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Crafting a professional teacher learner through models of learning and positive psychological coaching tools

Abstract

The important question of pedagogy and positive psychology in the 21st-century is how to facilitate educators in becoming professionals with successful self-concepts, capable of supporting and inspiring their students, coping with stress and burnout, and facing the challenges of their careers with autonomous, resilient strategies. Therefore, the main topic of the questionnaire conducted by Károli Gáspár University of the Reformed Church in Hungary is teacher motivation and coaching. This paper discusses a specific aspect of the theoretical and methodological background provided by the literature sources for compiling the questionnaire.

Our current analysis encompasses McClelland's "Theory of Human Motives", Bateson's Logical Levels of Learning, and Dilts' NeuroLogical Levels of Change. Central to our exploration is the significance of reflection in teacher learning, leading to an analysis of Korthagen's frameworks, such as ALACT, the Onion Model, and the Core Reflection model. Simons and Ruijters' Model of Professional Learner Identity illuminates the relationship between learning and professionalism in teaching, accentuating the importance of lifelong learning. Ultimately, our endeavour is to comprehend the intricacies of motivating teacher learning by synthesizing insights from various theories, models, and coaching tools to nurture proficient and inspired professional teacher learners.
Keywords: learning professional, reflective practice, positive psychological coaching tools, Zsigmond Simonyi Carpathian Basin spelling competition, questionnaire research

1   Introduction

In our volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA) world only the constant development of self-awareness and "soft skills" can counterbalance the impact of the amount of information and stimuli that are flooding every human being in our society, learners, and teachers alike. This is only possible if teachers re-establish their existential, intellectual, and intrinsic value. Self-knowledge, self-esteem, self-reflection, and resilience must primarily be revitalised in teachers and learners. This requires both the ability to learn and constantly adapt to new situations. To view oneself realistically and to deal with conflict. For teachers to lead by example, achieve a successful professional identity and remain professional learners throughout their lives, they need a range of support to inspire themselves and their students. This includes constant reflective practice and positive psychological coaching approaches and tools.

Therefore, the primary focus of the research at Károli Gáspár University of the Reformed Church in Hungary (KRE) is on teacher motivation and the potential benefits of utilizing

positive psychological coaching tools. This paper addresses a specific aspect of the theoretical and methodological foundations underlying our questionnaire, which was developed as part of the KRE-supported project *Language Competences in Space and Time (202–2024).*[1]

The questionnaire is designed to gather insights from teachers who prepare students for the Zsigmond Simonyi Carpathian Basin Spelling Competition. Since the academic year 2020/2021, the Zsigmond Simonyi Carpathian Basin Spelling Competition, organized by the Faculty of Pedagogy at KRE, has transitioned from a traditional paper-based format to a digital platform (Tóth 2021: 365–372). This competition not only requires new competencies and a shift in thinking for both contestants and teachers (Tóth 2021b: 122–124) but also provides participants and valuable data for the research within the *Language Competences in Space and Time* project. This connection offers a unique opportunity to explore how teachers can effectively prepare their students for the competition using positive psychological coaching tools, emphasizing the evolving role of educators in the digital age. Analyzing how teachers adapt to these new demands is crucial, as it has significant implications for their role in student preparation and support. The research uses interdisciplinary tools and a multidisciplinary approach, including psychology, pedagogy, linguistics, coaching and economic-social sciences, to deepen understanding of factors influencing language competence development.[2]

In the section of the questionnaire on teacher motivation, we ask questions about ten complex themes which include the development of the role of the committed and motivated facilitator, mentor, coach-teacher, and the realisation of a successful and strong teacher self-image and the aspects of prestige. We also explore the importance of motivated teaching and learning experiences, autonomous, lifelong, self-directed learning, and how to support individual learning strengths, learning strategies and the development of a flow experience (Neumayerné Streitman 2023b).

Our research aims to explore the topic of safe and creative working and learning environments, as well as teamwork in the teaching and learning process. Additionally, we seek to investigate attitudes towards assessment and failure, along with the impact of reflection on teachers' motivation and effectiveness. We are also examining the demotivating factors that teachers may face, including challenges related to resilience, uncertainty tolerance, and coping strategies (Neumayerné Streitman 2023a: 63–67). Our questionnaire addresses questions surrounding (self-)management in personal, professional, and organizational contexts.

This paper focuses on the concepts and models that informed the theoretical foundation of the teacher motivation section of the questionnaire. I will discuss significance of motivated learning experiences, autonomous lifelong learning, self-directed and reflective practices, and the approaches, methodologies, and tools—such as reflection, positive psychology, and coaching—that support these processes. (Neumayerné Streitman 2023a). A detailed examination of psychological theories associated with inquiry, models of lifelong learning and reflection will be conducted. The investigation aims to elucidate the concept of professional learning, showcase effective models and tools for its motivation, and discern how reflective practices contribute to the evolution of teacher learning and the cultivation of a thriving professional identity.

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[1] I have also discussed this topic in my forthcoming article: Neumayerné Streitman, K. Az ideális, teljesítendő és félt nyelvtanár énképek szerepének tudatosítása a hosszú távú tanári motivációban. To be published in the volume *Language Competences in Space and Time*, edited by Károli University (KRE).

[2] The questionnaire for the research on teacher motivation has been developed with the contributions of our research group members at Károli Gáspár University of the Reformed Church in Hungary, primarily Etelka Tóth and Júlia Szarka, as well as Tamás Csontos.

2 Motivating teacher learning: Theories, models and positive psychological coaching tools

True motivation aims at the enrichment of the whole life and quality of life. It is not just about learning but also about development and change. To ensure a clear discussion, we need to define both terms. When the focus is on the long-term learning processes which are often implicit, we refer to it as "development." Whereas, when the emphasis is on changes in work processes or outcomes, we use the term "change." In a broader sense, learning encompasses both development and change. However, in a more restricted manner, it relates to changes in skills, knowledge, attitudes, and learning abilities (Ruijters & Simons 2004: 5).

My interest lies in positive psychology coaching and language coaching, and the approach I have developed is evident in my university work and English teacher training. Therefore, I was delighted to have the opportunity to visit twice two of the Dutch teacher training partner institutions of the Károli Pedagogical Faculty, CHE in Ede and Driestar in Gouda, with the help of Erasmus+ in 2023. In the Netherlands, the coaching approach is an integral part of (higher) education and teacher training. There is a strong tradition and practice of motivation, reflection, and coaching models incorporated into the courses (Vloed 2021). To understand motivation and teacher learning the following seven models – McClelland's, Bateson's, Dilts', Korthagen's three models, and Ruijters' – along with the theories that have significantly influenced professional learning and reflection, will be described here.[3]

Our exploration encompasses McClelland's Theory of Human Motives, Bateson's Logical Levels of Learning, and Dilts' NeuroLogical Levels of Change, which also serves as an effective coaching tool. The significance of reflection in teacher learning is crucial, prompting our exploration of Korthagen's frameworks, including the ALACT model, the Onion Model, and the Core Reflection model. We examine how continuous reflection can contribute to learning and self-awareness. Simons and Ruijters' Model of Professional Learner Identity sheds light on the connection between learning and professionalism in the teaching field, emphasizing the essence of lifelong learning. Our goal is to understand the nuances of motivating teacher learning, drawing insights from various theories, models, and coaching tools to help develop skilled and inspired professional teacher-learners.

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[3] I owe a debt of gratitude to Keese Van der Vloed for his professional advice in outlining the theoretical background for this paper. Keese Van der Vloed's theory of action and field of expertise are also reflected in his book *Dialogue: 30 Communication Models for Education* (Vloed, 2021).

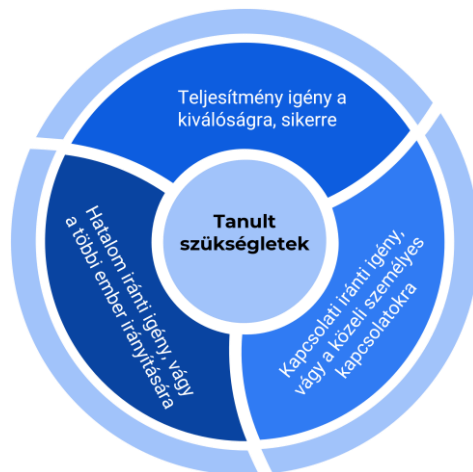## 2.1 Theory of human motives: Insights into achievement, affiliation and power

Figure 1. McClelland's Theory of Human Motives ("Need Theory")

Teacher motivation is crucial for fostering effective teacher learning and for building and sustaining a strong teacher identity. Understanding the underlying psychological drivers of motivation can significantly impact how educators engage with their profession. American psychologist David McClelland's Theory of Human Motives, known as the "Need Theory," provides valuable insights into these drivers by positing that human needs and desires function as motivational forces, influencing individual behavior to satisfy these needs (McClelland 1976: 36). McClelland focuses on acquired needs rather than basic needs, identifying three key social motives that shape human behavior: the Need for Achievement (nAch), the Need for Affiliation (nAff), and the Need for Power (nPow). The Theory of Human Motives provides valuable insights into adult learning. While McClelland's theory highlights external drivers linked to social interactions, Deci and Ryan's Self-Determination Theory (SDT) underscores the importance of internal motivation and the fulfillment of fundamental psychological needs – such as autonomy, competence, and relatedness – for fostering long-term engagement and personal growth (Deci, Kasser & Ryan 1985, Deci & Ryan 2002).[4]

In measuring these motives, McClelland emphasizes that the strength of a particular motive cannot be solely inferred from an individual's behaviour. For instance, actual achievement is influenced by various factors beyond the need for achievement, such as the need for social approval, knowledge, power, skills, and abilities (McClelland 1976: 39). The Need for Achievement reflects the drive to excel in a challenging task. Individuals with a strong need for achievement demonstrate increased effort and performance when the task holds personal significance and is related to general intelligence or leadership skills. They prefer individualistic tasks, seek achievement satisfaction, and establish their standards of excellence (McClelland 1976: 40–46).

The Need for Affiliation represents the desire to be liked and accepted by others, indicating a concern for warm, close relationships. Individuals with a high need for affiliation seek social approval and demonstrate increased effort in cooperative tasks (McClelland 1976: 160–161).

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[4] I have discussed Deci and Ryan's Self-Determination Theory in detail in Neumayerné Streitman (2023a: 62–63).

The Need for Power is characterized by the drive to influence, dominate, or control others. Those with high need for power exhibit emotional reactions in dominance situations, engage in dominance activities, and seek relationships where they can assume a superior position (e.g., boss, leader) (McClelland 1976: 167–170).

Among the above mentioned needs, the Need for Affiliation (nAff) is likely the most characteristic of teachers. Teachers often seek to build strong interpersonal relationships with their learners, colleagues and the broader school community. They place a high value on collaboration, teamwork, and the sense of belonging that arises from being part of a supportive educational environment.

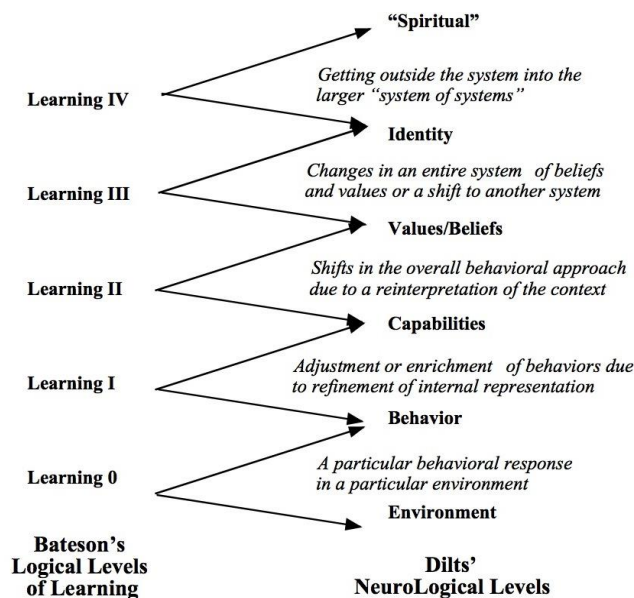## 2.2 Logical levels of learning in human behavior and development

Figure 2. Connections between Bateson's Logical Levels of Learning and Dilts' NeuroLogical Levels (Dilts 2014)

The logical levels of learning, initially formulated by anthropologist Gregory Bateson in his 1964 essay "The Logical Categories of Learning and Communication," present a hierarchical structure based on Bertrand Russell's Theory of Logical Types (Bateson 1987: 284). According to Bateson, there are four levels of learning, each incorporating and organizing elements from the previous level, with gradually greater impact on the individual or system (Dilts 2014).

The first level of learning involves perception or behaviour in an interaction sequence, with each element acting as a stimulus, response, or reinforcement based on the interrupted sequence of the interaction (Bateson 1987: 297). The second level is defined as learning about the contexts in which the first level of learning occurs (Levin 1975: 4), enabling individuals to improve choices and performance through adaptation to the learning context. It involves predicting emergency patterns based on prior experiences, allowing for contextual adaptation (Bateson 1987: 300). The second level of learning includes learning how to perceive the world, form meaningful gestalts, and make habitual value judgments, shaping what psychologists refer to

as character. The second learning level is self-validating and generally resistant to environmental correction due to its subjective nature (Levin 1975: 4). In human affairs, the second level of learning is evident in daily communication and interactions, enabling individuals to describe human beings and punctuate human interactions accurately (Bateson 1987: 303–305). The third level of learning is considered a profound redefinition of the self, which involves a reorganization of character. It is a challenging process that rarely happens in humans (Bateson 1987: 307). It addresses contradictions within the premises of the second level of learning, often resulting in changes in acquired habits or limitations acquired on the second level. The fourth and last level of learning operates on a spiritual level, transcending individual identity to encompass a broader, interconnected understanding of existence (Bateson 1987: 309).

Robert B. Dilts further developed Bateson's work into the NeuroLogical Levels model, presented in "Beliefs: Pathways to Health and Well-Being" and "Changing Beliefs with NLP," both published in 1990 (Dilts 2014). This model describes life on six levels, namely Environment, Behavior, Capabilities, Values and Beliefs, Identity, and Spiritual, each influencing human interactions and relationships. The Environment is the foundational level, determining contextual factors, while Behavior encompasses specific actions within a system. Capabilities involve individual or organizational skills and strategies for action, determining how actions are selected and directed within the environment. Values and Beliefs provide motivation and guidelines for actions, determining how events are given meaning. Identity encompasses the sense of self supported by values and beliefs, including both ego and soul elements. The highest level, Spiritual, is characterized by an individual's sense of belonging to a larger system and provides a sense of vision, meaning, and purpose for actions, capabilities, beliefs, and role identity (Dilts 2014).

Dilts' NeuroLogical Levels model provides a valuable coaching tool for teachers engaged in professional learning, offering a framework that allows them to independently reflect on their teaching practices and align their behavior with their beliefs, values, and a greater sense of self. The strengths of this model lie in its ability to capture the complexity of human experience and its emphasis on change as a holistic process. By addressing multiple levels of existence – from the external environment to deeply ingrained beliefs and identity – the model recognizes that change at one level can influence and be influenced by other levels, leading to a more profound and lasting transformation. This holistic approach ensures that changes are not merely superficial but are integrated into the individuals broader sense of self, making them more sustainable and meaningful. As a result, the model is particularly valuable in education, where teachers can use it to identify areas for growth and refinement, establish long-term goals, and foster a comprehensive approach to their professional development. This is especially important for teachers guiding students through their own developmental processes, as understanding the interconnectedness of various life aspects is crucial for achieving deep and lasting outcomes.

2.3   Reflection and teacher learning

In the realm of English language teaching, Kata Csizér's research on teacher motivation brings forth a compelling revelation. Reflection, despite being relatively underexplored in motivation studies, emerges as a singular factor with a profound positive impact on teacher behavior and professional development (Csizér 2020: 169–173, 177, 197–201). Recognizing the pivotal role of reflection in motivating educators sets the foundation for a more profound examination of its implications for

teacher learning (Korthagen 2017: 392–393, Kubanyiova 2009: 325–326, Reinders & Lázaro 2011). This section of the paper examines the dynamics of reflection and its multifaceted dimensions, highlighting its potential to drive meaningful change and enhance professional growth.

2.3.1 Reflection: Thinking, feeling, wanting (the three dimensions in teacher behaviour and teacher learning)

According to Korthagen's model, reflection serves as a crucial tool for teachers and professionals, allowing them to analyze, discuss, evaluate and adapt their practices consciously and systematically, fostering continuous improvement (Calderhead & Gates 1993: 2, Korthagen 2010: 386, 2017: 392). Contrary to a one-sided rational approach to learning, (Ross 1987) Korthagen emphasizes the multifaceted nature of teaching, where cognition, emotion and motivation collectively shape behavior (Korthagen 2010, Korthagen 2017).

Recognizing these interconnected dimensions, he underscores the importance of considering teachers as unique individuals, urging a tailored approach in teacher education that accommodates their distinct needs, preferences, personalities, and circumstances (Korthagen 2017: 391). Teacher learning encompasses a multifaceted process, extending beyond the mere acquisition of knowledge. Similar to Dilts' NeuroLogical Levels model with its holistic approach, Korthagen's onion model also emphasizes the complexity, unconscious processes, multidimensionality, and multi-level learning, highlighting the intricate layers that contribute to teachers' professional growth. (Korthagen 2017: 398).

In the realm of reflective practice, Korthagen distinguishes between action-oriented and meaning-oriented reflection, emphasizing the need for a more profound deeper understanding of the underlying processes within teaching situations. Action-oriented reflection focuses on improving one's actions and determining "what to do" in specific teaching scenarios. Similarly, meaning-oriented reflection delves deeper, fostering an awareness that extends beyond the cognitive realm. Korthagen advocates a reflection that encompasses the dimensions of thinking, feeling, wanting and acting, rejecting the notion of using reflection solely in a rational or cognitive manner. He asserts that meaning-oriented reflection contributes to professional development over time, contrasting it with the limited impact of action-oriented reflection (Korthagen 2017: 393–395).

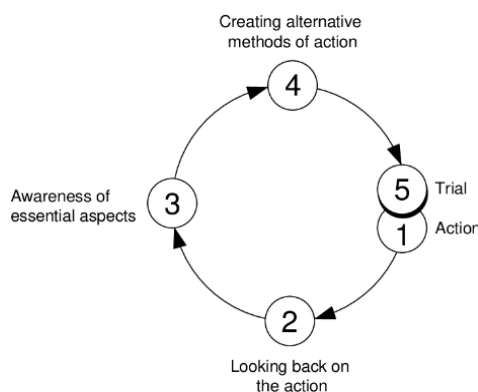### 2.3.2 The ALACT model for reflective practice

Figure 3. The ALACT model of reflection (Korthagen 2017: 392)

The ALACT model, developed by Korthagen in the 1980s, presents a comprehensive framework that defines the best learning process from practice. This model unfolds in five phases, each contributing to a full reflective cycle. Starting with the initial phase of *Action*, the subsequent stages involve *Looking back on the action*, *Developing awareness of essential aspects*, *Creating alternative methods of action*, and concluding with *Trial*. The Trial phase serves as the culmination of the current process and the beginning of a new reflection cycle (Korthagen & Vasalos 2010, Korthagen 2014).

In contrast to conventional action-oriented reflections, the ALACT model emphasizes the importance of a meaning-oriented approach. This paradigm shift advocates a reflection process that goes beyond mere rational analysis of actions, extending its focus to motivational and emotional dimensions (Korthagen 2014, Korthagen 2017: 392–393).

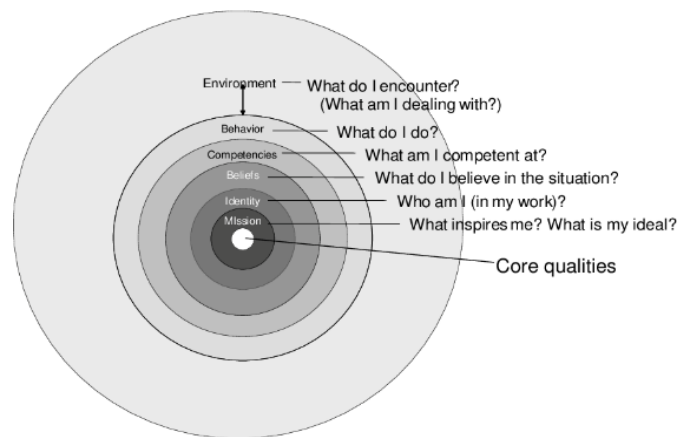### 2.3.3 Stages of reflective practice: The onion model

Figure 4. Onion model of the levels of learning (Korthagen & Nuijten 2018: 93, Figure 10.3)

The significance of meaning-oriented reflection, demonstrated by the ALACT model's third phase, is emphasised by its pivotal role in the reflective process. However, the ALACT model primarily delineates practical steps in reflection, offering limited guidance on the reflection's quality and content. To fill this gap, the onion model was introduced (Korthagen 2017: 395, Korthagen & Vasalos 2010).

The onion model, comprising six layers and an additional seventh layer known as the core, serves as a comprehensive framework for understanding the various levels of learning intertwined with the reflective process. Beginning with the Environment, which signifies the experienced context, and extending through layers such as Behavior, Competencies, Beliefs, Identity, and Mission, the model culminates in the Core, representing the individual's intrinsic core qualities (Korthagen 2017: 395, Korthagen & Vasalos 2010). This multi-layered approach helps comprehend the complexities of reflection and the broader range of learning levels.
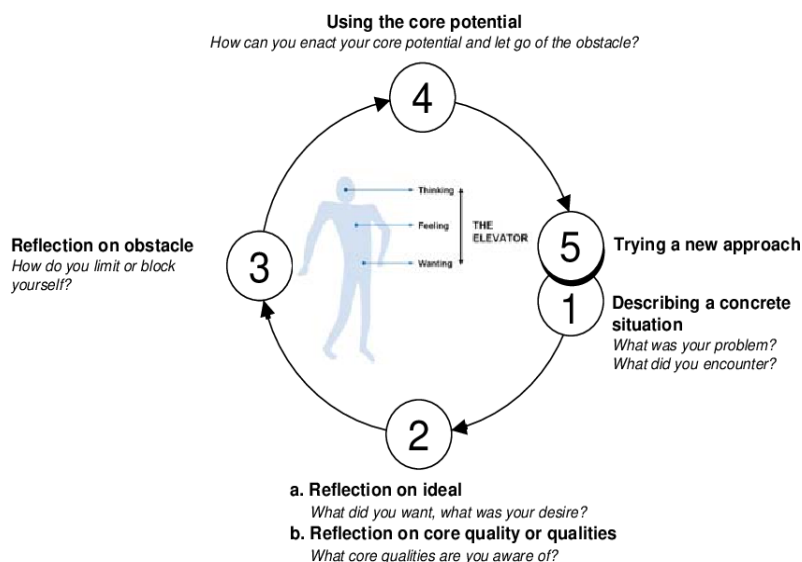
2.3.4 Core reflection

Figure 5. The five-steps of core reflection (Korthagen & Nuijten 2018: 93, Figure 10.2)

Korthagen (2017) asserts that delving into the inner levels of the onion model during reflection enhances a teacher's understanding of underlying processes within a teaching situation, contributing to effective behaviour, aligning all layers of the onion model is recommended to enhance teacher effectiveness. Additionally, Core Reflection, identified as a catalyst for positive outcomes in teacher learning and effectiveness, promotes awareness of ideals and core qualities linked to the situation under reflection (Korthagen 2017: 395). It emphasizes recognizing internal obstacles hindering these ideals, fostering cognitive and emotional awareness, and encouraging autonomy in applying core reflection (Meijer et al. 2009: 300). The Core Reflection ends with a focus on taking concrete action, where the teacher plans steps to integrate insights into their future practice, aligning more closely with their ideal self (Kubanyiova 2009).[5]

It is worth comparing Korthagen's Core Reflection Model and Ignatian Examen. While Ignatius of Loyola's Examen is rooted in spiritual reflection and growth, and Korthagen's Core Reflection Model focuses on professional and personal development, both processes emphasize awareness, gratitude, emotional insight, focused reflection, and forward-looking actions. Each approach aims to bring individuals closer to their ideal selves, whether in a spiritual or professional context.[6]

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[5] Kubainyova discusses the beneficial effects of the ideal self.

[6] An in-depth discussion of Saint Ignatius's Examen can be found in the essay "Spiritualitás, elkötelezettség és identitás: az önsegítő eszközök szerepe a vezetésben" by Neumayerné Streitman, K., Szarka, J., and Tóth, E., to be published in the volume *Language Competences in Space and Time*, edited by Károli University (KRE).

2.3.5   Positive psychology in education: Embracing core qualities for strength-based approaches and fostering 'good teaching'

In the field of positive psychology, Korthagen proposes a shift in perspective from problems to strengths, focusing on the significance of core qualities in fostering "good teaching." "Good teaching," according to Korthagen, encompasses fostering meaningful connections with students, cultivating a supportive learning environment, and promoting holistic development. It focuses on understanding individual students' needs, strengths, and challenges, while incorporating reflective practices to improve teaching methods and outcomes. Empathy, communication, and adaptability are emphasized to respond effectively to diverse learning styles, ultimately empowering students to become lifelong learners equipped with the skills, knowledge, and confidence to succeed in an ever-changing world (Korthagen 2014: 80–82).

Professional teachers' core qualities include positive personal attributes such as creativity, trust, care, courage, sensitivity, decisiveness, spontaneity, commitment, and flexibility (Korthagen 2017: 396). Positive psychology posits that, rather than fixating on weaknesses and problems, attention should be directed towards an individual's positive traits, known as character strengths, as conceptualized in the VIA (Values in Action) classification by Martin Seligman (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi 2000, Seligman & Adler 2018, Neumayerné Streitman 2022: 75). Central to this perspective is the growth mindset, introduced by Carol Dweck, which emphasizes the importance of viewing abilities and intelligence as developable through effort and perseverance (Dweck 1999, Dweck 2006).

Moreover, this philosophy asserts that individuals can use their strengths not only for effective actions but also for personal fulfilment (Korthagen & Vasalos 2010, Csikszentmihalyi 1997: 72–89, Schüler & Engeser 2009). Korthagen contends that core reflection, centered on core qualities, facilitates the experience of a state of flow, a concept developed by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, which describes the immersive and fulfilling state of being deeply engaged in an activity (Korthagen & Vasalos 2010, Csikszentmihalyi 2014: 129–151, Shernoff et al. 2003: 158–176). By focusing on positive attributes and encouraging a growth mindset, educators can foster environments that promote both academic success and personal well-being (Csikszentmihalyi et al. 2005, Lee 2005).

2.3.6   Transformation in the reflection paradigm

Within the framework of Korthagen's core reflection approach (Korthagen & Vasalos 2010), a departure from the conventional view of reflection is proposed, involving a re-evaluation of several fundamental principles. Traditionally, reflection has been retrospective, delving into past actions, experiences, and events (Korthagen & Vasalos 2010). This approach has historically prioritized problem-centric perspectives, accentuating challenges and difficulties. Additionally, it has highlighted rationality, emphasizing logical analysis and reasoning within the reflective process, and primarily focused on the outer layers of the onion model, exploring observable behaviour and environmental factors (Szivák 2010: 19–20, Korthagen & Vasalos 2010).

In contrast, Korthagen proposes a paradigm shift that encourages reflection on one's ideals, which goes beyond mere cognitive engagement to include emotional and motivational dimensions (thinking, feeling, wanting) (Korthagen & Vasalos 2010). This new approach argues that reflection is not limited to past experiences; positive anticipation of future outcomes, as shown

in the ALACT model, is also considered essential. Moving beyond the exclusive emphasis on rationality, the revised perspective underlines the importance of emotional and motivational considerations, necessitating a focus on the inner layers of the onion model and core qualities. Moreover, it emphasizes the importance of contemplating the (ideal) future within the reflective process (Korthagen & Vasalos 2010, Szivák 2010: 19–20).

Furthermore, alongside future-oriented reflection, attention to the present is seen as crucial in addressing teaching situations. Connecting with one's core qualities in the present is considered an effective strategy for overcoming internal and external obstacles hindering the realization of future ideal outcomes. Mindfulness is identified as a valuable tool in fostering a state of presence. The core reflection approach and mindfulness enhance each other in fostering self-awareness and personal growth (Perczel-Forintos 2017). Core reflection encourages individuals to explore their core qualities and values, while mindfulness involves being fully present in the moment without judgment (Kabat-Zinn 2003, Perczel-Forintos 2011). Together, they promote holistic well-being and empower individuals to lead more fulfilling lives (Korthagen & Vasalos 2010, Mercer & Dörnyei 2020: 1–3).

2.4   Model of professional learner identity

To develop a strong professional learner identity, it is essential to incorporate a holistic approach and an emphasis on complexity – qualities that are similarly reflected in Dilts' NeuroLogical Levels model and Korthagen's onion model. Focusing on the topic of professional identity, after extensive research and publication (Ruijters & Simons 2001, 2015, Simons & Ruijters 2004, 2008, 2014), Dutch researchers Manon C. P. Ruijters and P. Robert-Jan Simons aimed to integrate their prior models into a unified conceptual framework for professional learning and work-related learning (Ruijters & Simons 2020: 32–56). Defining professionalism, as Ruijters and Simons articulated, goes beyond traditional associations with specific occupations. It is characterized by a mindset that prioritizes continuous learning in practice, which is applicable to individuals in various professional fields. This mindset includes a clear vision, distinctive methodology, and a repertoire of high-quality tools and techniques. Professional learning and work-related learning involve three main functions: engaging in practical work with students or clients, maintaining connections with or conducting research, and conveying knowledge through teaching. Sustaining professionalism relies on active participation in practical work, allowing for experiential learning from and within one's professional activities. Professionals must remain engaged in current research in their fields and actively participate in their experiences to advance their expertise (Ruijters & Simons 2020: 37).
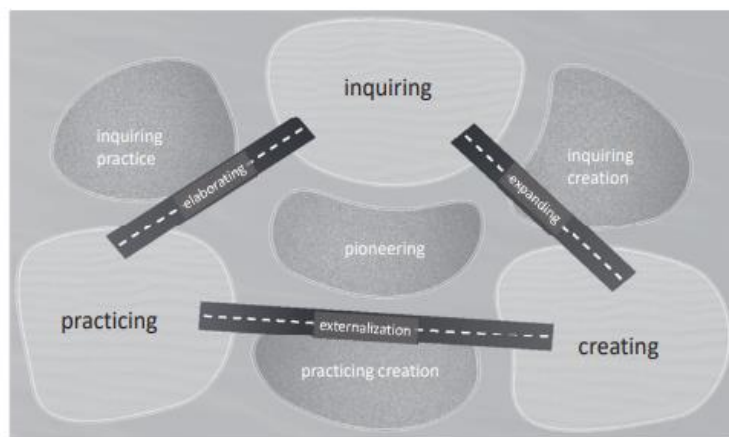
2.4.1   The learning landscape model

Figure 6. The learning landscape metaphor (Ruijters & Simons 2020: 39, Figure 1)

The learning landscape metaphor and learning preferences (Ruijters & Simons 2020), along with Dilts' NeuroLogical Levels model and Korthagen's onion model, can assist teachers in recognizing their strengths, weaknesses, and learning strategies and preferences. These insights can serve as tools for facilitating complex change, enabling them to become authentic professionals. In the learning landscape metaphor, the various methods of learning (Simons & Ruijters 2008) were conceptualized as islands, bridges, and polders functioning in an organizational context. The metaphor comprises "islands of learning," representing three fundamental ways of learning: through practice, inquiry, and creation. Complementary elements in the learning landscape, such as bridges and polders, serve to establish connections between the outcomes of islands, with bridges connecting them and polders creating new land to connect these islands[7] (Ruijters & Simons 2020).

The learning landscape model proposes that professionals engage in three interconnected learning approaches: *elaboration*, where they enhance their work competencies through practical learning; *expansion*, involving the explicit learning from research to develop theoretical knowledge; and *externalization*, where they contribute practical and theoretical insights to the advancement of the profession or within team and organizational contexts (Ruijters & Simons 2020: 37). Despite their interconnected nature, the three forms of work-based learning – elaboration, expansion, and externalization – do not operate as overlapping domains, but rather as distinct entities akin to islands, as described by the authors (Simons & Ruijters 2004: 2–8, Ruijters & Simons 2020: 38).

The "islands" encompass the different facets of learning. *Practicing* denotes the automatic learning which occurs during work, problem-solving, and daily life. It involves unplanned and unstructured learning and results in experiential knowledge and abilities. *Inquiring* encompasses learning that provides new knowledge and skills, involving activities such as research, reading, attending conferences, conducting applied research, and engaging in discussions. *Creating* involves learning in the context of crafting new teaching materials, tools, products,

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7   The term "polder," crucial in the Dutch cultural context, signifies the "creation of new land in the sea" (Ruijters & Simons 2020: 38).

publications, or services, leading to design knowledge. This form of learning occurs when one attempts to develop or design something, revealing both existing and unknown knowledge (Ruijters & Simons 2020: 38).

The "bridges" link practice, inquiry, and creation, each providing distinct forms of knowledge. Integrating these realms is essential for targeted professional growth, allowing for clear articulation and sharing of experiences, pattern recognition, and learning loops. Within bridges, the results of one learning approach are linked to another. The bridge between practicing and inquiring is called *elaboration*. It involves making implicit knowledge from practice explicit for further investigation and practical application. Similarly, the bridge of elaboration facilitates the transfer of knowledge gained through inquiry into practical application.

The bridge between inquiring and creating, known as *expanding*, connects new knowledge with potential teaching materials, products, tools, or services. It explores what can be developed further based on this knowledge, identifying relevant target groups. Additionally, expanding helps identify knowledge gaps that need to be addressed for effective design, development, or publication. The third bridge, *externalizing*, connects new materials, tools, publications, products, and services to practice (Ruijters & Simons 2020: 39).

The "polders" symbolize collective connections between islands, fostering new territory. They integrate learning processes through collaborative efforts, allowing practitioners to collectively investigate their practices. Another polder promotes innovation through inquiry and creation, evolving teaching materials, tools, or services. Another collaborative space, merging practice and innovation, promotes the exchange of ideas and the adoption of novel methodologies to enhance teaching practices. This entails practitioners working with designers to tailor teaching materials and methods to their unique contexts using intermediate tools.

The fourth collaborative space intersects all three domains – practice, research, and innovation – which leads to the evolution of teaching practices and materials through experimentation and pilot projects. Innovative practitioners participate in pilots and prototype development, blending practical application, academic inquiry, and creative exploration. Positioned amidst transformative endeavours, these collaborative spaces signify a paradigm shift, recognizing the necessity for a fresh perspective (Ruijters & Simons 2020: 40).

2.4.2   *Learning preferences*

Learning preferences encompass five overlapping patterns of preferences that evolve over time and throughout one's career.

Apperception involves learning from experts in a specific field, relying on observation and imitation. Individuals with this preference value real-world challenges, learning by example, and resisting role-play and exercises they see as childish. Their focus is on practical application and navigating complex environments, aiming to avoid mistakes and turn disadvantages into advantages.

Participation focuses on social learning, highlighting interaction and collaboration. Knowledge, seen subjectively, gains shared meaning through communication. Those inclined to participate thrive on interaction, discussions, and the exchange of ideas within a group. Their learning process is facilitated in an environment where trust and interest among group members are maintained. While mentorship or coaching support can be beneficial, the division of tasks

within a group and rotating chairmanship provide effective alternatives for these learners (Ruijters & Simons 2020: 42).

Acquisition involves a strong emphasis on the transfer of knowledge and the acquisition of skills. Individuals with this preference value goal setting, structured learning processes, and guidance from experts or teachers. They perceive knowledge to be objective and prioritize acquiring it in an uncontaminated environment. Mistake avoidance is integral, viewing errors as indications of planning lapses, inadequate preparation, or insufficient knowledge. These learners have clear learning objectives, focusing on achieving tangible outcomes, and incorporate regular testing, examination to measure their knowledge.

Exercising focuses on bringing learning closer to the workplace, emphasizing on-the-job training, work experience, and role-play. The main concern is practical application of acquired knowledge. Consequently, training is ideally conducted in realistic situations that closely mirror everyday practice. A crucial aspect is creating a safe learning environment where learners feel comfortable making mistakes.

Discovery, on the other hand, sees life and learning as synonymous, with an eternal process of finding one's way through and understanding different situations. This preference requires a significant degree of freedom, as learners inclined towards discovery prefer to chart their own path, seeking inspiration and meaning in their environment, friends, and the people around them (Ruijters & Simons 2020: 42–44).

These five preferences can overlap, often incorporating two or three preferences simultaneously. Rather than considering them as fixed learning styles, they are viewed as transient patterns of preferences. (Ruijters & Simons 2020: 43). In practical applications, these preferences serve to foster mutual understanding, tailor training and teaching approaches to align with the majority of (teacher) learners' preferences, distinguish between learner groups, and form the foundation for implementing "how to learn" strategies.

The learning landscape model, characterized by islands, bridges, and polders, provides a holistic framework for understanding various forms of professional learning. Concurrently, learning professionals demonstrate a range of preferences that extend beyond rigid styles, reflecting a spectrum of overlapping patterns. Recognizing these preferences as dynamic rather than fixed styles provides educators with valuable insights for tailoring their approaches to their own effective learning and fostering safe learning environments, first for themselves and subsequently for their learners.

3   Conclusion

All in all in this paper I have outlined the literature I gathered to gain a thorough understanding of key theories and models and comprehend the complex concept of the professional learner-teacher, motivation, and the importance of self-reflection in the learning process. This foundation enabled the development of the research questionnaire.

It is important to integrate McClelland's Theory of Human Motives, Bateson's Logical Levels of Learning, Dilts' NeuroLogical Levels of Change, and Korthagen's reflective models to have a complex understanding of a professional learner. McClelland's focus on intrinsic motivation aligns teachers' goals with core needs, while Bateson and Dilts' models explore the cognitive and behavioral dimensions. Korthagen's ALACT, Onion, and Core Reflection models

emphasize deep, continuous reflection, promoting self-awareness and adaptability in teaching. Simons and Ruijters' Model of Professional Learner Identity further underscores the importance of lifelong learning in sustaining a dynamic professional identity.

By combining these models with self-directed learning strategies, we gain a comprehensive view on how teachers can effectively monitor and analyze both their own and their students' learning needs, ensuring continuous growth and transformation. Lifelong learning involves not only control and supervision but also overcoming obstacles through conscious resources like joy, creativity, curiosity, and resilience in discomfort. These elements are vital for facilitating personal and professional growth. This comprehensive approach was the foundation to the creation of the teacher motivation questionnaire.

Due to length limitations, the essays in the forthcoming volume *Language Competences in Space and Time* will focus on the intersection of professional identity, self-awareness and leadership within the teaching profession.[8] These essays will explore theories, strategies and tools for cultivating professional identity and achieving success in this dynamic field. The deep interconnection between professional identity and professional learning is a central theme, with professional identity serving as the foundation for integrating long-term perspectives, personal values, and organizational contexts.

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[8] Neumayerné Streitman, K. Az ideális, teljesítendő és félt nyelvtanár énképek szerepének tudatosítása a hosszú távú tanári motivációban; A sikeres professzionális identitás kialakításának és megvalósításának fontossága a tanárképzésben (forthcoming).

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