

Going to the core of reflection

Stéphanie Pattyn

“Thomas More is so much more than just a university. It is more a center of knowledge where we focus on high quality education, applied research and where business and community partnerships thrive.”

- Stijn Coenen, CEO



This is where it all happens



Domains of education:

**Business
Organisation &
Tourism**

**Life Sciences &
Chemistry**

Health & wellbeing

**Media &
Communication**

Education

**Design &
Construction**

Sport

Technology & ICT

The **MORE** Professional

At Thomas More we educate future-proof professionals who make a lasting difference, both socially and professionally. They make a difference thanks to their **MORE characteristics**.

They **M**onitor their learning.

Our students take their learning into their own hands in an effective way. They have both the skill set and the desire to constantly learn and master new things. They know themselves, what their strengths are and where there is still potential to grow.

They are **O**pen to the world.

Our students function within different contexts and regional settings of the world. They shift their perspectives and are open to everyone, in order to communicate and cooperate effectively and appropriately.

They are **R**eady to act.

Our students continuously adjust their actions from a reflective attitude. They work in a connecting and appreciative manner with others. They see opportunities, think out of the box and dare to take action to create added value.

They are **E**ngaged in society.

Our students are committed to create a positive impact on society. They are aware of how societal structures and systems can lead to inequality, injustice, .. and can form an informed opinion about it.



THOMAS
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UNIVERSITY OF
APPLIED SCIENCES

AD HR-Support

Human Resources

Going to
the core of
reflection

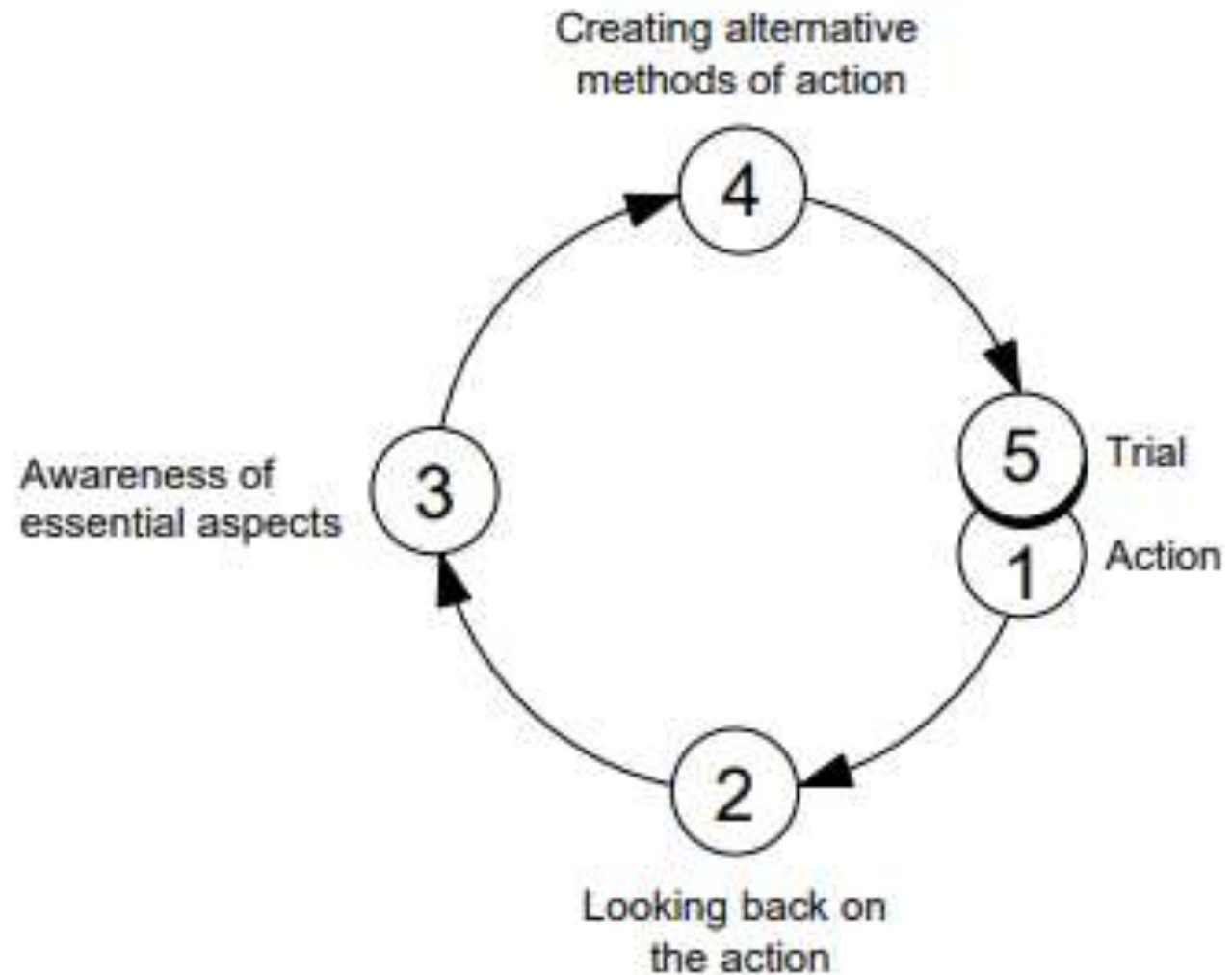


Target not achieved

- Students' reflections lacked depth.
- Students tended to externalise causes rather than examine their own role.
- Reflection tasks were fragmented and relied on a single method, preventing recognition of broader patterns.
- Students did not understand the purpose or added value of reflection.

How it used to be

Korthagen's ALACT Cirkel



Our approach

- Starting point: reflection as a core skill
- A two-year cycle: embedded from day one to graduation.
- Reflection as a continuous mindset, not just for internship
- Creating depth through a shared language so students can explain what happens, how it affects them, and how they can influence it.



Our goal

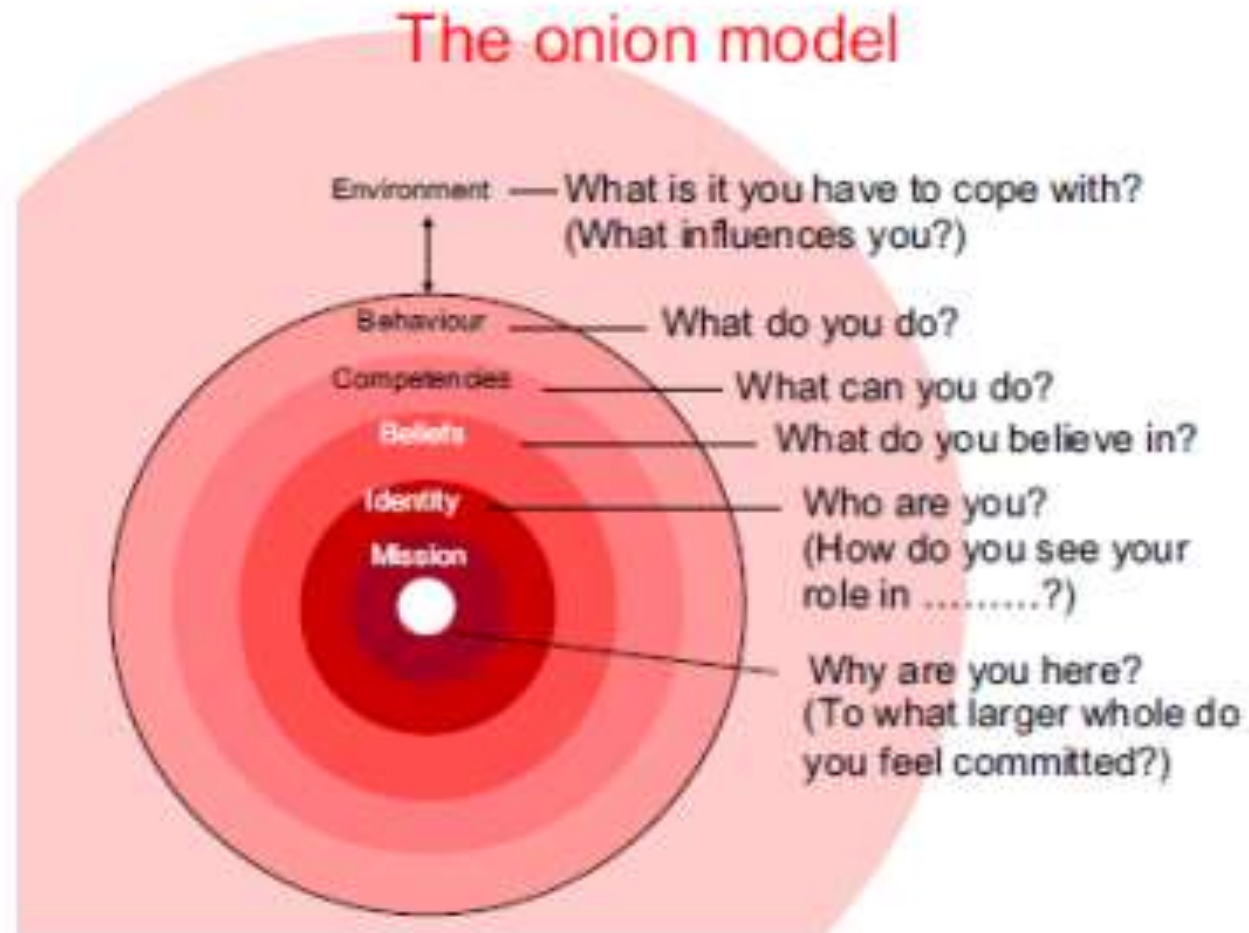
- Build self-awareness as a person and as a professional by working layer by layer.
- End point: “This is me.”
- Students can support others in their career and personal development aligning with their future role as career coaches.

Onion Model Korthagen, 2004

The identity Onion



Reflection focused on your *behaviour* (and underlying layers in interaction with the *environment*)



Right here, right now

Think of something that happened **just now** in this workshop

No sharing yet.



Layer 1

In pairs, describe **only what happened**:

What did you see / hear?

Who or what triggered the moment?

Keep it factual — no emotions, no actions.

Partner asks:

“What happened around you?”



Layer 1

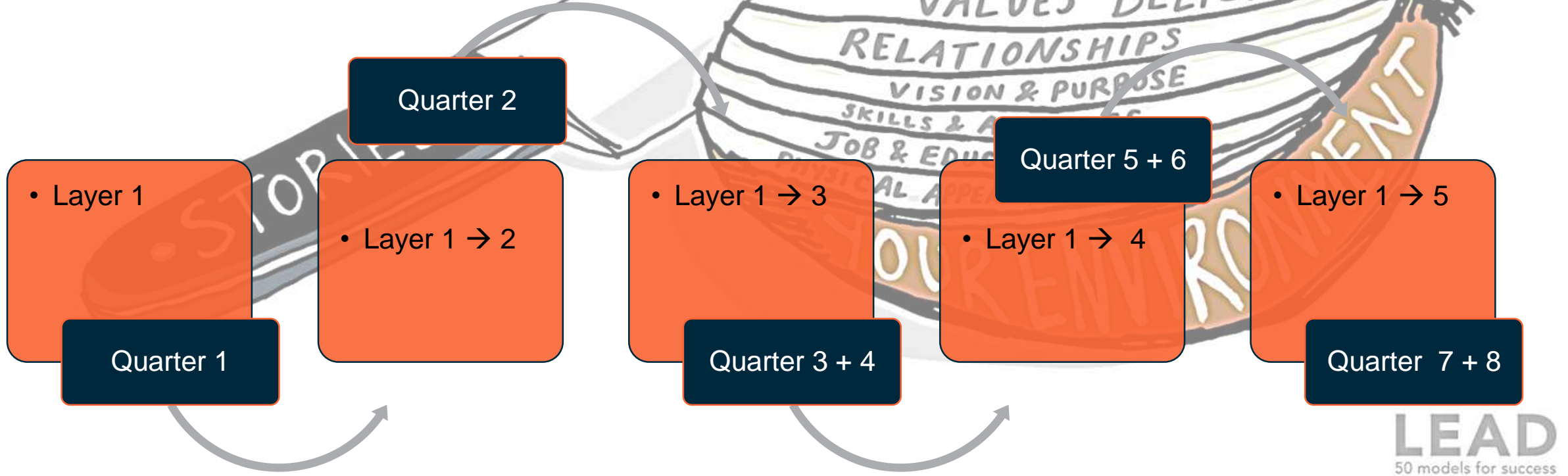
Was it difficult?

Did you automatically jump to behaviour, emotions, or explanations?

Why is it powerful to separate these layers?



Reflective growth over 2 years



Course	Quarter	Layer	Questions
Discover the role of HR	1	1	Where am I? When? When? With whom am I? With whom am I? What is there to see/what is happening? What is there to see/what is happening? What is the context/situation? What is the context/situation? Who is taking on which role? Who is taking on which role?
Diversity	1+2	1 + 2	What is my reaction? What do I do verbally and non-verbally? What actions did I take or not take? How would I describe my behaviour? What was the effect of my behaviour? Was my behaviour effective given my role? What could others observe about me?
Plan & organize	2	1+2+3	!!! with <u>predefined</u> competences focused on planning. What knowledge have I used? What can I do? How do I work?What are my strengths?What do I still need to develop?
Internship 1 +2	3 +4	1+2+3	!!! with <u>predefined</u> competences. What knowledge have I used? What can I do? How do I work?What are my strengths? What do I still need to develop?
Talent Support	6	1 + 2 + 3 +4	What do I believe in? What are my values? What standards do I apply? What (conflicting) values play a role? What convictions do I have? What convictions guide my actions?
Internship 3	5+6	1 + 2 + 3 + 4	What do I believe in? What are my values? What standards do I apply? What (conflicting) values play a role? What convictions do I have? What convictions guide my actions?

Course	Quarter	Layer	Questions
Deontology	7+8	1+2+3+4+5	How do I see myself? What roles do I take on? When am I myself in this situation? What personal characteristics come to the fore? What do I believe in? What are my values? What standards do I apply? What (conflicting) values play a role?
Internship 4	7+8	1 + 2 + 3 + 4 + 5	How do I see myself? What roles do I take on? When am I myself in this situation? What personal characteristics come to the fore? What do I believe in? What are my values? What standards do I apply? What (conflicting) values play a role?
		Mission Statement	Who am I without my successes, possessions and roles? What gives me the deepest sense of fulfilment or meaning? What is my drive/mission in life? What do you want to contribute to society?

From patterns to choices



Erkennen

Contact met jezelf!

E

H

L

E

Exploreren

Wat kan ik anders doen?

Leren

Afscheid oud
begin nieuw

Professionele groei



Finding patterns

HEEL = a tool to strengthen self-reflection and enable behavioural change. Behavioural change drives professional growth.

Why? HEEL encourages behavioural change by guiding students to reflect step by step and from a distance.

- ✓ By revisiting past behaviour, recognising patterns, and disrupting them, real change becomes possible.



Example

Application of final reflection report using HEEL:

You have now had a final evaluation meeting with your mentor and supervisor.

During this interview, you were given areas for development. Discuss a maximum of two areas for development.

- Step 1: What areas for development were you given and in what situation did this occur? Describe the situation as objectively as possible and describe the feedback you received as objectively as possible.
- Step 2: How did you behave in this situation? What did you think? Why did you behave this way? Are you satisfied or dissatisfied with the way you acted? To what extent do you recognize a pattern: reciprocal behaviour that has also occurred in another situation or previous internship?
- Step 3: This is behaviour that you would like to change, so that you do not exhibit it again next time or can approach it differently. There are many ways to address this. First and foremost, you must acknowledge your part in it. It starts with you; you are responsible for changing your behaviour. Do you recognize a pattern and that this has prevented you from achieving your goal? Why or why not? Explain.
- Step 4: Explore what you could have done differently to achieve your goal. What could you do differently in the future to break this pattern? What are your SMART actions?



Destination: Mission Statement

My mission? To help people find the job that really suits them.

Not just looking at what someone can do, but above all at who someone is.

I get energy from connecting candidates and companies, creating a match that works in the long term. A place where someone feels good and can be completely themselves.

I want to be there for people: by listening, thinking along with them and searching together for the right fit. I feel at my best in a warm, open and people-oriented environment.

With a lot of enthusiasm, a sense of responsibility and a big heart for people, want to continue to grow in HR – especially in recruitment and selection, because that's where my passion lies.

What do we measure

1. In-depth self-analysis: insight into values and ambitions
2. Recognising patterns: underlying causes of your actions
3. Action-oriented: the ability to formulate future-oriented actions
4. What is your mission? Which professional roles fit in with this?

What our students say

As a mentor, you have brought out so much in me that I didn't know I had.'

'I used to bottle everything up. By reflecting, I am more aware of what I feel and dare to express it.'

'The icing on the cake was that I got to present my mission statement on Thursday. It was an educational experience to reflect on who I am, what I stand for, and what I want to achieve as a professional. Preparing and presenting it not only gave me self-insight, but also made me proud.'

"The past two years have also been very much about getting to know myself. I know even better what my strengths are and where I feel comfortable."

Some research...

- Korthagen, F. A. J. (2014). Een softe benadering van reflectie helpt niet [A soft approach to reflection doesn't help]. Tijdschrift voor Lerarenopleiders, 35(1), 5-14. <https://korthagen.nl/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/Een-softe-benadering-van-reflectie.pdf>
 - Guo, L. (2021). How should reflection be supported in higher education? — A meta-analysis of reflection interventions. *Reflective Practice*, 23, 118 - 146. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14623943.2021.1995856>.
1. Deepen reflections by consciously using the technique of lifting . Use questions about thinking, feeling, wanting versus objectively describing
 2. Promote meaningful reflection by using all layers of the onion model, focusing on depth in professional development.
 3. Encourage reflection on students' successes and pay less attention to what is not going well. Give lots of positive feedback, preferably by identifying core qualities.
 4. Make such methodological principles explicit, encourage students to reflect on their own way of reflecting and to apply the methodological principles themselves as a tool in guiding their own professional development.



Summary

- **Reflection is a core skill** embedded across two years not a task, but a mindset.
- **Onion Model:** moving from describing the *environment* → to *behaviour* → to deeper layers creates insight and growth.
- **HEEL Method:** structured reflection helps identify patterns and enables real behavioural change.
- **Reflection strengthens professional identity:** “This is me” as the end point.
- **Students evolve into reflective HR-professionals** who can guide others in their development.

Thank you

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