

THE LIFELONG LEARNER: PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY IN LEADERSHIP¹



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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the relevance of Jesuit leadership principles in teaching and leadership, with a specific focus on their application within teacher education. The study introduces an integrated model that combines the professional identity frameworks of Manon Ruijters and Júlia Szarka with key Jesuit leadership pillars—self-awareness, love, ingenuity, and heroism. Emphasizing self-awareness and reflection, the paper argues these pillars provide a distinctive foundation for leadership development in educational settings. The integrated Streitman–Szarka–Tóth Model enhances the understanding of teacher identity and professional commitment by incorporating spiritual dimensions. Additionally, the model integrates new elements such as positive psychological coaching tools and Kubanyiova’s concept of possible selves to further enrich professional identity. The next phase of research will involve validating the model using

¹ For a related discussion, see: Neumayerné Streitman, Krisztina: Spiritualitás, elkötelezettség és identitás Az önségítő eszközök szerepe a vezetésben, in Tóth, E. – Csontos, T. (eds.): *Simonyi új dimenziókban*, Budapest, Károli Gáspár University of the Reformed Church in Hungary, 2024, 53–68.



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data from teachers involved in the Simonyi competition, as part of the “Language Competencies in Space and Time” project.

Keywords: value-driven leadership, self-awareness, spirituality, positive psychological coaching tools, Simonyi Zsigmond Carpathian Basin spelling competition

INTRODUCTION

Our humanity and identity are fundamentally shaped by the connection between our past and present. Since we live in a world of contradictions and constant change, we must find a balance between honoring the values of tradition and embracing the flexibility to learn and adapt. This requires living in the present and adapting to the challenges posed by our life circumstances and environment. To navigate these complexities successfully, one must take on the role of being the leader of their own life, which necessitates a strong (professional) identity. Leadership, in this sense, is not a static trait but an evolving process that demands continuous learning and self-development. The process of becoming a leader never truly ends; leading oneself requires ongoing learning and development. The formation of professional identity plays a crucial role in this process, supported by models and frameworks that draw on both religious traditions and modern pedagogical and psychological approaches.

In the postmodern era religious traditions that can provide guidance for spiritual and leadership development are experiencing a revival, as the field of psychology and mental health is rediscovering the benefits of these practices.² While mindfulness³ and meditation originate from Eastern, Buddhist traditions and have become some of the most popular methods for mental well-being today, it is important to note that meditation and contemplation are also integral parts of Christian traditions,⁴ dating back to the Desert Fathers.⁵ Saint Ignatius’s spiritual exercises, particularly the “examen” from Ignatian spiritual practice demonstrate how these traditions can be integrated into modern leadership and learning models.⁶

This paper focuses on the Jesuit leadership framework, due to its lasting relevance and alignment with the Christian leadership theme of this volume. By examining its capacity to provide spiritual, ethical, and pedagogical guidance, the Jesuit model bridges Christian traditions with the contemporary challenges

² Tornyai, Erika: *A lélek súlya*, Budapest, Jezsuita Kiadó, 2024, 12.

³ Conscious presence with all of our being in the present moment or situation.

⁴ Patsch, Ferenc: Működni hagyni Istent: A keresztyén kontempláció fogalma, története és mai újjáéledése, *Embertárs*, 21 (4), 2023, 397–414.

⁵ Brendan D. Kelly: Contemplative Traditions and Meditation, in Lisa J. Miller (ed.): *The Oxford Handbook of Psychology and Spirituality*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, online edition, 2012, 307–325.

⁶ Kiss, Ulrich: *Szolgáló vezető a tanuló vállalkozásban*. Budapest, Jezsuita Kiadó, 2017, 125–135.

faced by today's leaders. While this integrated model incorporates elements from Simons and Ruijters' professional identity framework, as well as Szarka's perspectives, the Jesuit model remains the primary focus of this paper. The other two models are briefly outlined to provide context and support for the discussion.

The article also draws on findings from the Károli Gáspár University of the Reformed Church in Hungary (KRE) research project, specifically the Simonyi Zsigmond Carpathian Basin Orthographic Competition Questionnaire Research,⁷ which focuses on teacher motivation and the coaching approach. This research forms part of the broader project *Language Competences in Space and Time*,⁸ supported by KRE. Insights from the research project highlight how motivation and professional identity are cultivated in educational contexts, offering practical applications for the integrated model explored in this article.

Previous publications in Hungarian within the project volume *Language Competences in Space and Time* and other writings in English⁹ have provided in-depth analyses of the Simons–Ruijters model and Szarka's approach, exploring how professional learning influences identity, particularly in educational and professional context.¹⁰ These works also explore methods and practical self-help tools for teachers and professionals to refine both their knowledge and character. Furthermore, an analysis of Kubanyiova's research¹¹ on teacher self-concepts—specifically the ideal, ought-to, and feared selves—has also been published in Hungarian in the above-mentioned project volume.¹² It provides an in-depth exploration of how these psychological constructs contribute to professional identity formation and complements the broader discussion on leadership development.

⁷ Tóth, Etelka: Értékörzés, hagyománytisztelet digitális keretekben. *Magyaróra*, 3(3), 2021, 365–372; Tóth, Etelka: Új utakon a Simonyi-verseny. *Anyanyelv-pedagógia*, 14(1), 2021, 122–125, https://www.anyanyelv-pedagogia.hu/pdf/Anyv_XIV_2021_1_12.pdf (accessed 20 April 2024)

⁸ In Hungarian “*Nyelvi kompetenciák térben és időben*”, the project topic number at KRE is 66010R800. See: Tóth, Etelka – Csontos, Tamás (eds.): *Simonyi új dimenziókban*, Budapest, Károli Gáspár University of the Reformed Church in Hungary, 2024. <https://portal.kre.hu/images/kutatas/nyelv-es-digitalis-kompetenciak/simonyi-uj-dimenziokban.pdf>

⁹ Neumayerné Streitman, Krisztina: Long-term teacher motivation, tools for creating a successful professional identity, in Puskás, A. – Nagy, M. (eds.): *Promoting Tolerance : Encounters of Education, Literature and Culture*, Komárno, Slovakia, János Selye University, 2024, 223–236; Neumayerné Streitman, Krisztina: Crafting a Professional Teacher Learner through Models of Learning and Positive Psychological Coaching Tools, *Argumentum* 20 (2024), 420–437, <https://doi.org/10.34103/ARGUMENTUM/2024/25>

¹⁰ See: Neumayerné Streitman, Krisztina: Sikeres professzionális identitás a tanárképzésben, in Tóth, E. – Csontos, T. (eds.): *Simonyi új dimenziókban*, Budapest, Károli Gáspár University of the Reformed Church in Hungary, 2024, 43–52.

¹¹ Magdalena Kubanyiova: Possible Selves in Language Teacher Development, in Z. Dörnyei – E. Ushioda (eds.): *Motivation, Language Identity and the L2 Self*, Bristol, Blue Ridge Summit, Multilingual Matters, 2009, 314–332.

¹² Neumayerné Streitman, Krisztina: Az énképek szerepe in Tóth, E. – Csontos, T. (eds.): *Simonyi új dimenziókban*, Budapest, Károli Gáspár University of the Reformed Church in Hungary, 2024, 33–42.

By emphasizing the Jesuit leadership approach, this article aims to expand the dialogue on professional identity and leadership development, connecting spiritual traditions with contemporary challenges. The interplay of these models underscores the importance of an integrated approach to fostering the growth and resilience of leaders and educators, building on previous works that provide a strong foundation for further exploration.

THE SUCCESS OF IGNATIAN LEADERSHIP

Chris Lowney, a former Jesuit who became an investment director and the author of *Heroic Leadership*, asserts that we are all leaders: as teachers, parents, friends, or colleagues, we are always leading—either well or poorly.¹³ Lowney’s experiences in corporate settings inspired him to revisit the “leadership secrets”¹⁴ he learned with the Jesuits. He realized that the 470-year-old Jesuit order had successfully addressed very similar challenges to those faced by modern organizations and educational institutions today.¹⁵

In his work, Lowney examines the characteristics of the Jesuit “way of proceeding” that enabled the order to thrive, posing the essential question: why have the Jesuits been so successful, and what can they teach modern leaders? While most leadership literature focuses on external tasks—such as providing direction, making decisions, motivating teams, and fostering change—the Jesuits emphasize who leaders are as individuals and how they live.¹⁶ Leadership, in their view, is not merely about actions but reflects one’s entire life, rooted in self-awareness, integrity, and continuous self-development.¹⁷ Values define both self-perception and identity; true leaders embody these principles authentically, shaping their leadership through lived conviction rather than strategy alone. Saint Ignatius believed that opportunities for leadership arise in everyday life, underscoring the importance of the whole person, particularly in teacher-leaders whose identity and relational presence are as crucial as their knowledge.¹⁸

This approach closely aligns with contemporary *ethical leadership* theory. Brown, Treviño, and Harrison define ethical leadership as demonstrating

¹³ Chris Lowney: *Heroic Leadership: Best Practices from a 450-Year-Old Company That Changed the World*, Chicago, Loyola Press, 2003, 2.

¹⁴ Lowney: *Heroic Leadership*, 3; St. Ignatius of Loyola: *A zarándok – Napló – Önéletrajzi visszaemlékezések– Lelki feljegyzések*, Budapest, Jezsuita Kiadó, 2015, 8, 142.

¹⁵ After spending seven years as a Jesuit seminarian, practicing his vow of poverty, chastity and obedience, Chris Lowney became a corporate professional working as an investment banker at JP Morgan.

¹⁶ Ibid., 15–20; Sylvie Robert: *Isten útjain Loyolai Szent Ignáccal*, Budapest, Vigilia Kiadó, 2010, 16–17.

¹⁷ Chris Lowney: *Heroic Living: Discover Your Purpose and Change the World*, Chicago, Loyola Press, 2010, 70.

¹⁸ Lowney: *Heroic Leadership*, 21.

normatively appropriate conduct through personal actions and promoting it among others within a social learning framework.¹⁹ Similarly, Ciulla emphasizes that leadership must be grounded in moral purpose and authenticity, beginning with the question: “What is the right thing to do?”²⁰ The Jesuit model, centered on self-awareness, a loving mindset, ingenuity, and heroic ambition, supports and extends these views by embedding ethical action within a lived vocation.²¹ Through inner transformation and reflective practices like the *examen*, the Jesuit tradition offers a spiritually grounded foundation for leadership that is both inwardly reflective and outwardly responsible, enriching modern theories with its long-standing tradition of character formation.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE SPIRITUAL EXERCISES

Saint Ignatius of Loyola lived at the end of the Middle Ages and the beginning of the modern era.²² His desire to help others inspired his book *Spiritual Exercises*, which became central to the Jesuit order and later practitioners.²³ Unlike his other writings, Ignatius initiated this work himself and considered its publication of utmost importance, as he believed its primary mission was “to help souls.”²⁴ Teaching others to pray, a key element of the *Exercises*, was essential to the apostolic work of the first Jesuits and remains one of the main goals and characteristics of Ignatian spirituality today.²⁵ The Spiritual Exercises serve as a tool for all believers, promoting a deeper faith and self-awareness while fostering ingenuity, love, and heroism.²⁶ The practices developed by

¹⁹ Michael E. Brown – Linda K. Treviño – David A. Harrison: *Ethical leadership: A social learning perspective for construct development and testing*, *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes* 97(2), 2005, 117–134, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.obhdp.2005.03.002>

²⁰ Joanne B. Ciulla: *Ethics, the Heart of Leadership*, Santa Barbara, California, Praeger 2004, 2020, 3–30.

²¹ Kiss: Szolgáló vezető, 145.

²² John W. O'Malley: *Az első jezsuiták*, Budapest, Szent István Társulat, 2006, 293.

The era, historical context and mentality of St. Ignatius of Loyola are excellently presented in several well-known works of cultural history, from various perspectives and approaches, for example: Marc Bloch: *Land and Work in Mediaeval Europe*, Fernand Braudel: *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, Peter Burke: *How to Be a Counter-Reformation Saint*, Peter Burke: *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe*, John W. O'Malley: *A jezsuiták története*, Szabó, Ferenc – Bartók, Tibor: *Jezsuiták Szent Ignác nyomdokain*, in Thomas Worcester (ed.): *The Cambridge Companion to the Jesuits*.

²³ Peter Burke: *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe*, London, Temple Smith, 1978. (2nd edn.: Aldershot, 1994, 3rd edn.: Ashgate, 2009), 207.

²⁴ St. Ignatius of Loyola: *A zarándok – Napló*, 8, 142; José Ignacio Tellechea Idígoras: *Egyedül, gyalog. Loyolai Szent Ignác élete*, Budapest, Jezsuita Kiadó, 2022, 169–172.

²⁵ André Ravier: *Loyolai Szent Ignác megalapítja Jézus Társaságát*, Budapest, Hungarian Province of the Society of Jesus (Jézus Társasága Magyarországi Rendtartománya), 1994.

²⁶ Szabó, Ferenc – Bartók, Tibor: *Jezsuiták Szent Ignác nyomdokain*, Budapest, Szent István Társulat, 2005, 25–28.

Ignatius are meant to inspire concrete actions rather than being theoretical rules to study.²⁷

The *examen* provides an opportunity to reflect on what we have done, what we are doing, and what we will do.²⁸ In practice, this involves consciously recalling personal goals every morning and pausing twice a day for a brief prayer or quiet reflection. The process begins with gratitude, where one gives thanks for the gifts and blessings received throughout the day, reflecting on specific moments of joy and appreciation. It continues with a review of the day's events, as though watching a film, paying attention to feelings, actions, and interactions, while reflecting on the choices made in response to opportunities and challenges.²⁹ Identifying emotions and exploring how different situations evoke particular feelings and reactions are central to this process. Following this, one acknowledges any mistakes or shortcomings, seeking forgiveness for moments when personal values may have been compromised or negative responses given. Finally, the exercise concludes with setting a resolution for the next day—intending to grow, respond differently, and be more mindful of God's presence. For non-believers, this would involve focusing on personal growth and aspirations with greater mindfulness.

This simple yet effective exercise helps break down goals into smaller steps. Regularly reviewing goals and spending five to ten minutes twice a day in reflection makes it easier to draw lessons, analyze setbacks, and strengthen commitment to self-reflection and personal growth. Ignatian spirituality integrates a continuous cycle of reflection and action.³⁰

Recent studies underscore the importance of self-awareness and reflection,³¹ asserting that advanced reflexivity is far more critical for leadership success than IQ or other competencies, such as technological or digital skills.³² Daniel Goleman's research emphasizes the significance of emotional intelligence in both leadership and learning roles.³³ Ignatian spirituality has always recognized and highlighted the importance of emotional intelligence in learning, spiritual growth, and the leadership of oneself and others.³⁴

²⁷ Cándido de Dalmases: *Loyolai Szent Ignác*, Budapest, Hungarian Province of the Society of Jesus (Jézus Társasága Magyarországi Rendtartománya), 1995.

²⁸ St. Ignatius of Loyola: *Lelkigyakorlatok*, Budapest, Jezsuita Kiadó, 2019, 45.

²⁹ Patsch: *Működni hagyni Istent*, 397–414.

³⁰ James Martin: *Jezsuita spiritualitás – Gyakorlati útmutatás a hétköznapi élethez*, Budapest, Ursus Libris, 2013, 368.

³¹ Nemes, Ödön – Perczel Forintos, Dóra: *A lelkivezetés művészete*, Budapest, Jezsuita Kiadó, 2013, 5–7.

³² Lowney: *Heroic Leadership*, 109.

³³ Daniel Goleman: *Emotional Intelligence*, New York, Random House, 1996; Daniel Goleman: *Primal Leadership*, Boston, Harvard Business Review Press, 2013, 24–29.

³⁴ Lowney: *Heroic Leadership*, 108–110.

THE FOUR PILLARS

The Jesuits' "leadership secrets" and successes are founded on four fundamental principles consistently evident in their historical narratives, activities, and writings.³⁵ Among these, two principles—self-awareness and love—particularly stand out as they are not always evident in other models, and play a crucial role in shaping teacher leadership, professional identity, and success.

The principles of *self-awareness and reflexivity* are fundamental to personal and professional growth, empowering leaders to understand themselves, recognize obstacles to their freedom, and respond to challenges in their environment effectively.³⁶ In contrast, the principle of *love* is essential in fostering positive and supportive relationships with others. These two principles stand out, "As leaders, we succeed when we become aware of who we are and what we hold dear, when we recognize the flaws and weaknesses that can lead us astray, and when we consistently reflect on ourselves and never stop learning."³⁷

According to Saint Ignatius, leaders should lead "with greater love than fear."³⁸ At the heart of the Ignatian approach lies respect for the dignity of the individual, where love and trust define the quality of relationships. This sharply contrasts with Machiavelli's contemporary 16th-century view, which focused on fear and manipulation.³⁹ In Ignatian leadership, *love and a loving mindset* take center stage, reflected in leaders' positive and caring attitudes that encourage participation in learning and work processes. This approach respects the dignity and potential of every individual, promoting the full realization of human capabilities.⁴⁰ Loving leaders recognize and value the talents, gifts, and inherent dignity of their colleagues and students, supporting their growth with courage, passion, and commitment. For Saint Ignatius, Jesuit leadership meant passionately supporting others and providing opportunities for the continuous pursuit of excellence.⁴¹

The third pillar is *ingenuity and innovative adaptation*, which combines creativity, flexibility, boldness, and sound judgment. This principle highlights the importance of flexible and creative problem-solving, along with the ability to adapt and innovate. For the Jesuits, ingenuity means being able to respond quickly and effectively to changing circumstances, finding new solutions to challenges and using available resources efficiently while remaining free from fear and external constraints.⁴² This principle involves recognizing opportunities and embracing different cultures, requiring a kind of indifference that

³⁵ Ibid., 25–28.

³⁶ Martin: *Jezuita spiritualitás*, 368.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Lowney: *Heroic Leadership*, 31.

³⁹ Ibid., 27.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 122–124.

⁴¹ Ibid., 33.

⁴² Ibid., 119–120.

frees one from prejudices and fears. It is characterized by deep trust in the world, rooted in the belief that it offers many favorable opportunities.⁴³

Ingenuity, therefore, has two vital components: indifference, which frees one from prejudices and narrow-mindedness, and deep trust and optimism, which assume the world offers favorable possibilities. Leaders who genuinely care about their team's well-being inspire respect and trust, unlocking both their own potential and that of others.⁴⁴ This principle is especially important for teachers, who must continually adapt to changes in the educational environment and develop new methods to improve the effectiveness of their teaching.

The fourth fundamental trait is *heroism*. "Leaders have an exciting future vision before them and aim to actively shape the future rather than passively observe it take shape. Heroes excel by seizing available opportunities rather than waiting for perfect opportunities to present themselves."⁴⁵ The Latin root of 'excel' means rising above, and heroic leaders embody this by elevating themselves and others, bringing out the best in their talents and gifts.⁴⁶ They inspire with visionary ambition and inner motivation, leading by example and prioritizing the team's goals and colleagues' success over their own self-interest.⁴⁷ By combining self-awareness, a loving mindset, ingenuity, and heroic leadership,⁴⁸ we can cultivate a coherent, consistent identity and authentic leadership in guiding ourselves and others.⁴⁹

This emphasis on continuous self-awareness and intentional growth in Ignatian leadership aligns with Simons' and Ruijters' perspective, which views professionalism as an ongoing learning process. Building on Gardner and Schulman's earlier work⁵⁰ and international literature, Simons and Ruijters emphasize that "the real professional is a learning professional".⁵¹ The framework identifies eight key characteristics of professionals, including commitment to personal growth and societal contributions, integrity in handling uncertainty, and the ability to maintain a solid body of theoretical and practical knowledge while generating new insights. Autonomy, professional community engagement, and authority further strengthen their professional practice, while resilience, wisdom, excellence and self-management provide the capacity to adapt, discern, and continuously

⁴³ Ibid., 30.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 31.

⁴⁵ Martin: *Jezsuita spiritualitás*, 368.

⁴⁶ Lowney: *Heroic Living*, 78.

⁴⁷ Lowney: *Heroic Leadership*, 34.

⁴⁸ The equivalent of *heroism* appears here and in the combined model as *ambition*, which is a concept that can be better understood in a secularized environment.

⁴⁹ Kiss: *Szolgáló vezető*, 145.

⁵⁰ Howard Gardner – Lee S. Shulman: The professions in America today: Crucial but fragile, *Daedalus*, 134(3), 2005, 13–18. <https://doi.org/10.1162/0011526054622132>

⁵¹ P. Robert-Jan Simons – Manon C. P. Ruijters: The real professional is a learning professional, in S. Billet – Harteis, C. – Gruber, H. (eds.): *International Handbook of research in professional and practice-based learning*, Dordrecht, Springer, 2014, 955, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-017-8902-8_35

grow.⁵² This integration of the Ruijters model highlights its role in professional identity formation and its connection to lifelong learning and leadership.

Figure 1 illustrates the evolving integration of the personal and social self into the professional self over time.



Figure 1. Ruijters' model of professional identity⁵³

Figure 2 highlights the key traits of a learning professional, emphasizing continuous growth, autonomy, authority, resilience, and ethical commitment.

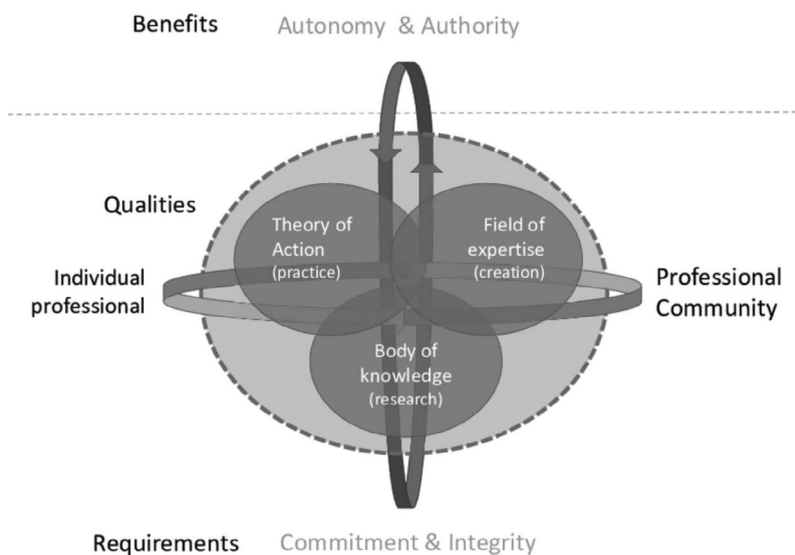


Figure 2. Traits of a professional learner⁵⁴

⁵² Manon C. P. Ruijters – P. Robert-Jan Simons: Connecting professionalism, learning and identity, *Eesti Haridusteaduste Ajakiri, Estonian Journal of Education*, 8 (2), 2020, 46–48.

⁵³ Ruijters – Simons: Connecting professionalism, 48 (Figure 3). https://www.researchgate.net/figure/The-model-of-professional-identity_fig3_346382568

⁵⁴ Simons – Ruijters: The real professional, 969. (Fig. 35.1.)

THE CONCEPT OF “COMMITMENT” IN THE CONTEXT OF A HUNGARIAN MODEL

The Szarka model, developed in the context of Hungary’s educational reforms, highlights the relational and personal aspects of commitment, providing a valuable framework for understanding how professionals navigate their roles. Júlia Szarka’s research on preschool teachers highlights how dedication, responsibility, and attachment influence professional growth and resilience.

The model emerged in response to the introduction of new Bachelor’s degree (BA) training requirements for preschool education in 2002.⁵⁵ These changes led to a significant influx of professionals into higher education programs. Their dedication and enthusiasm became central to studies on professional commitment, highlighting how professionals maintain their roles through effort, responsibility, and perseverance.⁵⁶

Empirical research confirms that preschool teachers recognize the importance of their work, which requires a solid professional concept, a value system, and authority. They prioritize the emotional, moral, social, and physical development of children over academic preparation. The Szarka model identifies the key traits of committed professionals as: strong faith in the task’s goals and values; efforts exceeding minimal expectations; psychological attachment to the profession, institutions, and entrusted children; responsibility as a moral obligation; alignment of professional duties with personal ideals; independence in decision-making, planning, and resourcefulness; perseverance characterized by ambition and emotional stability; acceptance reflected in empathy and differentiated problem-solving; and identification through strong interpersonal skills, reliability, and prioritization of humanity in professional relationships. Preschool teachers demonstrate commitment through ongoing knowledge acquisition, professional development, and effective communication, while consciously rejecting egoism, impatience, and aggression in favor of an accepting pedagogical approach.

The *SUN (Szarka) model* visually represents these findings, summarizing the interplay between the elements of professional commitment. The model’s unnamed eighth ray symbolizes its flexibility and openness to further analysis and development.

⁵⁵ Baska, Gabriella – Hegedűs, Judit: *A magyarországi pedagógusképzés története recepciós hatások tükrében*, TÁMOP 4.1.2.B.2-13/1-2013-0007 „Országos koordinációval a pedagógusképzés megújításáért”, Budapest, ELTE, 2013.

⁵⁶ Szarka, Júlia: *Az óvónők szakmai elkötelezettsége*, Doctoral (PhD) thesis, Budapest, 2004.

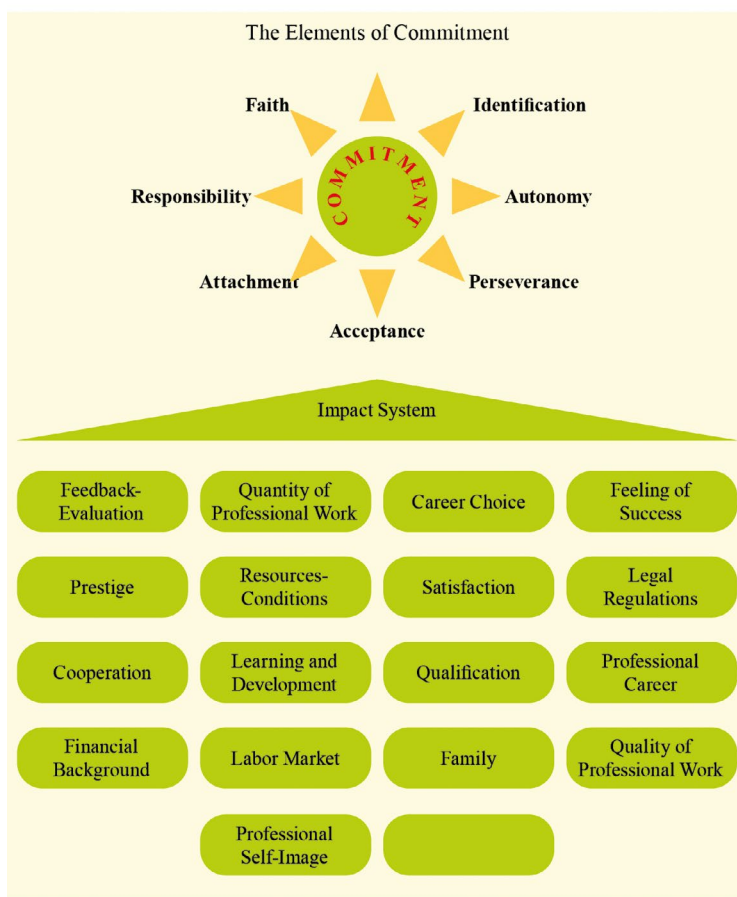


Figure 3. The Szarka model

IMPLICATIONS OF THE SZARKA MODEL

The Szarka model, emphasizing attachment, responsibility, and perseverance, enriches discussions on professional identity and lifelong learning. Its relational and moral focus complements the Jesuit pillars and Ruijters' framework, offering practical insights for educators and leaders in complex environments.

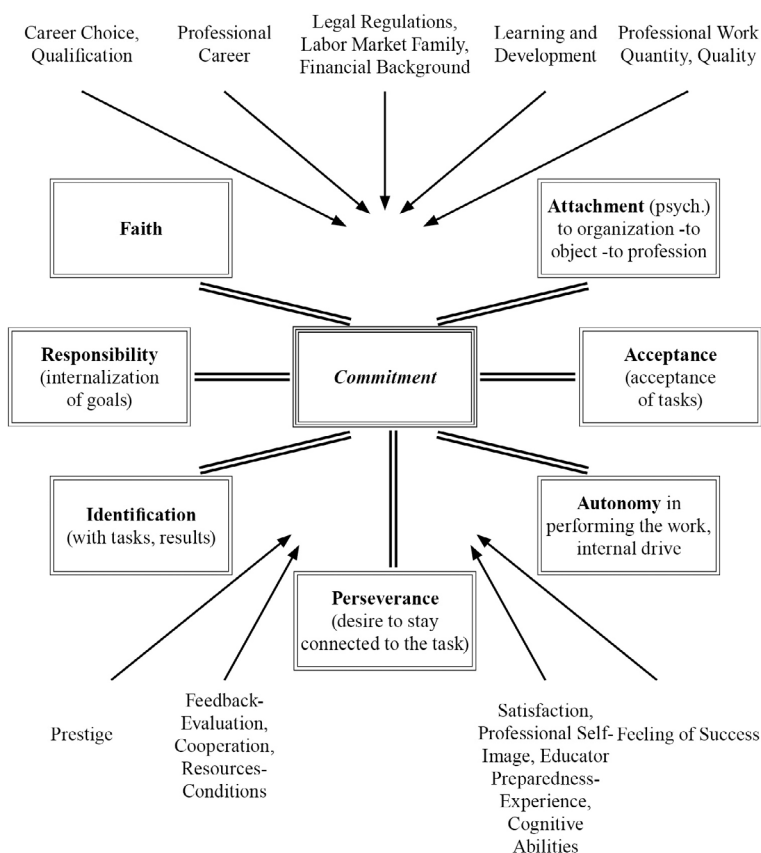


Figure 4. Impact system

THE UNIFIED STREITMAN–SZARKA–TÓTH MODEL — DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS OF THE MODEL

The Unified Streitman–Szarka–Tóth Model was developed based on existing literature and the previously mentioned models. We anticipate that its validity will be supported by data collected from questionnaires completed by teachers preparing students for the Simonyi competition, as part of the above-mentioned research project titled *Language Competencies in Space and Time*. Analyzing this data will be the next step for our research group.

The Streitman–Szarka–Tóth Model is sun-shaped, with its red outer frame reflecting the Jesuit logo and lighter orange rays inspired by the Szarka model (see Figure 5). The darker orange arrows reference Ruijters' model of the learning professional, while the light-yellow rays represent new elements.

At the center of the model, four key concepts are highlighted: learning and development, leadership and change which are supported by a wide range of personal and professional qualities. *Self-awareness* forms the foundation, incorporating elements such as *self-help tools*, *(possible) selves*, *resilience*, *(self) reflection*, *identity*, *autonomy*, emphasizing the continuous cycle of introspection and growth. *Loving mindset* extends this foundation by including *responsibility*, *attachment*, *acceptance*, *wisdom*, *commitment*, *integrity*, highlighting the relational, ethical, and value-driven aspects of leadership.

Ingenuity supports adaptability and creativity *through creation*, *practice*, *and research expertise*, *flexibility* and *adaptability* enabling leaders to navigate change with courage and innovation. *Ambition*, as the final pillar, reinforces sustained excellence through *self-management* and *commitment to excellence*, *faith and spirituality*, *professional power*, *perseverance*, and *daring boldness* ensuring that leaders remain motivated, goal-oriented, and resilient over time. These concepts emphasize the importance of lifelong, self-regulated learning, particularly in teacher education, where 21st-century objectives focus on fostering change, developing teachers' professional identity, and cultivating leadership and self-directed attitudes.

THE JESUIT PILLARS, THE SZARKA AND THE RUIJTERS MODEL

The Jesuit pillars encompass four fundamental elements: *self-awareness and reflexivity*, *a loving mindset*, *ingenuity*, and *heroic ambition*, emphasizing a reflective, value-driven approach to self-leadership. The Szarka model, originally focused on the professional commitment of preschool teachers, identifies seven core traits: *faith*, *attachment*, *responsibility*, *acceptance*, *identification*, *autonomy*, and *perseverance*, highlighting the relational and personal dimensions of professional identity. Simons and Ruijters further enrich this discussion by characterizing the learning professional as an evolving integration of personal development, professional expertise and community responsibility.

At the Pedagogical Faculty of Károli University, spiritual dimension of the model—expressed through *faith*, *love*, *self-awareness and reflexivity*—adds further depth, aligning personal growth with ethical leadership and creating a nurturing educational environment.

Integration and Overlaps Between Components

The combined framework expands and interrelates the core elements of the three models. *Faith* from the Szarka model evolves into a vocation-driven commitment through Jesuit spirituality; *attachment*, understood in the Szarka

model as a strong emotional bond to one's profession, entrusted individuals, and institutions, is further strengthened by Ruijters' emphasis on belonging to professional communities; *identification* deepens through the development of a committed professional identity. *Autonomy*, as emphasized by Szarka, aligns with *self-directedness* in Ruijters' model, fostering proactive agency, innovation, and adaptability.

Further, critical overlaps reinforce the integrated structure: *reflexivity* is central to both the Jesuit tradition and Ruijters' learning model; *commitment* sustains motivation in Szarka and Ruijters alike; *flexibility* is vital for adaptability across all three frameworks; and *resilience* and *perseverance* reflect the enduring inner strength required for long-term professional success. Together, these dimensions support a cohesive, future-oriented model of leadership and identity development.

INNOVATIVE ELEMENTS IN THE MODEL

The inclusion of innovative elements further enriches this integrated framework. *Self-help tools* derived from positive psychological coaching emphasize practical strategies for enhancing self-awareness, resilience, and emotional agility. These tools are especially effective in teacher education, helping individuals navigate complex professional demands

Kubanyiova's concept of English teachers' *possible selves*—ideal, ought-to, and feared selves—adds depth to the identity-building process by encouraging individuals to envision their future selves and set meaningful goals for personal and professional growth. These are complemented by Ruijters' focus on *personal, social, and professional selves*, emphasizing a holistic understanding of identity within various contexts. The Jesuit principles of *daring boldness* and *ingenuity* emerge as defining traits of 21st-century teachers and leaders. This boldness encourages a courageous, innovative approach to practice, enabling individuals to take risks, embrace challenges, and create impactful change in their fields.

While each of the individual models—Jesuit leadership, Ruijters' professionalism, and Szarka's commitment framework—provides unique insights into professional growth, they address different facets of leadership. To build a coherent and contextually responsive approach for educational professionals, we developed an *integrated model* that synthesizes these dimensions. The resulting framework, visualized in Figure 5, brings together *spiritual depth, relational commitment, and professional agency* in a single structure.



Figure 5. *The Unified Streitman–Szarka–Tóth Model*

CONCLUSION

By synthesizing the Jesuit pillars, the Szarka model, and Ruijters' framework, we propose a cohesive model that captures the spiritual, relational, and professional dimensions of leadership. Reflexivity and self-awareness form the foundation for personal and professional growth, while commitment, flexibility, autonomy, and resilience create the dynamic structure needed to navigate the complexities of educational leadership. Integrating innovative elements such as self-help tools, the concept of possible selves, and daring boldness further strengthens the model's future-oriented nature.

Crucially, this integrated framework not only addresses individual development but also aligns closely with contemporary ethical leadership theories, which emphasize authenticity, moral purpose, and the modeling of values

through everyday actions.⁵⁷ By embedding ethical conduct into the very fabric of professional identity, the unified Streitman–Szarka–Tóth Model offers a holistic, humanistic, and sustainable approach to leadership and lifelong learning. It aspires to form leaders who are not only skilled practitioners but also reflective, resilient, and ethically grounded individuals capable of inspiring change within their communities.

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