

The Triadic Trait Model for Teachers: Teacher Leadership as a Classroom Paradigm

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Abstract

Delineating common traits or adjectives found in Transformative Leadership and the Five Factor Model of Personality (FFM) the paper makes the statement that similar traits can also be correlated to teaching, with all three processes delineated into a singular model. Designated as the Triadic Trait Model, the outliers are correlated by their shared traits or adjectives. The paper also asserts that these processes, especially teacher leadership, can be associated to the classroom teaching dynamic. Background and history of both the Transformative leadership Model and the Five Factor Model are included.

Introduction

Leadership, as defined as a noun, is usually conceptualized as “the capacity or ability to lead”. The American Heritage Dictionary states that word ‘lead’, which conceived as the verb ‘to lead’, means to “guide or direct”, and (as a noun) as the “ability to lead” (Berube, ed., 1991, pg 79). Together the two definitions illustrate one who has the capacity and the ability to guide others in doing or accomplishing a specific concept, task or function. Northouse (2004) espouses that leadership “is a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal” (pg. 3). From this beginning conceptualization, however, the word (in meaning and definition) becomes more convoluted, due in some part to the vagaries or concept of the word itself. This is in no means a simple syntax issue as the classification is as important as the definition, or in some respects integral to it. The conceptualization of leadership will drive the definition and context in which it is being studied.

Scholars have been divided over the exact meaning of leadership; modern studies list or define well over sixty different forms or classifications (Fleishman, et al, 1991). Most notably is in the definitions of the leadership relationship, or in the context of how leadership is actually being studied. The concept can be looked at as a process, a relationship and/or (depending on one’s view) a perspective of personality and influence (Northouse, 2004). Some forms may be labeled or designated through the influence of established skill sets, through appropriate utilization of leadership styles, or through supervisory behaviors consistent with management guidelines or protocols (Glickman, Gordon & Ross-Gordon, 2001). A historical perspective delineates leadership through established traits, more commonly referred to as the ‘great man theory’. This takes the stance that some leaders deserve to be in charge, or they may be the only ones qualified to be so due to skills and abilities that only they possess (Gardner, 2000). Modern studies have been hard pressed to delineate commonalities of these traits and this theory has somewhat faded in the modern age. This may be due, in some part, to the concept of a contingency theory; a theory explaining that these great men had the abilities or styles contingent for that situation and only that situation in which they found themselves. In the spectrum of leadership traits this may limit the skill sets to certain situations and/ or contexts (Johnson, 2001).

The concept of transformational leadership, as it is now known, was arguably conceived as a charismatic leadership dynamic introduced in 1947 by Max Weber, German sociologist and economist, in his seminal paper “The Theory of Social and Economic Organization[s]” (Weber, 1947). Many modern theorists have moved past Weber’s model and incorporated a transactional leadership template, from which the transformational derives.

Yet, looking at it through a personality paradigm, Weber's original model is quite telling in its classification and description of three types of leadership. These leaders are defined both by metaphor and classic definition, referred to as frames or 'grounds'. The types are the bureaucrat or rational ground, the prince or the traditional ground, and the hero who is the charismatic ground (Boje, 2000). The bureaucrat resembles the situational approach where certain functions, powers, skills and other modes of leadership rest both with the individual and the context in which the leadership is being utilized. Weber, however, points out that these 'grounds' are neither static nor isolated, instead they are fluid and there is continuous movement between the three (Boje, 2000). He saw the charismatic leader turning more into a bureaucrat as time moved on with new charismatic leaders moving into the forefront or limelight. In retrospect Weber developed a leadership model more involved with potential outlier processes than the leader himself, regardless of the charisma, traits or skills he or she may possess.

Transformational leadership was first introduced by James Burns (1978) in his book aptly titled "Leadership". He built his theory of transactional and transformational leadership on Weber's earlier work and on Kolberg's stages of moral development (Boje, 2000). Burns delineated leaders into two moral sets or labels from which other subsets are consequently filtered; the moral value leader and the amoral leader. The moral value leader is the only designation from which both transactional and transformational leadership can derive, though some later scholars would dispute this assertion. The amoral leader, according to Burns, is not a true leader at all. These individuals are those who acquire power through means not applicable to charismatic styles or traits. Paradoxically these same traits were defined positively by Machiavelli in his book, *The Prince* (1532), which listed those who distinguished leadership through the use of power or force, political hierarchies, birthright and family as examples of the 'great man' theory. All of these are historic leadership types who Burns refused to classify as true examples of leadership (Boje, 2000). His reasoning was that true leadership, or the moral value leader, involved charismatic and empathetic concepts that involved the followers, not just the wants and desires of the leader (UNPAN, n.d.). Transactional leadership, the first stage of the moral leader, involved ethical value sets, best defined through adjectives such as responsibility, fairness, honor and commitment. Transformational leadership, the highest stage, would focus on collective results of the other leadership styles and is aptly described through the adjectives of liberty, equality, and morality. Later scholars would describe this form of leadership through the positive and beneficial transformation of culture (Johnson, 2001).

Bernard Bass, in his book 'Leadership and Performance beyond Expectation' (1985) would further expand on the definition of the transactional and transformational leader. He agreed with the assumptions and labels as defined by Burns but would incorporate another taxonomy into the leadership matrix. Bass, as did Burns with Kolberg, added Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs to further extend the dynamic morality a transformative leader would develop in meeting the needs of his or her constituents (Boje, 2000). Defining beyond that of a charismatic leader where "followers identify with the leader's aspirations and want to emulate [them]" the transformative leader's "charisma or idealized influence is characterized by high moral and ethical standards" (Kellogg Leadership Studies Project, 1997, p. 3). Its inspirational motivation provides the needs of their followers to engage them in positive and meaningful ways with the end result in transforming of the social and cultural norms in which they reside and work (UNPAN, n.d.).

Transformative Leadership in the Classroom

Most research towards transformational leadership in the realm of education focuses on administration, albeit in relation to school or district interaction, teachers, or parents. Other dynamics measure or describe the empowerment of teachers or students, primarily in relation to change or success. The commonality of most studies is the classic leadership paradigm, commonly associated with the principal or any other defined educational leader (Hallinger, 2003). However, these are not the only leadership directed behaviors as found in the school setting. What is conspicuously absent in most research is the teacher to student leadership model; a model that tends to fall under the label of classroom management and often overlooked by modern theorists. However, teachers are leaders as well and the incorporation of the basic tenants of charismatic and moral leadership as detailed by Weber, Burns and Bass can also be relevant within the traditional classroom dynamic.

Under the theoretical premises of pedagogy, and the more narrowly defined andragogy, the teacher assumes different roles in the classroom, determined in part by the status, age, cognitive level and/or mode of activity and responsibility of the students (Lowder, 2007).

As an outlier for leadership, especially towards charismatic and transformational conceptualizations, the outcome or development of the students is as much an indication of leadership as is the role of the teacher. Pedagogical theory assumes more of a primary or influential role of the educator within the classroom and is defined as a teacher dependent educational model (Hiemstra, 2005). This style incorporates a directive leadership format which, though allowing for various levels of student engagement, is still predetermined by the educator's designs, planning and philosophy (Sadker & Zittleman, 2007). Outside variables of standards, albeit the teacher's or the district's (or state), goals and values are descriptors of both pedagogy and transactional and/or transformative leadership (Johnson, 2001). Pedagogy illustrates the process concept of leadership as it defines the teacher as in charge with the responsibility of determining and incorporating what to teach and learn, how to accomplish this task and how to determine if it has been successful (Lowder, 2007).

Andragogy is best conceptualized along a continuum line with pedagogy, defined as teacher directive, at one end and andragogy at the other. This model is described as student centered and was originally conceived for adult learners who have the necessary skill sets to learn from differing formats save primarily that of the teacher directive approach (Hiemstra, 2005). These learners strive or function better in an active, participative environment that allows for a more informal, albeit looser educational style than would normally be predicated towards younger, more problematic and predisposed students (Lowder, 2007). In theory this style is not limited to adults as it also fits with students who are more inclined, for a variety of reasons, to being taught through a less directive approach. Described as a form of self directed learning, andragogy is not a separate paradigm to pedagogy but more a difference of scale, where students, depending upon their ability, will conform to some point or variance between the spectrums of these two types of educational processes (Hiemstra, 2005). As a leadership dynamic, andragogy is more of an outlier; described as an outcome or conclusion more than a process, though this by no means quantifies the entire definition. If successfully implemented this educational trait, while meeting standards and goals (as covered from the pedagogical model), also successfully meets the students' needs and wants, empowers them and allows expanded opportunities for success; powerful illustrations of transformative leadership that also doubles as successful tools for learning (Stewart, 2006).

The teaching of students can then be rationalized as a form of leadership; delineated by adjectives and/or interpretation of leadership models previously conceived for other formats or allocations. Many of these models conceptualized leadership in parts or components of a whole. These pieces, considered integral by Northouse (2004) include a process, a goal or an end, a group of people, and some sort of influential interaction by an individual over the group. This easily mirrors or mimics common curriculum planning and pedagogy whereupon the teacher or educator establishes or follows standards (goals) then determines the teaching format to best meet these standards (process). The students in the classroom comprise the group and the teacher (albeit a successful one) will exercise a positive influence over the class. To achieve a truly successful leadership paradigm, and of course a transformational one, a teacher will need to extend the components or parts further; incorporating a harmonious, safe and supportive environment from which the higher stages of leadership are integrated. Further traits or qualities also include empathy, ethics, and the meeting of students' needs (Johnson, 2001). Other theorists go further still, breaking the leadership traits into two modalities; the group traits and/or adjectives and individual traits. The group traits illustrate a shared purpose and collaboration, respectfulness and the creation of a learning environment. Individual highlights self-knowledge, authenticity or integrity, commitment and competence (Astin & Astin, 2000). All of which can be seen within a productive, successful classroom.

Personality Traits as Leadership Indicators

The utilization of descriptors in defining leadership allows for potential outliers to be associated or correlated through the same or similar words. This is consistent with many of the adjectives defined for transactional and transformational leadership as well as for personality models or templates. Many of these adjectives correlate but, unfortunately, the lists can be exceptionally long depending upon the assessment being used. Research conducted by Allport and Odbert in 1936 "found almost 18,000 individual words used to refer to personal behavior" (Craig, 2005, p. 178). This was determined by a comprehensive meta-analysis study of multiple English dictionaries. Other examples of successful personality templates have descriptors of 136, 160 to 171 words respectively, though this is by no means an exhaustive compilation of all the models utilized today (Paunonen, 2003). Personality models have used descriptors or adjectives for years with much heralded success, primarily through the assumption that common language is the primal resource for these descriptive traits.

Lexicon derived descriptors of personality, called surface traits, have emerged in recent research theory (Craig, 2005). These traits, usually referred to as factors, have led to the development of three competing models of personality; the Big Three, the Big Five(usually referred to as the Five Factor) and the Alternate Five (Zuckerman et al, 1993). These models differ from personality tests as they are generalized templates of an individual’s overall personality dynamic, unlike the more specific assessments which tend to focus on one’s needs, moods, and their possible states of anxiety or levels of depression (Craig, 2005). These templates are reasonably easy to administer, utilize language and scales simplistic for self-analysis and due to their descriptive nature are compatible for comparison to other disciplines and/or models.

Using traits to correlate with leadership has significance in the determination of these adjectives themselves. If personality is delineated from language then it may be safe to say the same paradigm could also apply to leadership. This correlates to the trait conceptualization of leadership versus the process definition, whereupon specific descriptors of individuals are looked for rather than an outcome or interactive process (Northouse, 2004). This delineates to descriptor words or adjectives, similar to that of the personality models. Unfortunately trait descriptors for leadership can be extensive (as general descriptors) unless, like the personality models, specific leadership models are applied. In this study the transformative leadership model is utilized and compared to the Five Factor Personality Model. Both are commonly used and respected within their disciplines and are considered as the most competent or heralded models at this specific time.

Table 1 - Five Factor Model Table

The Five Factor Personality Model

	Super traits – common descriptor	Super traits – other names	Letter code	Antonym descriptor/continuum	Sub-traits – correlated traits
Factor 1	Extraversion	Extroversion Introversion	E	Introvert To Extrovert	1. Enthusiasm 2. Sociability 3. Energy mode 4. Taking charge
Factor 2	Accommodation	Agreeableness Friendliness Honesty	A	Challenger To Adapter	1. Service 2. Agreement 3. Deference 4. Reserve 5. Reticence
Factor 3	Consolidation	Conscientiousness	C	Flexible To Focused	1. Perfectionism 2. Organization 3. Drive 4. Concentration 5. Methodical
Factor 4	Stability	Neuroticism	N	Resilient To Reactive	1. Sensitiveness 2. Intensity 3. Interpretation 4. Rebound time
Factor 5	Originality	Intelligence	O	Preserver To Explorer	1. Imagination 2. Complexity 3. Change 4. Scope

The Five Factor Model (FFM) is a template of basic personality descriptors that have been categorized into five domains, or super traits, through a meta-analysis of the modern English lexicon. The FFM started not as a theory, as it would seem to indicate, but through a longitudinal, long term data reduction study by early 20th century psychologists (Lucius, n.d.). Early researchers combed through language looking for any adjectives or words that described a personality trait in any way.

These words would be cross validated for redundancy and eventually delineated into consistent, primary adjectives (Mann, 2003). As a disclaimer it should be noted that the FFM is built from study of the English language; studies of effectiveness have yet to be determined through other languages.

Modern theorists built or conceived their models from the works of their earlier predecessors; Louis Thurstone in 1933 and Allport and Odbert in 1936. Thurstone would delineate 60 adjectives that could be further reduced to five primary factors yet his work was never followed or improved upon (Mann, 2003). Raymond Cattell later defined 16 personality factors, which would be developed into the 16PF Personality Questionnaire (Lucius, n.d.). Unfortunately his work would become largely discredited due to statistical inconsistencies determined by later theorists (Judge & Bono, 2000). However, Cattell's model would be developed further by Tupes and Christal, two unknown Air Force researchers, who are credited with the FFM, or at least the publication of the present day model and title now used today. The two published in an obscure journal, however and would not be credited until years later after another theorist published a similar work (Lucius, n.d.). In some part, this vagary of inception has led to more than one conceptualization for this model as it is also called the Big Five, though some psychologists believe there are minor differences between the two. Most researchers and/or writers, however, use both interchangeably.

Each of the five domains within the FFM, called super traits, consists of four to five sub-traits; basic descriptors that correspond, albeit positively or negatively, to their linked super trait (Judge & Bono, 2000). These sub-traits are best defined through continuum scales, as either a strength or weakness of the relationship as delineated by their linked super-trait (Howard & Howard, 2004). Measurement of these scales can be achieved through the use of corresponding antonyms, separate for each super-trait, which helps to bind the sub-traits to one general definition or descriptor. This establishes a form of measurement which, depending upon the instrument used, generates data which can be interpreted to different personality dynamics. The dynamic is considered statistically accurate and simplistic enough for multiple uses and users; a reasonable choice for educators to employ (Digman, 1990; Paunonen, 2003).

The factors of the FFM consist of extroversion, accommodation, consolidation, stability and originality (see table 1). The five dimensions are universally agreed upon yet there is some controversy concerning some of the factors or domains, what they are correlated or associated with and their names (Zuckerman, et al, 1993). Stability, also commonly referred to as neuroticism, and extraversion are attributed to multiple personality models and are generally seen as inclusive traits. The other three dimensions are accommodation, also listed as friendliness and/or honesty, consolidation, also referred to as conscientiousness and the dimension of originality which is commonly cited as intelligence (Howard & Howard, 2004; Zuckerman, et al, 1993; Paunonen, 2003).

As factors the dimensions can be generalized through their sub-traits or by traits attributable to each domain or super-trait. Factor one, extraversion, is described as the level or degree upon "which a person can tolerate sensory stimulation from people and situations" (Howard & Howard, 2004, p. 5). Traits common with this domain are enthusiasm, sociability, level of energy, trust, tact and/or taking charge. Factor 2, accommodation, is labeled as friendliness, honesty and/or agreeableness depending upon the theorist or author (Zuckerman, et al, 1993; Howard & Howard, 2004). Corollary sub-traits or adjectives that describe this domain are agreement, deference, reticence, service and/or reservations. Factor three is consolidation or conscientiousness which has listed five sub-traits or descriptors; perfectionism, organization, level of drive, level of concentration and/or how methodical one is. Four is stability or neuroticism, the other domain like extroversion which is universally agreed upon as a personality super-trait. Its descriptors are sensitivity, levels of intensity, how interpretive one is to situations and surroundings and the time it takes to rebound from a situation or crisis. Last, factor five, is originality or intellect and is described through adjectives of imaginative, complexity, degrees or willingness of change and scope or breadth of knowledge and intellect (Howard & Howard, 2004).

The Five Factors combine into a useful model that allows for an individual to illustrate or discern one's personality paradigm or overall behavior. Modeled or created through language, the metaphors or adjectives can easily be adaptable to other fields of human behavior, such as leadership and/or pedagogy (Digman, 1990; Howard & Howard, 2004). Personality is also linked, through language, to other pedagogical or educational related philosophies and practices. The personality of the educator is crucial to the understanding of their teaching, philosophy and leadership and will determine the overall influence or impact the educator will have on the students and the classroom.

Personality Traits (FFM)	Leadership Traits (Transformative)	Pedagogical Traits
Extraversion Enthusiasm Sociability Energy Mode Taking Charge	Charismatic Articulate Dominance (social) Sociability +	Classroom energy Classroom Management Lesson pacing Sociable/outgoing
Accommodation (Agreeableness/Friendly/Honest) Service Agreement Deference Reserve Reticence	Individual consideration Value driven Empathy Skilled +	Professional Friendly Willingness to help Grading ethics Accommodating
Consolidation (Conscientiousness) Perfectionism Organization Drive Concentration Methodical	Ethical High Standards Goal oriented Self-determination +	Ethical Planning Organization Rigor Adherence to standards
Stability (Neuroticism) Sensitiveness Intensity Interpretation Rebound Time	Empathetic Community oriented Confident +	Empathy Understanding Emotional (or not) Equitable Confidence
Originality (Intellect/Openness to Experience) Imagination Complexity Change Scope	Intelligent Visionary Creative Original	Understanding of others Creative Originality Openness to differences Willing to make changes

Table 2 – The Triadic Trait Model

Personality and Leadership in the Classroom

The classroom remains the domain of the teacher and it is within this domain that he or she will manipulate the factors necessary to teach and to create an environment conducive for children to learn. Depending upon the philosophical beliefs of the educator towards student learning; primarily that of the countering philosophies of behaviorism or constructivism, there will be a need for the teacher to develop the mechanism for either to work and to succeed. Teacher education espouses the theory of conditioning, albeit it being classical or operant (or something of both), as a means to which students acquire knowledge and skills (Skinner, 1976). This conditioning is determined by the teacher through multiple modalities of management or knowledge acquisition. Management is best described through the standard reward-punishment paradigm utilized in school systems, whereupon good grades and/or behavior could lead to rewards and benefits while poor grades or behavior can lead to punishment and detriments. Knowledge acquisition usually follows a teacher dynamic of consistency and educator dominant pedagogical practices, consistent with directive instruction.

This model falls under the behaviorist theorem or purview and can be extremely effective in managerial contexts, rote memorization or kinesthetic drills (Russell, 2002). This conceptualization also correlates to the base concept of pedagogy as a teacher dependent educational model (Hiemstra, 2005).

Constructivism, also taught in teacher education, operates under a social and freer context, where the philosophical assumption is that learning is a social phenomenon more so than a conditioned one and where language and culture play a more dominant role (Thirteen Ed. Com., 2004). In this context, humans, by nature, cannot remove the external, social stimuli that are integral to our development and existence. Cognitively when a student (or anyone else) receives a new piece of information, generally called a schema, he or she must 'reconcile' this information to their existing self, albeit cognitive, social and/or metaphysical. This reconciliation leads to learning and/or memory acquisition and can be repeated an infinite number of times. This theory falls more into the learning constraint of andragogy as a teaching template and inquiry based instruction as the teaching style.

Teachers primarily operate 'free range' of these modalities; successful teacher leaders will incorporate components or variables of both (See Table 2). Within the range of these two constants transformational leadership still plays a role as does the personality utilized in establishing it. Incorporating leadership to create a behaviorist management style or a constructivist learning environment, or any variable within, is under the guidance of the teacher who must manipulate the dynamic to the best of their personality. Leadership will follow the metaphors that describe the context of the classroom and the personality of the educator. The delineating factor is relationship, or the context to which the teacher engages the students within the learning environment. This inter-personal relationship must be positive and reciprocal; both necessary to the successful integration of transformative leadership and the positive effects it inspires (Elias, O'Brien & Weissberg, 2006). This establishes trust and community; arguably transformative leadership traits that correlate to stability or neuroticism of the FFM (community) and consolidation or conscientiousness (trust) (Judge & Bono, 2000). Community, for a teacher, is the context of the classroom environment. This is also another strong impact of the Extraversion trait. As a basis for human social interaction as defined by constructivist theory, establishment of the student-teacher trusting paradigm is instrumental to student success (Hadjoannou, 2007).

The teacher leader must be assured and self-confident, specifically due to experience and successful results within their learning sphere and/or their loci of control (Ackerman & Mackenzie, 2006). This confidence, correlated to the neuroticism factor of the FFM, is considered one of the "essential characteristic of transformational leaders" (Judge & Bono, 2000, p. 753). Based or correlated to the stability trait, confident leaders will tend to be more resilient than reactive, intense, able to understand and interpret external variables and stimuli and be quick to rebound (Howard & Howard, 2004). The teacher-leader will establish high standards, for both themselves and their students, and convince the students that attainment of these standards is possible. Through the use of charismatic traits, defined by the FFM as extraversion, the leader can set the precedent or attainment of these objectives into motion while establishing a culture accommodating to the needs of the students (Hadjoannou, 2007). This incorporates the personality trait of accommodation, sometimes referred to as agreeableness, and is further defined through the adjectives or descriptors of adaptive, willingness to serve, and/or reticence (Howard & Howard, 2004). As a combination of factors, confidence, trust building, sense of community and charisma, the teacher leader has the pre-requisite traits necessary to establish two of the primary components of transformational leadership as originally described by Bass (1985); idealized influence and inspirational motivation.

The teacher now has the necessary foundation to take the transformational concept forward and to create a significant impression or impact on the students and the school. As a leader he or she must dynamically mold and shape the environment to illicit change and progress. This is not limited solely to the students and class; conceptually there will come a time or issue that will eventually test the courage and strength of the fledgling teacher-leader, a test a true transformational leader will need to undertake and pass (Ackerman & Mackenzie, 2006). But the primary role of a teacher-leader (arguably) is in the classroom and other student related activities. Defined through the personality factor of extraversion, the teacher needs to be enthusiastic, social, energetic and willing to take charge. This trait is commonly associated with charisma and is another cornerstone of transformational leadership (Judge & Bono, 2000). The teacher will now need to incorporate the final component of Bass' theory; intellectual stimulation.

Defined as originality in the FFM, the adjectives of this factor are imagination, complexity of ideas, willingness to accept change and the scope in which to question and inquire basic assumptions and beliefs. Similar in concept to constructivist theory, the incorporation of intellectual stimulation will be the final domain to establishing a successful transformative climate. Teachers who do so will inspire students to succeed and other teachers to follow; nothing less is acceptable to a true transformational leader.

Conclusion

Teaching can be defined through certain traits or adjectives similar to those found in leadership and personality studies. In the more acclaimed models or theories of these two disciplines there are two, one each for personality and leadership, that have adjectives or descriptors that correlate to teaching. Teacher leadership is usually defined through the framework of a school leader, normally conceptualized through responsibilities seen outside the classroom while classroom constructs are generally seen through the lens of management. This is usually designated as a part of teaching rather than a major influence or outlier of pedagogy. Yet, adjectives associated with transformative leadership not only correlate to a major personality profile, in this study the Five Factor Model (FFM) of personality, but they also correlate to teaching traits. By this rational, teaching then looks surprisingly like transformational leadership. This is no coincidence. A good teacher does a lot of things a strong leader does. For anyone who has fond memories of an excellent teacher it is no surprise that transformative outliers exist in teaching. With the utilization of existing descriptors it may also be possible in defining the correct adjectives or descriptors for each personality type of teacher. This can then be applied as either a rubric or template for teaching as the individual can 'align' their classroom demeanor to the 'best fit' traits of Transformative leadership.

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