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Virtues for the 21th century professional

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Open any newspaper and you'll see that society can use more virtuous behavior. However, virtues are often considered 'old fashioned' and professionals do not relate them to their working life. Therefore, the project MijnDeugden.nl (Dutch for MyVirtues.nl) is started in 2014. The goal of this project is to refresh the classic wisdom of virtues and make them fit for our 21th century. The project builds on the well known assumption that virtues can be developed or enhanced by continued practice and have to be applied in daily life. A self-development online portal will be created, that helps individuals to reflect on their own virtuous behaviour. Key module in the portal will be a self-evaluation instrument that (1) includes virtues relevant for the current professional both in content and in language, (2) approaches virtues as a state and not a trait to promote practicing of virtues, (3) is created according to social sciences standards in questionnaire construction (4) is user-friendly to increase the motivation for long term and repeated use. To my opinion such an instrument is missing and will therefore be developed.

This presentation reports about the first phase of the development of a virtues self-evaluation instrument: a search for virtues relevant for the 21th century professional. I performed a scientific literature search and an online-search, resulting in 14 scientific and five popular virtues lists. From these lists 353 virtue descriptions were drawn. These virtues descriptions were clustered in a process of convergencing and divergencing, following a Grounded theory approach. Using the classifications of Dahlsgaard et al. (2005) and Chun (2005) as a starting point, in the end 17 behavior clusters were identified. Next, these clusters were grouped in six so called 'Virtues Characters', reflecting the person you can become by practicing virtues: a Likeable Person, a Brave Person, an Enthusiastic Person, a Careful Person, a Balanced Person and a Thankful Person. Building upon Aristotle's 'doctrine of the mean', I aim for balance between virtues: preferable you practice all six to become a Beautiful Person. During my presentation I like to discuss the findings so far.