

**Beyond Behaviour – Toward Relationship**  
**&**  
**Relational Leadership: From Staffroom to Classroom**  
*Establishing powerful relationships for leading in learning*

**This manual provides an approach in how to lead a school, and teach students, through powerful relationships. The material is based on the premise that systems and procedures, theories of learning and organizational culture emerge from the relational context of the school community. Understanding how and why people get along – or not – is the starting point for managing a class full of students, a staffroom of professionals and establishing sustained school improvement.**

For the purpose of presentation we have divided the material into three sections but to a great extent these are arbitrary separations. For those already embarking on relational work it maybe that the ideas about classroom practice are most relevant. For those new to the idea the whole school material might be preferable. In either case the principle and methods are predicated on the basis that there is an established organizational stability; that the conditions for school development are in place. Where this is not the case then the opening section on leadership is a necessary starting point.

This manual will not make anything happen (arguably no document is capable do doing so). What it does seek to provide is the theoretical, procedural and practical backdrop for those who are tasked with making things happen, either in the staffroom or classroom. Clearly some readers will want to chase directly to the techniques and process resources and this may have an impact, but it is likely to be limited. It is our contention that generally neither school leaders nor classroom practitioners are especially involved in professional development relating to relational approaches. Much good work has been done in this area but it has tended to be focused in specialist aspects in education, for example behaviour support and educational psychology. Consequently mainstream practitioners tend to rely on personal experience and highly individualized strategies to make sense of the relational dynamic of the workplace. Whilst this may have an immediate usefulness for individuals, organizationally it can mean that progress is limited or thwarted and that consistent approaches remains elusive.

### **Introducing Relational Leadership**

Much has been written on the task of school leadership and a common emphasis on becoming increasingly effective in leading others. For our purpose the focus in this section is to look closely at the regions - not types - of leadership in an organization and for this we draw on the work of Berne, (1961). He discussed the need for three

regions of leadership in order for a group, or organization such as a school, to function.

The **responsible** leaders provide the public face of leadership in the organisation, and the person who fills the role of leader in the organisational structure. The **effective** leaders, who makes the actual decisions, may or may not have a role in the organisational structure. They may be in the back room, but they are absolutely critical in making the group function. The **psychological** leaders are the ones who are most powerful in the private structures of the members and occupies the leadership slot in their internal perspective of the organisation. All three types of leadership may be invested in the same individual, but there are all sorts of combinations.

The **effective leader** can be distinguished by watching the group in action. They are the ones whose questions are most likely to be answered or whose suggestions are most likely to be followed in situations of stress...They are members who attract attention because they are dominant, popular or show a special interest in the group activity...it is often overlooked that the effective leader of the group is usually the experimenter.

The **responsible leader** is the individual who is going to be called to account by higher authority if things go wrong...Since in many organisations the responsible leader is only a front, it is here that dominance, popularity and helpfulness find their usefulness. A person who possesses these qualities may be attractive to the members and thus serve the purposes of the effective leadership.

The **psychological leader** of a group occupies a special position, whether or not they are also the responsible and effective leader. The members demand certain qualities of the psychological leader; omnipotent, omniscient, incorruptible, unsexable, indefatigable and fearless.

Typically in educational contexts the **responsible** leader is easy to spot – it's the headteacher, head of faculty or year group leader. The only time where this might be confused is where there is an acting head arrangement. If this develops it can lead to an anxiety about who is actually in charge and this becomes a distraction for staff. ***If responsible leadership is absent or poorly provided, then accountability will be the weakness for the school.***

More interestingly is the role of the **effective** leader in schools. These people get things done and are highly visible and productive. They make things happen and often this role is undertaken by others on the senior leadership team and may not be carried out by the headteacher. If outside agencies are contracting to support the school it is important that they are connected with the effective leader. Similarly, if an initiative is to work it will need the engagement of the effective leaders. ***If***

***effective leadership is not in place, or poorly provided, the school becomes increasingly dysfunctional.***

Finally, in schools, it is vital to identify the psychological leader(s). In successful organisations these people will be supporting the general vision and direction of the effective and responsible leadership. Where this is not the case there is likely to be trouble! Rarely is there sufficient room in the same group for two opposing psychological leaders – one has to go, or be willing to comply.

Psychological leadership can often be at the heart of leadership concerns in schools. Sometimes school/departmental leaders do not claim their psychological presence – either through unhelpful humility, or because they think that the job title only is sufficient to demand followership.

Psychological leadership is a basic hunger of humans – in almost any group/organisational setting individuals will either look to see who will lead, or take the initiative to do so. ***If psychological leadership is absent or divergent, then the organization will not thrive, and in extreme cases, will not survive.*** Psychological leadership determines the existence of a school or organization – it underwrites why schools close, headteachers leave, staff resist changes and students get fed up. It also connects with why other schools flourish, staff work consistently and students enjoy learning. For these reasons we will look more closely at what psychological leadership means in practical terms.

### ***Psychological leadership***

Most professional development for school leaders emphasizes the need to have a clear vision, be organized, and galvanise staff to follow. New head teacher professional standards refer to being politically astute, recognize personal objectives for growth and be leaders in learning. The assumption is that those who follow will do so because the need to be led (because the head teacher is one of the effective leaders) or have to be led (because the head is obviously the responsible leader). However, for the followers psychological leadership is about **wanting** to be led by them. And here lies a more subtle and powerful level of bringing about organizational change.

Typically successful head teachers may explain that they simply ‘make staff do things’ in order to get things done. Or that people just trust them to be right, or fair. Rarely does a leader explain that the reason staff are prepared to follow is that there is strong psychological presence, and yet that is often the case and the underlying factor in successful leadership.

Effective and responsible leaders can only create sustainable school improvement if they or others are providing underpinning psychological endorsement. Individuals establish such a position through a combination of personal qualities, some of which are outlined below and all of which are based on the work of Steiner, (199?).

### **Authentic Relationship: Theory of Action**

*If schools and teachers prioritise high expectations and authentic relationships, then curiosity will flourish'. **Curiosity and Powerful Learning***

Understanding, establishing and promoting authentic relationships in the classroom requires a specific set of skills, knowledge and competence. If schools and teachers have a working understanding of a useful educational psychology, then authentic relationships between both staff and students will be formed and sustained. Creating the conditions for a relational sensibility involves intentional action, planning and conceptualization. If empathically positive relationships stimulate curiosity then teachers and whole school approaches must have in place systems to train, explore and enact such empathy with competence and confidence.

This manual sets out the protocols and exemplar materials designed to establish powerful relational aspects in teaching and learning. The scope of the material ranges from the dynamic of the classroom, through that of the staffroom and into the office of school leadership. The general premise is that theories of action about authentic relationships are similar for children, young people and adults. The context and contract for each group is different; the principles and underlying philosophy are consistent.

For the purposes of the manual there are five subsidiary theories of action in building authentic relationships:

- If whole school systems promote the language and practice of authentic relationship, then staff and students are able to engage fully in the learning partnership
- If whole school policy creates an organizational narrative about the centrality of authentic relationships, then teaching and learning become essential components of realizing human potential

- If teachers establish a commitment to positive regard, then students become increasingly autonomous
- If teachers create a present-centred encounter, then students are more capable of making decisions which progress learning
- If teachers demonstrate functionally fluent behaviour, then students are stimulated to be curious, co-operative, spontaneous, caring and disciplined
- If teachers relate to students by integrating thinking, feeling and behaviour, then students develop a sense of belonging, exploration, independence and identity

Each of these subsidiary theories of action are underpinned by models, methods and techniques drawn from educational psychology, pedagogy and developmental theory. Central to each of the theories of action is an underpinning philosophy which is that the people in the educational partnership matter, and that the context of the learning partnership counts. Transactional analysis is a central theoretical framework on which much of the material is based and an introduction to the principles follows. Developing authentic relationships does not simply occur of its own accord. In complex systems – such as classrooms and schools – powerful relating involves building expertise, deepening understanding and raising awareness of both self and others.

The remaining sections of this manual provide a detailed description of how each theory of action can be established and sustained either in the classroom or at whole school level. In addition, protocol material is provided which is aimed at supporting professional development either through training and coaching, or via direct practice; developing the work whilst **doing** the work. Finally, indicative exemplar material is provided where appropriate.

### **Transactional Analysis in the Classroom and Staffroom**

The background framework for the theories of action in promoting authentic relationships is the use of transactional analysis (TA). Developed by Eric Berne through the 1950s to the 1970s, TA provides a psychological perspective on relational aspects of teaching and learning. The principles of the approach are essentially humanistic; the importance of positive unconditional regard, a common capacity to think and make decisions, and a commitment to growth as a fundamental feature of human nature. Throughout his career Berne developed a series of connected models to make sense of how people grow up, how they make sense of their experience and how people communicate. Since its earliest days TA has been

used in educational contexts and has seen an increased application in the UK over the past decade.

Since the late 1990s educators in the UK have been incorporating, adapting and developing early TA models to create an educational psychological framework to support the learning relationship. There have been several publications presenting TA within the UK educational context. *Improving Behaviour and Raising Self Esteem*, (Barrow, Bradshaw & Newton, 2001) and *Walking the Talk*, (Barrow & Newton, 2004) both introduced TA in developing TA approaches across primary, secondary and specialist contexts. *Behaviour Management: A TA Approach* (Newell & Jeffries, 2002) specifically focused on classroom relationships and *TACTICS*, (Napper & Newton, 2000) is orientated toward adult education and training. More recently specific TA models have been adapted and materials published, most notably the Cycle of Development. Based on the original research by Levin, (1980) and adapted by Clarke & Dawson (1998) both from the US, in the UK the model has provided the basis of an on-line pupil profiling tool, *The Behaviourwall*, Russell (2010) and a parent pack for supporting transition to school, *Feeling Good – Starting School*, (Barrow, 2004). Contracting and partnership planning are the main models featured in *Developing Effective Behaviour Support*, (Barrow, 2004) which applied TA in the organization and delivery of local authority support services. In addition to a range of published material, TA has also been taught directly to students in schools for many years and over the past decade this has become more formalized. The Institute of Developmental Transactional Analysis (IDTA) co-ordinates the TA Proficiency Award for Children & Young People (TAPACY). This collaborative accreditation scheme encourages students to learn about and apply TA concepts in their relationships at school.

In its most developed form, educational TA provides a distinct pedagogical approach that promotes a radical, co-creative model of learning (see Barrow & Newton, 2015). However, for the purposes of this manual the attention to pedagogy will take a back seat and instead the main concern here will be on how core concepts in TA can be useful in establishing authentic relationships in the classroom in support of learning in addition to whole school policy and approach. It is important to recognize at the outset that TA provides a universal framework for making sense of human experience; it has not been designed to be used exclusively in relation to childrens' behaviour. Hence, the attention throughout will be as much on what happens in the staffroom, as it is to the arena of the classroom.

## Authentic Relationship: Theory of Action

***Theory of Action 1: If teachers create a present-centred encounter, then students are more capable of making decisions which progress learning***

One of the challenges in creating present centred relationships in the classroom is that there are numerous ways in which both students and staff become entangled with ideas about what should be happening, prior experiences and implicit and explicit external expectations. A consequence of these distractions, some of which have significant validity, is that teachers miss the vitality of what is happening in front of them, whilst students can slip into passivity and lose sight of learning opportunities. In TA technical terms, if Adult – Adult awareness can be achieved and Parent and Child egostate impulses resisted, then effective relationship is possible.

### Introducing Egostates

Perhaps the most enduring image created during the early days of TA, is Berne's egostate model. Not to be confused with Freud's earlier concept of super ego, ego and id, egostates are a metaphor for understanding the structure of personality. In brief, at any given moment individuals behave, think and feel in consistent patterns – an egostate - and that three such patterns can be discerned. For example, there are times where the individual replays the thinking, feeling and behaviour copied from the grown-ups who were in charge and cared for them in the past, referred to as the Parent egostate. At other times individuals replay the thinking, feeling and behaviour that they experienced internally when they were in childhood and this is referred to as the Child egostate. Finally, the individual responds to the here and now reality with thinking, feeling through their behaviour. TA is a highly visual framework and the egostates are presented as three stacked circles, see fig. 1 below.

INSERT Egostate model

### Implications for schools

The Parent egostate comprises an archive of retrievable experiences of being cared for and controlled. Although this invariably includes episodes involving mothers, fathers and other family adults, it inevitably incorporates other parental figures ***including teachers***. What this means is that at times when teachers replay the thinking, feeling and behaviour of teachers from several – many - years ago. This is not done consciously; it is simply a reaction to a situation and the archival material

immediately 'downloads' into the present moment. There is a second consideration. When teachers are in the staffroom and see a request to meet with the head teacher, an individual might re-experience being in trouble, just like when they were a young child. A churning in the stomach, fidgeting and confusion resulting in a fumbling with books and papers indicates a much younger sense of self taking over in the present moment. In TA terms this would be described as the activation of the Child egostate. The potential for conflict in these situations increases as in each instance the individual is not truly present, in relationship with others. To understand this more fully it is helpful to know about transactions, and why the approach is called transactional analysis.

### **Egostates in action**

It is one thing to create an idea about how individuals are internally structured, but what interests many people is what this means for being with others. In TA this is talked about in terms of a functional egostate model as a way of describing how the internal archive 'shows up' in the interplay with others. The way egostates function using additional language is presented below:

INSERT Fig. 2. Functional Egostate Model

When individuals engage with one another they communicate using transactions. A transaction is a unit of communication and comprises of both a stimulus ('Do you want a cup of tea?') and a response ('No thanks, I just had one'). Crucially, we can observe that when transactions are stimulated from the functional elements of the Parent egostates they have a tendency to invite responses from the Child egostate. Again, the implication for classrooms is significant. For example, if when the teacher functions from a Critical Parent position it is likely to generate limiting responses, such as compliance or rebelliousness from pupils (in TA terms this is referred to as Adapted Child). The teacher may likely not create this dynamic with conscious intention, but due to the reactive nature of the Parent and Child egostate archive they find themselves in recurrent conflicts with specific students. Similarly, we may notice that individual students appear to have a well-developed capacity to function from a Rebel Child position and in turn invites a strong response from Critical Parent by staff.

For example, a student arrives late to lesson with incorrect uniform, smirks as they slam their bag on to the desk. The teacher reacts immediately by demanding that the student leaves the room, gets a note for lateness and doesn't return until they are properly dressed and makes an apology. Of course this is precisely the impact that the student is seeking, responds by saying, 'Make me' at which point the teacher flies into outrage, and the uproarious drama continues.



As a result of observational research, Berne and others realized that by analyzing transactions a series of reliable rules of communication emerges. One of these is that when individuals stimulate and respond from anticipated egostates the communication becomes on-going. This is one way of describing what goes on during some kinds of conflict. One protagonist endeavours to take control of the other person, or situation, and the response is to resist this attempt through rebellion. Others may simply comply as a way of managing the controlling intention.

For another example, in the classroom the teacher might become increasingly irritated at pupils' low level, high frequency behaviours such as calling out, talking with peers, fiddling with equipment, wandering around. After awhile they exclaim; 'No-one is leaving for lunch until there's silence! I am fed up with the lot of you. No-one is getting along with the work; this is not good enough!' As the teacher does so they have their arms folded across the chest, and frown hard at any student that catches their eye. The teacher experiences a keen sense of frustration and indignation at how disrespectful young people have become. They think about how much of the time is wasted and that many of the students haven't been raised with a decent sense of manners. As this continues they might realize that they are replaying the experience of their own teacher at primary school. And they might also notice that indeed some of the students have sat down, upright waiting for my instructions, whilst several have begun giggling, smirking at mates and flicking paper across the tables. Another has deliberately hidden a friend's book who in turn is snatching for it and a squabble is beginning to emerge. In TA terms, the interplay between the teacher and pupil typically reflects a series of Parent - Child transactions, and by definition this dynamic will be on-going, until one of the players shifts to a different, unanticipated egostate.

When considering authentic relationship in schools, the egostate models and the idea of transactions offer a framework for making sense of what's happening in the situation. Perhaps more importantly, TA provides a way of doing something else instead. The important key to enabling effectiveness starts with increased self-awareness, a capacity to take account of what is happening in the present moment. This can be surprisingly challenging to achieve in the busy context of the classroom. Functioning from Adult can be an elusive quality but is fundamental in understanding and responding to conflict. Being sufficiently aware and able to analyse transactions is the first step in shifting from conflict to resolution. The second part of the process involves accounting for what is needed to get the best of those involved, rather than remaining in conflict.

### **Being in Adult**

First it is critical to bear in mind that maintaining Adult awareness takes time to practice and mindful, conscious effort – it rarely 'just happens'. So, when starting out

using TA intentionally it is worthwhile tracking the extent to which we find and stay in Adult over a period of just a day, at first, or for a specific situation, such as a lesson.

Second, some top tips for being in Adult;

Practice becoming **increasingly aware** of when being in Adult is a challenge. For most of our time we may simply be ourselves and in doing so encounter little difficulty in being in positive and effective relationship. However, we may be acutely aware of times and situations where it is difficult to do so. Raising self-awareness is a crucial first step.

When you are in a situation where being in Adult is a challenge it can be worth asking yourself '**How old do I feel I am right now?**' Often if we are experiencing a high level of needing to adapt, ie. to do as we're told, or rebel, its likely that we'll be functioning from younger age. On the other hand, if we're experiencing a high sense of indignation or outrage it may be worth **listening for any internal Parent material** that obliges us to be outraged, for example.

The main strategy for shifting into Adult is a combination of **identifying options** and considering which is the most appropriate in the here and now situation. This may sound obvious enough but it is surprising how challenging this can be. For example, one aspect of the reality is that we are angry or worried. A here-and-now option is to let people know that, but often Parent and Child material conspires so that we avoid letting others know important information and we demonstrate a different behaviour/feeling.

Finally, go find and observe those who tend to demonstrate a sustainable level of Adult functioning. Notice not just the language they use but also their tone, body language and general attitude. It's not useful to copy them – its valuable to have a picture to hold of what it looks like. The tendency is to use phrases such as;

'I am interested in...'

'You say that and I am a curious about...'

'So, I notice that I get irritated when that happens...'

'I am frustrated about the lack of progress in this meeting/discussion/lesson.

I need to know what your view is...'

'I think you need to know that I am angry about what's going on here...'

'I am apprehensive about this presentation – there are some things I need you to know so that I can help you get the best from this session....'

'What might you be most interested in...'

The underlying message throughout is an acceptance that for the most of the time things are uncertain, even though we don't want them to be. Marshalling our internal process about the uncertainty is the basic quality of Adult awareness.

Finally, some of the qualities of an integrating Adult egostate include:

- Autonomy – the release of the human capacity for awareness, spontaneity and intimacy (and in a later addition – responsibility)
- Relational needs – for security, validation, feel affirmed and significant; for acceptance, for confirmation, for self-definition, to have an impact on others, to have another initiate and to express love
- Consciousness – awareness of the individual brain and mind in relation to its environment
- Reflective consciousness – being able to reflect on oneself, on the business of being human
- Critical consciousness – Tudor notes how the convention of splitting Critical Parent and Rebellious Child as negative the qualities associated with these tend toward the pathological and therefore unhealthy. Instead, he argues that these qualities have a legitimate part to play in being truly present-centred.
- Maturity and motivation
- Imagination – Because the individual is now free from contamination of fixated and introjected material they are free to accept, develop and respond to ideas previously prohibited (adapted from Tudor, 2003)

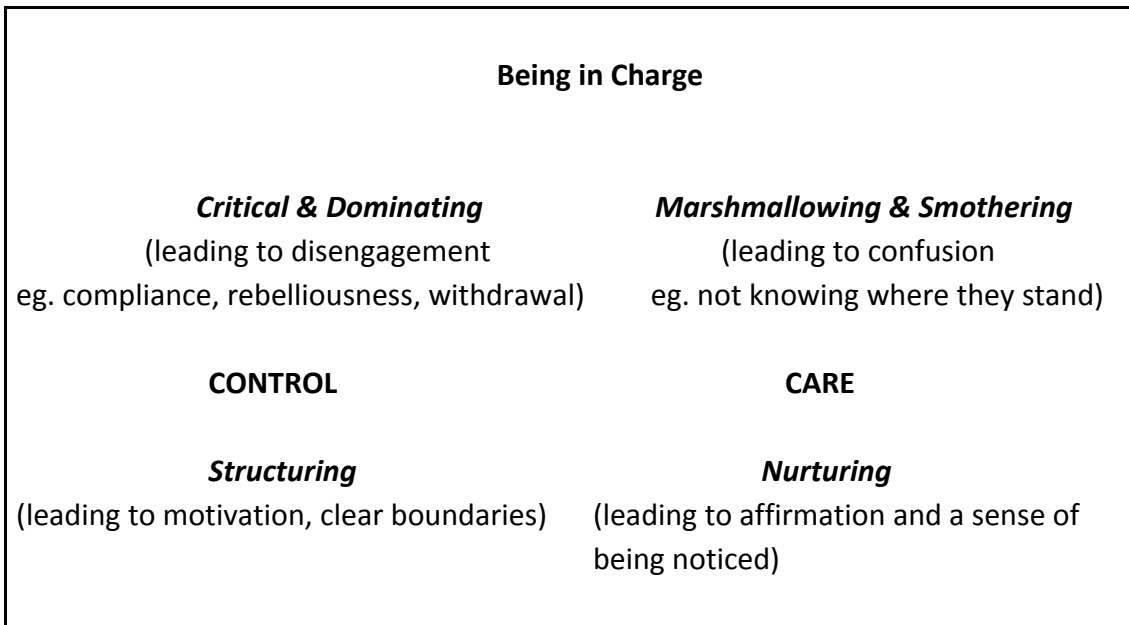
**Theory of Action 2: If teachers demonstrate functionally fluent behaviour, then students are stimulated to be curious, co-operative, spontaneous, caring and disciplined**

### **Functional Fluency: Being in Charge**

Susannah Temple has developed a powerful application of Berne's early concept of egostates in her model of Functional Fluency, (Temple, 2002). This continues to be one of the most straightforward ways of incorporating TA theory into the classroom. We will describe the way in which we use Functional Fluency in our work with teachers and students and readers are encouraged to make their own reading of Temple's work. Initially we will focus on one aspect of the model which concerns the business of *being in charge*. At the heart of the model are a series of behaviours which we can see in others, and experience in ourselves, at any given moment. Sometimes when we are using our energy to take care of, or control others, there will be some specific behaviours, and when we are functioning at our best the two most effective behaviours will be our capacity to be **nurturing** and **structuring**

ourselves and others in the situation. The impact of these behaviours has the tendency to motivate and affirm students and colleagues.

However, there will be occasions where our capacity to achieve these qualities escapes us and instead we may become **domineering**, which leads to others disengaging from us. Over-nurturing – **marshmallowing**, as it has been referred to in TA is the negative dimension of caring, this is where it is misplaced, irrelevant, unasked for and unwelcome. The impact on others is that they become increasingly confused. The matrix of these behaviours is presented in fig. 1 below.

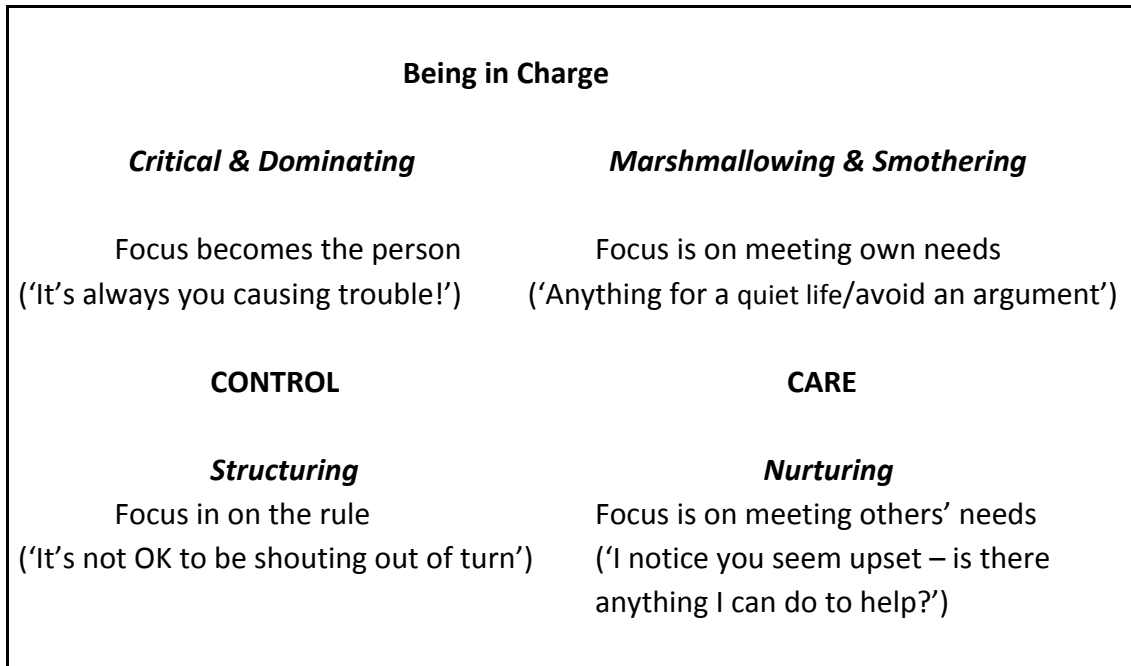


**Fig. 1: Behaviour modes associated with being in charge of others**

One of the useful observations about this part of Temple’s model is that there’s an interesting inter-play between these different behaviours. For example, there will be times where the most useful behaviour mode will be to be structuring as a way of addressing the situation, for example in reminding students about classroom rules. However, some teachers are unsure of how to be structuring; they don’t want to become dominating and critical of students or colleagues, but remain unsure of how to be structuring, for example by re-establishing boundaries. In the absence of clear structuring the other person experiences the teacher as marshmallowing – a push-over. Meanwhile, perhaps in the classroom next door, a different teacher encounters an issue where the most appropriate response is to provide nurturing. This member of staff though is unsure of how to ‘do’ nurturing because they don’t want to be seen as a soft touch – marshmallowing. In the absence of valid nurturing the other person experiences the teacher as critical or domineering.

This cross-relationship between the behaviours can be a crucial way into understanding how people get into, and remain in conflict in classrooms and staffrooms. A couple of further observations can be helpful to apply the ideas

further. It is worth noting that understanding the differences between Structuring and Dominating, and Nurturing and Marshmallowing, are useful to keep in mind, see fig. 2 below;



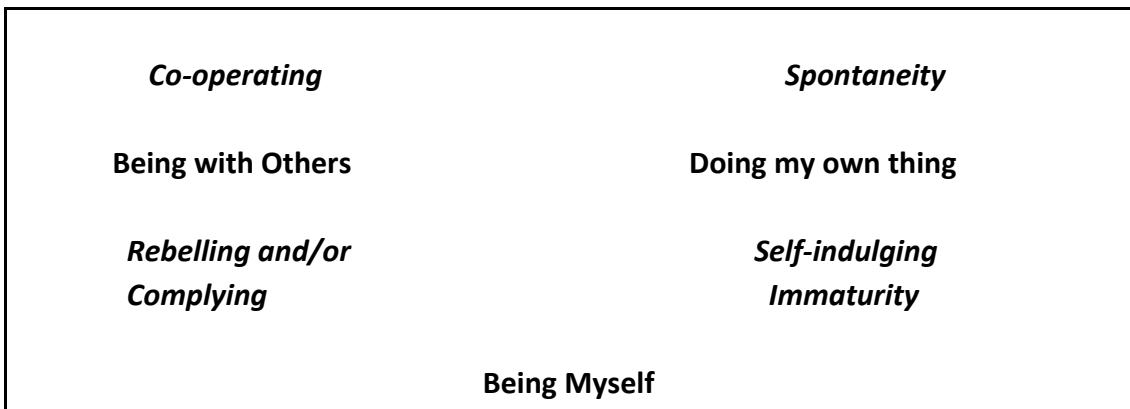
**Fig. 2: Calibrating between behaviour modes: Being in Charge**

Teachers often see which of the two negative behaviours they most lean toward when they are less effective in times of stress. Two qualities worthwhile developing in order to counter these are **assertiveness** and **empathy**, both of which are key in authentic relationship.

In considering how to use TA in schools it is as important to hold both the student-teacher, and colleague –colleague dynamics in mind. This can be especially important when reflecting on leadership behaviour. Using the idea of functional fluency in training middle and senior leaders can be helpful to widen the language and frame of reference to make further sense of the relational aspects of school management and leadership.

### **Functional Fluency: Being Myself**

A second dimension of Temple’s model concerns the behaviour modes which individuals demonstrate when their energy is invested in expressing who they are (as opposed to being in charge). In this domain two aspects emerge; ‘getting along with others’ and ‘doing my own thing’. Again, each of these aspects can be expressed in a functionally fluent way, through co-operation and spontaneity. Or, there are behaviours which limit the individual’s functional fluency, for instance by rebelliousness, compliance or self-indulgence. This dimension of the model is presented in Figure 3 below:



**Fig 3: Calibrating behaviour modes: Being Myself**

In practical terms, teachers are frequently adjusting to the needs of students, departing from their plan in order to best realize potential for learning (co-operating). Moments later the use of humour alleviates a situation and a chance interruption to the lesson provides a live teaching opportunity (spontaneity). However, on another day the teacher concedes that the last lesson on Friday is never fruitful and offers another worksheet, (complying with the class and possibly rebelling against school expectations), or telling students, at length what they did on their holiday, instead of teaching French (self-indulgence).

**Functional Fluency: Accounting**

A third dimension of the functional fluency model is based on how individuals take notice of what’s happening ‘in the moment’. Sometimes it’s sufficient to just stand back, reflect and take in what is going on in the classroom for a few moments. Rarely does this last for long before the teacher becomes **aware** of some movement, a change or subtle shift in the process; a student arrives late, another expresses frustration in their work or a third stares out of the window. As this happens the teacher **assesses** the significance of what is just happening; that the latecomer looks upset, the frustration is a necessary part of the learning and that the daydreamer is thoughtful in generating new ideas. Finally, the teacher chooses to **account** for these developments through the other positive behaviours associated with functional fluency – structuring, nurturing, spontaneity and co-operation, see Figure 4.

Functional fluency enables teachers to become increasingly influential in establishing authentic relationship with students and colleagues. The impact on others is an increase in motivation, affirmation, vitality, collegiality and critical thinking. Whilst it is not possible to make these qualities emerge in colleagues and students, there is a strong invitation into a functionally fluent partnership.

**Theory of Action 3: If schools establish clear partnership plans then students and staff are clear about purpose, permission and potential in the learning process**

Partnership planning is a specific term used to describe the process of contracting, which is another idea taken from transactional analysis. Although the notion of contracts might be familiar, contracting is a distinctive way of creating powerful learning partnerships. Contracting can be applied in a wide range of contexts and levels including across whole staff teams, department/faculty groups, classes and with individual teachers and students. First though, it is important to identify what can emerge where contracting is not in place

**Games People Play**

Eric Berne published *Games People Play* in 1964 and it proved extremely successful. In many respects it was responsible for popularizing TA, although it was not intended to present a comprehensive account of its theoretical framework. Berne's objective was to explain a specific aspect of human behaviour, namely the recurrent, familiar yet unresolving patterns of relationship commonly experienced in personal and professional situations.

Psychological game-playing, Berne observed, is commonplace and takes place out of awareness. Individuals inadvertently seek out and hook others into ways of relating that help maintain the individuals' sense of the world. Games form a pattern in the way individuals relate – they are rarely a one-off experience – and despite their familiarity do not bring about a resolution to the situation. For the most part, Berne argued that game-playing is unhealthy even though some individuals may spend a great deal of their time in game-playing. Invariably people get into game-playing when they don't know what else to do; the options seem limited, or possibilities discounted.

Psychological game-playing begins to emerge in middle childhood, a time where in schools bullying is first identified. The business of making friends, maintaining relationships, appreciating difference are crucial social skills that require practice and often result in mistake making. For most people we figure out how best to get alongside others, at best through co-operation, although we may learn that at times it seems to make sense to either rebel or comply, or to either take too much care of, or dominate others. These experiences of social interaction are framed by an even earlier stage of development in which a personal script is formed. This provides both a sense of identity and personal power. Teachers will often see how this emerges and plays out in primary classrooms and by adolescence both the script and game-playing are becoming more developed. As we walk into the staffroom it's often clear to see how these are embedded by adulthood.

Students and teachers frequently encounter psychological game playing and a useful illustration of this is Karpman's Drama Triangle model, (Karpman, 1968) see figure X. A brilliantly simple diagram which captures the essence of Berne's explanation, the drama triangle can be taught directly to children (especially useful in relation to bullying) and worked with by staff to give language to unhelpful situations.

#### INSERT DRAMA TRIANGLE

Karpman observed that often in a game three roles emerge. One of the people involved takes on the position of Victim. A student may begin to complain, or whine; 'I can't do this work, Miss. It's too hard. You know I can't do this type of stuff. It's boring'. This is offered within moments of the start of the lesson. Typically the victim role involves a lack of thinking, and discounting personal responsibility. It also involves the person ignoring the experience of others around them; there is an anticipation that things will get done for them as they perceive themselves as incapable.

Where the victim role emerges it is usually possible to identify a second role – the Persecutor. The person adopting this role result in them becoming increasingly demanding, dominating other people and 'making' them do things. Sometimes they show up as no-nonsense characters; 'People may not like me, but they'll know where they stand. Someone has to make the difficult decisions around here, and that's my job. I speak my mind – tell how it is'. In the classroom, in response to the student in the victim role, a teacher might respond; 'Of course you can do it! Get on with you work, stop complaining and get your books out. You'll be staying in afterwards to finish it. I don't care what you think – sit down and get on with it.'

Finally, a third role may emerge – the Rescuer. Someone in the situation arrives to make things better for the person in the victim role and in doing so placate the other in the persecutor role. 'I'll do it for you', says the teacher assistant. 'Don't worry – we can get on with the work and we'll do it together. Maybe Miss doesn't realize how difficult the work is for you.' And so the victim is soothed and the persecutor feels justified in making demands. At least for a while.

A critical feature of game-playing is what Berne called the switch. This is where one of the people involved metaphorically 'pulls a lever' and positions change. For example, later in the lesson the student turns to the teacher assistant and complains; 'You said you would help me, so why are you going over to those other kids? You're not bothered at all about my work. I don't want you helping me if you can't be bothered. You don't care!' At this point the switch is in play. The student has shifted to the persecutor role and the assistant from rescuer to victim.



What happens next? Maybe the assistant appeals to the teacher for support; 'I can't work with this pupil, he's been impossible all day'. The teacher's response is to reprimand the student for their rudeness (and in doing so completes the shift to Rescuer of the assistant). The situation escalates with a crescendo of critical Parent and rebel Child transactions resulting in the pupil being removed from the class. Each of the individuals ends up feeling bad; the student experiences a familiar sense of being alone, the teacher feels the recurrent fatigue that comes from having to take care of everybody and the assistant has failed again to sufficiently support needy pupils. One of the main functions of game-playing is that it results in an uneasy confirmation of how people make sense of themselves and others. It can happen in classrooms and staffrooms and underpins many conflict situations. It can get embedded in school culture and restrict the potential of deep learning, collaboration, professional development and effective leadership. Game-playing is worth knowing about.

Recognising that game-playing is going on is a significant step toward eliminating or minimizing its negative impact. Because psychological games take place out of awareness becoming aware that it's happening can open up options. One choice is to simply withdraw from the situation or people engaged in the negative process. For example, a teacher may realize that they tend to get drawn into gossip about other colleagues or senior managers which have a recurrent, negative impact, which in turn can lead to the Victim position. Deciding to spend break-times in another part of the staffroom, or gather with different groups of colleagues is a straightforward way of stepping out of the game. However, removal is not always possible and a more sophisticated approach is necessary.

### **Responding to game-playing**

Sometime it seems to just happen. Within a few moments we are in a situation where we either feel blamed by others, or are determined to make others take the blame for what they have done. In each case the potential for game-playing increases and a critical factor in stopping it developing any further is to recognize that it's happening. This might seem obvious, but the nature of games is that they take place just outside of our awareness, even though the situation is strangely familiar. People tend to continue in game-playing because internally they have no idea that it could be any different for them and/or others. So, picking up that a game is opening up is the first point that other options might be considered.

'I can't do this Miss...'

'Sir, he just called me an idiot....'

'Can you do this question for me....'

'I don't want to be a pain, but could you come and sort this student out. He's been messing around again...'

'I know you are busy, but could I have a word....'

'Oh no! We haven't got you again Miss. I hate Maths....'

'Argh! The computer's frozen. Can anyone sort this out, please....'

And so on. The invitations into game-playing are endless although they all result in hooking others into 'doing things for me'. Some of us bite back from a Persecutor role whilst others cannot resist but help everyone out. And occasionally we might join in and out-bid them for who has the most miserable/challenging/complicated class/assistant/line-manager/student etc.

If we spot the game invitation a general rule of thumb is to invite the other person into thinking first about what they are saying.

'You did a similar task last lesson; can you think about some links to this one...'

'What do you think might be the downsides for getting others to sort out situations for you...'

'How about you start the question in the first instance....'

'I'm not sure I can sort it out – I am teaching my class right now. What have you been doing to try and sort it out....'

'You're right, I am busy right now. Let me come and find you at break...'

'Yes! And I have you too for Maths, so what three things would help this lesson go better than last time for you...'

'I know, the computer's been a pain all day. I wonder what you might do about it...'

Clearly it's how we respond that is important in order to avoid coming across as sarcastic or insensitive, but each of these examples are aimed at encouraging the other person into not just thinking for themselves but to also account for their personal responsibility in the situation. For some of us the challenge will be to pause sufficiently to allow this process to happen; those drawn to Rescue will be too quick to offer an answer and others 'don't suffer fools' which leads to the Persecutor role emerging.

Working with game-playing can be difficult – some parents, students, colleagues and managers may have been repeating these patterns for a long time and a simple invitation into thinking may not be initially be enough to bring about change quickly. The underlying objective is move out of the drama triangle and into more autonomous behaviours. The **Winners Triangle** (Choy, 1990) offers three helpful qualities – not roles - that might be used by anyone involved in the situation, or witnessing it. Assertiveness, responsiveness and a capacity to voice vulnerability are most helpful in shifting toward a more helpful way of figuring things out, see figure X below.

INSERT WINNERS TRIANGLE

In many respects these qualities are fundamental to restorative techniques and are also linked to solution-focused techniques. Examples of helpful questions are provided in the protocol section. More detailed discussions about the link between game playing and the role of middle managers in schools is covered in a previous publication, (Barrow, 2004).

### **Contracting for Partnership**

The most effective way of avoiding the conflict that comes with game-playing is the TA concept of contracting. In TA the concept of contracting has a particular meaning. Far from the functional business use of contracts, in TA the word refers to a process through which different partners clarify a range of factors which underpin effective working together. Contracting involves ensuring that individuals are clear about the extent of **permission**; what people are allowed to do and the limits of the partnership. It also includes ensuring that the partners have **protection**; they won't be asked to do what they can't do, or be caught out. Finally, it is important that the **potential** for growth and sabotage are also acknowledged.

These three dimensions – permission, protection and potency – provide the basis of sound partnerships in schools in both classrooms and staffrooms. In addition there are three levels at which the contracting takes place. The **procedural** level involves being clear about arrangements such as dates, times, equipment, rooms, payment and other domestic matters. The **professional** level concerns the purpose of the work, for example learning maths, developing social skills, establishing whole school policy, setting a budget, supporting parents. The **psychological** level refers to the unspoken hopes and fears that individuals bring to the partnership. This can include previous experiences of similar partnerships; both negative and positive. Often planning partnerships focuses on the professional procedural levels, although it is the psychological material that tends to drive the actual process. The three dimensions and the three levels can be explored using a series of questions, examples of which are presented in Table 1 below.

1. Check the practical aspects of the work, eg. when and where will colleagues meet? Are notes necessary? How frequent will the triad meet and what works best for individuals in terms of time
2. Establish a clear and overt understanding about the respective roles of the leader, team members and other partners in relation to the context of the school/organisation. This includes detailing the anticipated content of the sessions as well as what won't be covered.

3. Clarify roles and responsibilities – don't assume people know who does what. Questions to clarify respective expectations and priorities are important in gauging the extent to which individuals will be willing and able to engage with the process.
4. Consider what might get in the way of an effective partnership. What might each partner do that could sabotage the work? How might this be pre-empted or minimised?
5. It is important that the work of each partner is linked to the overall direction and development of the school. Has this been considered by the individuals?

**Table 1: Applying contracting principles**

**Theory of Action 4: If teachers relate to students through integrating thinking, feeling and behaviour, then students demonstrate affirmation, motivation, excitement and collaboration in their learning.**

A common intention for teacher in classrooms is to encourage students' critical thinking, capacity for social engagement and personal growth. Contemporary directions in pedagogy focus on developing thinking skills, meta-cognition and functional skills, all of which have significant currency beyond the classroom and prepare individuals for adult working life. Sometimes it can be easy for schools to overlook that students are also children and are engaged in a developmental process marked by distinct stages, developmental tasks and necessary needs and support.

Establishing authentic relationships in classrooms includes attending to the developmental process which students are undertaking during their period of schooling. In other words, gathering children together in schools has, by definition, a developmental function. In not understanding or accounting for this teacher miss part of the reality of the classroom.

