

# In search of the essence of a good teacher: towards a more holistic approach in teacher education

Fred A. J. Korthagen\*

*IVLOS Institute of Education, Utrecht University, P.O. Box 80127, Utrecht 3508 TC, The Netherlands*

Received 22 March 2002; received in revised form 3 July 2003; accepted 1 October 2003

## Abstract

There are two central questions determining the pedagogy of teacher education: (1) What are the essential qualities of a good teacher, and (2) How can we help people to become good teachers? Our objective is not to present a definitive answer to these questions, but to discuss an umbrella model of levels of change that could serve as a framework for reflection and development. The model highlights relatively new areas of research, viz. teachers' professional identity and mission. Appropriate teacher education interventions at the different levels of change are discussed, as well as implications for new directions in teacher education.

© 2003 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

*Keywords:* Teacher characteristics; Teacher competences; Teacher reflection; Pedagogical task; Teacher identity; Mission

*Consciously, we teach what we know; unconsciously, we teach who we are.*

Hamachek (1999, p. 209).

## 1. Introduction

A practical example:

A teacher educator is having a supervisory session with Judith, a student teacher in mathematics. Judith is annoyed with a student named Peter. She has a feeling that Peter is trying to get away with as little work as possible. Today was a good example. In the previous lesson, she had given the class an

assignment for the next three lessons in which they were to work in pairs. The assignment would be wrapped up in the third lesson with a report. Today was the second day. Judith expected all the students to be hard at work, and during this lesson, she was to answer questions from students experiencing problems. Then she noticed that Peter was working on a completely different subject. Seeing this, her response was 'Oh, so you're working on something else... looks like you're going to fail this assignment, too!' In retrospect, she is dissatisfied with her reaction, which she realizes was not effective.

In this example it was clear to the supervisor and to Judith herself that in the specific confrontation with Peter, Judith was not really being a 'good teacher'. But what was the underlying cause of it in

\*Tel.: +31-30-2531723.

E-mail address: F.A.J.Korthagen@ivlos.uu.nl (F.A.J. Korthagen).

Judith? Lack of competencies? Or was it that she does have the right competencies, but just did not use them? Or is she perhaps allergic to Peter? Or does she have an ineffective view of the role of a teacher?

And, even if the teacher educator or Judith would know this underlying cause or if they would unravel it in the course of the supervisory meeting, would it be clear how to help Judith in dealing with such situations? How could she become a 'good teacher'? Would that require modeling, instruction, training, or reflection?

These are questions simple to ask, but not so simple to answer. At the same time, the situation and the questions that surface are characteristic of many others occurring each day in teacher education. They bring us to the heart of the pedagogy of teacher education.

This is why this article discusses two central questions determining the design of teacher education programs and the work of teacher educators:

1. What are the essential qualities of a good teacher?
2. How can we help people to become good teachers?

However, the objective of this article is not to present definitive answers to these questions, which according to Hamachek (1999) are still unresolved. We believe the answers may be different depending on the context, and perhaps it is even impossible or pedagogically undesirable to formulate a definitive description of "the good teacher". So, we believe it would be too ambitious to try to introduce any norm describing what a good teacher should look like. However, we do intend to offer a framework for any serious discussion of such a norm. What we wish to point out is that any attempt to describe the essential qualities of a good teacher should take into account that various levels are involved that fundamentally differ from each other. The level of teacher competencies is just one of these. We will introduce a model clarifying this point, and offering a framework for thinking about the two questions.

There are various reasons why such a framework may be important, especially at the present time. The first reason has to do with the changes in the aims and methods of teacher education taking place worldwide, due in part to the serious shortages of teachers. In many places, short-track teacher education programs have been introduced, and more and more of the actual education of teachers is taking place inside the schools. This raises a number of questions about the quality of these programs, questions that can only be answered when we have some kind of answer to the question "what is a good teacher?" Sometimes, the complexity of this question seems to be overlooked by policy-makers.

The second reason why the two questions may be important is that in teacher education, there is considerable emphasis on promoting reflection in teachers, but at the same time, it is not always clear exactly *what* teachers are supposed to reflect *on* when wishing to become better teachers. What are important contents of reflection?

Finally, the pedagogy of teacher education strongly builds on insights from other disciplines, especially psychology. In that respect, it is important to note that new developments have taken place within psychology and psychotherapy, developments that have not yet much influenced mainstream thinking about teacher education. Hence, one of the objectives of this article is to discuss these developments, such as transpersonal psychology, positive psychology, the status-dynamic approach in psychotherapy, and to consider their implications for the work of teacher educators.

## 2. A theoretical model for framing the question 'what is a good teacher?'

Trying to put the essential qualities of a good teacher into words is a difficult undertaking. At present, all over the world, many attempts are being made to describe these qualities by means of lists of competencies, something that seems to be strongly supported by policy-makers (Becker, Kennedy, & Hundesmarck, 2003). However, doubts have been raised about the validity, reliability and practicality of such lists, and many

researchers question whether it is actually possible to describe the qualities of good teachers in terms of competencies (e.g., Barnett, 1994; Hyland, 1994).

It is remarkable that in this respect, history is repeating itself. Around the middle of the 20th century, the 'performance-based' or 'competency-based' model in teacher education started to gain ground. The idea was that concrete, observable behavioral criteria could serve as a basis for the training of novices. For a number of years, so-called process-product studies were carried out, in an effort to identify the teaching behaviors that displayed the highest correlation with the learning results of children. This was then translated into the concrete *competencies* that should be acquired by teachers.

This development, however, led to serious problems. In order to ensure sufficient validity and reliability in the assessment of teachers, long detailed lists of skills were formulated, which gradually resulted in a kind of fragmentation of the teacher's role. In practice, these long lists proved highly unwieldy. Moreover, it was becoming increasingly apparent that this view of teaching took insufficient account of the fact that a good teacher cannot simply be described in terms of certain isolated competencies, which can be learned in a number of training sessions:

In the first place, it is a fallacy to assume that the methods of the experts either can or should be taught directly to beginners. (Combs, Blume, Newman, & Wass, 1974, p. 4)

Moreover, Lowyck (1978, p. 215) stressed that teaching behavior can only be understood when the original context of the specific teaching behavior is included in the interpretation. Others criticize the competency-based model because it is rigid and pedagogically wrong (e.g., Hyland, 1994). In this light, it is noteworthy that in many places in the world we are yet seeing the revival of a view of teaching and teacher education focusing on competencies.

Around 1970, a contrasting view of the way teachers should be educated emerged, known as Humanistic Based Teacher Education (HBTE), in which more attention was directed towards the person of the teacher. HBTE originated in

humanistic psychology, a movement whose well-known representatives were Rogers and Maslow. It was promoted, amongst others, by Combs et al. (1974) at the University of Florida in Gainesville, and by the University of California School of Education at Santa Barbara, where George Brown and his colleagues pursued the notion of 'confluent education', in which thinking and feeling "flow" together in the learning process (see, for example, Shapiro, 1998). Joyce (1975, p. 130) notes that HBTE stresses above all the *unicity and dignity of the individual*. In this view of education, a central role is reserved for personal growth (Maslow, 1968, uses the term self-actualization). As Joyce (1975, p. 132) maintains, the viewpoint of HBTE cannot be reconciled with the laying down of standardized teaching competencies.

HBTE failed to obtain broad support. However, the fact that this movement focused attention on the *person of the teacher* was of importance to the further development of teacher education. For example, Combs et al. (1974) devote an entire chapter to 'the self' of the effective teacher.

This classical controversy between a competency-based view of teachers and an emphasis on the teacher's self can still be found in present discussions on teaching and teacher education. Where policy-makers generally focus on the importance of outcomes in terms of competencies, many researchers emphasize the more personal characteristics of teachers (e.g., Tickle, 1999), such as enthusiasm, flexibility, or love of children. However, we may have to guard ourselves against narrowing down the discussion to this classical dichotomy. More factors seem to be involved. In order to broaden the discussion, the model visualized in Fig. 1 may be helpful. This so-called 'onion model' is an adaptation of what is known in the literature as Bateson's model (see, for example, Dilts, 1990).<sup>1</sup> It shows that there are various levels

<sup>1</sup>In the literature, one often finds references to 'the Bateson model', in which the levels are visualized as stacked (see, for example, Dilts, 1990). However, Gregory Bateson (1904–1980) never described such a model, not even in the publications to which many authors refer. Thus, the form of the model that appears in Fig. 1 cannot in fact be described as 'the Bateson model' either. In the present article, we refer to 'a model of levels of change', or briefly 'the onion'.

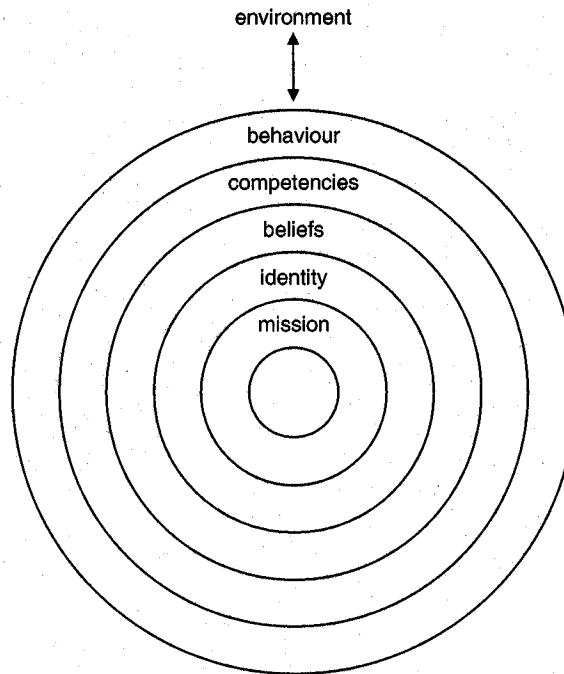


Fig. 1. The onion: a model of levels of change.

in people that can be influenced. Only the outer levels (environment and behavior) can be directly observed by others. Below, we will discuss each of the levels, which can be seen as different perspectives from which we can look at how teachers function. From each perspective, there will be a different answer to the question of the essential qualities of a good teacher, while it is also possible to employ various perspectives parallel to one another.

The outermost levels are those of the *environment* (the class, the students, the school) and *behavior*. These are the levels that seem to attract the most attention from student teachers: they often focus on problems in their classes, and the question how to deal with these problems.

Very influential to the level of behavior is the next level, the level of *competencies* (the latter including knowledge, for example subject matter knowledge). We have already discussed this level.

In order to make a clear distinction between the levels of behavior and of competencies, it is important to stress that competencies are generally conceived of as *an integrated body of knowledge*,

*skills, and attitudes* (Stoof, Martens, & Van Merriënboer, 2000). As such, they represent a potential for behavior, and not the behavior itself. It depends on the circumstances whether the competencies are really put into practice, i.e. expressed in behavior (Caprara & Cervone, 2003).

Before discussing the other three levels, we can at this point already note an important assumption behind the model, namely that the outer levels can influence the inner levels: the environment can influence a teacher's behavior (a difficult class may trigger other reactions from the teacher than a friendly one), and through behavior that is repeated often enough, one develops the competency to also use it in other circumstances. A reverse influence, however, also exists, i.e., from the inside to the outside. For example, one's behavior can have an impact on the environment (a teacher who praises a child, may influence this child), and one's competencies determine the behavior one is able to show.

We will now discuss the next three levels in more detail. First, we realize that a teacher's competencies are determined by his or her *beliefs*. For

example, if a teacher believes that attention to pupils' feelings is just "soft" and unnecessary, he or she will probably not develop the competency to show empathic understanding. The level of beliefs has begun to draw international attention since about 1980, under the influence of the so-called cognitive shift in psychology. Researchers studying the behavior of teachers and how they were trained, stressed that it is important to know what teachers think, what their beliefs are (see, for example, Clark, 1986; Pajares, 1992). The beliefs teachers hold with regard to learning and teaching determine their actions, a point often overlooked in the more behaviorist approach. Various authors (e.g., Feiman-Nemser, 1983) state that teachers have themselves spent many years as students in schools, during which time they have developed their own beliefs about teaching, many of which are diametrically opposed to those presented to them during their teacher education. For example, they may have developed the belief that teaching is transmission of knowledge, and most teacher educators find this belief not very beneficial to becoming a good teacher (Richardson, 1997). However, in most cases, it is these old beliefs that prevail (Wubbels, 1992).

This has led to a development in teacher education in which the emphasis is less on the transfer of scientific knowledge (or 'formal knowledge', as Fenstermacher, 1994, calls it), and more on becoming conscious of one's own 'personal practical knowledge' (Clandinin, 1986). This practical knowledge usually takes the form of *images*. An example is the image of a teacher that many teachers have retained from their own school days: someone standing at the front of the classroom and explaining things. Korthagen and Lagerwerf (1996) emphasize that not only visual images or purely cognitive aspects are involved here, but also emotional (compare Hargreaves, 1998), volitional and behavioral aspects. They use the term Gestalts to refer to cohesive wholes of earlier experiences, role models, needs, values, feelings, images and routines, which are—often unconsciously—evoked by concrete situations (see for an elaboration of the concept of Gestalt Korthagen & Lagerwerf, 1996; Korthagen, Kessels, Koster, Lagerwerf, & Wubbels, 2001). To take an example: a student

teacher is faced with a student he sees as unmotivated. This student immediately triggers old images and feelings, along with the desire to change something in that student and its accompanying behavioral inclination. It is not inconceivable that, at a stroke, all the knowledge provided during his professional preparation will be nullified, and replaced by that Gestalt. The student teacher may for example seek a confrontation with the student, even though the theory on interpersonal classroom behavior (Wubbels & Levy, 1993) says that in such a situation the teacher would do better to opt for cooperative rather than oppositional behavior.

More recently, many researchers have turned to the stories of teachers. This so-called *narrative approach* is based on the premise that the ways in which teachers think about education is embedded in the stories they tell each other and themselves (Carter, 1993). Moreover, a shift of accent within this narrative approach gradually became apparent. Initially, it was considered important to find out how teachers thought about education. Today, more and more attention is being paid to the *beliefs people have about themselves*. This is the fifth level in the onion model, the level referring to how one defines oneself, in other words, to how a person sees his or her (*professional*) *identity*. In the next section, we will describe this fifth level of Fig. 1 in more detail, as there are some interesting developments in this area.

### 3. Teachers' professional identity and its development

#### 3.1. *The concept of professional identity*

Interest in the theme of professional identity may seem to be of fairly recent date, although in this respect the humanistic-based approach (HBTE) was ahead of its time. From quite early on, it was customary within this movement for teachers to reflect on such questions as 'who am I?', 'what kind of teacher do I want to be?', and 'how do I see my role as a teacher?', all of which are essential questions when it comes to developing a professional identity.

It is not surprising that at present the theme of professional identity receives renewed attention: in the recent past there have been a great many significant developments in the ways in which we look at learning and teaching, and views of the role of the teacher have rapidly shifted from someone transferring knowledge to someone guiding students. This means that teachers are expected to adopt a different view of their role, and a different answer to the question ‘who am I as a teacher?’ McLean (1999, p. 55) concludes that after decades in which ‘the person’ was largely absent from the theory on how best to educate teachers, we are now witnessing a surge of interest in the question of how beginning teachers think about themselves and how they undergo the substantial personal transformations they pass through as they become teachers.

A good example of that shift in accent is to be found in the work of Kelchtermans and Vandenberghe (1994), who studied the influence on the professional development of teachers of so-called critical life events, phases and significant others (see also Tripp, 1994). Due to the biographical perspective chosen by Kelchtermans, it became clear that the way teachers saw their role was to a large extent colored by the events and individuals in their lives. This had previously been emphasized by Crow (1987), who used the term ‘teacher role identity’, and by Knowles (1988), who introduced a Biographical Transformation Model to explain the relationships between early childhood experiences with significant others, teacher role identity, and classroom actions. Interesting examples are presented by Mayes (2001), who shows how his student teachers’ beliefs about the world and about themselves are shaped and inhibited by their upbringing. A student who has grown up in a closed religious environment, can have a hard time when confronted with completely different views of the world, and this may start to undermine his or her self-concept.

A study carried out by Koster, Korthagen, and Schrijnemakers (1995) into the influence of positive and negative role models, brought to light clear examples of the extent to which student teachers were influenced by certain teachers in their own past. Those examples illustrate how past

role models shape the professional self-image of teachers. This point may be considered of enormous importance to teacher education. As Tusin (1999) states, “behavior is a function of self-concept, which makes self-concept an essential aspect of teaching and learning to teach” (p. 27). Hamachek (1999) says that “the more that teachers know about themselves—the private curriculum within—the more their personal decisions are apt to be about how to pave the way for better teaching” (p. 209).

During the 20th century, an enormous amount of research has been carried out in psychology and philosophy on issues such as ‘identity’ and the ‘self’. However, as the theme of teacher identity has only recently begun to attract the widespread attention of researchers in the area of teaching and teacher education, Beijaard, Verloop, and Vermunt (2000) note that a largely unexplored territory lies ahead of us. How can we translate the wealth of psychological and philosophical literature to teaching and teachers? In the few publications devoted to this subject, we find no clear definition of the concept of teachers’ professional identity. In this article, we endorse the definition put forward by Beijaard (1995): “Who or what someone is, the various meanings people can attach to themselves, or the meanings attributed by others”. This is related to Gecas’s (1985) statement that identity “gives structure and content to the self-concept, and anchors the self to social systems” (p. 739). Both authors attribute great importance to the notion of ‘self-concept’. On the basis of the interviews Nias (1989) conducted with teachers, she concludes that the concept of self is indeed crucial to a proper understanding of how teachers function. However, one problem presenting itself is the fact that if we look at the literature devoted to developmental psychology in order to clarify the notion of self-concept, we find an overwhelming number of concepts centered around the term ‘self’. These include such terms as the actual self, the true self, the essential self, the ideal self, the possible self, as well as the social self, the emotional self, and the learning self. Moreover, there is considerable confusion about the difference between terms such as self-image, self-concept, self-conception,

self-experience, self-appreciation, etc. There are also the more process-centered notions, including self-development, self-actualization, and self-realization. And this is just a random selection drawn from the extensive body of literature devoted to the 'self', which also encompasses the debate concerning the differences between self and ego, and between self and personality. This body of literature becomes even more overwhelming and confusing if we also take the literature on identity formation that is more philosophical into account.

No doubt, many readers will see the above as evidence of a certain scientific vagueness surrounding the level of identity, promoting the idea that we would do better to forget about the whole notion of professional identity. However, a similar confusion of tongues occurs in the case of concepts much better known within the world of teaching and teacher education, including competencies (see, for example, Eraut, 1994) and beliefs (see, for example, Pajares, 1992). It is a challenge to further clarify such concepts in order to make them manageable for educational purposes. Indeed, this represents a major field of research as far as the theme of teachers' professional identity is involved. In the present section, we will try to take some further steps in developing a frame of reference for such research.

It is true to say that within the literature, a reasonable consensus is to be found with respect to the core idea of 'self-concept'. A common definition of the term is "an organized summary of information, rooted in observable facts concerning oneself, which includes such aspects as traits of character, values, social roles, interests, physical characteristics and personal history" (Bergner & Holmes, 2000; Kihlstrom & Klein, 1994).<sup>2</sup> On the basis of that definition, it is not so difficult to distinguish between a 'personal self' and a 'professional self', by focusing on the difference between a summary dealing with the entire body of information on one's personal functioning, and a summary of the information dealing with one's

professional functioning. With respect to teacher education, it is interesting to speculate on how far apart the two could lie. Although there are some who prefer to make a clear distinction between these two identities, most researchers in this area agree that excessive inconsistencies between one's personal and professional identities would in the long run give rise to friction within the individual teacher (see e.g. Nias, 1989, p. 42). It is precisely because such friction must be prevented that the professional identity of the teacher merits the attention of educators, even more than in professions where it is easier to separate the individual from his professional performance (McLean, 1999).

### *3.2. The development of teachers' professional identity in teacher education*

We may ask ourselves whether teacher education can also contribute to the development of the professional identity of teachers. This is no question to Bullough (1997), who states:

Teacher identity—what beginning teachers believe about teaching and learning and self-as-a-teacher—is of vital concern to teacher education; it is the basis for meaning making and decision making... Teacher education must begin, then, by exploring the teaching self (p. 21).

A major problem here is the fact that self-concepts are extremely resistant to change, even in the light of facts that clearly contradict them (Swann, 1992). Indeed, all experienced teacher educators know that when student teachers have a negative self-concept, it is extremely difficult to bring them round to a different way of thinking about themselves, even when they are confronted with examples of situations in which they performed in an outstanding manner. The reverse situation is at least as problematic, i.e., trying to convince students with an unrealistically positive self-concept that their professional performance leaves something to be desired. The classic, psychoanalytical explanation for this phenomenon is that it involves a mechanism designed to protect the ego (Freud, 1986). This particular problem has

<sup>2</sup>This modern formulation is remarkably similar to the description that James put forward over a 100 years ago, when he defined the 'self' of a person as "the sum total of all that he can call his" (James, 1890).

taken on a different perspective as a result of an interesting shift in the theory surrounding the self-concept. Bergner and Holmes, representatives of the *status-dynamic approach* within psychotherapy, proposed to define the self-concept as a concise formulation of one's own status (Bergner & Holmes, 2000, p. 36). The notion of 'status' refers to the overall conception of one's own place or position in relation to all the elements in one's world, including oneself. In this view, the self-concept is a relational concept: our self-concept is largely determined by how we see our relationships with significant others. This concurs with the view expressed by Slegers and Kelchtermans (1999, p. 369). They consider the professional identity of teachers the result of temporary meanings related to themselves and their profession, which teachers construct by interacting with their environment. This is also in line with the systems approach chosen by Watzlawick, Beavin, and Jackson (1967), who see interpersonal relations as part of a system formed by those participating in the relationship. As a result of the imperative nature of the system, the participants' perceptions of the relation is difficult to alter once it has taken shape. This explanation for the fact that self-concepts are difficult to alter deviates from the classic one, which makes use of the notion of 'ego-protective mechanisms', for which, in the view of Bergner and Holmes, there is insufficient empirical support.

The status-dynamic approach may have very practical consequences for the supervision of teachers: Bergner and Holmes state that it is not effective to try to change the unrealistic self-concepts of people by confronting them with conflicting information. Even promoting reflection on one's own self-concept probably has only a conservative effect. What does help is putting people into a situation that creates a different status, a different definition of the relationship. A well-known example from teacher education consists in placing a student with a highly negative self-concept in an easy, friendly class. Another example is the deliberate use of the supervisory relationship: in this relationship, the experience of a certain status can be evoked in the student. One need only think of the status of unconditionally

acceptable person which Rogers (1969) emphasized, and which Borich (1999, p. 112–113) translates into the relationship between the teacher educator and the student teacher. Bergner and Holmes believe that in the same way other status types can be created, for example by approaching the person as being someone important, who has within him a great potential for change, who has the capacity to be a change agent, etc. They describe this approach as: "This is who you are, and I will treat you as such." There are many educators who have been doing this for years (see, for example, Korthagen et al., 2001, p. 125), but recent developments in the field of psychotherapy have now provided a theoretical basis for their practice.

Reflection on professional identity is emphasized in many current teacher education programs. In our own, for example, students are asked to reflect on positive and negative role models from the time when they themselves were students in primary or secondary school. This appears to help them in making implicit influences explicit, and to consciously choose what kind of teacher they want to be. Tripp (1994, p. 74) says this kind of reflection is essential for teachers. In our own program, we also make use of exercises such as the 'life path', in which students draw a time line indicating important events and persons that were—or still are—influential in their development as teachers. A variation on this has been developed by Pope and Denicolo (2001), and is called the 'river of experience', in which a meandering river is used as a metaphor for teachers' personal biographies. Through such techniques, teachers may chart what Pinar (1986) calls their 'Architecture of Self'. A well known other method in teacher education aimed at making teachers aware of their professional identities, is the exchange of stories (Clandinin, 1992; McLean, 1999). Related approaches are described by Bullough (1997). Nowadays, many teacher educators use portfolios as a means to promote student teachers' reflections on their professional identities (see Bullough, 1993 for an exploration of the potential of portfolios for deepening reflection).

Activities such as these are examples of "constructing life through language" (Van Huizen,



2000, p. 41), and the co-construction of professional identity that takes place within interpersonal communication (Van Huizen, 2000, p. 62, 65). It is important to point out that in the absence of such activities, teachers are usually not very interested in their professional identity, especially not during periods of actual teaching (Korthagen & Lagerwerf, 1996). Professional identity, then, often takes on the form of a Gestalt: an unconscious body of needs, images, feelings, values, role models, previous experiences and behavioral tendencies, which together create a sense of identity. This Gestalt influences the outer levels of beliefs, competencies and behavior. The methods described (such as the 'life path' and story telling) help students to become aware of that Gestalt. This in turn leads to what Kelchtermans and Vandenberghe (1994) refer to as *self-understanding*. On the basis of such self-understanding, teachers are able to make choices that are more conscious when compared to their previous, more unconscious teaching behavior, and that are related to their own further professional development. Here we see how the biographical perspective in research can be translated into teacher education practices.

However, as Bullough and Baughman (1997) show, fundamental changes in teacher identity do not take place easily: identity change is a difficult and sometimes painful process, and often there seems to be little change at all in how teachers view themselves.

#### 4. The level of mission

In the form in which the model of Fig. 1 appears in the literature, a sixth level appears which is relevant to the present discussion. Dilts (1990) calls it the *spirituality level*. We will refer to it as the *level of mission* in that, according to various authors, this level is concerned with such highly personal questions as to what end the teacher wants to do his or her work, or even what he or she sees as his or her personal calling in the world. In short, the question of what it is deep inside us that moves us to do what we do. This level has been called a *transpersonal level* in so-called transper-

sonal psychology (see e.g., Scotton, Chinen, & Battista, 1996), because it is about becoming aware of the meaning of one's own existence within a larger whole, and the role we see for ourselves in relation to our fellow man. Where the identity level is concerned with the personal singularity of the individual, the spirituality level is about "the experience of being part of meaningful wholes and in harmony with superindividual units such as family, social group, culture and cosmic order" (Boucouvalas, 1988). In short, it is about giving meaning to one's own existence. The central question at this level is 'why do I exist?', in other words, what is at the root of my personal inspiration? The word 'inspiration' comes from the same Latin word as 'spiritual'. However, the term 'spirituality level' occasionally evokes undesirable associations with the New Age movement.<sup>3</sup> This has brought us to use the term 'level of mission'. In this context, it is also interesting to mention a suggestion put forward by Mike Bourcier (personal communication). He refers to this level as 'the level of interconnectedness.' The central question at this level can then be reformulated as 'with which larger entity do I feel connected?' As will also be clear from the above quote from Boucouvalas (one of the authors writing about transpersonal psychology, see also Boucouvalas, 1980), the answer could be of a religious nature, or it could focus on the commitment to one's fellow man, to the environment, to an ideal such as World Peace, etc. For teachers, we can think of ideals such as creating more acceptance of differences between people, creating feelings of self-worth in children, and so forth. In any case, we are talking about deeply felt, personal values that the person regards as inextricably bound up with his or her existence. People are not always equally aware of this level in themselves. Occasionally, however, it can suddenly

<sup>3</sup>This is even more striking in view of the fact that the original meaning of the word 'psyche' is spirit or soul. Various authors point out that in this sense psychology appears to have distanced itself from its roots. For example, Graham (1986, p. 21) is critical of this development: "Bereft of its soul or psyche, psychology became an empty or hollow discipline; study for its own sake." Graham points to transpersonal psychology as a branch of psychology striving to re-establish the link with the concept of 'soul'.

demand attention, as when through certain circumstances everything in your life grinds to a halt, for example when faced with the loss of a loved one.

As we intend to demonstrate below, the level of mission can be of direct relevance to teachers, and it may acquire a very concrete significance in their professional development. This has previously been emphasized by Mayes (2001).

### 5. Core qualities and positive psychology

One more issue is important to the understanding of the model of levels of change. Related to the deeper levels are people's *personal qualities*, for example creativity, trust, care, courage, sensitivity, decisiveness, spontaneity, commitment, and flexibility (Tickle, 1999). Attention for such personal qualities is strongly influenced by the work of the past president of the American Psychological Association (APA), Seligman, and his colleague Csikszentmihalyi, well known for his publications on "flow". Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000, p. 7) state that for too long psychology has focused on pathology, weakness, and damage done to people, and hence on 'treatments'. They say that, although this focus has been successful in some limited areas, "treatment is not just fixing what is broken; it is nurturing what is best". One can easily relate this to certain approaches toward the improvement of education, including some competency-based approaches, which often start from a deficiency model.

Partly returning to the roots of humanistic psychology, but also critical of its lack of empirical research, Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (and many other psychologists at present working within *positive psychology*; see Aspinwall & Staudinger, 2003) emphasize the importance of positive traits in individuals, which they call *character strengths*. For the scientific identification of these strengths, they also make use of philosophical literature on *virtues*, as "character strengths are the psychological ingredients—processes or mechanisms—that define the virtues." Examples of such strengths are creativity, courage, kindness,

and fairness, but also spirituality, and transcendence ("strengths that connect us to the larger universe", Peterson & Seligman, 2000). The latter examples illustrate the connections made within positive psychology to transpersonal psychology.

Strengths are fundamental to what Diener (2000) calls subjective well-being. A central issue in positive psychology is how a person's values and goals (ideals) mediate between external events and the quality of experience, something that is directly relevant to teacher education. Peterson and Seligman (2000), using their terminology of strengths, emphasize that although these strengths can and do produce desirable outcomes, they are morally valued in their own right, even in the absence of obvious beneficial outcomes: "Although strengths and virtues no doubt determine how an individual copes with adversity, our focus is on how they fulfill an individual." This illustrates that these personal strengths are not only related to the level of identity, but also to the level of mission. Peterson and Seligman add that when people are referring to their strengths, this correlates with a feeling of "this is the real me", that they show "a feeling of excitement when displaying a strength", and—very important to our discussion—"a rapid learning curve as themes are attached to the strength and practiced."

The way Seligman and other psychologists within this new field write about strengths, clarifies that they are synonymous to what Ofman (2000) calls *core qualities*. He states that such core qualities are always potentially present. He maintains that the distinction between qualities and competencies lies primarily in the fact that qualities come from the inside, while competencies are acquired from the outside. This is in accordance with the model of levels of change: competencies such as the ability to take into account different learning styles or to reflect systematically, are located at the level of competencies, while core qualities are found at the deeper levels of change. Almaas (1987, p. 175) talks about *essential aspects*, which he considers absolute in the sense that they cannot be further reduced, or dissected into simpler component parts. We prefer the term core quality, as it stresses the difference with the concept of 'core competence' (often used

in the literature on competency management, for example by Prahalad & Hamel, 1990).

It should be stressed that when someone is brought into touch with a core quality, it may be important to support him or her in taking the step towards actualization of that quality. This means that an important aim of supervision may be to facilitate the process whereby the inner levels of change influence the outer levels. Thus, we concur wholeheartedly with Lipka and Brinthaup (1999, p. 228), who maintain that “an excessive focus on ‘self’ at the expense of ‘other’ will be counter-productive.” What matters is developing effective personal behavior. To that end, it is vital that teachers are not only cognitively aware of their core qualities, but that they are emotionally in touch with those qualities, that they take the step leading to conscious decisions to make use of those core qualities, and then carry out those decisions. Often, this may initially require help from a teacher educator.

## 6. What is a good teacher?

On the basis of the above analysis, we conclude that the first question from which we started, namely ‘what are the essential qualities of a good teacher?’ cannot be answered in a simple way, and that a list of competencies is in any case inadequate to answer it. On the other hand, the model of levels of change may offer a helpful framework for thinking about this question, as it clarifies the variety of relevant aspects that should be taken in to account. We should not forget, however, that a ‘good teacher’ will not always show ‘good teaching’: although someone may have excellent competencies, the right beliefs, and an inspirational self and mission, the level of the environment may put serious limits on the teacher’s behavior (see e.g., Zeichner & Gore, 1990). This is another indication that awareness of the levels may help to understand such limitations: often there are discrepancies between the six levels. Such discrepancies often lead to problems, for the teacher (in the form of inner tensions), for others in his or her environment (if the teacher does not show adequate behavior), or both. Stated more

positively, with more balance between the various levels, the teacher will experience less inner and outer frictions. Ideally, there is a complete “alignment” of the levels, which means that the teacher’s behavior, competencies, beliefs, identity and mission together form one coherent whole matching the environment. A situation that can take a lifetime to attain, if attained at all. As Shaw (1975) states in a wonderful chapter on this issue (entitled “Congruence”):

Such authenticity has no equivalent; it is the development and expression of one’s Self through direct, personal experience and creation of one’s language and meanings over time. (p. 445)

## 7. How can we help students to become good teachers?

This brings us to the second central question set out in the introduction, namely: How can we help people to become good teachers? The onion model can make a contribution to finding an answer to that question. For example, it provides support in supervising the reflection processes of teachers, because it focuses attention on the possible contents of that reflection. Many models for reflection are in fact phase models (Pope & Denicolo, 2001, p. 63), describing the reflection *process*, and make no pronouncements on the question of what teachers can reflect *on*. In this sense, the model of levels of change (the ‘onion’) supplements such process models of reflection, in that it helps educators to determine on which levels the teacher is having problems, as well as on which levels the supplement might lie that should take shape.

Let us look at the practical example of Judith, with which we started this article. In this example, the different levels in Fig. 1 can be concretized as follows:

1. *The environment*: what Judith encounters, i.e., everything outside herself. In the present example, this is Peter and the way he is behaving.

2. *Behavior*: both Judith's less effective behaviors, such as an irritated response, and other—possibly more effective—behaviors.
3. *Competencies*: for example, the competency to respond in a constructive manner.
4. *Beliefs*: perhaps Judith's beliefs that Peter is not motivated or even that he is trying to cause trouble.
5. *Professional identity*: how does Judith view her own professional role here? For example, does she see a social-pedagogical role for herself in relation to Peter?
6. *Mission*: what is the calling that has led Judith to become a teacher? It is not uncommon for our own mathematics student teachers to be enthusiastic about their subject; in fact they often find their main inspiration in mathematics, and—at least at the beginning of their professional preparation—much less in their relationship with students at school.

For the teacher educator, an important question should be: What is it that is bothering Judith in this situation? In terms of the model in Fig. 1, the question is on which level lies her *concern*. In the so-called 'realistic' view of teacher education formulated by Korthagen et al. (2001), concerns are seen as the driving force of learning. Perhaps, Judith is beginning to wonder whether different behavior would be better (the level of behavior), or she may be questioning her role as a teacher (identity level). The educator may have to help Judith in becoming aware of her concern and the level on which it is located, but must also keep in mind whether—and how—the other levels are involved. For example, if Judith intends to change her behavior, an important question is whether she has the competency to do so. And in order to

develop this competency, the level of beliefs may well deserve attention.

The type of intervention required to change behavior may not be the same as that needed to promote awareness of one's professional identity or mission. Fig. 2 indicates how, on the basis of the existing literature on the education of teachers, we can relate the various levels to appropriate interventions in teacher education. The right-hand column in this figure was strongly influenced by a theory put forward by Gallimore and Tharp (1992) on 'assisted performance'. They based many of their ideas on neo-Vygotskian concepts, and distinguish six types of intervention: modeling, contingency management, giving feedback, instructing, questioning, and cognitive structuring. Below, feedback and questioning are considered important aspects of coaching. We see cognitive structuring as an important ingredient of the conceptual-change approach.

*We will now look briefly at the right-hand column.*

1. In order to help student teachers become acquainted with the 'environment' relevant to the professional development of a teacher, it is important to offer them a suitable learning environment. For example, a school where the teaching is highly traditional would be less appropriate for acquainting oneself with new teaching practices. Many institutions of teacher education try to create a fruitful teaching environment through collaboration with professional development schools (Darling-Hammond, 1994).

2. Modeling consists of showing students what is suitable behavior, so that they can imitate it. This requires that teacher educators "teach what they

Levels	Appropriate interventions
1. Environment	Creating a suitable learning environment
2. Behavior	Modeling and contingency management
3. Competencies	Instruction, training and coaching
4. Beliefs	Conceptual-change approaches
5. Professional identity	?
6. Mission	?

Fig. 2. Relation between the levels of change and interventions in teacher education.

preach” (compare Lunenberg & Korthagen, 2003). When students are experimenting with new behavior, it is important to refine that behavior by both correcting and rewarding them. Gallimore and Tharp (1992) call this contingency management.

3. Instruction, training, and coaching are major components of the direct instructional model, which has been dealt with in detail by, among others, Rosenshine and Stevens (1986). As this model is widely known, it will not be further discussed here.

4. The essence of conceptual change is altering students’ existing views. A well-known example is the common conception among students that teaching consists of ‘transferring’ knowledge, while today’s educators strive to help their students develop views that are more appropriate to a constructivist view of teaching. Conceptual-change strategies often consist of the following steps (see also Korthagen, 1992; Wubbels, Korthagen, & Dolk, 1992):

- (a) First, the student is encouraged to reflect on a concrete experience during teaching practice.
- (b) Next, the student is helped to become aware of the often-implicit beliefs playing a role in his or her perception of—and behavior in—this and other, similar situations.
- (c) Then, through examining the disadvantages of that belief together with the student, dissatisfaction with the existing belief is created.
- (d) The student is then offered an alternative—scientifically sound—theory.
- (e) Finally, alternative behavior based on that theory is practiced.

Posner, Strike, Hewson, and Gertzog (1982) stress that the alternative theory must be intelligible, plausible and fruitful in the eyes of the student, in order to lend it a higher ‘status’ than the existing belief.<sup>4</sup>

5 and 6. In the literature on the pedagogy of teacher education, relatively little attention has been devoted to interventions aimed at the levels of professional identity and mission. A relatively

recent exception is Mayes (2001), who shows how a transpersonal perspective can lead to a broadening of the concept of reflection in teacher education. Another noteworthy exception is Palmer (1998), who focuses on teaching “from within”, and stresses the importance of the call to, the pain, and the joy of teaching. His in-service work with teachers is based on his belief that “good teaching cannot be reduced to technique; good teaching comes from the identity and integrity of the teacher” (p. 10). Palmer’s work shows similarities with Hansen (1995), who focuses on *the call to teach*. Newman (2000) studied the ideals and dreams of teachers and how these could be used in teacher education. Other exceptions are Allender (2001), who describes how he works with student teachers on the relation between self, others and pedagogy, and Ayers (2001), who—while talking about educators—states that “our calling after all, is to shepherd and enable the callings of others.”

When thinking about interventions on the fifth and sixth level, one might expect the conceptual-change approaches to be useful here as well. On the other hand, these levels are concerned with self-concepts, which, as we have seen above, are not easily influenced. In various therapeutic approaches, specific techniques are used to influence self-concepts and awareness at the level of mission. Above, we have already looked at Rogerian interventions, which are designed to influence self-concepts. Psychosynthesis (a branch of transpersonal psychology founded by Assagioli) deals specifically with the level of mission, making use of such techniques as guided fantasies, drawing and meditation (Assagioli, 1965; Parfitt, 1990; Whitmore, 1986). The use of the latter interventions within teacher education is still in its early stages, and sometimes evokes resistance (see Mayes, 2001). In the next section, a number of interventions will be described that seem promising, so that it may be possible to replace the question marks in Fig. 2 with concrete interventions suitable for teacher education.

To our discussion of Fig. 2, a comment must be added. Because the various levels influence one another, it is quite possible that a particular intervention can be employed on another level as well. For example, Wubbels (1992) emphasizes

<sup>4</sup>However, this does not necessarily mean that the student will then actually act differently (Korthagen & Lagerwerf, 1996).

that it is possible to influence beliefs through interventions making much less use of reflection than the conceptual-change approach described above. For example, the views of a student teacher may change when starting teaching at a different school (influence via the level of the environment), or when he is helped to develop new behavior by means of modeling (level of behavior).

We are now gradually approaching a general answer to the second question with which we started this article, namely, how can we help someone to become a good teacher? The essence of this answer is: it may be important to focus on the level at which the person has a concern, but it is also helpful to extend the attention to include other levels, while keeping different types of intervention in mind. In short, the model of levels of change can help educators to provide tailor-made support to their students.

It would be interesting to systematically study the effects of integrated efforts at various levels. The hypothesis could then be tested that maintains that the process of professional development among teachers stagnates when problems on a specific level are not tackled by descending to a deeper level. Such research will demand a clearly defined theoretical foundation with respect to the various levels. For the outer levels of the model in Fig. 2, considerable theoretical material is available. However, when it comes to the theory surrounding the level of mission, very little research has been done. This is unfortunate for the field of teaching and teacher education, since there are still many people who choose to become teachers, because they feel that they have a 'calling' (compare Hansen, 1995). This is an aspect seldom mentioned in professional profiles and lists of teaching competencies. Almost nowhere do we find any mention of how important it is to be a teacher with all your heart and soul, and this is one reason why so little attention is devoted to the question of suitable interventions at the level of mission.

## 8. Concrete applications: three projects

Precisely because the inner levels of the model receive relatively little interest, we have started a

number of projects aiming at the levels of professional identity and mission. They focus on student teachers, experienced teachers, and teacher educators respectively. Through these projects, we are gradually gaining more insight into the interventions that may be suitable to replace the question marks in Fig. 2. As most reports on these projects have only been published in Dutch, they are briefly summarized below.

### 8.1. *A workshop for student teachers*<sup>5</sup>

We developed and researched a workshop (of four mornings/afternoons) for student teachers entitled 'Did you encounter your students or yourself?' The workshop, which was held towards the end of the 1-year postgraduate program, attracted students who during their teaching practice had been forced to face up to certain truths about themselves. Many of them were suffering from feelings of insecurity, and almost all were grappling with questions at the level of identity or mission, such as: Am I willing—and able—to adopt the kind of behavior that is apparently necessary to maintain classroom discipline? Does this behavior suit me? Do I still want to become a teacher? Is there actually room for what inspired me to become a teacher in the first place? In the workshop, we used a number of techniques designed to promote reflection, in order to help the students to acquire a greater awareness on the levels of identity and mission. Elsewhere, we describe the workshop in more detail, its background and the interventions employed, together with an evaluation of the processes involved and their effects (Korthagen et al., 2001, p. 266–269; Korthagen & Verkuyl, 2002).

After the workshop, in which we used many structures aiming at an awareness of the deeper levels, the students reported that reflection on these levels (which we call *core reflection*) had not often taken place during the teacher education program (which focuses on the promotion of reflection!), and that they considered it a valuable addition. In the workshop, it appeared to serve as

<sup>5</sup>This workshop was devised and carried out by Hildelien Verkuyl and the author of this article.

a springboard for a fresh examination of both their career choice and their concrete teaching behavior. In the latter case, this involved the important shift from the inner levels of the model to the outer levels, for example by reflection on the question how to translate one's core qualities into concrete behavior in a specific situation.

In all, the workshop succeeded in focusing serious attention on professional identity and personal inspiration (mission). We believe that by stressing core reflection, we can counter the unconscious socialization and adaptation to a traditional school culture (cf. Zeichner & Gore, 1990). Core reflection helps students to consciously direct their own development, in accordance with their personal identity, and their inspiration and enthusiasm for their profession.

### 8.2. *A project with experienced teachers*

Core reflection was also a part of a project involving experienced teachers in primary and secondary education. In this group, a variety of structures were used focusing on raising (renewed) awareness of one's own professional identity, and one's 'pedagogical mission' in relation to the moral and social development of children. These included the 'wall', an exercise in making one's own pedagogical views explicit by means of paper bricks bearing statements (Korthagen et al., 2001, p. 162–163). Within the framework of this project, the participants also selected a concrete case they were struggling with. Then, on the basis of this case, they worked together in small groups, supporting one another as they tried to identify their individual pedagogical ideals, and ways to put them into practice. At the end of the project, these teachers reported that it had become clear to them how little their school cultures were directed towards reflection and collaboration with colleagues on matters related to the personal development of children. (This observation concurs with Klaassen (2002, p. 151), who states that "an erosion of teachers' pedagogical sensibilities is occurring.") The ground we had traveled with our teachers had inspired them, and they said they hoped their colleagues would also have an opportunity to take part in a project like this.

Especially mentioned was the importance of the interaction with colleagues. In a reflection on the project, one participant wrote:

Of course, after a discussion like that, you keep thinking about yourself, the way you function as a teacher. It gives you new insights into yourself, makes you face up to a side of yourself you didn't know of, and maybe would prefer not to know. You can't close your eyes to truths like this, and they keep revolving inside your head. During the lessons that follow, you find yourself stopping in order to think about interventions, decisions, remarks and feelings. What am I like, how do I think and act as a teacher? What do I consider really important?<sup>6</sup>

It will be clear from this quote that the levels of identity and mission had come to occupy an important place in the thinking of this teacher. There appeared to be many participants in this project whose pedagogical ideals had received a shot in the arm, against the background of their colleagues in their schools. In the midst of the rough and tumble of everyday life, we believe there are a frightening number of teachers striving on their own to give shape to the ideals they have—or had when they chose to take up a teaching career. As one of the teachers in this project said:

Everyone who decides to work with people must have ideals. Everyone has that 'level' inside, but at a certain moment you can decide to close the hatch.

Teacher shortages have received a great deal of attention, and in many countries teacher educators are doing their best to attract people to the profession. However, in view of the prevalence of burnout among experienced teachers, it is perhaps no less important to retain those already teaching. Research has shown that the loss of ideals, and what people experience as a lack of support when it comes to the realization of those ideals, play an important part in cases of burnout and, in some cases, the decision to resign from their present position (Freudenberger & Richelson, 1980).

<sup>6</sup>Thanks go to Kristel Peters for this quote.

Edelwich and Brodsky (1980) even define burnout in terms of the loss of ideals and meaningfulness, characterizing it as a “progressive loss of idealism, energy, purpose, and concern as a result of conditions of work” (p. 14). We conclude that an important working condition for teachers is sufficient attention to their personal ideals, and collegial support in realizing those ideals. In short, for many teachers finding answers to the question ‘What’s the sense of it all?’ is not a luxury, but a necessity if they are to continue to put their hearts and souls into their work (Palmer, 1998).

### 8.3. *A professional development course for educators*

The principle of congruence (Korthagen et al., 2001, p. 48) implies that educators wanting to promote core reflection in student teachers will themselves have to be actively involved in such reflection. Moreover, it is of crucial importance that they acquire the specific competencies necessary to stimulate core reflection. As McLean (1999, p. 74) observes, teacher educators often find it difficult to support reflection processes focusing on the person of the (student) teacher. It is for these reasons that we have turned our attention to the teacher educators themselves. We have now organized a number of courses in which educators learn how to include the levels of professional identity and mission in their work with student teachers. In these courses, teacher educators are helped to focus more on the ideals of the people they work with, on their calling to the profession, and on their core qualities, but also on the limitations teachers themselves create, for example by negative thinking. The courses also aim at promoting the translation of people’s core qualities into competencies and actual behavior, and on overcoming their self-created inhibitions.

In these courses, ‘homework assignments’ focus on the actual implementation of core reflection in everyday practices in teacher education. In most cases, the participants discover that a mere awareness of the tension between an ideal and inhibiting beliefs, feelings, and images serves to clarify the problem that lies at the root of many other problems the teacher is facing. To take an

example: during the teacher education program, a student teacher becomes aware of an area of tension between his ideal “to be myself in my work” and his inhibiting belief that this is something that only experienced teachers can achieve. By means of this process of awareness-raising, he gradually realizes that his nervousness in the classroom, the minor conflict that he had the other day, as well as the uninspiring assignments he devises for his students, all have to do with that underlying area of tension. On the one hand, he wants to feel confident and relaxed, while in fact he is restrained by the belief that this is something reserved for ‘later’. In this way, his stronger side (his core qualities) cannot be fully realized. By means of such core reflection, i.e. reflection that takes the levels of identity and mission into account, a solution becomes possible more fundamental than would have been possible if his reflection had been restricted to the level of behavior, skills or beliefs.

According to the evaluations of the participants, our professional development courses for educators appear to fill a gap in their professional development. For one thing, the participants appreciate the fact that core reflection—unlike other, more therapeutic, approaches—does not require them to delve into the past and the accompanying, often painful, memories, even though it is in itself a very deep and probing process. In core reflection, the depth is reflected above all in the process of tapping into one’s inner potential for the benefit of professional development, which concurs with the perspective of positive psychology on personal growth. This is a considerable advantage for supervisors, who—quite rightly—take pains to respect the private lives of their students and to avoid a therapeutic role.

## 9. Conclusions and implications

In this article, two questions were raised that are of importance in any form of teaching: (1) What are the essential qualities of a good teacher? and (2) How can we help people to become good teachers? Various possible answers were



summarized in the model of levels of change. In answering the second question, the different levels were linked to possible interventions.

Special attention was focused on professional identity and mission, because until now not much theoretical research has been devoted to these levels.

Our discussion of core qualities has brought us to an area that, until now, has received surprisingly little attention from educators and researchers. In the view of Tickle (1999): "In policy and practice the identification and development of personal qualities, at the interface between aspects of one's personal virtues and one's professional life, between personhood and teacherhood, if you will, has had scant attention" (p. 123). Tickle mentions such qualities as empathy, compassion, understanding and tolerance, love, flexibility. However, as noted above, they are rarely included in official lists of teacher competencies and assessment procedures. Tickle is possibly correct when he emphasizes that these are essential qualities for teachers. He even maintains "the teacher as a person is the core by which education itself takes place" (p. 136). This opinion is concurrent with our thinking in terms of core reflection.

In order to explore interventions on the levels of identity and mission, we briefly described three projects, which are largely terra incognita in the field of teacher education. This is remarkable in the light of Nias's (1989) conclusion that self-concepts and core values are sources of stability for teachers, through which they maintain a sense of purpose in their work (see also Tickle, 2000, p. 91).

Focusing on core reflection during initial and in-service teacher education can also make teachers more aware of the core qualities of students at school, so that they are better able to direct them in making use of their own core qualities, at school and throughout the rest of their lives. This is what Stoddard (1991, p. 221) calls "education for greatness", i.e., education aiming at the development of great human beings, who are valuable contributors to society. On the basis of research into the lives of outstanding people, Stoddard and her colleagues found three "qualities that stand

out in those who made significant contributions: a strong sense of self-worth, deep feelings of love and respect for all people, and an insatiable hunger for truth and knowledge."

She states that being aware of the importance of developing such qualities in people, helps us "to concentrate on human development—maximum individual achievement—instead of curriculum development with its twin brothers: minimum competence and standardized achievement" (p. 222). In short, the topic that we touch on here is one of the pedagogical goals of identity development in children (Korthagen et al., 2001, p. 263-267). It will be evident that this makes it even more important that teachers examine the 'core levels'—in themselves and in children—and the ways these affect the other levels. In our view, it may ultimately be a question of raising awareness, among both teachers and teacher educators, of the interaction between all levels of change—whether in the student, the teacher, or the educator.

In particular, we feel it is important for teachers to learn how they can get (back) in touch with their core qualities, and how they can stimulate these qualities in their students. This will lead to a deeper involvement in the learning process among teachers as well as students. It is precisely this involvement that is in danger of being lost when a technical, instrumental approach to competence is employed.

This discussion may give the impression that we consider the inner levels more important than the outer. That is not so. In this article, we have focused more on the inner levels, because they have received far less attention in the literature on teaching and teacher education than the outer levels. However, all the levels are of fundamental importance to the professional development of teachers, and educators must be capable of intervening on all levels. It should be noted that in many cases it is sufficient to confine interventions to the outer levels. In fact, in a case where a student teacher is having serious discipline problems with a certain class, and will have to teach that same class tomorrow, it would probably be most effective to focus exclusively on the outer levels, namely on those of the environment

(the class) and his own interpersonal behavior. However, if after the teaching practice period this student teacher has doubts about his or her own reasons for becoming a teacher, the inner levels come into play. The issues of mission and core qualities may then become relevant.

Looking at teachers from the perspective of the different levels may add validity to scientific analyses of how teachers function, and may broaden our view of what makes a good teacher. It counterbalances the somewhat frightening emphasis on specific aspects, such as competencies. From a more integrative perspective, a good teacher may be characterized by a state of harmony between the various levels. This means that a teacher educator will ideally devote attention to all the levels—preferably in relation to one another—depending on the phase in the teacher education program, the developmental process of the individual student teacher and the specific problem at hand. In other words, in line with Harris, Guthrie, Hobart, and Lundberg (1995), we propose a more holistic approach towards teacher development, in which competence is not equated with competencies, and which tries to find a realistic middle ground between views based on different paradigms, for example between humanistic and behaviorist perspectives. Moreover, we believe it may be important that teacher education incorporates insights from transpersonal and positive psychology, as explained above. This implies demands on the professionalism of the educator, demands not limited to the level of competencies. For example, taking the model of levels of change seriously requires that teacher educators stay in touch with their own core qualities as a prerequisite for promoting the development of core qualities in prospective teachers. For, as Nelson Mandela reminded us in his 1994 inaugural address: “If we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same.”

### Acknowledgements

The ideas developed in my work on core reflection build on my cooperation with Angelo

Vasalos. I am grateful for his help and inspiration, and for the way in which he ‘lives’ his inner mission. I would also like to thank three anonymous reviewers for their stimulating comments.

### References

- Allender, J. S. (2001). *Teacher self: The practice of humanistic education*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Almaas, A. H. (1987). *Diamond heart, book 1*. Berkeley: Diamond Books.
- Aspinwall, L. G., & Staudinger, U. M. (Eds.) (2003). *A psychology of human strengths: Fundamental questions and future directions for a positive psychology*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- Assagioli, R. (1965). *Psychosynthesis: A manual of principles and techniques*. New York: Penguin.
- Ayers, W. (2001). *To teach: The journey of a teacher* (2nd ed.). New York: Teachers College Press.
- Barnett, R. (1994). *The limits of competence: Knowledge, higher education and society*. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Becker, B. J., Kennedy, M. M., Hundersmarck, S. (2003). *Hypothesis about ‘quality’: A decade of debates*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association.
- Beijaard, D. (1995). Teachers’ prior experiences and actual perceptions of professional identity. *Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice*, 1(2), 281–294.
- Beijaard, D., Verloop, N., & Vermunt, J. D. (2000). Teachers’ perceptions of professional identity: An exploratory study from a personal knowledge perspective. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 16, 749–764.
- Bergner, R. M., & Holmes, J. R. (2000). Self-concepts and self-concept change: A status dynamic approach. *Psychotherapy*, 37(1), 36–44.
- Borich, G. D. (1999). Dimensions of self that influence effective teaching. In R. P. Lipka, & T. M. Brinthaupt (Eds.), *The role of self in teacher development* (pp. 92–117). Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Boucouvalas, M. (1980). Transpersonal psychology: A working outline of the field. *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*, 12(1), 37–46.
- Boucouvalas, M. (1988). An analysis and critique of the concept “self” in self-directed learning: Toward a more robust construct for research and practice. In M. Zukas (Ed.), *Proceedings of the Trans-Atlantic dialogue conference* (pp. 56–61). Leeds, England: University of Leeds.
- Bullough, R. V. (1993). Case records as personal teaching texts for study in preservice teacher education. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 9(4), 385–396.
- Bullough, R. V. (1997). Practicing theory and theorizing practice in teacher education. In J. Loughran, & T. Russell (Eds.), *Purpose, passion and pedagogy in teacher education* (pp. 13–31). London/Washington, DC: Falmer Press.

- Bullough, R. V., & Baughman, K. (1997). *First year teacher eight years later: An inquiry into teacher development*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Caprara, G. V., & Cervone, D. (2003). A conception of personality for a psychology of human strengths: Personality as an agentic, self-regulating system. In L. G. Aspinwall, & U. M. Staudinger (Eds.), *A psychology of human strengths* (pp. 61–74). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- Carter, K. (1993). The place of story in the study of teaching and teacher education. *Educational Researcher*, 22(1), 5–12.
- Clandinin, D. J. (1986). *Classroom practice: Teacher images in action*. London: Falmer Press.
- Clandinin, D. J. (1992). Narrative and story in teacher education. In T. Russell, & H. Munby (Eds.), *Teachers and teaching: From classroom to reflection* (pp. 124–137). London: Falmer Press.
- Clark, C. M. (1986). Ten years of conceptual development in research on teacher thinking. In M. Ben-Peretz, R. Bromme, & R. Halkes (Eds.), *Advances of research on teacher thinking* (pp. 7–20). Lisse: Swets & Zeitlinger.
- Combs, A. W., Blume, R. A., Newman, A. J., & Wass, H. L. (1974). *The professional education of teachers: A humanistic approach to teacher preparation*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
- Crow, N. A. (1987). *Socialization within a teacher education program*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. University of Utah.
- Darling-Hammond, L. (1994). *Professional development schools: Schools for developing a profession*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Diener, E. (2000). Subjective well-being: The science of happiness and a proposal for a national index. *American Psychologist*, 55(1), 15–23.
- Dilts, R. (1990). *Changing belief systems with NLP*. Cupertino: Meta Publications.
- Edelwich, J., & Brodsky, A. (1980). *Burn-out*. New York: Human Sciences Press.
- Eraut, M. (1994). *Developing professional knowledge and competence*. London/Washington, DC: Falmer Press.
- Feiman-Nemser, S. (1983). Learning to teach. In L. Shulman, & G. Sykes (Eds.), *Handbook of teaching and policy* (pp. 150–170). New York: Longman.
- Fenstermacher, G. D. (1994). The knower and the known: The nature of knowledge in research on teaching. *Review of Research in Education*, 20, 3–56.
- Freud, A. (1986). *The ego and the mechanisms of defence, revised edition*. London: The Hogarth Press (Originally published in 1936).
- Freudenberger, H. J., & Richelson, G. (1980). *Burn-out*. Garden City: Anchor Press.
- Gallimore, R., & Tharp, R. (1992). Teaching mind in society: Teaching, schooling, and literate discourse. In L. C. Mol (Ed.), *Vygotsky and education: Instructional implications and applications of sociohistorical psychology* (pp. 175–205). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Gecas, V. (1985). Self-concept. In A. Kuper, & J. Kuper (Eds.), *The social science encyclopedia* (pp. 739–741). London: Routledge.
- Graham, H. (1986). *The human face of psychology*. Philadelphia: Open University Press.
- Hamachek, D. (1999). Effective teachers: What they do, how they do it, and the importance of self-knowledge. In R. P. Lipka, & T. M. Brinthaupt (Eds.), *The role of self in teacher development* (pp. 189–224). Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Hansen, D. T. (1995). *The call to teach*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Hargreaves, A. (1998). The emotional practice of teaching. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 14(8), 835–854.
- Harris, R., Guthrie, H., Hobart, B., & Lundberg, D. (1995). *Competency-based education and training: Between a rock and a whirlpool*. South Melbourne: Macmillan Education Australia.
- Hyland, T. (1994). *Competence, education and NVQs: Dissenting perspectives*. London: Cassell.
- James, W. (1890). *The principles of psychology*. New York: Holt.
- Joyce, B. R. (1975). Conceptions of man and their implications for teacher education. In K. Ryan (Ed.), *Teacher education, 74th yearbook of the national society for the study of education* (pp. 111–145). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Kelchtermans, G., & Vandenberghe, R. (1994). Teachers' professional development: A biographical perspective. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 26, 45–62.
- Kihlstrom, J., & Klein, S. (1994). The self as a knowledge structure. In R. Wyer, & T. Srull (Eds.), *Handbook of social cognition* (2nd edition) (pp. 152–208). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Klaassen, C. A. (2002). Teacher pedagogical competence and sensibility. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 18(2), 151–158.
- Knowles, J. G. (1988). *Models for understanding preservice and beginning teachers' biographies: Illustrations from case studies*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New Orleans.
- Korthagen, F. A. J. (1992). Techniques for stimulating reflection in teacher education seminars. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 8(3), 265–274.
- Korthagen, F. A. J., Kessels, J., Koster, B., Lagerwerf, B., & Wubbels, T. (2001). *Linking practice and theory: The pedagogy of realistic teacher education*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Korthagen, F. A. J., & Lagerwerf, A. (1996). Reframing the relationship between teacher thinking and teacher behaviour: Levels in learning about teaching. *Teachers & Teaching: Theory and Practice*, 2(2), 161–190.
- Korthagen, F., & Verkuyl, H. (2002). Do you meet your students or yourself? Reflection on professional identity as an essential aspect of teacher education. In *Making a difference in teacher education through self-study: Proceedings of the fourth international conference on self-study of*

- teacher education practices (pp. 43–47). Herstmonceaux, England.
- Koster, B., Korthagen, F. A. J., & Schrijnemakers, H. G. M. (1995). Between entry and exit: How student teachers change their educational values under the influence of teacher education. In F. Buffet, & J. A. Tschoumy (Eds.), *Choc démocratique et formation des enseignants en Europe* (pp. 156–168). Lyon: Presses Universitaires de Lyon.
- Lipka, R. P., & Brinthaup, T. M. (1999). How can the balance between the personal and the professional be achieved? In R. P. Lipka, & T. M. Brinthaup (Eds.), *The role of self in teacher development* (pp. 225–228). Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Lowyck, J. (1978). *Procesanalyse van het onderwijsgedrag [process analysis of teaching behavior]*. Leuven: Universiteit Leuven.
- Lunenberg, M., & Korthagen, F. A. J. (2003). Teacher educators and student-directed learning. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 19(1), 29–44.
- Maslow, A. H. (1968). *Toward a psychology of being* (2nd ed.). Princeton, NJ: Van Nostrand.
- Mayes, C. (2001). A transpersonal model for teacher reflectivity. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 33(4), 477–493.
- McLean, S. V. (1999). Becoming a teacher: The person in the process. In R. P. Lipka, & T. M. Brinthaup (Eds.), *The role of self in teacher development* (pp. 55–91). Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Newman, C. S. (2000). Seeds of professional development in pre-service teachers: A study of their dreams and goals. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 33(2), 125–217.
- Nias, J. (1989). *Primary teachers talking: A study of teaching as work*. London/New York: Routledge.
- Ofman, D. (2000). *Core qualities: A gateway to human resources*. Schiedam: Scriptum.
- Pajares, M. F. (1992). Teachers' beliefs and educational research: Cleaning up a messy construct. *Review of Educational Research*, 62(3), 307–332.
- Palmer, P. J. (1998). *The courage to teach*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Parfitt, W. (1990). *The elements of psychosynthesis*. Dorset: Element Books.
- Peterson, C., & Seligman, M. E. P. (2000). *Values in action (VIA): Classification of strengths*. Philadelphia: Values In Action Institute (<http://www.positivepsychology.org/taxonomy.htm>).
- Pinar, W. (1986). *Autobiography and the architecture of self*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Washington, DC.
- Prahalad, C. K., & Hamel, G. (1990). The core competence of the corporation. *Harvard Business Review*, 68(3), 79–91.
- Pope, M., & Denicolo, P. (2001). *Transformative education*. London/Philadelphia: Whurr.
- Posner, G. J., Strike, K. A., Hewson, P. W., & Gertzog, W. A. (1982). Accommodation of a scientific conception: Towards a theory of conceptual change. *Science Education*, 66, 211–227.
- Richardson, V. (Ed.) (1997). *Constructivist teacher education*. London/Washington: Falmer.
- Rogers, C. R. (1969). *Freedom to learn*. Columbus, OH: Merrill.
- Rosenshine, B., & Stevens, R. (1986). Teaching functions. In M. Wittrock (Ed.), *Handbook of research on teaching* (3rd ed) (pp. 376–391). New York: Macmillan.
- Scotton, B. W., Chinen, A. B., & Battista, J. R. (1996). *Textbook of transpersonal psychiatry and psychology*. New York: Basic Books.
- Seligman, M. E. P., & Csikszentmihalyi, M. (2000). Positive psychology: An introduction. *American Psychologist*, 55(1), 5–14.
- Shapiro, S. B. (1998). *The place of confluent education in the humanistic potential movement*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America.
- Shaw, F. S. (1975). Congruence. In W. Pinar (Ed.), *Curriculum theorizing* (pp. 445–452). Berkeley: McCutchan.
- Slegers, P., & Kelchtermans, G. (1999). Inleiding op het themanummer: Professionele identiteit van leraren [Introduction to the theme issue: Teachers' professional identity]. *Pedagogisch Tijdschrift*, 24(4), 369–373.
- Stoddard, L. (1991). The three dimensions of human greatness: A framework for redesigning education. In R. Miller (Ed.), *New directions in education* (pp. 219–232). Brandon, Vermont: Holistic Education Press.
- Stoof, A., Martens, R. L., Van Merriënboer, J. J. G. (2000). *What is competence? A constructivist approach as a way out of confusion*. Paper presented at the Onderwijsresearchdagen [the conference of the Dutch Educational Research Association], Leiden.
- Swann, W. (1992). Seeking "truth," finding despair: Some unhappy consequences of a negative self-concept. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 1, 15–18.
- Tickle, L. (1999). Teacher self-appraisal and appraisal of self. In R. P. Lipka, & T. M. Brinthaup (Eds.), *The role of self in teacher development* (pp. 121–141). Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Tickle, L. (2000). *Teacher induction: The way ahead*. Buckingham/Philadelphia: Open University Press.
- Tripp, D. (1994). Teachers' lives, critical incidents, and professional practice. *Qualitative Studies in Education*, 7, 65–76.
- Tusin, L. F. (1999). Deciding to teach. In R. P. Lipka, & T. M. Brinthaup (Eds.), *The role of self in teacher development* (pp. 11–35). Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Van Huizen, P.H. (2000). *Becoming a teacher: Development of a professional identity by prospective teachers in the context of university-based teacher education*. Ph.D. Dissertation. Utrecht University, Utrecht.
- Watzlawick, P., Beavin, J. H., & Jackson, D. D. (1967). *Pragmatics of human communication*. New York: Norton.
- Whitmore, D. (1986). *Psychosynthesis in education: A guide to the joy of learning*. Rochester, VT: Destiny Books.
- Wubbels, T. (1992). Taking account of student teachers' preconceptions. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 8(2), 137–149.

Wubbels, T., Korthagen, F., Dolk, M. (1992). *Conceptual change approaches in teacher education: Cognition and action*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association. San Francisco.

Wubbels, T., & Levy, J. (1993). *Do you know what you look like?* London: Falmer Press.

Zeichner, K. M., & Gore, J. M. (1990). Teacher socialization. In W. R. Houston (Ed.), *Handbook of research on teacher education* (pp. 329–348). New York: Macmillan.