

The Application of Emotional Intelligence and Transformational Leadership in

Managing Disruptive Behaviours within Schools

Part 1

Emotional intelligence contributes to an effective implementation of transformational leadership in that much of what transformational leadership entails closely relates to components of emotion intelligence. Notably, they together can be useful in addressing disruptive behaviours among students within schools. The following sections will be dedicated to explaining emotional intelligence, transformational leadership, how they relate to each other, and their application in addressing disruptive behaviours.

One of the most pronounced challenges both within the context of education and in educational institutions is the management of disruptive behaviors among students. Disruptive behaviours from students, also termed disruptive student behaviours and challenging behaviours, are defined as behaviours exhibited by students that are deleterious to students' scholastic outcome, relationships with peers and instructors, and classroom order (Granero-Gallegos et al., 2020). Some examples of disruptive student behaviours include unexplained absence, undesirable attitudes and acts toward peers and school personnel such as aggression and insult, substance abuse, disrupting classroom activities, and so on, all of which can potentially be detrimental to not only the overall academic and social well-being of students exhibiting them but also to the welfare of peers and instructors, undermining the integrity of educational institutions as a whole (Danielsen et al., 2010). In a survey conducted by the Department of Education in the UK (2023), around 62% school personnel reported experiencing disruptive behaviour from students during teaching. Besides, around six minutes

per 30 minutes of classroom time are lost because of disruptive behaviour by students (Department of Education, 2023).

Disruptive behaviors can affect multiple parties both in the vicinity of the student exhibiting them and those who are involved in the learning process of the exhibitor. First, academic performance, overall scholastic outcome, peer relationships, and socioemotional functioning of the exhibitor can be negatively affected by disruptive behaviours (Brennan et al., 2016). Second, disruptive behaviours by pupils can be taxing on the health and well-being of teachers; many teachers experience burnout, frustration, and a range of mental and physical symptoms in the aftermath of such behaviours (Department of Education, 2023; Okeke et al., 2023). The majority of primary and secondary school teachers reported that student's disruptive behaviour has a negative impact on their health and well-being, with 7% reporting to a large extent, 23% to some extent, and 31% to a small extent (Department of Education, 2022). Third, disruptive behaviours function as a significant stressor for parents, particularly those who lack optimal coping strategies and self-regulation (Schulz et al., 2018). Last but not least, peers who are in the vicinity of disruptive behaviours are insofar hindered in the ability to learn and socialize (Powers & Bierman, 2012)

As leaders of the classroom, teachers are expected to manage such behaviours so as to maintain classroom order and ensure that the learning process of other students can proceed as planned, though the approach may drastically vary in terms of urgency, intent, and implementation because of individual leadership style and the need of having to adhere to goals set by higher authorities, including meeting a certain percentage of pass-fail rate (Garcia & Han, 2022; Jones, 2013). It is also worth a moment's attention that the elimination

or amelioration of disruptive behaviours among students is not always dependent upon strategies on teachers' end; instead, they are, in certain cases, the biopsychosocial products of students' socioeconomic status, parenting style of their parents, genetics, adverse childhood experiences, and many other factors shaping the mind and behaviour of students (Araban et al., 2020; Karwatowska et al., 2020). On top of the aforementioned complications, teachers can also experience burnout and failure to maintain a positive and authoritative image that reinforces classroom management, particularly in the lower grades (Kollerova et al., 2023). Therefore, the management of disruptive behaviours among students constitutes a major leadership challenge for teachers in their workplace.

Psychological theory associated with the management of disruptive behaviour

Emotional intelligence (EI), as one of the psychology theories, can aid teachers in the process of understanding the strategic implication of addressing disruptive behaviour. Combined with a decent understanding of leadership theories and practices, teachers with high EI can expect to perform well in managing disruptive behaviour among students (Maamari & Salloum, 2023). In the simplest language, EI is the ability to appraise, express, regulate, and utilize emotions in oneself and others in various settings and situations (Salovey & Mayer, 1990). Although there are many differing models of EI resulting from the constant development of psychology, it is generally categorized into four components: self-awareness, managing emotions, self-motivation, recognising the emotions of others, and social skills (Goleman, 1996).

Regardless of the leadership style teachers possess, emotional intelligence is of paramount relevance and importance in carrying out effective leadership strategies and

building optimal leadership attributes (Coronado-Maldonado & Benitez-Marquez, 2023).

Emotional intelligence is associated with success in classroom management (Valente et al., 2018), thus its obvious value in educational settings. Strictly speaking in terms of psychology, having high levels of emotional intelligence enables teachers to better assess students' emotions based on various cues. These cues can range from spur-of-the-moment emotional outbursts, facial expressions, and body language to observable relationships between students and their surroundings (e.g. teachers, peers, parents) and trajectory of academic performance. In addition, a higher level of emotional intelligence allows teachers to manage their own emotions, which has double benefits: avoiding negative emotions and burnout and preventing further instigation of the situation due to emotional outbursts on the teachers' part.

Thinking in terms of the rest of the components of EI is also critical. Specifically, by managing their emotions and utilising certain emotions at the right time, teachers can build better relationships with students having disruptive behaviour, foster EI among those students, and become self-motivated in the face of adversity. Besides, by transitioning from being reactive to responding strategically while keeping emotions in check, teachers set an example for students as to how one should detach in stressful situations. Competency in the recognition of emotions will also render certain teachers more inclined to go beyond classroom observation and interaction to find out the underlying causes of disruptive behaviour, which can be issues going on at home because empathy propels responsibility (Glouchkow et al., 2023). The accompanying benefits would be increased rapport between teachers and students and students' significant others. The resulting stronger, interconnected social support system will be beneficial for the management of disruptive behaviour (Liu et

al., 2020). For teachers, their experience may also be refined and increase afterwards, helping them to cope with similar scenarios in the future.

Having high EI essentially equates to a more constructive way of tackling disruptive behaviour whereby teachers reflect, manage emotions, make assessments on students' emotions, and identify possible contributing factors behind the facade that stereotypes and attributes disruptive behaviour to simply children being disobedient and 'crazy' (Pozzi et al., 2018; Qu, 2023). However, as the above sections mainly discuss the benefits that come along with having high EI, it is imperative to refrain from an elitist point of view and acknowledge that not everyone is born with high EI and the level of EI is often thought of as malleable and developing continuously (Chen et al., 2017; Gilar-Corbi et al., 2019). Hence, high EI is the result of self-motivation, a central component of EI, and can be attained through constant learning. The higher authorities within and outside schools who oversee the training of teachers are responsible for raising awareness and facilitating the improvement of EI among teachers so that the management of disruptive behaviour becomes a collective effort.

EI & leadership theories

EI bears great relevance in leadership theories, underpinning nearly all of them, and proving to be of great use in leadership practices. The following sections will be dedicated to explaining transformational leadership, transactional leadership, and how EI underpins transformational leadership.

Transformational leadership came about with Burns' book "Leadership" in 1978. Burns introduced the concept of charismatic/transformational leadership, theorizing that transformational leaders, by being attentive and responsive to subordinates, foster benign

interactions between themselves and subordinates, build intrinsic motivation among followers, shift the values and beliefs of followers, and increase accountability and transparency (Burns, 1978). At the core of Burns' theory is the concept of charisma. It refers to the traits and abilities of a leader to appeal to his or her followers in a way that is mutually beneficial and uplifting (Burns, 1978). Charismatic leaders are not "power wielders"; of course, they are leaders who are intellectual, innovative, revolutionary, and self-actualized, but more importantly, they are not bureaucratic and fixated on achievement at the expense of followers' well-being. Charismatic leaders lead by influencing others instead of instilling fear.

Bass later expanded upon Burns' theory, setting forth four I's transformational leadership. They include idealised influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualised consideration. Idealised influence refers to the idea that transformational leaders lead by being role models to their followers (Bass, 1985). By demonstrating wanted attributes and behaviours such as dedication, work ethics, enthusiasm, a sense of responsibility, and honesty, leaders influence their followers and insofar impart these qualities to the followers. Inspirational motivation, as the name suggests, means that transformational leaders inspire and motivate followers through means that do not instil fear into them (Bass, 1985). This can be sharing a vision, stating a set of clearly defined goals and objectives, and expressing expectations. Intellectual stimulation is defined as practices that encourage critical thinking, innovation, and challenging the status quo, even when it means doubting seniority and experience (Bass, 1985). Intellectual stimulation is considered to be a great way to remove the fear factor and rigid structural, hierarchical nature of the leader-follower relationship. Individualised consideration calls for leaders to attend to the

individualised attributes, needs, and worth (Bass, 1985). Adopting individualised consideration for each follower, leaders act as mentors and make followers feel empowered and in ownership of the organization.

Following Bass' expansion, Greenleaf (1977) proposed the concept of servant leadership, which also falls under the umbrella of transformational leadership and sometimes is mentioned concurrently with transformational leadership. Servant leadership warrants that leaders prioritize the engagement of followers and the greater good over the sole goal of monetary gains and achievement of the organization (Greenleaf, 1977). The underlying mechanism of servant leadership is that the growth of an organization co-occurs with the personal and professional development of the associates.

The proponents of transformational leadership argue that its desired effect exceeds that of transactional leadership in certain scenarios (Burns, 1978). While past research evidence suggests conflicting results when comparing the two (Aarons, 2007; Abbas & Ali, 2023), it is important to incorporate other theories and findings when it comes to finding the most suitable leadership style in different organizational contexts, presumably a hybrid of leadership styles as opposed to one only. For instance, the social identity theory claims that the behaviours and traits of a leader can significantly influence how and to what extent his followers identify as and associate themselves with the organisation they work for (Haslam, 2004), in which case a leaning toward transformational leadership by the leader can potentially produce a more positive team dynamics in which team members feel strongly accountable, respected, and the need of working toward a common goal. In support of transformational leadership, research has found social identity theory to be effective in

certain contexts (Steffens et al., 2020). Thus, it may be advisable for leaders and researchers to combine more than one leadership modality in practice instead of being fixated on comparing different leadership modalities, as can be seen in the case of prior research (Aarons, 2007; Burns, 1978; Abbas & Ali, 2023) where comparing transformational and transactional leadership is possibly not an ideal way of viewing leadership for leaders in practice.

Speaking of which, transactional leadership further accentuates the value that EI brings to leadership theories and practices as well as the way it underpins leadership models because transactional leadership often deprives the leader-follower dyad of the collective and considerate aspects inherent to transformational leadership. According to Bass (1985), the tenet of transactional leadership is the exchange between leaders and followers in which each party abides by the rules, whatever they may be or regardless if they are reasonable or indicative of the greater good, and the end result brings either reward or punishment on the followers part, depending on if the violation of rules is present. In other words, it is a contractual relationship between the leader and follower. As mentioned before, Burns appears to favour transformational leadership over transactional leadership, arguing that transactional leadership is not sustainable, but in certain contexts, such as combating crimes, it proves effective. Notably, both transformational and transactional leadership can co-exist, as can be seen in the leader-member exchange theory which “begins as transactional social exchange and evolves into transformational social exchange”(Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995).

How EI underpins leadership theories in the context of disruptive behaviours in school settings

The implementation of transformational leadership, to a large extent, lies in the level of EI within both leaders and followers. It is rather easy to draw connections between the components of transformational leadership and EI. To put it into perspective, inspirational motivation can only be executed effectively when leaders make reliable predictions on if their visions and objectives appeal to or are aligned with individual and collective beliefs and values among the followers. Pushing an agenda without empathizing with the followers' individual needs, beliefs, and values does not work as effectively as sharing visions in accordance with these factors or tailoring the motivators based on what is best for the followers (Palmer et al., 2001). Notably, high EI of followers can help the process because high EI allows them to better understand and empathize with the motivators set by the leader and manage their emotions even when the motivators are not exactly what they feel motivated by (Wong & Law, 2002). Moreover, high EI among leaders allows them to express and utilise their emotions in a way that delivers the most impact to the followers, which also enhances inspirational motivation. Thus, EI aids in the process of executing effective inspiration motivation.

Another component of transformational leadership that cannot function independently of EI is individualised consideration. Humans do not always operate based on logic. Feelings and emotions are large parts of us, and despite that people with high EI are able to manage them better, they will always affect our performance in the workplace (Cakit et al., 2020). Therefore, basing leadership practices in school contexts based on non-emotional factors like grades, peer competitions, and parental supervision is not always reliable. Some teachers may apply individualised consideration without giving much thought to their students' emotions

and feelings, which is counterintuitive to what transformational leadership entails. Executing individualised consideration using EI is to be attentive to the individual needs, feelings, and emotions of students, or in this particular case, students with disruptive behaviour.

Idealised influence applied with EI implies that leaders have to utilise their ways of managing emotions and expressing emotions to set an example for their followers. Bandura's (1976) social learning theory perfectly illustrates how EI underpins the idealised influence of transformational leadership. One of the ways humans acquire behaviours is by imitating the behaviours they observe from others, a process called modelling (Bandura, 1976). If teachers encountering disruptive behaviours exhibit emotional outbursts or resort to violent means to try to restore order, then there is a possibility for students to observe and imitate teachers' behaviours. Vice versa, if teachers are able to manage their emotions and express them in a way that both discourages disruptive behaviour and serves as a model for students to imitate, then perhaps the management of disruptive behaviour can be more effective, bringing the extra benefit of teaching students emotion management through modelling effect. So, idealised influence warrants competency in managing one's emotions, which is a direct reflection of how EI undergirds transformational leadership.

While the idealised influence and individualised consideration are two components of transformational leadership that can be directly applied in managing disruptive behaviour among students, intellectual stimulation, on the other hand, is not as applicable, the main reason being that students in lower grades tend to operate out of intrinsic motivation rather than outside stimuli, such as critical thinking activities and practices in this case (Zurita-Ortega et al., 2020), making intellectual stimulation a strategy more suited for

managing disruptive behaviour in students of higher grades. There is, however, an association between self-regulation and critical thinking skills among students (Pollarolo et al., 2022).

Thus, it is safe to suggest that intellectual stimulation helps EI and vice versa.

Inspirational motivation is no less important than the aforementioned components of transformational leadership. The level of motivation is negatively associated with the severity and frequency of disruptive behaviour in students (Granero-Gallegos et al., 2019), and some have argued the extent to which teachers contribute in the building of motivation among students is parallel to parents (Reeve, 2009). Also, given that teachers with high EI can positively influence students' motivation, EI is further connected with transformational leadership in the domain of inspirational motivation.

Critique of the application of different leadership styles in managing disruptive behaviour in school Settings

Although the previous sections have detailed the promising effects of utilising transformational leadership to manage disruptive behaviour, transformational leadership is to be used with careful measure and probably produces better results when used in combination with transaction leadership. The following sections discuss the applicability of transformational leadership and transactional leadership in managing disruptive behaviour.

Application of transaction leadership

It may be safe to say that leadership in school settings is unique and unlike leadership in settings like companies and corporations because there are no monetary or interest exchanges between students and teachers, who are the main stakeholders aside from parents and school board, in which case there would be no significant deterrents for disruptive

behaviour among students other than fear, the fear of teacher reporting to parents, the fear of getting called out in front of the peers, or even the fear of scolding and other forms of aggression from the teacher.

Since transactional leadership operates based on reward and punishment, teachers in a bid to manage disruptive behaviour may react punitively in the situation because it seems easier and more effective than the other way around. In fact, punishment is the primary response from teachers trying to manage such behaviours (Clunies-Ross & Little, 2008). Studies focusing on the effectiveness of punishment in the management of students' disruptive behaviour yield divergent findings (Okesina & Famolu, 2022; Sun, 2015), which may be the result of the differing demographics of samples and sociocultural context in which the studies were conducted. Research findings have also revealed a pattern wherein teacher's punishment is associated with higher rates of delinquency and mental disorders among the students receiving the punishment (McLeod et al., 2012; Visser et al., 2022). Therefore, utilising transactional leadership in managing students' disruptive behaviour may not be always effective and beneficial and certainly requires great discretion on the teacher's part. It comes down to balancing the deterrent and immediate effect with the long-term detriments punishment can bring, the latter of which is virtually impossible to measure and foresee.

Application of transformational leadership

Transformational leadership is an all-in-all ideal approach to managing students' disruptive behaviour without any potential drawbacks. To assess its efficacy in managing disruptive behaviour, it is essential to look beyond disruptive behaviour itself and examine the overall benefits that students receive because of teachers adopting transformational

leadership in their workplace, the reason being that disruptive behaviour is influenced by a wide range of factors both academically and socially. Some of the influencing factors of disruptive behaviour include perceived academic competence, academic motivation, psychological factors such as stress, and support from teachers (Araban et al., 2020; Bru, 2006). Through practising transformational leadership, teachers can address some of these factors, including academic motivation, resilience, burnout, and academic competence (Trigueros et al., 2020), which in turn indirectly contributes to the management of disruptive behaviour.

To date, the number of research focusing on using transformational leadership to manage disruptive behaviour in school settings remains scarce, virtually non-existent to be precise. For us to draw inferences on this particular application, we not only need to look beyond the sole relationship between transformational leadership and disruptive behaviour but also factor in practices and factors that fall within the realm of transformational leadership. For instance, as EI underpins much of what transformational leadership entails, approaching the application by exploring the relationship between EI and disruptive behaviour is a sound option. Past research has also linked high EI to the reduction of negative socioemotional experiences in students (Mahvar et al., 2018)

But again, EI is an attribute instead of a skill. Although people who are familiar with the concept can easily think of practices showing high EI, getting down to the nuts and bolts of 'EI practices' that specifically address disruptive behaviour is important for educators who are not as well-trained and informed. Practice within transformational leadership that effectively address disruptive behaviour can be effective communication, deescalation, a

friendly but firm attitude, setting shared rules, and so on (Mahvar et al., 2018), but none of these practices is categorized as “transformational leadership practices”, though the connection is apparent. Hence, a central theme emerged, which is that it is the specific practices that are useful for managing disruptive behaviour, probably more so than the term transformational leadership alone and It is up to educators to connect these practices with transformational leadership. On a theoretical level, transformational leadership embodies the underlying mindset and principles upon which these practices are built. For that, transformational leadership is perfectly applicable in managing disruptive behaviour.

It is also important to note that using transformational leadership does not exclude practices related to other leadership practices. It relates back to the previous section where it discusses the possibility of a hybrid leadership approach in tackling workplace challenges in different contexts. Plus the fact that transactional leadership-influenced punitive practices such as the removal of students exhibiting disruptive behaviour from the classroom and scolding can be highly effective (Okesina & Famolu, 2022), educators should tailor their leadership style according to the context.

Part 2

Personal reading plan

To finesse leadership practices in the workplace of my choice, I expect to take on a hybrid approach, meaning that I will draw information and practices from different leadership styles and different disciplines to form a comprehensive understanding of leadership. In my opinion, being a leader is far more than understanding leadership theories, though they are a significant part that makes an exceptional leader; rather, it is a life-long learning process

whereby one gains an understanding of the intricacies of human life, how to succeed in performing specific tasks required for different positions within an organization, how to foster the pursuit of shared vision through increasing accountability and transparency, and last but not least, putting these things together as a functioning unit. To gain such an understanding is to be well-versed in more than one discipline and learn from people working in different fields, which coincides with the tenet of this course: utilising psychology in leadership.

There are a number of reading materials I believe will help me become a competent leader. The book “Extreme Ownership” by Jock Willink and Leif Babin is definitely on top of my list. Both authors are retired U.S. Navy Seals, one of the toughest special forces in the world. I have long heard about the book from my friends and is yet to indulge in it. From what I have seen online, this book is mainly about how to keep one’s ego in check and be a humble leader while being able to make quick and constructive decisions that serve the team as a whole (Willink & Babin, 2015). The strategies in this book were tested in wars as the authors went on several deployments in Afghanistan. I expect to gain valuable insights into how Navy Seals lead and transfer them to my field of profession in the future.

Also, I plan to read a series of psychology books that pioneered the field. Bandura’s Social Learning Theory (1976) is one of them because it talks about how humans learn to behave and think, which I think would be a great help to my leadership practices in the future. After all, knowing the mechanisms behind thoughts and behaviours will give me a chance to come up with ways to modulate thoughts and behaviours both within myself and my leaders and followers.

The Psychology of the Child by Piaget and Inhelder (1972) is another book I require myself to read. As a person aiming to work in the field of education, I will surely have to work alongside children a lot, so understanding child development and the unique way they think will be helpful. I am well aware of the different schools of thought within child development.

Aside from Piaget's view that child development is essentially composed of different stages, there are psychologists and behaviourists who view such processes as continuous. Lev Vygotsky is a forerunner of the 'continuous' sort of theory on child development, so his book "Play And its Role in the Mental Development of the Child" (2013) is a must-read for me. I expect to gain a deeper understanding of how children develop. From that, I can probably work with children better, not getting frustrated and agitated when they exhibit disruptive behaviours, which is something I oftentimes fall victim to. Also known as the pioneer in the field of psychology and human development is Erik Erikson. His book "The Life Cycle Completed" (1998) will also be on my list.

Of course, these books will not be nearly enough. I will utilise reading resources in this course as well because I have not had the time to read them all. During the writing and researching process, the name Haslam came up several times. I actually came across Haslam's (2004) book "Psychology in Organizations" when writing this paper and only found out later that Haslam's works are also in the reading list of this course, which tells me that Haslam is probably someone who is very active in the field. Finding such figures and staying up to date with the current work in the field of leadership and psychology would be

crucial. I will intensively read the rest of the readings of this course as soon as I get the chance.

Personal action plan

Knowing the theories is one thing; being able to apply them in real-world practices is another. Applying the theories I learn from the readings in real-world settings will surely be a process mixed with failures and successes. Nonetheless, I feel a strong urge to go through this process, partly because I have to see what works and what does not, and also because only after going through failures and successes can I build true tenacity, resilience, and expertise in leadership and psychology. In order to do this, I plan to attain internship opportunities throughout the school years. I believe that it will enrich my overall experience and skills. Importantly, it is not to be done at the expense of compromising my time at school. I do not plan to spend all the time working with no time studying.

Now, since I do not have a solid foundation of psychological theories, much of how I think I will apply psychological theories to my leadership practices in the future is based on speculations, but not all. I expect to utilise psychological theories to know the motives behind my followers' behaviours and actions since psychology is essentially the study of human behaviour and mind. EI is something I need to improve. To do so, I will try to write down my emotions everyday, identify the negative ones and the positive ones, and list things I can do to manage them. Outside feedback is also critical to the development of EI. I will practise my active listening and perspective-taking skills and ask for feedback from my followers and teammates to see if I come across as empathetic and caring or opinionated and indifferent to

others' needs and emotions. I will certainly incorporate other methods to improve my EI as I progress. It is always nice to try out different methods.

Having a solid foundation of psychological theories and high EI also relates to transformational leadership because a true leader understands his followers to a great degree. Besides, by understanding the ways humans are conditioned to act and behave, I can perhaps devise an effective system of reward and punishment to better facilitate my followers' performance. It essentially relates to transactional leadership, only in my case, I will adopt reward-punishment mechanisms while knowing my followers on a personal level. So far, it is my two cents of what I am going to do based on the things I have learned so far. I have a strong belief that as I complete my reading plans, I will gain more insights into how I will apply psychological theories in my future leadership practices.

One of the things I keep reminding myself is that I have to cap my learning of theories. Learning is a life-long process, but it is always good to keep learning theories for a certain period of time and then go out and test if those theories apply to real-world problems. Doing so allows me to cement the things I learned. It relates to the concept of transferability, which entails that we have the ability to sense whether something we see in scholarly articles makes sense. The more experience we gain, the more we are able to discern whether certain theories are generalisable or not. In summary, an optimal mixture of practice and theory is the way to go.

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