havens from frightening and oppressive events and that they must create a positive socio-emotional atmosphere that encourages positive learning and supports pupils to overcome socio-emotional burdens such as trauma (Johnsen,B. 2005.). The UNESCO report 'Learning: the treasure within' (Delors, J. 1996) introduces the idea of the four pillars of education that underpin the humanistic tradition of European education over the last decades. In the report Delors' four pillars of education are learning to know, learning to do, learning to be, and learning to live together (Delors, J. 1996). The first two pillars are about academic and professional-skill learning, while it is the latter two pillars that are relevant to the important job of creating of positive learning environments and taking a humanistic approach to all aspects of education. Academic and professional-skills are only one half of the purpose of learning. Learning to be is about how to develop a personality and act with autonomy, judgment and personal responsibility and learning to live together is about developing an understanding of the interdependence of all people (Delors, J.

1996). The strategies that teachers in adult education centres' youth departments utilise to help pupils learn also strengthen the pupils learning to be and learning to live together.

2.1.3 The Role of Schools for Adolescent Refugees

Teachers have a mandate to educate and influence pupils using a framework produced by the education authorities (Department of Education. 2016. p.45, Samuelsen, J., Nilsen, Y., Dahl, N. 2016.). There are certain standards of attainment that pupils are expected to achieve. In Norway there is compulsory education up to 16. The final assessment results in a point score which is then used to compete for a place at an upper secondary school (Vilbli.no. 2019, Education Act. 2006. §4 and §6.). Young adult refugees entering the Norwegian education system between 16-20¹ are classed as adults. In larger cities there often are classes of young adult refugees physically located in a mainstream upper secondary school where they are educated in classes of migrants (almost entirely refugees) of a similar age and at a similar attainment level. They are technically part of the adult education centre but physically located in upper secondary schools. Their teachers have to follow the curriculum mandated to them but also create a healthy and nurturing learning environment. It is within a nurturing and healthy learning environment pupils can realise their potential for learning and development (Nordahl, T. 2010. p.81). The culture and social system that schools maintain takes on a different role when working with young refugees who, in addition to needing to get an education, need to be integrated into a new society.

School is an important arena for adolescent refugees. It's an arena for learning and development as well as a space where they get to interact with peers (Pastoor, L. 2012). School routines and boundaries give the young refugees a much needed sense of security in a foreign environment. As Berg also mentions that a sense of trust and security is paramount in her chapter 'from a life in stasis to being settled in a municipality'² (Berg. 2012). School is an important area where young refugees can gain vital language and academic skills but, just as importantly it provides them with opportunities to gain social skills (Pastoor, L. 2012). Lessons in maths or Norwegian don't just give knowledge in the subject but also give the pupils an experience of who they are and what they can achieve. A pupil who leaves school with self belief, the feeling that they can achieve something and

¹ This study focuses on adult adult refugees aged 16-24. However these young people will normally have entered the education system between the ages of 16 to 20 and thus are expected to finish their accelerated, basic education by 24. 24 is the cut off age for young adults - both Norwegians and immigrants to Norway - to qualify for *ungdomsrett*, the right to a place at an upper secondary school.

² Norwegian title 'fra et liv på vent til bosetting i kommunene'.

that they're popular will be better prepared to face the world than one who leaves school feeling worthless and without a positive connection to their peers (Nordahl, T. 2010.p.84). Schools encourage adaptation, the absorption of knowledge and the influencing of pupils, while at the same time they try to give pupils the opportunity for self realisation and actualisation. This duo of adaptation and self realisation has consequences for pupils identity (Nordahl, T. 2010. p.83).

There are three transitional processes that schools play an especially large role in for young refugees. They play a central role in the socialisation process, an integrational process, and a healing and recovery process (Pastoor, L. 2012). Developing from a child to an adult is a socialisation process where young people need to acquire the knowledge and skills to become active members of society. Socialisation is the process where members of a society learn its rules, norms and values. Primary socialisation is where children learn the basics of socialising and how their society functions. This normally happens at home. Secondary socialisation takes place outside the home, mostly at school and within social circles (Minuchin, P.P., & Shapiro, E.K. 1983). Schools play a large role in children's and young people's secondary socialisation nowadays. Education and knowledge play large roles in creating competent and active members of society. For young refugees the secondary socialisation that takes place in Norwegian schools with their emphasis on knowledge and the skills needed for a life in modern Norwegian society there is a disconnect between the adolescents' primary socialising which they had in their homelands and the secondary socialisation here (Pastoor, L. 2012).

The integrational process that takes place is where young adult refugees need to absorb the social codes that govern Norwegian society. They need to learn what is expected of them and how to behave. As discussed previously the skills that are required to survive and thrive in Norway are very different to the ones needed in the refugees homelands. Schools play a central part in young refugees conforming to Norwegian society through academic and social inclusion in class and school communities (Pastoor, L. 2012). Through meaningful social interactions with key adults and other young people the young refugees are given the opportunity to develop social and cultural skills which help them acclimatise to the school community and Norwegian society (Pastoor, L. 2012). We learn constantly and in all situations, positive or negative. Learning and developing into an active and responsible citizen is however easier when learning environments allow for attention and playful focus of complex tasks (Johnsen, B. 2005.). One of the fundamental tasks of a teacher must be to create a positive socio-emotional atmosphere in the classroom (Johnsen,B. 2005.).

School means just as much to the young adolescents' social development as to their psychosocial adjustment. With a past dominated by uncertainty, unrest and conflict the stability that schools offer help normalise life for young refugees (Pastoor, L. 2012). Fleeing a country at a young age will have involved experiencing potentially traumatic experiences meaning that a healing and recovery process will have to be undertaken. This involves building up a meaningful and fulfilling life in Norway (Pastoor, L. 2012). A well structured school day and a healthy and positive learning environment can give young refugees believe in themselves and future hope (Pastoor, L. 2012). This study is concerned with looking at what strategies teachers use to achieve this.

2.1.4 Schools as Salutogenic Arenas

A good inclusive learning environment contributes to positive development (Nordahl, T. 2010. p.115). A good learning environment contributes to good academic achievement and good social competence as well as motivated and well functioning pupils who contribute to maintaining a good learning environment (Nordahl, T. 2010. p.115). A large meta-analysis carried out by Dansk Clearinghouse for Uddannelsesforskning (Nordenbo mfl. 2008) shows that there are three elements that have an effect on learning. They are: that the teacher has a social relationship to each individual pupil, the teacher has the competence to lead the class and uphold order, and that the teacher has a good knowledge of their subject didactics (Nordenbo mfl. 2008). Good learning environments don't just forward health, happiness and positive social development, they also contribute to educational attainment (Nordahl, T. 2010. p.117). This study is focusing on how teachers describe a positive class environment and the factors and strategies they report.

Adolescents refugees' memories and experiences of potentially traumatic events can have consequences for their mental health and how well they function at school - both academically and socially (Pastoor, L. 2012). In order to succeed in school adolescent refugees need extra help. In order for the school to fulfill its multifaceted role for the lives of these pupils the school's programmes must be designed with them in mind. This study is only looking at what individual teachers describe and the strategies they use to create positive and healthy learning environments so the wider programmes implemented in schools won't be discussed however it's important to acknowledge the important role that schools as institutions play. Schools are more than just a place to learn. They are also a central socialising and integration arena. Pastoor calls this the school's central salutogenic role (Pastoor, L. 2012). Life as a young refugee is difficult, they have to work

though and process traumatic experiences as well as learning new social codes all while still being normal teenagers who can't stop their own physical and mental development from child to adult (Pastoor, L. 2012). Schools have a central role in helping all teenagers transition to adults but this role, and the role of teachers, are especially important when these teenagers are refugees dealing with all the added mental load fleeing your homeland brings.

Schools are a salutogenic arena³ which helps mental health healing and well being (Pastoor, L. 2012). This means that young people experience a sense of coherence and that life has meaning. To increase understanding of one's experience helps predictability and manageability which helps mental health and well being. In a salutogenic approach one works with the young adult refugees to organise healthy environment which can contribute to give meaning and a sense of belonging in their new environments (Pastoor, L. 2012). Almqvist and Broberg's study in Sweden showed that for young refugees their current situation in their host country played as big a role as their exposure to war and other potentially traumatic events in their homelands did (Almqvist, K. and Broberg, A. 1999). School plays a big role in this work to provide a positive and inclusive environment for learning and development (Pastoor, L. 2012). Some young refugees need extra help but, for many the developmentally supportive measures and initiatives by schools and their teachers as well as good relationships with their peers will reduce their vulnerability and help prevent mental health and behavioural problems (Pastoor, L. 2012). As discussed in the introduction to this thesis in the section 'Background' reports and studies have found that as many as 50% of young refugees would qualify for extra psychological support but many fewer actually receive any extra support.

Teachers focus on young refugees current situations and ability to learn but they need to also consider what their pupils have previously experienced and their need for sociocultural adaptation (Pastoor, L. 2012). This means that pupils with emotional problems and learning difficulties are more likely to succeed at school when they feel that teachers care about them and respect them (Noam, G. and Fiore, N. 2004). Positive relationships with teachers and classmates give pupils a feeling of belonging and help build an integrated sense of identity as well as to acquire the necessary social and cultural skills needed (Pastoor, L. 2012). All this shows what an important salutogenic role schools have. Article 39 of the UN's Convention on Children's rights (UNICEF. 1989) which Norway

³ Salutogenesis and the salutogenic model are terms first coined by sociologist Aaron Antonovsky. The term is used to discuss factors which increase health and wellbeing. Antonovsky's book *Health, Stress and Coping* (Antonovsky, A. 1979.) was the first use of the term and presentation of the model.

fully ratified on the 16th of November 1990 is the article of the UN's Convention on Children's rights that states that Norway must "take all appropriate measures to promote physical and psychological recovery and social reintegration of a child victim of [...] torture [...] or armed conflicts. Such recovery and reintegration shall take place in an environment which fosters the health, self-respect and dignity of the child" (UNICEF. 1989).

2.2 Challenges experienced by young adult refugees

Among young refugees are those who have witnessed and been victim to serious attacks and abuse. Many have been on the run from their homelands for years and lived in difficult conditions. Living under these conditions increases the risk of developing Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) (Berg, B. 2012). Not all unaccompanied minors and other adolescent refugees are traumatised but they have an increased risk of developing psychological conditions (Berg, B. 2012).

On arrival to Norway and when they are resettled these youths meet a society unlike anything they knew before. As younger children many had to fight for survival. In Norway survival and success are based on completely different factors (Berg, B. 2012).

Establishing trust with carers is central for the success of these young adults (Berg, B. 2012). Trust first requires mutual acknowledgement and respect which in turn is based on having a firm, grounded relationship. Establishing this relationship takes time. The adolescents need to be seen as individuals despite their similar backgrounds (Berg, B. 2012). What is then needed to help adolescent refugees? Berg gives a few key words; trust, recognition, acknowledgment, respect and care. These young people who have experienced so much insecurity need to be in a situation that gives them the feeling of security (Berg, B. 2012). Teachers are just some of the adults young refugees meet regularly in addition to social workers, adults from group homes and from other official institutions. Teachers' task are traditionally focused on the academic and in ensuring that their pupils learn that which the government deems necessary for adult life and to be an active member of society (Berg, B. 2012) a focus on establishing trust and respect however is also central to the well being and future success of the young refugees and needs to be focus area for teachers.

2.2.1 Trauma

Words such as trauma, crisis and catastrophe have become part of our everyday language, without us always being aware of what such words mean. Most associate these words with sudden adjustments, dramatic events and psychological stresses (Dyregrov, 2010). Leonore Terr splits

trauma into two types (Terr, 1991). One type; type 1 trauma, includes single events such as an accident, a sudden dramatic death, violence, rape, or another dramatic single event. The other type of trauma she has called type 2 trauma, which includes situations where people experience a series of traumatic events such as. sexual abuse, abuse or war (Terr, 1991).

Type 1 trauma is mainly related to a crisis situation, an important clarification is that a crisis situation is not necessarily a traumatic situation. What determines whether an event is traumatic depends on several factors. A potentially traumatic event experienced with parents who remain calm may become stressful, but not traumatic. The same experience without parents present can be very traumatic. Other factors such as the child's developmental level, past history and congenital resilience also affect whether a potentially traumatic event is traumatising (Dyregrov, 2010).

Type 2 traumas are characterised by repeated traumas over a period of time. It is about trauma where children are exposed to abusive or frightening experiences or where their central needs are not met (Dyregrov, 2010). A subsection of type 2 traumas is complex trauma that Jørgensen and Steinkoft talk about in their article "Trauma informed care" (Jørgensen and Steinkoft, 2013). Complex trauma and developmental trauma is used when there is a persistent stress that has begun in early childhood. The frequency of traumatic episodes does not need to be high, but the definition implies that the child lives in a constant fear of new episodes of potentially traumatic experiences (Jørgensen and Steinkoft, 2013).

Trauma is a broad term that can be divided into several types and subtypes. This research is only concerned with the teachers of young adult refugees who have grown up in war zones and in politically and socially unstable countries. Although the pupils may be affected by different or multiple types of trauma, for the sake of relevance and brevity this text will only discuss the effects of complex trauma. This is the type of trauma most likely to have affected the young adult refugees who attend adult education youth departments. In his book *Children and Trauma, a handbook for parents and helpers*⁴, Atle Dyregrov explains more about type 1 trauma and discusses that help and support these children (Dyregrov, A. 2010). I recommend the book as a starting point for further reading on type 1 trauma.

⁴ Norwegian title *Barn og trauma: en håndbok for foreldre og hjelpere*.

2.2.2 The effects of complex trauma on children and adolescents

When we talk about how children and adolescents are affected by type 2 trauma as complex trauma, we also start talking about neurobiological conditions. The individual's brain has been altered by persistent trauma and that is why they are unable to handle feelings and emotions on a par with "normal" adolescents. The areas of the brain that are affected and altered by early persistent trauma load are many, including the attachment system, the alarm response and the crisis management systems, the emotional system, the memory, and the ability to reflect and understand themselves (Jørgensen and Steinkoft, 2013). The neurobiological effects that result from traumatic experiences lead to difficulties with impulse control, difficulties in controlling levels of participation and action, emotional regulation, and difficulties in understanding themselves and their own reactions (Nordanger, 2014). Teachers need to relate to how their pupils act and their presented behaviours.

Affect regulation is the ability to regulate one's own emotions, feelings and expressions (Siegel, 2012) it is also called emotional regulation. It is a learned ability that young children learn through observing their caregivers acting comfortingly, calmly and by reassuring young children in their emotional responses (Jørgensen and Steinkoft, 2013). Caregivers help co-regulate the feelings of young children. Children eventually need less help with co-regulation and can regulate their emotions themselves (Jørgensen and Steinkoft, 2013). Children who have experienced complex trauma early in life do not learn affective or emotional control in the same way as regular children. These children have little opportunity to regulate their own feelings (Jørgensen and Steinkoft, 2013). Behaviours such as agitation and anxiety, somatic ailments or extreme withdrawal are difficulties one can observe in adolescents (Jørgensen and Steinkoft, 2013). Many young refugees struggle especially with anxiety, nightmares, sleep problems, unrest and difficulty concentrating (Oppedal et al. 2008, 2009).

A term that is widely used when discussing affect regulation as a result of complex trauma is the window of tolerance. The window of tolerance is defined as the span of activation that is optimal for an individual (Nordanger, 2014). Everyone has different windows of tolerance and we can tolerate different amounts before we become hyper-aroused - which is marked by turmoil, impulsivity, aggression, or hypo-aroused - which is marked by numbness, paralysis, and stagnation (Nordanger, 2014). Young people affected by complex trauma have a narrower than usual window of tolerance (Nordanger, 2014).

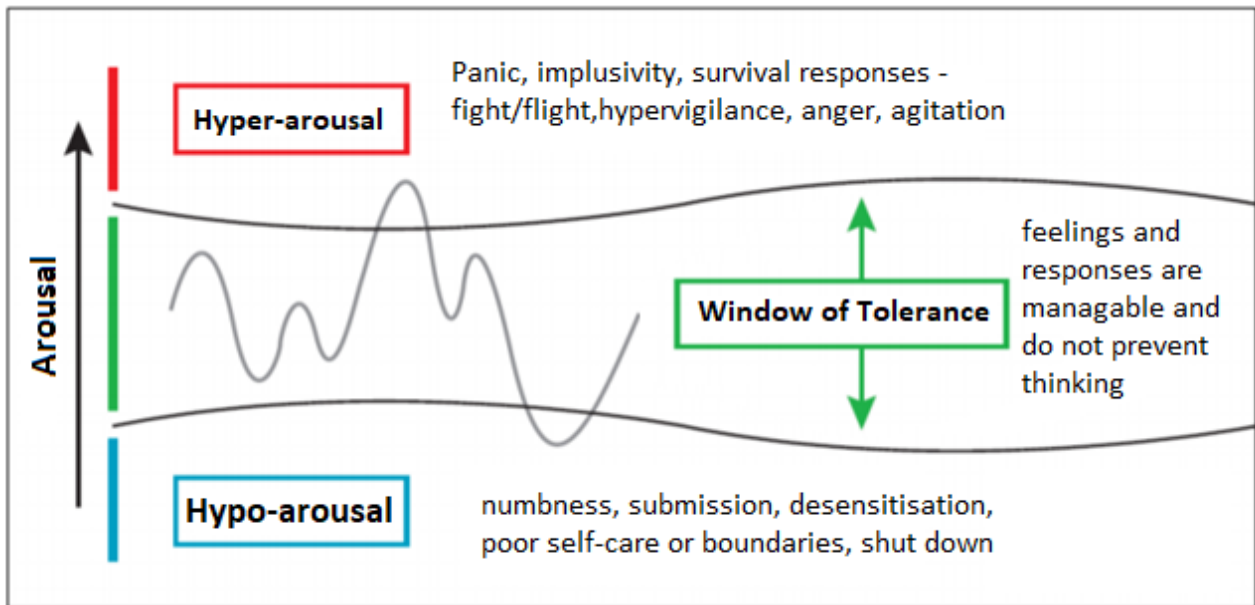


Figure 1: The Window of Tolerance adapted and translated from Nordanger 2014

Figure 1 illustrates what happens when a person falls outside their window of tolerance. Within the window of tolerance is optimal arousal zone, the individual manages to recover by reacting with reason and as expected of those around them. However, when a young person experiences feelings and emotions that they don't have ways to handle, they become hyper- or hypo-aroused.

The symptoms of complex trauma lead to challenging social and academic problems in school (Eide, K. 2012). There may be a tendency for teachers to take an attitude driven by positivism and reduce the child's specific symptoms to the problem. The problem is then reduced to behavioral problems where the goal is the reduction of the behavioral problems (Jørgensen and Steinkoft, 2013). Teachers and special needs educators must understand the pupil's inner world and the mechanism they have designed to regulate difficult emotions, anger, horror, and painful memories (Jørgensen and Steinkoft, 2013). The goal of educators working with complex trauma in pupils is to help them deal more appropriately with their inner pain. Behavioural problems will be reduced by addressing the traumas and challenges behind the stressed and over-worked emotional system (Nordanger, 2014).

2.3 Trauma Informed Care

Trauma informed care is a framework for understanding trauma and some methods and interventions that are based on the framework (Jørgensen and Steinkoft, 2013). Complex traumas

are, by definition complex, they take time to develop and they take a long time to heal from (Bath, 2008). As discussed in the background to this project a high percentage of young adult refugees are traumatised enough to require clinical care and yet few get the support they need. Bath puts forward the idea that non-clinicians, teachers and carers, can help traumatised individuals on the road to recovery and better emotional regulation with the help of the trauma informed care (Bath, 2008). Jørgensen and Steinkoft distinguish between the principles that constitute the framework of understanding and methods that can be used by educators and caregivers to help developmental traumatised youth (Jørgensen and Steinkoft, 2013). Jørgensen and Steinkoft emphasise that the teachers and caregivers are dependent on knowledge and understanding in order to be able to meet these young people in a constructive manner (Jørgensen and Steinkoft, 2013). In trauma informed care, understanding and attitude are the most important elements and they place less emphasis on specific methods than other approaches to trauma (Jørgensen and Steinkoft, 2013). Trauma informed care has a lot of focus on the adult's ability to see behind actions and unwanted behaviour (Jørgensen and Steinkoft, 2013).

The three basic principles of trauma informed care are safety, relationships, and emotional regulation (Bath calls this principle 'coping') (Bath, 2008., Jørgensen and Steinkoft, 2013). Safety is the first principle in the framework. Traumatised adolescents have a hypersensitive nervous system and a narrower window of tolerance (Siegel, 2012., Nordanger, 2014). When the adolescent leaves his or her window of tolerance, they become hyper- or hypo-aroused (see figure 1, page 14). In such conditions, it becomes difficult for the individual to learn new behavior patterns and it leaves little room for development. Outside their window of tolerance, the young person's behaviour is perceived as incomprehensible or unreasonable (Bath 2008, Perry, 2006, in Jørgensen and Steinkoft, 2013). Challenging behaviours can cause the adults around the child to react with controlling and punitive reactions which in turn can create an unsafe environment for the traumatised adolescent (Anglin, 2002).

Relationships, or connections, is the second principle of trauma informed care. Here having and building a connection is a central concept (Bath, 2008). It is important that educators, who work to try to help the child, be respectful, appreciative and sensitive to the young person. Here again it is important to be able to reflect over our reactions (Jørgensen and Steinkoft, 2013). It is more difficult to build relationships with people who exhibit challenging behaviour and this is especially true if these youth are used to connecting adults with negative emotions. When the adolescent meets us

with anger, it is natural reflex to be angry back (Jørgensen and Steinkoft, 2013). It is this impulse reaction that educators must take care to avoid. Every good meeting between a pupil and teacher can be a positive development for the child's attachment system (Jørgensen and Steinkoft, 2013).

In the section on the effects of complex trauma on children and adolescents, affect regulation is discussed. Understanding of this learned ability and the fact that developmental traumatised adolescents can't regulate themselves as much as their peers is central to trauma informed care (Bath, 2008). Educators must understand that children and adolescents with complex trauma have not learned how to take control of their emotions and get themselves back into their optimal window of tolerance. Therefore they display challenging behaviours. A central task for teachers in trauma informed care is to help co-regulate difficult emotions with pupils so that their windows of tolerance gradually become wider and they learn ways to handle their feelings. It is important for teachers to be able to anticipate potential crisis points and give the adolescent a language to express their feelings. Teachers in their training have learned about Vygotskij's proximal zone of development, which is a theory that states that children learn more from fellow students and teachers who know more than them (Vygotsky, 1982). Here trauma informed care uses the same principles with the teacher as scaffolding to expand the pupil's emotional understanding which leads to better affect regulation. It is a key task for the teachers and caregivers to keep the pupil within their window of tolerance. It is only when the pupil is in this optimal activation zone that learning and development can take place (Jørgensen and Steinkoft, 2013).

Co-regulation is one of the key methods used in trauma informed care. Co-regulation means that the adult is a regulator of the difficult, unwieldy feelings the child experiences until they are able to regulate themselves (Jørgensen and Steinkoft, 2013). When a child or young person is exhibiting signs of being hyper- or hypo-aroused they are really expressing a feeling that they are unable to handle (Jørgensen and Steinkoft, 2013). It is important that the teacher meets and responds to the feelings and not the behaviour; they must help the pupil to cope with their emotions (Bath, 2008). Trauma informed care doesn't have to be able major interventions. Every meeting between a teacher and a pupil can slowly but surely help the child learn to regulate his or her own feelings (Jørgensen and Steinkoft, 2013).

3.0 Method

Here the structure of the research study will be discussed and the chosen method will be explained. The way the research was carried out, how the participants were recruited and the practicalities of the analysis process will be presented. The validity, reliability and generalisability of the study will also be presented. The ethical implications of the study will be reflected upon.

3.1 Taking a qualitative approach

Qualitative research is how a researcher collects information about the world and interprets what they learn to help make sense of phenomena as people live them. Qualitative research makes the world visible and transforms it (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005. p.3). The project proposed here is looking at how teachers describe creating and maintaining a nurturing and healthy learning environment for pupils. The project wants to look at nurturing and healthy learning environments. Interviewing teachers about their experiences of teaching young adult refugees will give the researcher data that they will then be able to interpret to make sense of this phenomenon. Thus, the proposed study is best suited to a qualitative approach with interviews as the main data collection method.

3.2 Research Design - A Phenomenological Design

A phenomenological research project looks into the lived reality of several people who experience the same phenomenon (Creswell, 2007. p.58). The central aim of a phenomenological study is to distill the essence of the phenomenon from descriptions given during the data collection phase (Creswell, 2007. p.58). For this project, the phenomenon being investigated is the creating of nurturing and healthy learning environments for young adult refugees who exhibit symptoms of trauma. The population being interviewed for their experiences of this is teachers working in adult education centres with young adult refugees.

There are two main types of phenomenological studies; hermeneutical phenomenology and transcendental phenomenology (Creswell, 2007, Moustakas, 1994, Van Manen, 1999). Hermeneutical phenomenology is where the researcher is interested in researching the texts of life and the lived experiences (Creswell, 2007). Transcendental phenomenology is a methodology where the researcher brackets their own experiences off and aims to get a fresh perspective on the phenomenon (Creswell, 2007). Through analysing data collected from individuals who have experienced the phenomenon, important statements about the phenomenon can be concentrated

down to the essence of the experience (Creswell, 2007). Transcendental phenomenology has a relatively set analytic style. I feel that this style is the one that best suits the project. Transcendental phenomenally also has a strong tradition within educational research, which increases its appeal to the novice educational researcher such as myself. This study has chosen to use a method design inspired by phenomenology, and specifically by transcendental phenomenology.

3.2.1 Transcendental Phenomenology

Moustaka describes the relatively rigid procedures that act as guidelines when conducting transcendental phenomenology (Moustaka, 1994). The project used these guidelines to help give it structure and to increase the quality of the study. Creswell says that the types of research problems best suited to phenomenology are ones where it is important to understand multiple individuals' shared experience of a phenomenon to develop a deeper understanding about the features of the phenomenon (Creswell, 2007. p.60). In this research project I have interviewed teachers (individuals) who work with young adult refugees at adult education centres (the shared experience) about how they describe nurturing and healthy environments for young adult refugees (the phenomenon). Therefore, the project was justified to use a design inspired by transcendental phenomenology.

Once phenomenology had been selected as a design the first step for the researcher was to fully dissect their own experience and how they have been influenced by the phenomenon in this and other contexts. This is called *bracketing* and is a central part of conducting a phenomenological study method.

3.3 Research Methods

3.3.1 Bracketing

Bracketing, or *Epoche* as Moustakas refers to it, is the process by which the researcher brackets off their prior experiences (Creswell, 2007). Moustakas explains that the researcher needs to put aside their prejudgments, biases and preconceived ideas about the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994. p.85). In order to be ready to absorb new knowledge and study the phenomenon, the researcher needs to be free of presuppositions and open to the phenomenon as it presents itself (Moustakas, 1994. p.86). Bracketing challenges us to learn new information and develop new understandings. It is central to the phenomenological method as it is a method that bases itself entirely on how

individuals experience a phenomenon (Creswell, 2007. Moustakas, 1994). The process was especially important to this study, as it is born out of my experience teaching within the phenomenon itself. It was difficult to completely put aside my feelings and views, but writing a statement of preconceptions to help explore my presuppositions I was able to suspend my understanding of the phenomenon in such a way that it allowed for curiosity to be cultivated (LeVasseur, 2003). LeVasseur in his article “The problem with bracketing in phenomenology” suggests that the aim of bracketing is to allow for an enhanced focus to help extract the essence. It does not have to be a complete suspension of all prior knowledge, but rather a way to compartmentalise the knowledge of the phenomenon already known enough to allow for a new and keener curiosity to be awaked (LeVasseur, 2003). My statement of preconceptions forced me to check my prior knowledge and helped me start thinking about the essences of the phenomenon.

3.3.2 Semi-structured Interviews

Data collection in phenomenological studies is usually done through in-depth interviews and this was the route that this study took too. The individuals being interviewed need to be asked broad, open ended questions that allow the researcher to collect as much information about the lived experience as possible (Creswell, 2007). Moustakas states that the two most important questions “what have you experienced in terms of the phenomenon?” and “what contexts or experiences have influenced or affected your experience of the phenomenon?” (Moustakas, 1994). In this study the questions asked were “how do you create a nurturing and healthy learning environment for young adult refugees?” and “how have the symptoms of trauma that your pupils exhibit influenced the way you strive to create a nurturing and healthy learning environment?”. The interview guide with the interview themes and initial question pathways is attached as Appendix II.

3.4 Participants and Participant Recruitment

The research aim already defines a very specific participant, the project aimed to interview teachers who work in adult education with young adult refugees. This meant that the population from which to recruit participants was small. There are a significant number of young adult refugees receiving education in Norway, but not all of them get that education in specialist departments. These departments are mainly only found in the main cities. Initially, I considered interviewing teachers from my own workplace. However, despite this being at first glance a good idea, it would ultimately have weakened the study. It would have made bracketing my experiences harder and there could be concerns about how genuine and open the interviewees would be talking to a colleague. The

study is stronger for having had interviewees who were not known to the interviewer, but finding them became harder. I used contacts from my own workplace to gain an introduction to another department in a different city in Norway. This youth department welcomed me into their school and over the course of two days five interviews were carried out. In this study all the teachers interviewed worked exclusively with pupils who had been resettled in Norway after they have turned 16 and are educated as adults. All the teachers interviewed in this study work in a school unit that is set up similarly to the one I have worked in.

3.5 Data Collection - semi-structured interviews

There were a few practical things to remember when organising semi-structured interviews. I needed to ensure all of these to allow for a smooth collection of valid data. The interviews were recorded and then subsequently transcribed. This allowed the interviews to progress without having to stop and start to make notes and allowed the interviewer to fully engage with the subject in a natural way (Adams, 2014; King and Horrocks, 2010; Yin, 2011). Enough time was needed for the interviews. The time frame normally varies, but most authorities suggest allowing up to an hour for each interview (Adams, 2014; King and Horrocks, 2010). For these interviews the interviews all lasted around 30mins, less than some experts suggest but given the scope of the study and number of interviewees this was a more than adequate amount of time to gather enough data. These practical considerations were clearly conveyed to the possible participants in an info-sheet given out before the interviews, this helped lay the groundwork for a positive interview experience. The info-sheet and consent form are attached as Appendix III.

The interviews had a semi-structured form. Most of the questions asked were be open ended with follow up questions asked (Adams, 2014). There were set themes that will be discussed but not a rigid protocol to follow (Adams, 2014). The questions, themes and example follow up questions for this project are set out in the interview guide (Appendix II). The interview guide gave an outline of planned topics and questions to be discussed (Adams, 2014), it was used by the interviewer but in each interview a different series of questions was asked based on the flow of the interview and the rapport. There needed to be a rapport in the interview, but a neutral superficial one. Successful rapport is one of the most important ingredients in a good qualitative interview (Kings and Horrocks, 2010). Rapport is about trust and hard to artificially create. Good interview prep on the part of the researcher was one way in ensuring the interviews began positively and then the social skills of the interviewer had to take over (King and Horrocks, 2010). My background as a teacher who is

experienced with building interpersonal relationships helped build genuine rapport with the interviewees. To collect authentic data, it was important that the interviewer didn't direct the interviewee. To gain as much information as possible, the interviewees needed to be able to follow their own train of thoughts and their unique experience of the phenomenon (Josselson, 2013; Yin, 2011). In this study this was especially important to remember and avoid as the I have the same professional background and was interested in the topic being discussed by the interviewees. This was where bracketing played an important role as well to ensure neutrality, I kept myself in check and managed to maintain a neutral tone during the interviews and to remember that as the interviewer I did not know as much as the interviewee about their reality teaching young adult refugees in youth classes. Bracketing helped attain my goal of superficial but successful rapport rather than a lively discussion between equals.

3.6 Data Analysis

After the interviews were carried out, the data analysis began. The transcripts needed to be read through a few times to properly gain a feeling of the interview before the significant statements could be highlighted, this gives the researcher a sense of how the interviewees experience the phenomenon (Creswell, 2007). This is called horizontalization (Moustakas, 1994). The process of transcription also gave the researcher a new sense of the interview and what important themes had been discussed. Next, from these significant statements the researcher can begin to draw out themes mentioned into clusters of meanings (Moustakas, 1994). The transcripts revealed ways that the teachers created nurturing and healthy classrooms as well as other themes they thought it was important to discuss. As the significant statements from each teacher were selected, common themes began to emerge. These themes, or clusters of meanings, formed the basis of the textual description of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). Once the textual and structural descriptions had been written, the essence of the phenomenon - the most important factors they are involved in creating nurturing and healthy learning environments - was extracted and presented (Moustakas, 1994). This final presentation was the exhaustive description of the phenomenon written up further along in this text in section 4 'Results'. An illustration of the coding process is attached as Appendix IV.

Constant comparison analysis is a system of analysis most associated with grounded theory (Lewis-Beck, et al., 2004), but one that this study utilised elements of. It is a systemising analytical method of categorising data and useful for defining categories and finding their limits (Boeije, 2002). Since

this was a study of only a few individuals, not all the steps set out by Boeije were used, steps involving comparison of different sets of interview data will have to wait for a later project (Boeije, 2002). However, the initial steps were useful in establishing significant statements within a single interview and between the interviews. The first level of comparison is internal in individual interviews, where the interview were read and roughly coded to look for broad categories (Boeije, 2002). Here initial significant statements were selected. Once the interviews were open coded the comparison between interviews began. This is axial coding where significant statements and initial codes can be conceptualised and all relevant themes can be collected (Boeije, 2002). These steps allowed for thorough analysis and for the overall essence of a nurturing and healthy learning environments for young adult refugees in the adult education system to be defined.

3.7 Ethical Reflections

When carrying out interviews and the subsequent analysis that followed, I needed to ensure that I held myself to account and was committed to not plagiarising work from others or falsifying data. Reading Pimple's book *Research Ethics* (Pimple, 2008) has taught me that the having a firm ethical base for the study and committing to good ethical practices will have increased the study's validity. I didn't set out to deceive, but I needed to constantly be checking my research to make sure that I didn't inadvertently alter the data to better fit my desired results or plagiarise from another researcher.

There are a few other important ethical issues I needed to consider carefully. As well as reading Pimple's book *Research Ethics* (Pimple, 2008) the The National Committee for Research Ethics in the Social Sciences and the Humanities' (NESH) guidelines for Research Ethics in the Social Sciences, Humanities, Law and Theology (NESH, 2016) contributed to ensuring that all ethical issues were considered. The group that I have written about is made up of young adult refugees. Even though I interviewed teachers who have the capacity to fully consent to being interviewed, I had to be especially careful about anonymising any students mentioned. The group of teachers and pupils is small and the pupils are very vulnerable. I have anonymised all people referenced in the thesis including the teachers. I have also been careful not to inadvertently give clues about the location of the school. The project applied to the Norwegian Centre of Research Data for permission to carry out the project and this process required compliance with a set of rules about proper data handling to ensure full anonymity. The study was approved and the interviews were carried out within accordance to the Norwegian Centre of Research Data's rules. These precautions were made to

protect the anonymity of the teachers involved in this study. The approval from the Norwegian Centre of Research Data to carry out this study is attached as Appendix I.

3.8 Methodological Reflections

3.8.1 Delimitations

The delimitations of the study are the boundaries of the project (Lunenberg and Irby, 2008). The research aim outlines the delimitations of the study. The study looked into how teachers at adult education centres' young adult departments describe nurturing and healthy learning environments for pupils. The project was only concerned with a small, specific group of teachers working with a small, specific group of pupils. Having evaluated various methodological designs (see Methodological Design and Research Approach) it was decided that the study would be inspired by a transcendental phenomenological design. This is a master's thesis so the scope of the project is limited.

3.8.2 Strengths and Limitations

There are many limitations to this project. The biggest is that as a master's project, it is limited in time and scope - the entire project was carried out and written within a five month timeframe and there was only one person carrying out the research and writing it up. The project was limited to interviewing only a few teachers in only one school. This means that the study might be hard to replicate and that reduces the validity of the project. Although questions of validity often arise in qualitative studies (Creswell, 2007; Yin, 2011), so this is not by any stretch a unique limitation to this study. The population under study lends itself to another limitation. All the teachers interviewed have taken a similar path into teaching, there are only so many routes to qualifying in Norway. This means that despite small age, gender and ethnic disparities, the teaching population has a relatively similar professional foundation and they were all basing their teaching on the same curriculum. These are limitations that are hard to avoid, however they can also be seen as a strength, that the project is narrow and specific in scope makes it more manageable and means that the research done can be held to a higher standard. The narrow timeframe means that no substantial changes took place during the study and all the research was done under the same conditions.

The population of young adults being taught at the youth department were very diverse. An Afghani boy who escaped the Taliban and war-torn chaos of Afghanistan and arrived in Norway as an

unaccompanied minor has had a different life to an Eritrean girl fleeing the iron-fist of the Eritrean dictatorship. A Syrian youth arriving in Norway as a quota refugee with their family is another example of a pupil who would end up in the same classroom as the others but who has a totally different background. All these pupils have undergone different potentially traumatising events and will exhibit different behaviour. This is a limitation of the study because due to politics, the unpredictable nature of war and Norwegian Department of Immigration's refugee settling patterns, schools in Bergen have a different pupil make-up to schools in Oslo or Tromsø, and the make-up of the classes this year is different from the make-up of the classes in five years time. This limitation applies to many educational research projects, but is magnified in this project especially.

As the project took a phenomenological approach, it was only looking at one lived example of the phenomenon which in itself is a limitation that restricts the validity and replicability. A phenomenological approach requires the researcher to bracket themselves off from personal experience, this will have been very difficult for a novice researcher despite their best intentions. The data was collected through semi-structured interviews which allow for an open-ended discussion centred around the project's research themes (see Research Aim and Appendix I) and can be seen as a strength of the study as it allowed for the interviewees themselves to decide what they felt it was important to talk about.

3.8.3 Assumptions

A central assumption in the project is that the teachers interviewed want to create a nurturing and healthy learning environment. We need to assume that the teachers who have chosen to work specifically with young adult refugees have their best interests at heart and attempt to implement strategies to help create a better learning environment. That the young adult refugees exhibit various symptoms of trauma and need thus are in great need of a special nurturing and healthy learning environment is another assumption that must be taken. It has previously been discussed that it is a limitation of the study that the population of young adult refugees changes. However, it must be assumed that all refugees experience potentially traumatising events and therefore are likely to exhibit symptoms of trauma. Findings from Pastoor and Eide back this claim up (Eide, 2012; Pastoor, 2016). We can also assume the teachers interviewed told the truth and spoke openly and honestly in the interviews. Anonymising their responses in the finished report increases the amount of weight we can give this assumption.

3.8.4 Role of the Researcher

As the researcher the findings of the report will have been filtered through my own lens and worldview. As discussed in Methodological Approach the background of the researcher plays a central role in the finished product. It is important to be aware of this impact that the researcher has. As a transcendental phenomenological project the process of bracketing has helped limit the impact that the assumptions of the researcher had on the validity of the research. Bracketing and my commitment to it were discussed in the section 'Bracketing'.

3.8.5 Validity

A valid study is one that has properly collected and interpreted its data, so that the conclusions accurately reflect and represent the real world that was studied (Yin, 2011). It is important for the study's future use and contribution to the academic field that the study addresses its validity and takes steps to ensure validity and transferability. Phenomenology with its focus on bracketing the researchers prior knowledge and emphasis on finding the essence of the lived experience can be difficult to transfer to future studies. Creswell suggests that a thick description is needed to give the study transferability (Creswell, 2007). This project has endeavored to give thick and meaningful descriptions of the teachers descriptions in the textual and setting descriptions to allow to transferability and relative validity where possible.

For a phenomenological study to be valid, it has to be strongly grounded in the philosophy of phenomenology and in the phenomenon being studied (Creswell, 2007). This project has a clear and defined phenomenon to study, which gives it a firm and valid base on which to build. The philosophical basis of phenomenology has also been addressed and this contributes to the study's validity. A thorough discussion of the delimitations, limitations and assumptions helps readers draw their own conclusions about the validity of the study and how it can be used in future (Maxwell, 2012).

3.8.6 Reliability

Reliability the standard by which we can evaluate that the study was true account of the phenomenon being studied (Creswell, 2007). There are several ways in which the reliability of this study has been ensured. Firstly, there are good and detailed notes from the interviews. The interviews were recorded and then during the transcriptions there was close attention paid to the words, pauses and overlaps which might alter the meaning of the words spoken. The interviews

were carried out in Norwegian but the final report has been written in English. As a native English speaker and fluent Norwegian speaker I have translated the results myself.

As noted in the reflections on validity thick textual descriptions added to the transferability of a study. They also added to the reliability of it. Applying the rigorous analysis process prescribed by the phenomenological method, as discussed in the section 'Transcendental Phenomenology', also helped to increase the reliability of the project.

3.8.7 Generalisability

Generalisability, or external validity, is how applicable the results of the study are to other groups and settings (Lunenberg and Irby, 2012). Given that phenomenological studies look at one small group of individuals experiencing one specific phenomenon, it is hard to say that the essence of this phenomenon will be the same as another similar phenomenon. That said, if enough studies were done into the ways of creating nurturing and healthy learning environments for young adult refugees, then it would be possible to use study as part of a meta-analysis. Part of the analysis could also be used for further constant comparative analysis if further studies were carried out.

4.0 Results

Here are the results from the semi-structured interviews. The interviews were transcribed and then the essences were distilled down from the transcripts and initial coding process. The results here are grouped into four essences were distilled from the results; relationships and how to work with them, trauma and the effects of being a young refugee on schooling, teacher strategies to combat these effects, and the teachers efforts to buffer the systematic challenges of being a young refugee. In these results an overview of the combination classes will be presented before each of the essences will be presented in more detail. Quotes from the interviewed teachers are used to illustrate the descriptions they gave. The interviews were carried out in Norwegian and translated by me, a native English speaker. All the headings in this section are quotes from the teachers interviewed.

4.1 A picture of youth adult education classes at an upper secondary school

The youth department that was visited was a department situated in an upper secondary school in the south of Norway. This department took all newly arrived immigrants to the local area who had completed a Norwegian course of 13 weeks and who were between the ages of 16 and 20. Nearly all the pupils were refugees at the time of the study in March 2019 and the teachers reported that this is generally true of the department over time.

The department runs a two year programme with two classes in each year, so a total of four classes. They teach a reduced curriculum of five subjects; Norwegian, Mathematics, Social Studies, English and Science. The first year of the programme is roughly at the primary school level and the second year was the equivalent of lower secondary school. As well as the basic subjects the department ran, often together with the main upper secondary school, a number of courses and workshops designed to help the pupils thrive.

The five interviewees consisted of four female teachers and one male teacher. For the purposes of anonymising the interviewees' genders they/their will be used as a singular, unisex pronoun throughout the results. All the teachers had taught for at least five years. They had a variety of backgrounds from primary school, upper secondary school, and adult education. One had spent their entire teaching career working in this department.

The department is relatively self contained although they use the same classrooms and common spaces - the gym, canteen, and locker areas - as the rest of the upper secondary school. During break times it was observed that the pupils mostly socialised in groups from within the youth department.

The pupils have a wide variety of backgrounds and most, but not all, were refugees. The largest groups reflect the wider refugee community in Norway with the three main groups coming from Eritrea, Syria and Afghanistan. There are also significant groups who have Kurdish and Somali backgrounds as well as individuals from other African and Asian countries. It was noted by one teacher that for the first time in a few years they had three pupils who were each the only speakers of their mother tongue in the class. This was remarked upon in regard to Norwegian language learning and was seen as making some elements of group work and adapted education more challenging.

4.2 We all have different ways to build a positive relationship

Relationships were a topic that came up again and again when discussing healthy and nurturing learning environments and the youth classes. The range of relationships was from the one-on-one relationship either between a teacher and the pupil or between two pupils, to group relationships between the pupils in a class or the department.

4.2.1 We show them it's our goal that they succeed

The importance of a good teacher-pupil relationship is something that the teachers express that they work on throughout the whole day. "We notice each pupil and shake their hands when they enter the class". The teachers have regular meetings with their pupils, as one teacher said "there are some pupils who try to fly under the radar and we need to notice them and make sure we regularly check in with them and have a chat". There are many ways to create good relationships, one of the teachers points out that "we all have different ways to build a positive relationship". The teachers reported that there are many different types of pupils and the degree to which they are open to building a relationship with their teachers varies too.

The teachers said that they have a more personal relationship than would be typical in a Norwegian teacher-pupil relationship. A teacher remarked that the pupils need more practical support than Norwegian pupils, one said that that means that "it's easier to have a good relationship with our pupils as you get a lot closer to them than Norwegian pupils and you bond with them more easily".

They use the example of having to ring a pupil's child's nursery as an example of how and why relationships quickly develop. If a pupil isn't at school the teachers reported that they would sometimes ring them to try and get them to come to school. The teacher reported that this "signalise[s] that our goal is that they succeed in school and in life. This is my job". The teachers expressed that they hoped that by building this relationship the pupils felt more motivated to come to school. Teachers talked about how they realise the importance of building a good relationship. One gives the example of a pupil they taught both last year and this year. They reported that they experienced the pupil as very difficult at first, but once they had build up a relationship he was completely different. "Underneath it all he was just unsure of himself, he didn't understand or know what he was meant to do...which resulted in him appearing angry". Once a good relationship had been established the teacher reported that once they had built up a relationship they saw that the pupil was just frustrated rather than angry. They concluded by saying "everything is about creating good relationships and building on them".

The interviewees brought up how important it was that the pupils felt they could talk to the teachers about anything. As one put it "we follow the pupils' discussions and if we hear any extreme views we question them". The teacher explains that when a pupil says something startling they follow the pupil up. "We need to talk to the pupil after such instances we can't just let it be". Another teacher says that "we have to discuss the difficult topics and how life is difficult".

Relationships between teachers and pupils can be difficult to establish some teachers reported. One teacher said "I think it's important to be kind and polite and signal that I treat them with respect, but I find it very difficult when I have to explain things many times and need to use very childish language with nearly adult pupils".

Occasionally the teachers questioned whether the pupils needed as good of a relationship with them as the teachers believed. One teacher remarked that, while they have fewer pupils than the mainstream schools, and they work very hard on building good relationships, the teachers possibly overestimate their own importance. They said: "I think we overestimate our own importance in reality, but we care more about our pupils because they go home to their group homes where the staff are paid to work with them". The teachers know that they are paid to work with the pupils too, but as one notes "I am more aware about how to build a good, healthy relationship and we need the pupils to know that we are there for them".

A couple of the teachers interviewed talked about the importance of boundaries in their relationships with the pupils. One says that they mostly try to keep school as school; "we don't talk about problems daily". One teacher reported that they "decided early on not to get too involved", they chose instead to help direct the pupils who needed extra help down the line to other agencies that could help such as the school pupil services.

4.2.2 We work a lot on relationships

The teachers described that they kept a close eye on the relationships between pupils and as one noted "we have a good overview over who are friends and who have fallen out". Teachers reported putting in time and effort into creating and curating interpupil relationships. They talked about how they used different ways to work with the pupils and would put them together in groups. "We have learning-pairs, we work in groups, and we facilitate relationships and friendships between pupils". The teachers expressed that they offered their help if the pupils need it. One teacher said that they used the theory of the zone of proximal development to encourage pupils to learn from each other. The teachers reported that they put together groups or pairs of pupils to work together help each other learn. As one said "we look at the pupils chemistry and who they feel secure working with". The teachers admitted that sometimes the learning-pairs they selected did not work and said that if something does not work they happily put together a new group of pupils to work together. One teacher discussed that the lesson subject influenced which pupils they put together in groups. They said:

"Sometimes if we're talking about something that might be contentious I put conflicting pupils each in their own groups. However if we're doing something concrete, like maths, I might put contentious pupils together. That's completely different from putting argumentative pupils in the same group to discuss social values".

The teachers described that they work to create a class environment that is safe and allows the pupils the space to build good relationships. "We make them aware of how they need to behave and that they can't laugh at each other." The teachers reported that they create class rules together with the pupils. One rule that one teacher had was that they created the seating chart for the class. They said that they mix up the seating plan regularly. "We make a conscious effort to think about

which pupils will be good learning partners”. The teachers reported that one way they create opportunities to help build a good interpupil relationships is the ‘getting to know you’ weeks at the beginning of the school year. Here the teachers described how they give the pupils different tasks to interview each other, ask questions and write about themselves. A teacher says “many are a little nervous to start school” and these extra days, at the beginning of the school year, are very well received by the pupils according to the teachers. “That the pupils are thriving and enjoy being in our small classes is a requirement for that they will be able to learn”.

One teacher reported that they had especially good interpupil relationships in their class. They report that their pupils are “very good at building each other up”. This teacher was particularly aware of the importance of the pupils feeling like they can talk to each other and be honest with each other. Another teacher pointed out that “they all have gone through difficult times, there’s not just one or two of them, they’re all here for a reason”. The teachers reported that the fact that all the pupils are in the same boat “absolutely helps”. They remarked that they see that the other pupils in the class are aware if there are problems in one of their fellow pupil’s homelands and that the pupils take extra good care of classmates if the situation in their homelands get worse. The teachers noted that while all of the pupils are in the same boat and new to the Norwegian school system that doesn’t stop some of them feeling anxious. “Many who start school here are a bit nervous and think it’s scary”. Other interpupil relationship building tactics included the class working together to select three class words which created a safe and respectful atmosphere, one class’s words were “respect, free speech, and being precise”.

4.2.3 It takes times to get to know each other, you can’t rush it

Time is an important element to allow for the development of relationships. One teacher said “we have time to develop a relationship which I think is important when one works in a young adult refugee class”. The teachers describe how the first couple of weeks of the school year are given over to getting the pupils used to school and the new school year. One teacher mentioned the importance of having this time and new setting to help build good relationships with the pupils. “We get to talk to them in a completely different setting and we get to learn more about them and they learn more about us before we have to begin with academic learning”. As a teacher points out “it takes time to get to know people, you can’t move too quickly with it”. “We always have time to talk to a pupil if we need to” says one teacher. The teacher highlighted that it’s a good thing that they are normally two teachers in each class. This gives them “lots of time for each pupil”.

4.3 They have some bad periods

The realities of refugee life and the trauma that some the pupils had suffered was another topic that the teachers described during the interviews. Here are some of the symptoms that the teachers reported the pupils exhibited and some of the issues that the teachers said affect their pupils.

4.3.1 They have a lot of baggage

The teachers noticed that the pupils are often affected by the realities of the experiences they have been through. Some of the pupils have had happy childhoods and as one teacher puts it “they’ve always been fine, achieved in school and been in a safe environment”. One teacher said that the contrast after they’ve had to flee their homelands and then arrived in Norway as a refugee can be stark. The same teacher continued “everything gets turned on upside down when they arrive here and it can all be too much ... there are periods when it is very clear that their focus is elsewhere”. The teachers said that this plays out in the classroom as the pupils seeming very removed and “not there”. The moods of the pupils are often affected, as one interviewee reports that “their moods vary and swing a lot” and that “there are some who have bad periods and then as a teacher you notice it at once”.

The young adult refugees have as one teacher put it “a lot of baggage”. Another teacher points out that “we occasionally get pupils who receive horribly, tragic messages from home that their friends and family have been killed or kidnapped, or that there have been bombings.” The teachers reported that the messages that the pupils receive are very hard to process and while the teachers see that the pupils want to concentrate on school and learn “there isn’t room for everything”. One teacher says that they see pupils who have difficulties concentrating and with “their thoughts clearly somewhere else entirely”. One way this plays out is in subjects such as maths. “I have pupils who one day can do addition after addition and then a day or two later they are completely removed and can’t manage anything.” That the pupils have so much to think about makes learning and retaining knowledge hard.

Sleep is another problem that many of the teachers talked about. One teacher said that pupils often have “little motivation to get up in the morning” and that they keep an eye on the pupils to see if they have slept well the night before. One says that you need to be careful because as they put it “you don’t always know how the night has been”.

One very clear outcome from the interviews, that was repeated by nearly all the interviewed teachers, was that there were no behavioural problems from the pupils. “Not at all” and “there’s very few challenges here” were a couple of replies when asked outright about possible behaviour challenges. Only one teacher mentioned behavioural challenges directly. They reported that they haven’t had any issues this year but in previous years there had been a few issues. This teacher noted that the pupils “must have had so many problems that they didn’t have the ability to follow teacher instructions or requests so they chose to do what they like”. This teacher adds that “we have the survivor pupils who have managed to survive” going on they add that the reason the pupils have survived is that “they rely on themselves” making it hard for them to “follow our advice”. This teacher also reported that there are a few pupils who find it hard to concentrate and who “call out and don’t listen”. The teacher thought that these actions might be the result of the pupils thinking “they don’t need this subject”, they think “the most important thing is that I learn Norwegian, the rest can wait.”

4.3.2 Someone is always absent

One issue which was raised by the teachers interviewed was absenteeism and that many of the pupils are often late or have low school attendance. As one teacher said “the pupils have a duty to turn up at the right time and be present in the classroom” however the department still has a problem with “poor attendance and repeatedly coming to class late”. The teachers reported that a knock on effect of this absenteeism is that “small classes are very vulnerable” if a class only has 12 pupils and one day a couple of pupils are away it impacts the lesson plan and quality. The teachers reported that for the last few months the the department has been trying out a new strategy to help reduce pupils arrive late to class. “We lock the classroom doors and then the late pupils must stand outside until there is a natural break in the lesson” after the pupils are allowed in “they have to just find themselves a seat and follow along”. The teachers reported relative success with reducing late comings by this method.

4.4 We have to talk to them about difficult issues and hard feelings

As well as reporting the symptoms and difficulties the pupils exhibited the teachers also talked about the strategies they used to try and help the pupils combat the effects of traumas and problems they were facing.

4.4.1 School can just be school

A couple of the teachers spoken to said that for them it's important that "school can be just school". They believe that school should be "a free-space where they don't have to think about everything else". Just attending school can have a positive effect on pupils according to the interviewed teachers "the pupils can forget what have happened and the longing they have for their families". One teacher says "we have to talk them about such things". One way that the teachers reported the school tries to help the pupils is with a programme called Resilience. Resilience (*Resilens*) is programme that is "a focus for the whole school which we now are trying to use in [the department] to try and make the pupils more prepared and robust to face all that can happen both at school and in life". One teacher said that it was also important that the teachers have expectations of the pupils. They said "the pupils can quickly be given victim-status...I show them that I expect something of them" the teacher continues that "the pupils then come to school and see that someone notices them".

4.4.2 Looking behind the problem

The interviewed teachers described how they try to look behind the presented issues, such as psychosomatic pain. One said "we need to talk about the reason they have a sore finger and how they are. I try to find out what's wrong and most likely it's not the finger which is really the problem". The teacher went on to reinforce this idea that "you have to see the whole person and teach them to see that there are lots of reasons why" they might be feeling upset or in pain.

4.4.3 There are some topics I avoid

The teachers reported that when it came to certain topics they were especially aware of bringing up memories or hurting the pupils. One teacher said "there are some topic I avoid, for example famine, although we can't protect them from everything there are some things we don't need to bring up". A concrete example of this is the well know picture *The vulture and the little girl* by Kevin Carter. A teacher noted that the picture a brilliant resource in mainstream classes but that they don't use it in the young adult classes. The teachers also reported that they are more careful than they typically would be with the pupils. One says "we are very careful when preparing the pupils if we think a difficult topic might come up" they reassure the pupils that "it's ok if they can't cope" then the teachers let the pupils leave the class. Sounds are another thing the teachers reported being more aware of. One interviewee said "striking a pen against the board to get the class to be quiet is something I doubt any teacher in this department does as it can remind pupils of bullets". If

certain pupils are having an especially difficult time then they can talk to their teacher and let them know they're having a hard time at the moment then the teachers reported that they "don't make a big deal out of things and let the pupils be" as one teacher put it "they pick knowledge up just by being at school".

The teachers reported that it can be difficult to have so many pupils that need so much of their time. As well as worrying they can't give their all to the pupils who need it most. When the teachers don't know the backgrounds of all the pupils they are working with it makes it hard to know what to expect. One teacher said "It's difficult to know how hard to press them".

4.5 Different backgrounds, different skills, different languages

The teachers reported many different systematic challenges facing the refugees. The challenges of a new school system, of having to learn Norwegian and of having different cultural norms and backgrounds as the main ones. The teachers also described the ways they attempt to buffer these systematic challenges.

4.5.1 They are used to saying yes or no

The teacher reported that the Norwegian school systems has different core values to the systems that most of the young adult refugees are used to. One teacher explained that "in the Norwegian system there is so much responsibility for your own learning...we value the ability to reflect upon your own work highly". However the teacher went on to express that many of the pupils come from countries that do not value the ability to reflect on your own work "they are used to saying yes or no and writing down exactly what the teacher says". The teachers interviewed pointed out that learning by rote is not an ability that the Norwegian system values.

The teachers all reported that there's a huge mix of pupils from those who have been to schools for years and those, especially girls one teacher noted, who have never been to school before. This creates its own problems they said. "There are lots of rules and things we take for granted that aren't a given if you've never been to school before". The teachers highlighted examples such as having to be in the classroom when lessons begin and end and that you can't just suddenly need to fetch books or go to the loo in the middle of the lesson. Another teacher said "I've had pupils who talk over me all the time and who never have been to school, maybe they don't know how to be at school". The challenge of pupils not knowing how to wait to speak or raise their hands was also

brought up by the teachers interviewed. “The pupils are so very engaged that waiting their turn or having to listen is hard”.

Many of the teachers talked about having a huge curriculum to teach relative to the short amount of time the pupils are in the school. One teacher says “even though [the pupils] learn quickly there are many words and terms they don’t have”. One way that the teachers reported trying to mitigate the negative effects of this is by allocating the time they have well. One says “we use a lot of time for each topic and [in the end] we cover what we cover. We have designed the year’s plan with what we think is relevant”. One teacher points out that it’s important to use this time wisely, “it takes time to get to know each other and you can’t rush yourself”.

4.5.2 Language is the biggest challenge

That all the pupils in the department have a low level of Norwegian was the issue brought up most frequently by the teachers interviewed, one who said “our [biggest] challenge is first and foremost language”. One teacher remarks that when it comes to language “the unaccompanied minors learn the language much faster and get the syntax in place earlier [than the others]”. They noted that even after a short week’s break they could hear the difference between the pupils who had clearly spoke Norwegian at home in the foster care centres during the holiday and those who lived with their families and spoke less Norwegian.

The teachers reported that when covering such a large curriculum in only two years there are elements that the teachers need to concentrate on. “We pick out the most important and simplify, we spend lots of time explaining. For some topics we have to begin from a third grade level. Then we quickly need to progress to an eighth or ninth grade level”. Another teacher expressed that “we spend so much time explaining basic words. We explain things three ways and then we have to try and find a fourth and fifth way to make sure that everyone understands”. The teachers said that they concentrate a lot on keywords and concept words. One says “they have an everyday vocabulary, but the ability to use the language in a greater depth and use it in conversation [is harder]”. One teacher used the example of the phrase “leaves falling to the ground”, in this example the teacher reports that the word “ground” was unknown for most pupils. This means “as a teacher I spend a lot of time making things seem more concrete, have to act as if I was on the stage”. The teachers said that they have strategies to utilise the pupils’ varied first languages to help strengthen language learning, but occasionally it can cause “chaos” when “everyone is talking over each other”

and translating works from one language to another. The teacher says “we must find space for [the pupil’s to do this] but it must be at the right times otherwise it’s just chaos”.

The teachers reported that they used different strategies to try and strengthen the pupils’ language. One way they do it is to put the pupils in groups or pairs to work together. One teacher talked about putting the pupils in groups based on their mother tongue - so each group has the same first language. The teacher said that this is beneficial because “they can help each other and give support”. Working in groups of mixed first languages can also be useful. One teacher said “working [in groups] across language means they are forced to work in [and with] the language in a different way, they have to use Norwegian to explain themselves”. The teachers varied the groups that the pupils work in, one teacher points out that this means “there’s always someone in the group who know what a word means”. The teachers said that they also use dictionaries and the pupils’ mother tongues to explain words. The teachers reported that the parts of language that they concentrate on changes too. One teacher says “I think words and concepts are more important than double consonants”. Backgrounds from different work environments help the teachers they said. One noted that “a lot of what I did with my second and third graders is usable here”.

4.5.3 We need to learn to get on with each other

The teachers reported that the Norwegian way of life and western European social norms can be very different to the norms of the cultures the young refugees come from. This means that the teachers expressed that the pupils that sometimes they come across views that are at odds to Norwegian norms. One teacher said “we listen when we have class discussions and if we catch any extreme views we discuss it [with the pupil].” The teachers described how during discussions with the pupils when comments about different ways of live come up from the pupils the teachers try to draw parallels to Norway and reflect over the issues raised. One teacher remarked that “we get pupils who assert that there’s no homosexuality where they come from. So we use films to draw out a discussion”. Films teachers reported using include *Rødt Hjerte*, *Hva vil folk si?*, and *En balong til Allah*.

The teachers stressed that there is a reason behind everything that they do. One teacher had a pupil who said they didn’t like democracy, the teacher discussed this with the pupil and they realised that the reason was that the pupil’s family did not live in a democratic country so the pupil thought it was unfair that he got to. The teacher summed up by saying “we must talk to the pupils, we can’t

let such remarks slide". The teacher says "we must dare to ask 'why', it's so important that they reflect over their beliefs".

The teachers described how classes made up of pupils from vastly different backgrounds means that some of the tensions that can arise do so for different reasons here. One teacher said "sometimes we have, like in mainstream classes, conflicts and tensions. I have learnt to be more careful about them because these tensions can be based both on personality, but also ethnicities". That teacher went on to say that one way they combat possible ethnic tensions is by "being very clear that the Norwegian school system is very social-democratic and here we are all equal and have the same worth".

The teachers reported that the school has a programme designed to help the pupils feel more at home with their multicultural identity. This programme is called Flexi. The teachers described Flexi as a class that has been created to support and cultivate positive multicultural identities. They are classes that the young adult refugees have every week. A teacher describes them as being "meant to strengthen their multicultural identity and what it means to have a multicultural background". They go on to say that "[for the pupils] with families here they feel too Norwegian at home and too [foreign] at school". The programme is designed to "highlight the positives and work with resilience too".

5.0 Discussion

After the presentation of the results it is important to reflect over the topics raised by the teachers in light of the theory discussed earlier. The theory looks at the legalities of education adolescent refugees as well as the theory behind schools and how schools can be, and should be, salutogenic arenas. Trauma and trauma informed care were also described. The teachers in their interviews did not reference the pupils as abstract 'models' and they did not talk about the ways they tried to create a healthy and nurturing environment as 'strategies', but that is what they are. Here they theory and the results of the teachers interviews will be discussed together to see what threads of inquiry and conclusions can be extrapolated upon.

5.1 Relationships and how to work with others

Relationships and discussions about how to work with others is the largest of all the themes that were drawn out of the interviews. The teachers interviewed were very concerned with both their own relationships with the pupils and the relationships between the pupils. This is very positive given the importance that the studies and reports by Pastoor (2012) and Berg (2012) give to building and maintaining positive relationships with and among adolescent refugees. Berg (2012) says that a focus on establishing trust and respect is central for the wellbeing and future success of adolescent refugees. This is something that the interviewed teachers agree with and show by their focus on building good relationships, first through a two week 'getting to know you' period with lots of team building activities at the start of the school year, and then by regularly checking in with the pupils and taking the time to concentrate on each pupil individually.

The UNESCO report 'Learning: the treasure within' (Delors, J. 1996) says that 'Learning to Be' is an important pillar of the education system. This is about how to develop a personality and act with autonomy, judgment and personal responsibility and to learn to live together. The time and effort that the teachers put into developing interpupil relationships and the focus they have on encouraging the pupils to be able to work with all other pupils in a class shows that the teachers describe the importance of learning to be. When the teachers discuss how to put the pupils in groups they report that in some subjects they choose non-conflicting pupils to work together while in others, like maths, they see the benefit of getting more contentious pupils to work together. This shows that, while still concentrating on the academic side of learning, a more holistic, humanistic type of learning is central to them.

Trauma informed care as a framework for understanding complex traumas (Bath, 2008, Jørgensen and Steinkoft, 2013) puts a huge focus on building relationships and connections. None of the teachers that were interviewed spoke of trauma informed care as a method, but it is clear from the results that they implement many of the principals of it in their work. In the area of relationships this is especially true. Many of the teachers talked about wanting the pupils to know that they were cared for, that the teachers cared about their success. The teachers showed time and time again in their responses that they valued the small, frequent meetings with their pupils and that they worked hard to develop good everyday relationships. This plays into what Jørgensen and Steinkoft (Jørgensen and Steinkoft, 2013) say about this, when they argue that every good meeting between a pupil and teacher can be a positive development for the child's attachment system. One teacher brought up the case of the pupil who had been challenging last year but after spending time getting to know them and building a relationship the teacher had seen that the pupil was unsure of themselves and needed time. The teacher didn't reflect the pupil's insecurity and fear back to them in the form of anger, but rather managed to build up a feeling of security and trust that helped the pupil.

The meta-study by Dansk Clearinghouse identified three elements that have an effect on learning, one of these factors is the social relationship the teacher has to each pupil (Nordenbo et al., 2008). The time and effort that the teachers report putting into building individual relationships will therefore have a very positive effect on the pupil's attainment. The teachers appear to focus on building positive relationships with the aim of giving the pupils a sense of security and showing them that they are cared for, so the added benefit of having a positive effect on learning is a secondary bonus. Another of the elements identified in the Dansk Clearinghouse study is that there is a positive effect on learning if the teachers have a good knowledge of their subjects' didactics (Nordenbo et al., 2008). The focus on this study was not to describe or discuss subject didactics but the results still show that the teachers put a lot of effort into how they teach Norwegian, suggesting that they have a strong background in Norwegian didactics.

The overall effect that one gets when reading the results is that the teachers are focusing on relationships. As one teacher puts it "relationships are the alpha and omega". Although they don't

mention the concept of salutogenesis by name, this focus on positive relationships shows that it is a central aim of the teachers and school to create a salutogenic environment.

5.2 Trauma and the effects of being a young refugee on schooling

Dyregrov talks about type 2 complex traumas as being characterised by repeated traumas over a period of time (Dyregrov, 2010). Given the history of the pupils it is clear that many of them must be traumatised. Many of the teachers talk about the pupils exhibiting symptoms of trauma. They may not immediately recognise the behaviours as symptoms of trauma. Indeed many of the teachers answered emphatically in the negative when asked if they saw any symptoms of trauma or challenging behaviour. One of the effects of complex trauma according to Jørgensen and Steinkroft is that the brain is altered and the individual is unable to handle feelings and emotions in the way a “normal” adolescent would be able to (Jørgensen and Steinfroft, 2013). The teachers interviewed talk about the pupils appearing shut down and having little motivation to go to school. Figure 1. (p.14) is an illustration of the concept of the window of tolerance (Nordanger, 2014) it shows what happens when people fall outside of their window of tolerance. Not being able to effectively regulate yourself is one of the effects of complex trauma. Many of the behaviours that the teachers discussed in their interviews are symptoms of hypo-arousal as shown in figure 1. (p.14). The teachers reported that the pupils often had problems with motivation and could seem shut down. Not attending school could also be a sign of numbness and poor self-care as it implies that the pupils lack the motivation to attend school. Repeated lateness to class can also be a sign of hypo-arousal as it shows the pupils aren’t able to handle transitions.

Not being able to sleep is a sign of hyper-arousal and agitation (Nordanger, 2014). When one teacher said that they never knew how the pupils’ nights had been they are showing that that they realise that pupils have difficulties sleeping because of the realities of being a refugee and the experiences they had been through. Other symptoms of hyper-arousal such as anger and the fight-or-flight response were not mentioned by the teachers at all.

5.3 Teacher strategies to combat these traumatic effects

The UNESCO report ‘Learning: the treasure within’ (Delors, J. 1996) discussed in depth the importance of a positive learning environment and taking a humanistic approach to education. The ways that the teachers report trying to help the pupils combat the effects of their history of potentially traumatising events and having had to flee their homelands shows that they have a

humanistic approach and put their pupils wellbeing at the centre of what they do. This is also in line with Article 39 of the UN's Convention on Children's rights (UNICEF. 1989) which states that countries must "take all appropriate measures to promote physical and psychological recovery and social reintegration of a child victim of ... torture ... or armed conflicts". Although the teachers all reported that they had strategies for helping their pupils in difficult periods they didn't seem to have 'top-down' strategies which were developed by leadership and implemented by the teachers. The teachers report working individually with pupils and classes to create a tailored approach. The only 'top-down' strategy that was reported was to do with implementing a united effort to combat pupils arriving late to class.

The individual methods of helping each pupil involved looking both at the presented behaviour of the pupil as well as the reasons behind the actions. Psychosomatic pain as an indication of trauma is something that one teacher reported seeing. When a pupil presented with a sore finger instead of just getting the pupil a plaster the teacher talked to the pupil and tried to work out the feelings behind the pain, in the knowledge that the presented pain in the finger was not the real issue.

Thomas Nordahl says that to be able to learn and reach their full potential pupils need a healthy and nurturing learning environment (Nordahl, T. 2010. p.81). The strategies the teachers implement to help reduce the pupils' stress, for example allowing them to leave the classroom without questioning it when covering triggering topics, will help create this nurturing environment.

As discussed earlier none of the teachers mentioned trauma-informed care by name, but all of them discussed ways that they looked behind the presented behaviour to the emotions and causes of the pupil's behaviour. When pupils shut down and could not find the motivation to attend school - a classic sign of hypo-arousal (see figure 1. p.14) - teachers reported that they would ring the pupils to let them know that they wanted them to come to school. These actions help reinforce the idea that school is a safe place and helps build connections between the pupil and the teacher. The teachers are trying to help the pupils back into their windows of tolerance and get them to a place where their feelings are manageable and they can learn.

Co-regulation is one of the key methods of trauma informed care as discussed by both Jørgensen and Steinkoft and Bath (Jørgensen and Steinkoft, 2013, Bath, 2008). Co-regulation is the idea that the caring adult can show a traumatised person how to regulate their emotions, and teach the

person to better regulate their emotions and feelings independently. Jørgensen and Steinkoft explicitly say that every meeting between a teacher and pupil can slowly but surely help the pupil learn to regulate their own emotions (Jørgensen and Steinkoft, 2013). This is a sentiment echoed in the actions of the teachers who expressed that they “regularly check in with [all pupils]” and “shake [each pupil’s] hand when they enter class”. The teachers reported that they wanted every pupil to come to school because just by being at school they would learn something. Although it was not mentioned in the interviews in the context of Jørgensen and Steinkoft’s research, it can also be assumed that the pupils, just by turning up, also enjoy some positive effects of co-regulation.

The school’s focus seems to be on creating a salutogenic arena. Thomas Nordahl says that a good inclusive learning environment contributes to positive learning and development (Nordahl, T. 2010). The extra school programmes, as well as the small class sizes, and the fact that the majority of classes have two teachers in the classroom for each lesson, means that the department has created a positive learning environment. Flexi, one of the extra programmes run by the department, is reported as being designed to help the pupils feel at home with their multicultural identities - that they can be comfortable being both Syrian, Afghani, or Eritrean, and being Norwegian. Pastoor talks about the important role that schools have to play to help the pupils align their primary and secondary socialisations (Pastoor, L., 2012). The Flexi programme is a good illustration of how the school does this.

The third element that increases learning, identified by the large meta-study carried out by Dansk Clearinghouse into effects on learning, was that the teacher has the competence to lead the class and uphold order (Nordenbo et al., 2008). None of the teachers explicitly mention class leadership in relation to the discussions about nurturing and healthy learning environments, but there are many signs that they are good class leaders. One teacher mentioned creating class rules together with the class. These class words were then something both the teacher and the class could refer back to. Getting the pupils to jointly create the class words gives them a sense of ownership over the words and makes it more likely that they will respect them.

5.4 Teachers' efforts to buffer the systematic challenges of being a young refugee

As discussed earlier schools play a huge role in young adult refugees' lives and are integral to the integrational process that occurs when these young people move to Norway. The pupils face some systematic challenges because of their status as refugees. These include, but are not limited to, the language, living in an institution, and coming from a different cultural background. The problem of not speaking Norwegian fully was one of the main problems highlighted by all the teachers in the study. All the teachers reported different methods to help with language learning. They used various groups, selected on the base of sharing a first language, or having different first languages. Their reasoning for chopping and changing the types of groups and how they worked with the classes to improve language learning shows that they have a good understanding of language learning. They make sure that the pupils do not get bored by only working in one way and mixing the groups helps all pupils develop their zone of proximal development. Other teachers reported different methods, such as tools learnt as primary school teachers, showing that they are using their whole breadth of experience.

The school's organisation and the extra workshops and programmes they run add value to the pupils' lives. Nordahl discusses how schools reproduce the social systems that exist in wider society (Nordahl, T. 2010). While this will probably be true to an extent here too, the extracurricular programmes like Resiliens, Flexi, KISS, and Livets Tre show that the school is trying to counteract the repetition of traumas and give the pupils methods for dealing with their backgrounds. The school is actively trying to build the pupils resilience up and give them the tools they need to be happy, functioning adults. This is especially important given the background of the pupils and how disproportionately likely they are to be marginalised in later schooling and life (Bakken, A. 2018).

The school's set up and the ways the teachers describe having extra resources to make sure they have enough time to spend with each pupil underpins the school's dedication to trying to be a safe haven from frightening and oppressive events (Johnsen, B. 2005.). It is also positive that the department is physically situated in the local upper secondary school, where most pupils will be attending after their two years in the youth department. They will already be familiar with the school's set up, allowing them to feel safe and secure there. The pupils will possibly also have friends there which will add to a feeling of belonging.

6.0 Conclusion

The aim of this study was to look at how teachers with classes of young adult refugees described nurturing and healthy learning environments for pupils. The study explored how a selection of teachers at an adult education centre's youth department described and reflected on the department's environment and how they tried to create and maintain nurturing and healthy learning environments. This study used a qualitative design and was mostly inspired by a phenomenological approach. Five semi-structured interviews were carried out over two days and these interviews formed the results. The data was decoded using transcendental phenomenological methods as well as elements from constant comparison analysis. This decoding led to the creation of four essences were distilled from the results; relationships and how to work with them, trauma and the effects of being a young refugee on schooling, teacher strategies to combat these effects, and the teachers efforts to buffer the systematic challenges of being a young refugee.

When looking into what the teachers described there were many parallels that could be drawn between the theories of school as a salutogenic arena and trauma informed care. Teachers are not clinicians. They cannot treat pupils and 'cure' them. However teachers are educated adults, working very closely with traumatised individuals with the aim of creating nurturing and healthy environments where learning is possible. They take a salutogenic approach to educating pupils and aim to see the whole individual. There is a lot of evidence to suggest that it is hard for the young adult refugees to access the professional, clinical treatment that many of them need. The teachers in their responses during the interviews showed that they use elements from trauma informed care to help their pupils learn emotional regulation and build safe relationships which in turn means that the pupils are able to thrive and learn.

The main factors that contributed to creating nurturing and healthy learning environment were the teachers having time to build relationships, the teachers focusing on creating positive relationships between teachers and pupils, and also between pupils themselves, and the teachers digging deeper behind the trauma-symptomatic behaviours presented by the pupils to try and help the pupils develop better emotional regulation and help the pupils remain in their windows of tolerance.

There are several ways the school has helped the teachers to be able to develop this environment. These include resources such as small classes, time devoted to extra-curricular workshops and

relationship building, and by employing enough qualified teachers allowing most classes to run a two-teacher-system. The teachers' experiences show that they need these resources to be able to create and maintain nurturing and healthy learning environments. For other schools and departments with similar pupil demographics, including the one this researcher has worked in, these resources seem to be vital for the success of the salutogenic arena described by the teachers interviewed.

This study could be the jumping off point for more research. Now that the study has been done in one department it would be interesting to repeat the study at different departments around the country to see if the factors that created a salutogenetic environment here were valid in other departments. A cross analysis or meta-study of these studies would be valuable as well. The teachers all stressed the importance of language learning and mentioned language skills as one of the biggest challenges facing the pupils. It would be interesting to study how pupils' language learning was affected by their learning environment. There are only a handful of researchers studying the importance of a nurturing and healthy learning environment for young adult refugees so there are many research paths yet to be forged. It is the wish of this study that these interviews can in some way contribute to this field and future research.

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Appendix I

13.5.2019

Meldeskjema for behandling av personopplysninger



NSD sin vurdering

Prosjekttittel

An investigation into healthy environments for young refugees

Referansenummer

121344

Registrert

14.01.2019 av Amelia Dixie Matre - amelia.d.matre@student.nord.no

Behandlingsansvarlig institusjon

Nord universitet / Fakultet for lærerutdanning og kunst- og kulturfag / Logopedi, spesialpedagogikk, tilpasset opplæring

Prosjektansvarlig (vitenskapelig ansatt/veileder eller stipendiat

Karianne Berg, karianne.berg@nord.no, tlf: 97145047

Type prosjekt

Studentprosjekt, masterstudium

Kontaktinformasjon, student

Dixie Matre, Dixiehadfield@hotmail.com, tlf: 91005482

Prosjektperiode

01.01.2019 - 30.06.2019

Status

15.01.2019 - Vurdert

Vurdering (1)

15.01.2019 - Vurdert

Det er vår vurdering at behandlingen av personopplysninger i prosjektet vil være i samsvar med personvernlovgivningen så fremt den gjennomføres i tråd med det som er dokumentert i meldeskjemaet med vedlegg den 15.01.2019. Behandlingen kan starte.

Appendix II

Intervjuguide for intervju gjort for prosjektet:

En undersøkelse av hvordan lærere på voksenopplæringas ungdomsgruppe beskrive et positivt og helsefremmende miljø for læring og utvikling for elever

Temaer for undersøkelsen

- Begrepet *positivt læringsmiljø*
- Begrepet *helsefremmende læringsmiljø*
- Å skape et positivt læringsmiljø
- Å skape et helsefremmende læringsmiljø
- utfordringer med å jobbe med unge flyktninger
- Refleksjoner rundt oppgaven å være lærer for flyktninger
- Utprøvde tiltak i klassen og på skolen

Spørsmål til intervjuet

1. Hvordan skaper du et positivt og helsefremmende miljø for læring og utvikling for elevene dine?
2. Hvordan har symptomene av traume som elevene viser påvirket måten du skaper et positivt og helsefremmende miljø for læring og utvikling?

Formålet med intervjuet

Intervjuet skal gi en innsikt inn i hvordan lærere som jobber med flyktningungdommer som viser symptomer på traume. Formålet er å samle inn deres beskrivelser av hvordan de skaper et positivt og helsefremmende miljø for læring og utvikling.

Hvordan intervjuet skal gjennomføres og behandles i etterkant

Intervjuet skal være semistrukturert og uformelt. Det er viktig at alle temaene er dekket, men for å la samtalen flyte og følge intervjuobjekt sine interesser blir det ikke en fastsatt spørsmålsrekkefølge. Denne fleksibiliteten gjør at spørsmålene kan knyttes opp mot intervjuobjektets forutsetninger og gir samtidig rom for at det kan tas opp temaer som ikke er planlagte på forhånd.

Intervjuet blir tatt opp på lydbånd slik at det kan transkriberes i etterkant. De transkriberte notatene skal legges til grunn for analyser i prosjektet. All informasjon skal anonymiseres slik at ingen personer eller hendelser kan gjenkjennes. Etter prosjektet er ferdig blir opptaket og notatene slettet.

Appendix III

Vil du delta i forskningsprosjektet

”Hvilke strategier bruker lærere på voksenopplærings ungdomsgrupper for å skape et godt læringsmiljø”?

Dette er et spørsmål til deg om å delta i et forskningsprosjekt hvor formålet er å beskrive hvilke strategier lærere på voksenopplærings ungdomsgrupper bruke for å skape et godt læringsmiljø for elever. I dette skrivet gir vi deg informasjon om målene for prosjektet og hva deltakelse vil innebære for deg.

Formål

Det er en masterstudent oppgave for en master i tilpassa opplæring med fordypning i spesialpedagogikk.

Formålet med prosjektet er å forske på hvordan lærere som jobber på voksenopplæringer med ungdom mellom 16-24 beskriver sine strategier for å skape et godt læringsmiljø. Gjennom semi-strukturerte intervju vil prosjektet intervjuere c.4-5 lærere for å få innsikt inn i deres strategier. Prosjektet er interesserte i strategier som er brukt til å skape et godt og positivt læringsmiljø i grupper hvor det er elever som viser tegn på traume.

Hvem er ansvarlig for forskningsprosjektet?

Karianne Berg på Nord Universitet er ansvarlig for prosjektet.

Hvorfor får du spørsmål om å delta?

Du får spørsmål om å delta fordi du jobber på en voksenopplæringscenter med ungdom mellom 16 og 24.

Hva innebærer det for deg å delta?

Hvis du velger å delta i prosjektet vil jeg intervju deg. Intervjuet blir semi-strukturerte og skal være i en halv time. Intervjuet vil innebære å snakke om din hverdag som lære og hvordan du jobber med å skape et godt og positivt læringsmiljø for elevene dine.

Intervjuene blir tatt opp på bånd for å hjelpe med transkribering i etterkant. Alt informasjon blir anonymisert og ingen personer kommer til å bli gjenkjennbart i oppgaven.

Det er frivillig å delta

Det er frivillig å delta i prosjektet. Hvis du velger å delta, kan du når som helst trekke samtykke tilbake uten å oppgi noen grunn. Alle opplysninger om deg vil da bli anonymisert. Det vil ikke ha noen negative konsekvenser for deg hvis du ikke vil delta eller senere velger å trekke deg.

Ditt personvern – hvordan vi oppbevarer og bruker dine opplysninger

Vi vil bare bruke opplysningene om deg til formålene vi har fortalt om i dette skrivet. Vi behandler opplysningene konfidensielt og i samsvar med personvernregelverket. Kun jeg og prosjektlederen vil ha tilgang til opplysningene dine.

Navnet og kontaktopplysningene dine vil jeg erstatte med en kode som lagres på egen navneliste adskilt fra øvrige data. Lydopptakene blir oppbevart på Nord Universitets sikre forskningsserver. Deltakerne vil ikke kunne gjenkjennes i oppgaven.

Hva skjer med opplysningene dine når vi avslutter forskningsprosjektet?

Prosjektet skal etter planen avsluttes juni 2019. Lydopptak og notatene blir slettet i juni 2019.

Dine rettigheter

Så lenge du kan identifiseres i datamaterialet, har du rett til:

- innsyn i hvilke personopplysninger som er registrert om deg,
- å få rettet personopplysninger om deg,
- få slettet personopplysninger om deg,
- få utlevert en kopi av dine personopplysninger (dataportabilitet), og
- å sende klage til personvernombudet eller Datatilsynet om behandlingen av dine personopplysninger.

Hva gir oss rett til å behandle personopplysninger om deg?

Vi behandler opplysninger om deg basert på ditt samtykke.

På oppdrag fra Nord Universitet har NSD – Norsk senter for forskningsdata AS vurdert at behandlingen av personopplysninger i dette prosjektet er i samsvar med personvernregelverket.

Hvor kan jeg finne ut mer?

Hvis du har spørsmål til studien, eller ønsker å benytte deg av dine rettigheter, ta kontakt med:

- Dixie Matre. Epost: dixiehadfield@hotmail.com. Telefon: 91005482
- Karianne Berg ved Nord Universitet, Høgskolevegen 27, 7600 Levanger. Epost: karianne.berg@nord.no Telefon: 75 51 70 00
- NSD – Norsk senter for forskningsdata AS, på epost (personvernombudet@nsd.no) eller telefon: 55 58 21 17.

Med vennlig hilsen

Karianne Berg,
Prosjektansvarlig

Dixie Matre,
Student

Samtykkeerklæring

Jeg har mottatt og forstått informasjon om prosjektet Hvilke strategier bruker lærere på voksenopplærings ungdomsgrupper for å skape et godt læringsmiljø, og har fått anledning til å stille spørsmål. Jeg samtykker til:

- å delta i intervju

Jeg samtykker til at mine opplysninger behandles frem til prosjektet er avsluttet, ca. juni 2019

(Signert av prosjektdeltaker, dato)

Appendix IV

The Coding Process

The initial and axial coding

First the transcripts were roughly coded. The text considered to be significant was highlighted. Then axial coding took place, comments were added to the highlighted sections discussing why they were thought to be significant. Figure 2. Illustrates this process.

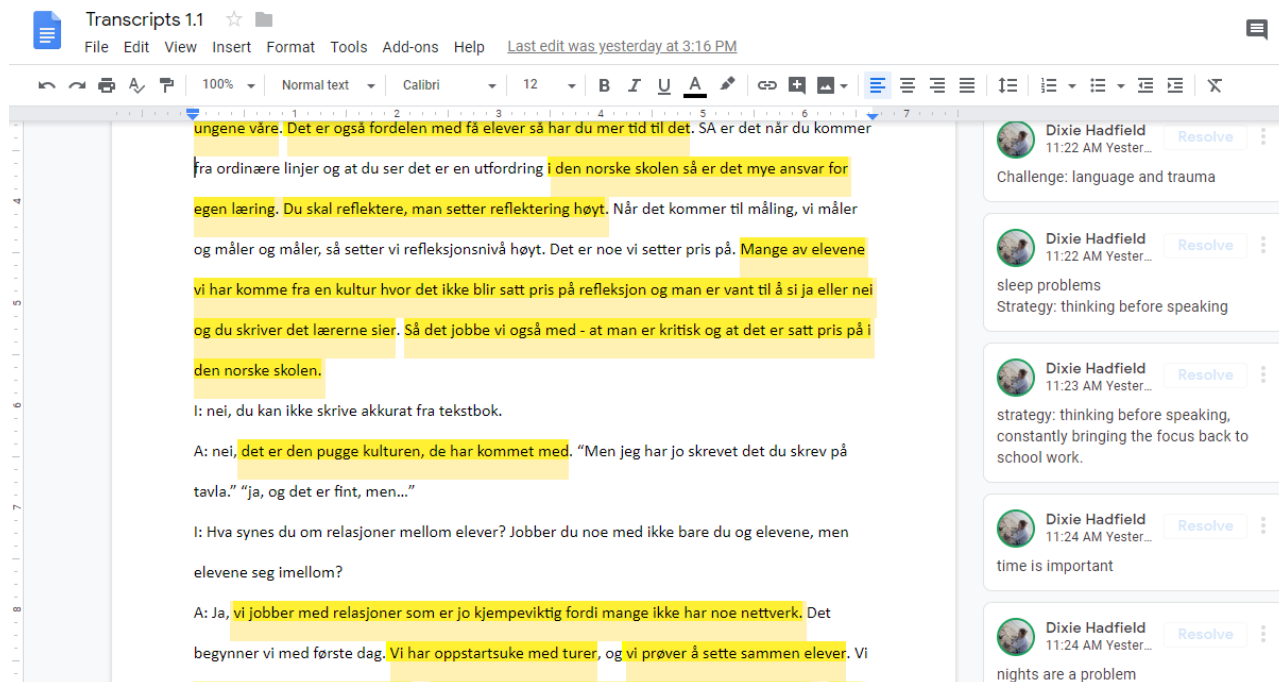


Figure 2.

Essential coding

After this axial coding the comments were typed up the comments were grouped into further distilled themes to begin to identify the essences of the results. This process took time and many different themes had to be considered before settling on the final essences. Figure 2. illustrates this process.

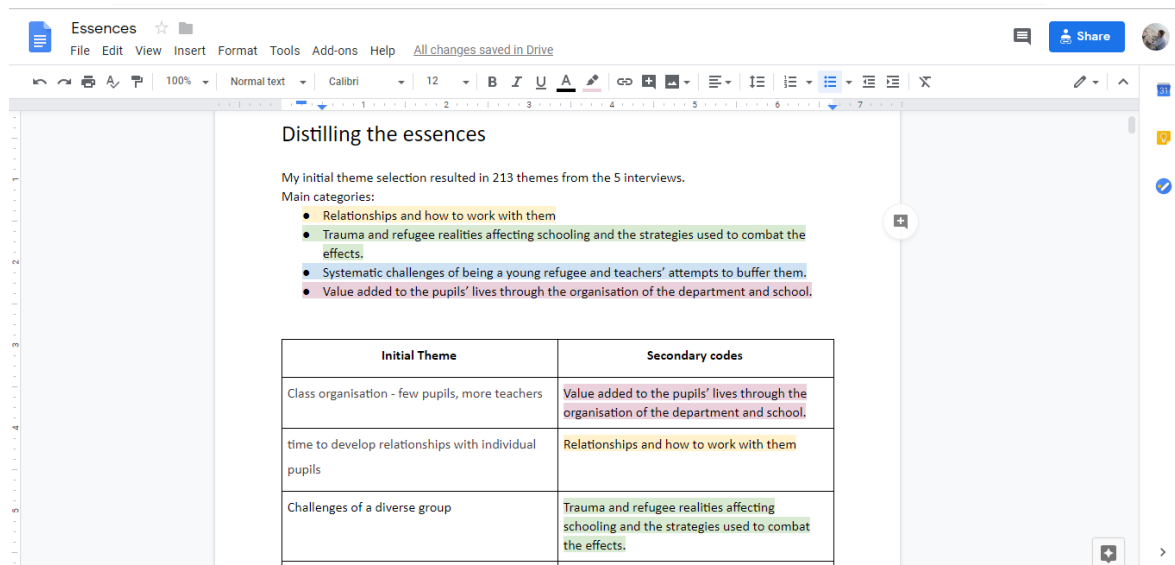


Figure 3.