Collaborations Resulting in New Leadership Model Operationalization with Disadvantaged

Students

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Abstract

A new leadership model is needed in all organizations. In response, The Affect-Centered Transformational Leadership Model came about. The new model resulted from a doctoral student's participation in a leadership course, and continued dialogue with its professor. Ultimately, the new model reached the stage of needing to be operationalized. A public school teacher, who teaches primarily disadvantaged low-income minority students, decided to implement the new model in her classroom. Results of the co-authors' collaborations, and the first semester implementation of the new model in the public school classroom with economically disadvantaged students are shared.

*Keywords*: Teaching, Learning, Teacher, Student, Low-Income Students, Affect, Transformation, Human Potential, Emotional Intelligence, Reciprocity, Trust, Engaged Learning

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Does the operationalization of a new leadership model with disadvantaged middle school students ultimately increase their test scores on the state's high stakes academic examination? This is the research question the three Investigators eventually hope to answer. Investigator One, herein after known as the Middle School Teacher, Investigator Two, herein after known as the Doctoral Student, and Investigator Three herein after known as the Professor began collaborating in the summer of 2014.

The purpose of this collaboration was to operationalize the Doctoral Student's new model known as Affect-Centered Transformational Leadership with the Middle School Teacher's students. The Doctoral Student had created the new leadership model as a student in the Professor's Concepts of Leadership course in the fall semester of 2013.

In the early summer of 2014 the Professor provided a presentation on Emotional Intelligence at the state's regional education service center for future K-12 school leaders. The Middle School Teacher was in attendance at the presentation and inquired as to how Emotional Intelligence could be taught. It was at this time that the Professor introduced the Middle School Teacher to the Doctoral Student's new leadership model.

Several meetings occurred between the Middle School Teacher and Professor across the summer of 2014. These meetings culminated with the decision to ask the Doctoral Student permission to implement his new leadership model with the Middle School Teacher's students. The Middle School Teacher, Doctoral Student, and Professor subsequently met and the Doctoral Student agreed to allow his model to be operationalized by the Middle Grades Teacher.

The Middle School Teacher teaches in a school containing a substantial percentage of economically disadvantaged students. The three researchers hypothesized implementing the model would have positive effects on the students, including increases in high stakes test scores.

**The Affect-Centered Transformational Leadership Model**



**What The Affect-Centered Transformational Teacher Must Know And Do**

The affect-centered transformational teacher who implements the model must be knowledgeable about the human developmental theories, self-assess where they reside in each, and develop action plans for how they will reach next desired levels in each. This results in the

desired, self-directed behaviors and outcomes needed for personal transcendence and self-transformation.

Then, the teacher facilitates followership knowledge of the theories, students' self-reflections regarding where they reside in each, and development of student action plans for how the followership will reach next desired levels, resulting in desired self-transformations. These actions, exchanges, and outcomes between teacher and students take place in the "Results Within" portion of the model. The teacher must live, model, and espouse the desired behaviors, while ensuring followers do the same. The teacher must also set the organization's mood and tone.

Becoming an affect-driven, transformational teacher requires substantial theory knowledge, deep reflection, personal sacrifice, willingness to change, ability to articulate action in plans, and follow-through. Becoming affect-driven students require the same. Intensive training and requirements of use are essential to the success of the endeavor.

As the members of the classroom experience the desired transformations, they concurrently focus on the organization's shared vision and goals. Collectively, all members focus on the tasks at hand and create the organization's desired product. The product is represented by the "Results Beyond" portion of the new leadership model.

The teacher then analyzes success results for the product. The data analyses are compared with the classrooms' shared vision and goals that resulted in the product. The product result, in a continuous improvement fashion, guides the teacher in making adjustments in their personal action plans, the plans for the students and organizational plans. Once needed changes are made, based on the data, the teacher then facilitates any needed adjustments in modeling, and transmitting, transformative expectations. Then, the process is repeated, whereby the teacher and

students strive to reach new human development levels, while product is produced and once again analyzed. This process is continuous and never-ending. In the case of Middle School students, one of the identified products is the test score on the annual high stakes state examination.

Continuous feedback, beyond the model's initial implementation, becomes high stakes organizationally, with openness to change being critical to the affective, trusting intent of leading, and living, by example. The self-aware, exemplary teacher will espouse, and communicate, affective messages based on humanistic traits of charity, spirituality and non-hierarchical egalitarian ideals, with the intention of creating and nurturing the respect of the students. This creates a centripetal reciprocity across the model's components, pulling together all classroom members, results within, and results beyond the organization.

Followers will reciprocate affect, emulating the teacher's intentional modeling of affective behaviors. Such behaviors have potential for producing needed intrinsic happiness, resulting in greater productivity among all classroom members. Intrinsic happiness also encourages innovation. The teacher's and students' affective reciprocity will result in desired organizational extrinsic success, reinforcing the positive psychology aspects of the new affective model.

While affect cannot be easily measured, test score success can be. Additionally, the affective sum of the organization will have positive consequences beyond it. This is included, as well, in the model by the "Results Beyond" portion of the reciprocal circle. Like the selfless, affective-driven transformational teacher (and students), the school will think, and act, well beyond itself. In other words, improved performance in school will result in a more active citizenry beyond school, with civilization advancement as the ultimate goal.

This affective-driven model for transformational leadership, then, is offered for consideration as the next, needed one to take teachers, students and schools to new places. It is readily known that there are created cultures in any organization. Further, how those cultures are transacted upon depend on the willingness of individuals to lead and the willingness of the led to follow. It is safe to conclude that effective leaders incorporate social influence which, "helps individuals obtain power and increases access to the tangible and intangible" (Epitropaki & Martin 2013, p. 299).

The process of social influence, and empowerment, of individuals is reliant on human processes, which in this model are supported by multiple human development theories. Again, in the use of this new affect-centered leadership model, teachers must understand the basic tenets of human development, internalize them, and genuinely behave in a manner representative of the transformative characteristics. That is, reside in the affective domain of human development potential.

Affect-centered transformational leaders, who reflect a willingness to capitalize on this understanding, and act on this knowledge, play a great role in liberating individuals to operate at optimal levels, for the benefit of all stakeholders. Individuals want to be free of the entanglements that operate in the traditional (transactional) leadership paradigm.  How this liberation occurs is a result of the behaviors of transformational leaders, and the response from followers, which begins with effective reflection, internalization, and communication evoking reciprocity that yields pleasant, substantial results.

Effective leadership encompasses powerful dynamics, leading to change in organizations. This change does not happen easily. Effective leaders need the followership to believe in the mission of the organization and its leadership. It posits that effective leaders will incorporate

methods that will undoubtedly bring the highest returns from the greatest commodity in an

organization—the individual. How teachers get "buy in" from students is of great concern, given

that we are living in chaotic times marked with change and uncertainty (Bass,1985). Bass

indicates leadership effectiveness is a "direct function of a leader's transformational behavior,

and is an indirect function of individual differences working through transformational behaviors"

(p.451). Teachers who desire to be effective will likely capitalize on the strengths of students,

using everything in their power to influence better followership. Better followership will

translate to higher productivity of classrooms and schools.

It is vital to understand the characteristics of transformational leadership and the

implications thereof, to provide a justifiable rationale for fresh leadership interaction. Eagly,

Johannesen-Schmidt, and van Engen (2003) maintain that transformational leadership styles

include "stable patterns of behavior", and that women "are less hierarchical, more cooperative

and collaborative, and more oriented to enhancing others' self-worth" than men in leadership

positions, and conclude that these patterns of behavior "make women superior leaders for

contemporary organizations" (p.569). While the focus of this paper is not on women as leaders, it

should be noted that the characteristics displayed by women in leadership positions are

transformative in nature, and are integral components of the position taken herein.

An example of leaders nurturing relationships is apparent when there is productivity in an

organization (Bass, 1985). Teachers should understand that for there to be real productivity from

students there has to be a sense of relevancy urged, and effectively communicated, to followers.

In order for students to have that sense of relevancy, teachers should display affect-centered

transformational leadership behaviors that are rich in communicating a collective vision, not just

a vision for a select few. Communicating a collective vision implies care and concern for teachers and students.

Cavazotte and Hickmann (2011) found that emotional intelligence and emotional stability are positively related to transformational leadership. They further found that transformational leadership appeals to the intelligence of their followers, "so as to promote thinking processes that favor creativity and innovation", with careful treatment of the followers' needs and desires (p.444).

### Affect-Centered Teacher/Student Reciprocity

Teachers encouraging a collective vision should also be very concerned with, and engaging in, developmental behaviors that increase reciprocity such as "rationality, ingratiation and exchange" (Epitropaki & Martin, 2013, p. 300). In order for there to be reciprocity, that includes the premises of rationality, ingratiation and exchange, there needs to be effective communication between the teacher and the student. That is, the type of communication that evokes responses from the student that is more than mere transaction.

Receivers of effective communication may be more likely to display transformative behaviors, which result in many positives for leadership, followership, and organizations. This calls for teachers possessing an increase in knowing, internalizing, and communicating the various stages of human development of the individual. Those stages of development are guided by Benjamin Bloom's affective domains of learning, and supported by psychosocial, human needs, and spirituality theories outlined by Abraham Maslow, Erik Erikson and James Fowler.

The affect-centered transformational teacher first reflects on where they reside in Maslow's Hierarchy, Erikson's Life Stages, and Fowler's Stages of Spirituality. Then, they develop an action plan which guides them to reach needed higher stages, or levels, in each. Once

they have begun their personal human development journey they teach their students the various

development theories and aid them in creating, and acting upon, their development action plans.

These efforts are framed within the affective domain, since reaching one's feelings and values

impact learning and changing most.

In sum, the results of the operationalization of the Affect-Centered Transformational

Leadership Model play out in positive relational ways with students' Emotional Intelligence (EI)

(Cavazotte & Hickmann, 2011). EI is the ability to perceive, or be aware of, control, and

evaluate, or judge, emotions (Why You Need Emotional Intelligence to Succeed in Business,

2014). EI has a profound impact on whether or not a student is successful. Moreover, unlike IQ,

EI can be taught, and improved over time and experience.

Consider the story of Phineas Gage, a 25 year old railroad construction foreman whose

ability to lead his team was admired and respected. He was described as hard-working,

responsible, and a favorite among his team. On September 4, 1848, he and his team were

exploding rocks on a job site, a skill at which he was reputed to be a master. Unfortunately, he

became distracted during the process, causing the explosion to occur before he was ready. A

13.25 lb. iron rod, more than 3.5 inches long, pierced his left cheek, his skull and brain, then

exited his skull. Miraculously, he survived, and even recovered with no apparent impact on most

of his physical abilities. But emotionally, he was a changed man. Gone was the wise, even-

tempered man his men had always known. He became aggressive, hostile, and profane. He lost

respect for social conventions. His (mis)behavior was so severe, he lost his job (Macmillan,

2000).

The case study of Phineas Gage is valuable to this study because, towards the last 12 years of his life, he regained (re-learned?) most of his lost social and personal skills that his accident had 'erased', thus lending support to the premise that EI can be taught.

### The Importance of EI in a Classroom Setting

Why should teachers care about their students' EI?  Studies have shown that: EI is 90 percent of the difference between average and best performing leaders (Goleman, 1997). EI is five times more important than intellectual quotient (IQ) in determining success (Bar-On et al, 2006).

In the last decade researchers have found that even more than IQ, one's EI and ability to handle feelings will determine happiness and success in life (Gottman, 1998).  Experienced partners in a multinational consulting firm were assessed on the EI competencies plus three others. Partners who scored above the median on nine of the 20 competencies delivered $1.2 million more profit from their accounts than did other partners, a 139 percent increase, (Boyatzis, 1999).

The U.S Air Force found their most successful recruiters scored significantly higher in EI.  The Air Force began using EI tests to select recruiters themselves. They increased their ability to predict successful recruiters by 300 percent. The annual gain was $3 million in savings. A national insurance company determined agents with low EI had average policy sales of $54,000, while agents with high EI averaged $114,000 (Hay/McBer, 1997).  L'Oreal sales agents with high EI scores outsold their counterparts by $91,000, resulting in a net difference of more than $2.5 million dollars (Cooper, 2014). Additionally, employees with high EI scores were 63 percent more likely to persist in employment during their first year.

The foregoing results are not isolated to the business/professional world.  As was demonstrated in a study done by Zizzi, Deaner, and Hirschhorn (2003), wherein the relationship between EI and athletic performance was studied: EI was significantly correlated to better performance of pitchers, specifically strikeouts (Hawkins, 2013).

## The Study

The fall semester, 2014 portion of the study included 115 8th grade reading students. Most of the students were low-income minorities with historically lower than average performance on state assessments, as a whole.  The school was on an eight (8) period bell schedule, each class period lasted for 55 minutes.  Classes met Monday through Friday, with the exception of early release days, holidays, and teacher development days.  The first semester of the study lasted for 16 weeks of the academic year; therefore, the number of instructional hours was approximately 430 hours.

## Study Procedures

Informative posters featuring the human development, education, and spiritual theorists Maslow, Erikson, Bloom and Fowler were posted in the classroom for student reference purposes.  Per the Affect-Centered Leadership Model, the Middle School Teacher as classroom leader first shared with students where she currently resides in each of the theories. She then shared with the students her personal plan of how she will reach each of the higher theory stages. Students were then guided to identify where they believed they might reside in each of the theories, and what that might mean in terms of their EI.

Students then took an online Empathy Quotient Test, recorded their score on a separate document, and were debriefed regarding the meanings of the various scores.  Thereafter, and at a later date, students wrote a statement regarding where they thought they were in terms of their

EI.  In particular, students discussed 1) whether they had high, average, or low EI based upon their score, as well as self-knowledge, 2) whether they wanted to improve their EI or not, and why, and 3) what they were going to do about it, in other words their action plans.

Throughout the semester, students took part in lessons designed to increase their EI, along with instruction on reaching full potential embedded in their regular curriculum (i.e., EI with respect to various characters in a piece of literature, and/or level of EI in different types of characters).

## First Semester Study Results

Keeping in mind the study's upcoming second semester results will be focused on the high stakes state test scores, the first semester study results are qualitative in nature. What can be said at this point is that operationalization of the new leadership model has affected the classroom culture in a number of positive ways.

Those students receiving emotional intelligence instruction are more willing to collaborate in productive ways with their peers and the Middle School Teacher.  Students actively solicit more input about their performance, their attitude, their behavior, not just from the Middle School Teacher, but from their peers as well.  Students offer more unsolicited suggestions about educational activities that they feel would be beneficial for the class, their learning community, without fear of being shot down.

The Middle School Teacher has even noticed that she, as instructor, is more open to implementing the suggested activities, because there is greater trust between the parties.  In short, there is more give and take, greater dialogue, increased collaboration, and a new trust that exists in these classes that the Middle School Teacher has not previously experienced in classes that have not received such instruction.

The Middle School Teacher's experience leads her to conclude that EI can be taught. That is evidenced by the behavioral changes in her classes receiving the instruction in the first semester of the study.

### Recommendations for Future Study

Performance indicators will be taken from the students' performance on state exams during the prior academic year, together with their performance on state exams in the spring semester during the current academic year. These data will be correlated with individual EI levels as they present at the beginning of the academic year versus those same levels at the end of the academic year.

The question remains: Does operationalizing the new leadership model positively affect academic performance? If it does, this may well mean that anyone's performance, irrespective of whether they are a student in a classroom setting, or a CEO in a Fortune 500 company, may be dramatically improved in a way that takes into account the whole person. Moreover, we may have a tool that enhances the work culture in a way that better meets an individual's needs, and meets a capitalistic society's need for results.

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