Functional Fluency for Educational Transactional Analysts

Susannah Temple 2002
(Updated version of TAJ 29:3, 1999 article)
A German translation of this version was published in the Zeitschrift für Transaktionsanalyse 4/2002

"Functional fluency" is proposed as a term to describe the behavioural manifestations of the integrating Adult ego state.   An approach to teaching the integrating Adult ego state model, one with particular relevance for educators, is presented.   A rationale for the importance of personal development and therapy for educators using the concept of functional fluency is outlined, and a practical framework for undertaking aspects of this work is described.

One of the heartening aspects of transactional analysis is its humanity.   Eric Berne promoted the idea that we all have our frailties and susceptibilities - both practitioners and those with whom they work - and that transactional analysis can be used to help reduce or eliminate these frailties in the service of the lifelong process of attaining autonomy.

An educational transactional analyst aims to offer potency, protection and permission to students (Crossman, 1966) and to invite them towards autonomy as learners and as people.   This means that classrooms can become safe places to make friends and learn well together.   Transactional analysis theory suggests that to do this educators need to promote their own awareness, spontaneity and capacity for intimacy to decrease the likelihood of symbiotic transactions and increase their ability to respond flexibly and effectively using a range of ego state manifestations (Stewart & Joines, 1987).   I have adopted the term "functional fluency" to describe this ability.

This is an important matter for educators, who need to develop their capacities for engaging students, catching their attention, understanding their difficulties, providing them with safe frameworks, and communicating subject matter with enthusiasm and energy. This is what being functionally fluent is all about.   Goleman (1995) referred to such characteristics as manifestations of high interpersonal intelligence, a necessary attribute for successful teachers, he suggested, quoting Gardner (1993).

Because functional fluency means increasing awareness and choice about avoiding negative, Parent- or Child-contaminated behaviours and, instead, responding with positive options more likely to invite similarly positive responses, it describes the manifestations of the integrated Adult ego state.

I am conscious, however, that "integrated Adult" is a term for an ideal (Gobes cited in Novey, Porter-Steele, Gobes & Massey, 1993, p. 132).   Bearing in mind, along with Berne, that we are all human and will never reach this ideal totally, I find it more appropriate and realistic to talk about the "integrating Adult" when teaching about ego states; this highlights the fact that Adult decontamination and integration is an ongoing, dynamic process.   In educational contexts, I emphasise the importance of understanding this process and how structural and functional analysis connect (Cox, 1999).   For maximum classroom effectiveness, teachers need to be aware of the intrapsychic sources of behavioural difficulties and how the history of these difficulties affects function, both for themselves and in relation to others.   Although their professional practice necessarily

focuses primarily on the functional analysis of ego states, their inner grasp of structural analysis informs, and can transform, this practice.

I have, therefore, developed a way of teaching and illustrating the concept of the integrating Adult process, one that addresses the point made by Novey (Novey et al., 1993): "Further exploration is needed to define more clearly what happens in the updating process" (p.126).

The purpose of teaching educators ego state analysis in this way is to convey the depth and significance of structural theory, thus enriching their understanding and use of functional theory. The method uses a series of diagrams, the last of which shows structure and function simultaneously; this allows the conceptual connections to be made and clarified. At the same time, the model attempts to clear up along the way some of the classic confusions referred to by Novey et al. (1993).

## TEACHING THE INTEGRATING ADULT EGOSTATE PROCESS

When I teach this material I use colour coded posters to clarify connections and hula-hoops for the ego state circles so that I can lay them on the floor and move them to indicate the crucial dynamic aspect of ego states, also alluded to visually by Berne (1957) in his diagrams showing decontamination.

Figure 1: The Decontamination and Integration Process of the Integrating Adult

.
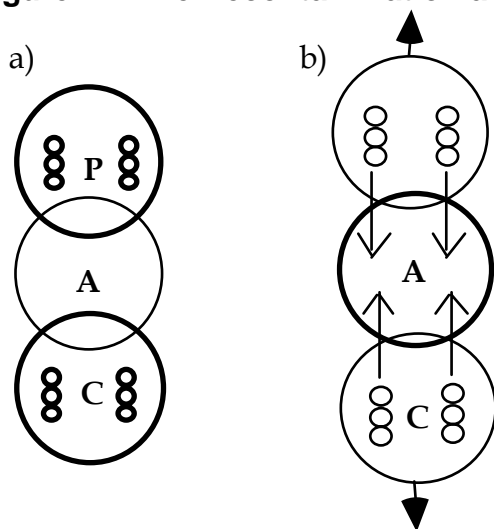
To begin, using Figure 1, I stress how the integrating Adult is both enlarging and enriching, and that these processes occur simultaneously. Figure 1a shows the starting point. The Parent and Child ego states overlap large portions of the Adult, the Parent and Child fixations are solid and still charged with potential energy, and the Adult remains weak. Then in Figure 1b, the Parent and Child ego states are receding out of the Adult arena, and the fixations are shown fading and transferring their energy into the Adult. This energy has been converted into learning during the therapeutic process, and it is this learning, duly integrated and assimilated, that strengthens and enriches the Adult. (Gobes, cited in Novey, et al., 1993, p. 131). The idealised goal of this process is depicted in Figure 2.
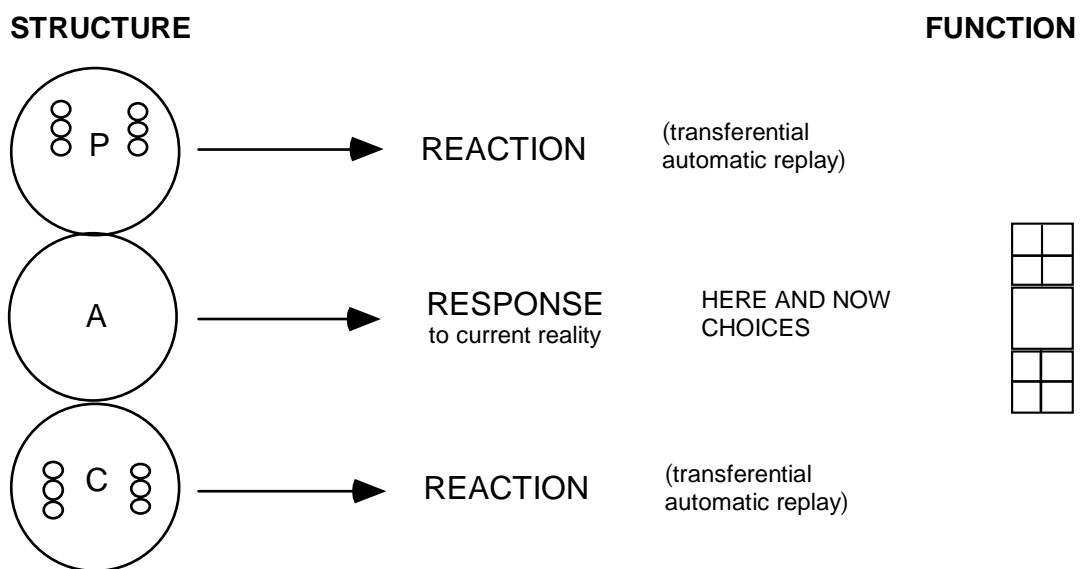
Figure 2: The Idealized Integrated Adult (Gobes, cited in Novey et al., 1993, p. 131)
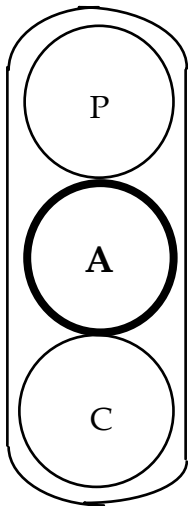
The integrated Adult can express full maturity, having incorporated the riches of learning from past experiences hitherto locked in Parent or Child ego states. This concept, originating with Berne himself (1961), was vividly described by both Clarkson and Gilbert (1988) and Erskine and Moursund (1988).

The focus of the first stage of teaching these aspects of ego state theory is structural. The next stage clarifies the connections and differences between a structural focus and a functional focus in ego state analysis. I use two linked diagrams, see Figures 3 and 4. The structural outline of the three ego state categories remains on the left, leaving room for explanation of function on the right. It is important to note that there are many ego states in the Parent and Child categories, each with their own Parent Adult and Child parts (Gobes cited in Novey et al., 1993, p. 130) although I only show token examples in my diagram.

Figure 3: React and Respond Diagram


STRUCTURE   FUNCTION

REACTION   (transferential automatic replay)

RESPONSE   HERE AND NOW CHOICES
to current reality

REACTION   (transferential automatic replay)

I use the terms "react" and "respond" as technical terms in this context to emphasise the crucial difference between Adult and Parent or Child. In both Parent and Child ego states we are replaying, or automatically re-acting, archaic material. When triggered into doing this, we have no choices; we just play things the same old way once again. It is in the Adult ego state that we have our choice of options (Berne 1961 p.76). When we are in Adult we are in touch with and account for present reality: "The Adult ego state consists of one's current age-appropriate motor behaviour; one's emotional, cognitive and moral development; one's ability to be creative, and one's full contactful capacity for engagement in meaningful relationships." (Erskine & Moursund 1988 p.20)

Already in Figure 3, on the far right, is a miniature outline framework ready for showing the functional options available in Adult (Karpman 1971). Figure 3 is then elaborated into Figure 4, in which the structural part of the diagram shows the human reality of some contaminations as an inevitable feature of the human condition. I draw in the horizontal lines to show that all nine options are manifestations of the Adult ego state as well as how the two pairs of negative options have contaminations as their structural source. In contrast, the five positive options result from well-decontaminated and integrated Adult sources.

Figure 4:   React and Respond Diagram Elaborated

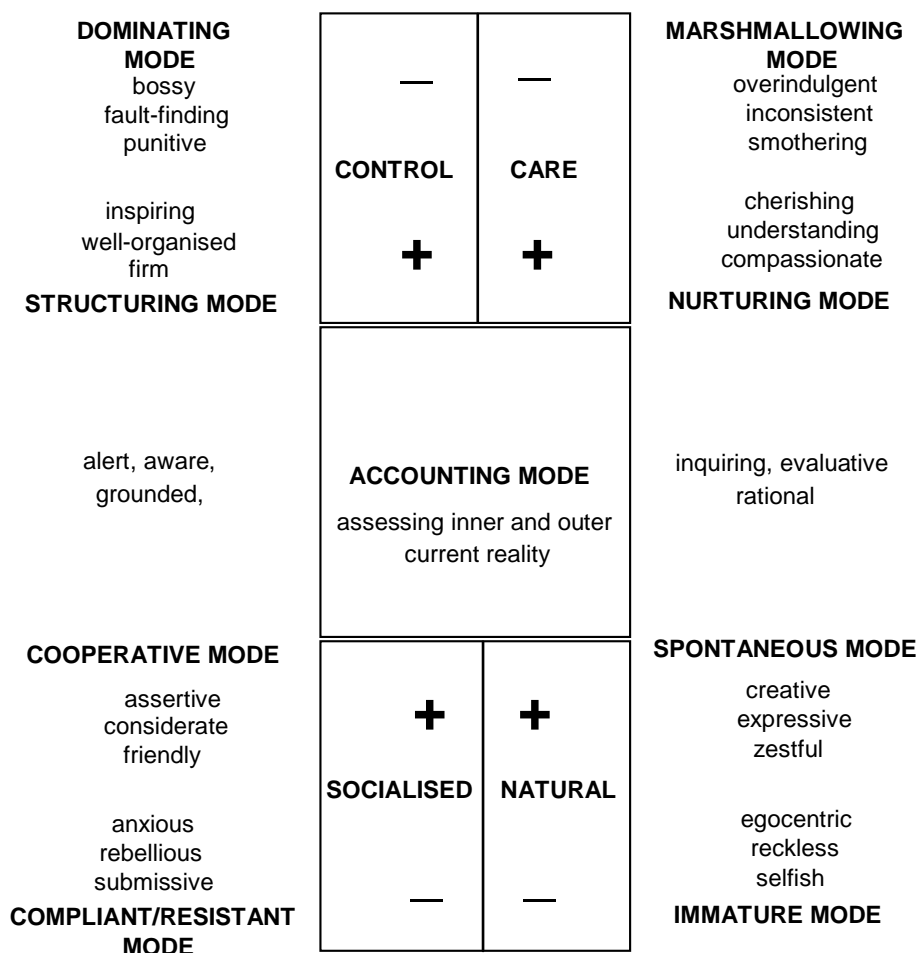**STRUCTURE**   **FUNCTION**
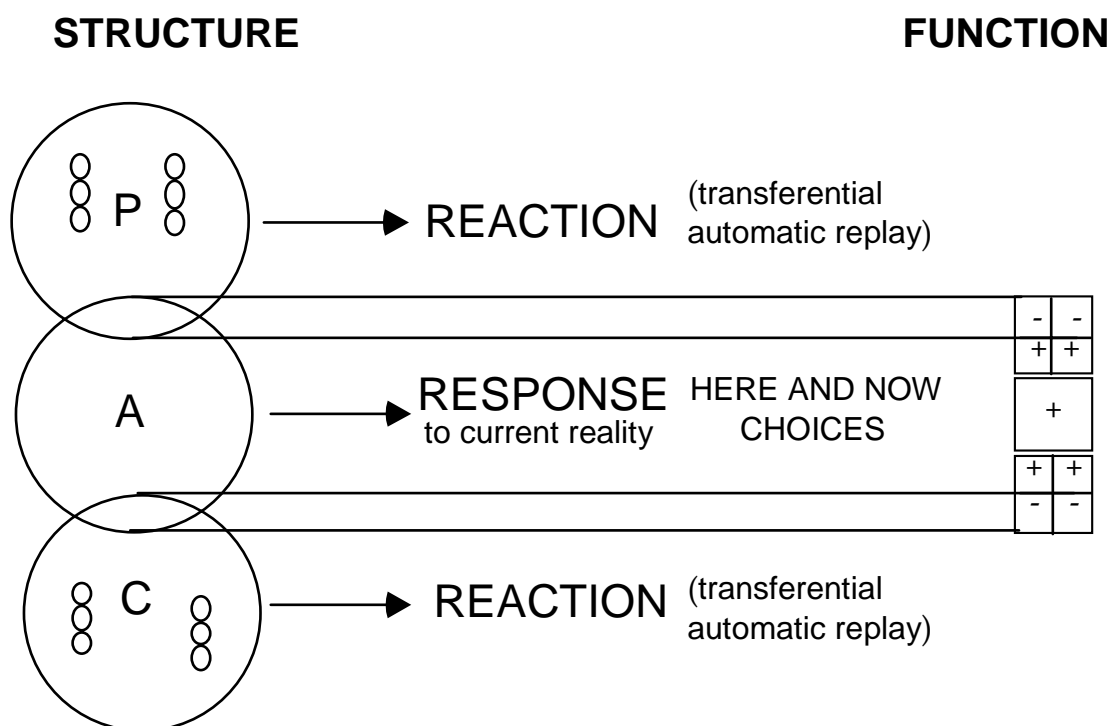
In my educational work I use this nine-category functional model outlined in Figure 4 because it provides a logical and balanced set of behavioural manifestations of integrating Adult: the usual positive five options (Karpman 1971) and the four negative options that originate from remaining Parent and Child contaminations. This functional model has some similarities to Kahler's (1987) model, in which he also indicates and names positive and negative Parent and Child functions.

In my model, which I term the functional fluency model, I follow the example of Lapworth, Sills and Fish (1995), and use the term 'mode' instead of 'ego state' to denote each type of behavioural manifestation. This clarifies the fact that the model concerns the

analysis of behaviours rather than types of ego state.   It also helps to avoid the confusions that can arise when terms such as Nurturing Parent or Adapted Child are sometimes reified and referred to as entities as though they were actually ego states in the structural sense, and are sometimes used to describe ways of functioning (Berne, 1961; Gobes, cited in Novey et al., 1993, p. 136,).   A typical confusion of this sort is revealed by the common question, "When is Adult an ego state and when is it a behaviour?"   This teaching process, illustrated by Figures 3-6, helps to answer this question.   Feedback from educators, even those familiar with transactional analysis, suggests that through this approach they can understand, sometimes for the first time clearly, the difference between "being in my Adult ego state" and "functioning in Adult mode, accounting for current reality".   A way to resolve this problem would be to reserve the term Adult exclusively to refer to actual ego states, and to adopt the term "accounting" as the name for the behavioural mode of reality assessment (see below).   Using the 'mode' terminology has a further advantage in that it helps people to own their behaviour.   Note the difference between "My Nurturing Parent was listening", and "I listened in Nurturing mode".

Figure 5 shows the functional fluency model with its nine behavioural modes.

Figure 5:   Functional Fluency Model

DOMINATING MODE bossy fault-finding punitive	CONTROL —	CARE —	MARSHMALLOWING MODE overindulgent inconsistent smothering
inspiring well-organised firm **STRUCTURING MODE**	CONTROL **+**	CARE **+**	cherishing understanding compassionate **NURTURING MODE**
alert, aware, grounded,	**ACCOUNTING MODE** assessing inner and outer current reality		inquiring, evaluative rational
COOPERATIVE MODE assertive considerate friendly	**+** SOCIALISED	**+** NATURAL	**SPONTANEOUS MODE** creative expressive zestful
anxious rebellious submissive **COMPLIANT/RESISTANT MODE**	SOCIALISED —	NATURAL —	egocentric reckless selfish **IMMATURE MODE**

I find this expanded model, with all its functional options named, makes it easier to differentiate between, and therefore identify and understand, the various behaviours which educators encounter in themselves and others.

My aim is to illuminate theory and to keep the system of theoretical constructs logical and consistent.   Firstly I found it necessary to name the two elements of Parent function just as we name the two elements of Child function.   This balances the model and releases the term 'nurturing' to mean only positive care.   The terms "care" and "control" (Temple, 1990) were chosen because they relate to British legal terminology and educational usage.   In Britain those taking responsibility for the welfare of children have rights of control and power to make decisions affecting them as well as responsibilities for taking good care of them and acting in their best interests.   Teachers carry this responsibility "in loco parentis".   In court custody cases the question is "Who will have care and control of the children?"

The model I developed shows that both Parental care and control and socialised and natural Child can be either positive or negative, thus giving four Parent modes and four Child modes of behaviour.   I have used three of Clark's (1978) names for the former, substituting "dominating" for her "criticizing", and have created four new names for the Child modes.   To avoid the confusion with respect to the term "Adult", referred to above, the mode for reality assessment is called "accounting", to denote its particular aspect of ego state function, and to avoid using the term Adult to mean two quite separate concepts. The term "accounting" is intended to evoke the quality of this 'data processing facility' which helps to keep a person grounded and in touch with current reality.

Having a name for each mode makes it easier to think about the distinctive characteristics of each and therefore to differentiate more precisely between them.   This is the basis for identifying and understanding behaviours in the classroom and planning appropriate strategies to enhance the teaching/learning process.

Combining elements of the previous diagrams leads to the final diagram in the series (Figure 6).   It shows both the four structural sources of pathology, and the full range of Adult ego state options.   Most helpfully, it shows clearly the connection between structural contaminations and their functional manifestations so that educators can make sense of negative behaviours, whether manifested by pupils, colleagues or themselves.   This is a good first step in dealing with them appropriately.

Figure 6: Combination Diagram Structure and Function Shown Together
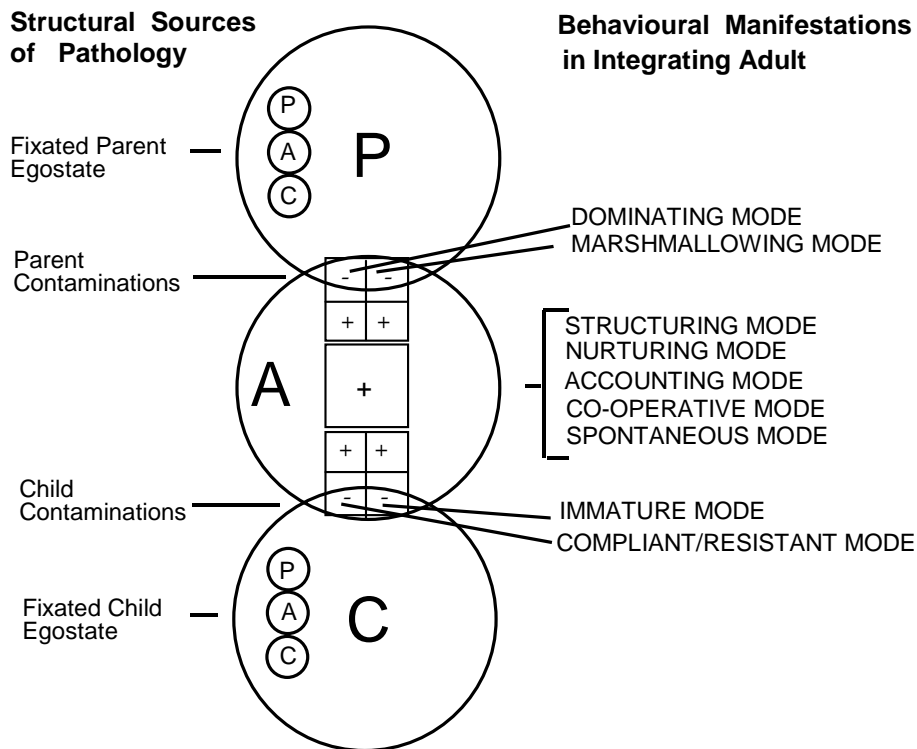
This combination diagram depicts a snapshot of the integrating Adult, with all the functional options included.   When teaching, I connect it up with Figure 1 again, using the hula hoops laid on the floor, as described earlier.   By moving the hoops, and having arrows to indicate lifelong input into both Parent and Child, as well as arrows to show decontamination and integration, the ongoing nature of this dynamic human process comes alive.   If educators can envisage the Parent and Child ego state circles receding from Adult, they can see how dominating and marshmallowing, immature and compliant/resistant behaviours will diminish.   If they can also envisage how learning from past previously encapsulated experiences (fixations in Parent and Child) enriches the Adult, they can then appreciate that this increases the possibility of appropriate structuring, nurturing, accounting, cooperating and spontaneity.   They learn that this is how functional fluency develops.

The teaching framework just outlined also helps to make clear that functional fluency is not simply the acquisition of a set of behavioural techniques.   Rather it develops as part of personal growth and as such is an important aspect of transactional analysis training for educators.

A functionally fluent teacher will tune in to both internal and external stimuli (in accounting mode), will empathise with others showing compassion and understanding (in nurturing mode), will be appropriately directive and firm about boundaries (in structuring mode), will demonstrate assertive, I'm OK, You're OK, friendliness (in cooperative mode) along with creativity and expression of wants and feelings (in spontaneous mode).   This functionally fluent teacher will refrain from bossing others about and finding fault (dominating), and/or from doing too much for people, and being over-indulgent (marshmallowing).   Likewise he or she will be unlikely either to slavishly follow others' leads, or to be oppositional as a matter of course (compliant/resistant mode).   It is also

unlikely that he or she will show the sort of developmental lag that results in continuing childish egocentric and impulsive behaviour (immature mode).

There have been many positive spin-offs from the use of this expanded model. Teachers need to differentiate between the modes and to understand the significance of their possible structural sources, to tell the difference, for instance, between "compliance" and "cooperation". If, as often happens, a teacher thinks these are synonymous and strokes pupils for compliance, she or he may be disappointed to find that this does not promote assertive, I'm OK-You're OK, cooperation. This is one reason why it is so important in educational transactional analysis to make clear that positive adaptation (cooperative mode) is essential in social development; it allows people to enjoy friendship and to work together productively. In traditional functional diagrams positive adaptation is invisible, and "adaptation" is mostly assumed to be pathological.
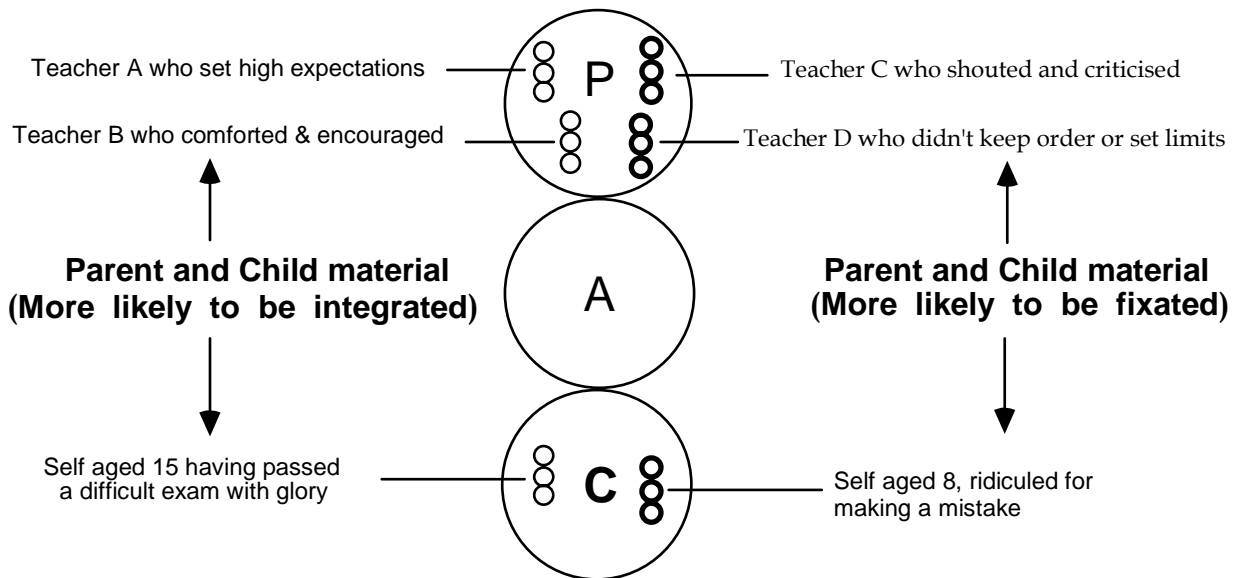
Another benefit of using this expanded model can be seen when the educational establishment fears that listening to children and meeting their psychological needs involves harmful permissiveness. These fears can be somewhat allayed by showing that the positive care of nurturing helps children by listening to them and meeting their needs. This is in contrast to the negative care of marshmallowing, which is overindulgent and harmful. I also find it helpful in such situations to emphasize the directiveness and empowerment of structuring for maintaining the discipline children need to feel secure and free to learn. This helps teachers to stop clinging to dominating in the belief that it is the only way to keep control. It also changes the educational argument from "Should we be harder on children or softer?" --- translated, this means dominating or marshmallowing, neither of which does children any favours --- to "How shall we structure and nurture children more effectively?"

What teachers do can be viewed as preventive mental health work because they inevitably serve as potent Parent figures for pupils. Hopefully, they will provide positive modelling of functional fluency, helpful explicit teaching about how to behave, and implicit messages that are congruent. This is a way of viewing upbringing and education as a positive resource for children's healthy development, one that balances out the usual clinical transactional analysis focus on parents and teachers as sources for children's script construction.

THE IMPORTANCE OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR EDUCATORS
Since most people have school experiences as children, most will have teachers in their collection of Parent ego state introjects as well as classroom experiences as a pupil in their Child ego states. For some people, both of these ego state types will have been mainly positive and therefore easily integrated into Adult. For others, these types may have been negative and traumatic and thus may remain longer as fixated archaic material in Parent and Child. Everyone is likely to have at least some examples of both types (see Figure 7).

Figure 7: Classroom History in Parent and Child Egostates

Teacher A who set high expectations — P — Teacher C who shouted and criticised

Teacher B who comforted & encouraged — Teacher D who didn't keep order or set limits

Parent and Child material (More likely to be integrated)

A

Parent and Child material (More likely to be fixated)

Self aged 15 having passed a difficult exam with glory — C — Self aged 8, ridiculed for making a mistake

Because of this, people who enter teacher training, particularly those in their late teens, will likely be doing so with many of these Parent and Child ego states as yet unintegrated and therefore available for transferential cathexis in moments of stress.   In other words, until such teachers achieve the necessary Adult decontamination and integration, they will be liable in the professional situation to be triggered out of Adult into replaying material from Parent or Child.   This makes it hard for them to avoid symbiosis in the classroom.

For instance, Mrs X, a secondary math teacher, was constantly disorganised and ineffective in her classroom.   In a transactional analysis discussion group she slowly realized that she largely replayed an ineffectual teacher from her schooldays, one to whom she had been strongly attached (teacher D in Figure 7).   It seemed to her somehow "disloyal" to act powerfully and assertively in the classroom using Adult reality testing and problem solving.   As she made the connections, and stopped believing that to be a "nice" teacher she could not act authoritatively, she was motivated to set expectations and limits for her pupils and to become increasingly "functionally fluent", by using more structuring and accounting behaviours.

Another example, with a less positive outcome, was Mr. Y, who had a punitive attitude towards children who made mistakes.   He used ridicule and sarcasm as tools for correction.   Even his colleagues cringed at his interventions.   He would also recount in staff-room chat how he had suffered as a lad from similar teaching strategies.   He was not aware in his Adult that he was acting out of a Parent ego state.   It was clear that he was reenacting his trauma as a perpetrator (see Figure 7, child aged 8).   The school in which Mr.Y taught adopted a transactional analysis way of working as school policy.   Mr.Y's methods were confronted, and he was supported and encouraged to adopt new ways. He resisted strongly and went on sick leave with stomach ulcers.   After some time he took an early retirement on grounds of ill health.

The prime need for a teacher is to develop a sensitive and informed maturity that enables him or her to refuse symbiotic invitations and instead to give strokes that will help pupils or students to step out of script.   This means avoiding dominating and marshmallowing, and finding ways to structure and nurture instead (Clarke 1978). Educational transactional analysis training therefore needs to provide the context and opportunity for thorough decontamination of the Adult, with the necessary healing and

integration of past traumas and interfering introjects, in the cause of increased autonomy for the teacher.

Increased autonomy raises a teacher's energy and motivation, creativity and effectiveness.   Autonomy also brings enhanced awareness, (sensitivity, rationality, objectivity, realism and "with-it-ness"), enhanced spontaneity, (choice, range and fluency of behavioural options and freedom of self expression), and enhanced capacity for intimacy, (willingness to be candid, open and direct, congruent, empathic and affectionate) (Berne 1961).   This process is about becoming an integrated Adult teacher who is functionally fluent.

A FRAMEWORK FOR INCREASING EDUCATOR SELF-AWARENESS
Figure 8 provides a framework for what needs to be an ongoing, evolving process of opening up the educator's frame of reference to careful analysis and understanding. Ideally the process should take place in a supportive, collaborative training group, with many experiential exercises and time for discussion.   Pathological issues thus raised and recognised can then be taken to individual or group therapy.

Figure 8:   Self Awareness Framework
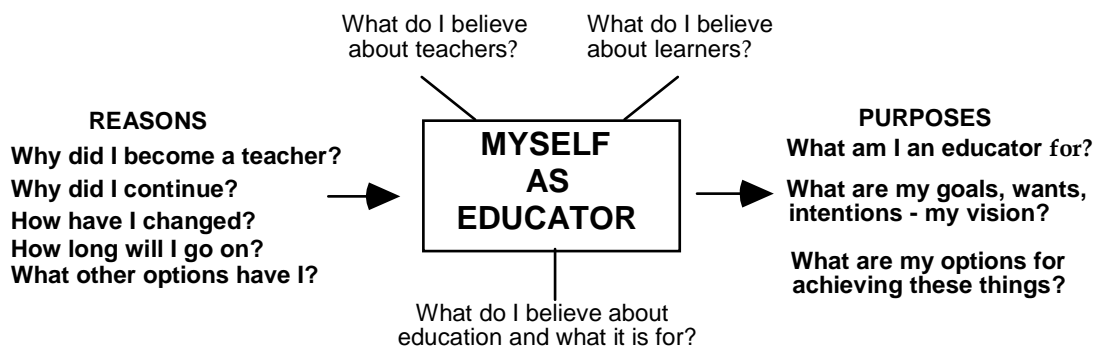
The educators involved in this process need to consider in depth the answers to the questions in Figure 8.   They need to track the development of their own beliefs about education and their role in it as an adult by examining their personal journey through childhood, schooling, college and professional situations.   Questions about the past, and awareness of the reasons for the decisions made, throw light on the range of both positive and negative motivations for becoming a teacher.   Questions about the future illuminate the personal rationale for professional decision making in the present.   There should be an opportunity for educators to recognise prejudices and delusions that contaminate Adult assessment of professional matters and interfere with professional effectiveness.

AN EXERCISE TO ELICIT SOME OF THIS MATERIAL.
1.   *Individually.*   Bring to mind a favourite teacher from your past.   Jot down words to describe the person.   Add a note about the most important things that you learned from her or him.
2.   *In pairs.*   Share your memories and reflections, comparing the two teachers and your learnings.
3.   *Whole Group.*   Gather some of the adjectives used to describe these people. What do we learn from this?
4.   *Pairs again.*   Discuss why you chose these people.   How effective were they? What did they model?   What messages, overt and covert, did they give?

5. *Individually*. How was this teacher a Parent figure in your Script construction? Draw a Script matrix, and share your findings with your partner. How do these teachers feature in your Parent Adult and Child ego states?

6. *Concluding discussion*. Focus on how those experiences with past teachers may still be affecting your professional practice in the present.

This exercise often illuminates teachers' practice in surprising ways. For instance, John, a primary teacher working with children with learning difficulties, had hero-worshipped a teacher he had as a young adolescent. He knew he had chosen his career as a result of this influence. What he did not realise until he did this exercise through, especially part 5, was how seriously he had limited himself professionally by obeying two injunctions he had incorporated from this revered teacher: "Don't outshine me!" and "Don't leave me!". John identified his reluctance to apply for promotion and thus acquire management status as his way of "staying with" his hero, who, John realised, had had a strong anti-authority attitude. This was the start for John of reassessing himself and his career as a teacher, and as a result opening up new possibilities for himself.

CONCLUSION

Clear and appropriate methods and models for teaching ego state analysis to teachers are important for engendering a comprehensive grasp of both structure and function. This will facilitate teachers' development of the functional fluency necessary for implementing their understanding and promoting their professional effectiveness.

Because of the formative nature of school experience for most people, and the likelihood that such experiences are script reinforcing, it is important for teachers to develop self-awareness in ego state terms. Structural analysis and in-depth reflection on personal motivations for becoming a teacher, are crucial in identifying both strengths and possible sources of professional difficulty. Decontamination and integration of the learning that results from the healing of Child and Parent ego states needs to be an ongoing and developmental process throughout training so that Script issues will be resolved and autonomous talent, ability and expertise can be maximised. This integrating Adult process will manifest in ever-increasing functional fluency.

© Susannah Temple 2002

REFERENCES.
Berne, E. (1957): "Egostates in Psychotherapy" American Journal of Psychotherapy, 11, 293-309.
Berne, E. (1961): Transactional Analysis In Psychotherapy: a systematic individual and social psychiatry, Grove Press
Clarke, J.Illsley. (1978): Self Esteem, A Family Affair, Harper San Fransisco
Clarkson, P. & Gilbert, M. (1988): "Berne's Original Model of Ego States: Some Theoretical Considerations" TAJ Vol. 18, No. 1.
Crossman, P. (1966): "Permission & Protection", Transactional Analysis Bulletin, 5,19 pp. 152-4
Erskine, R.G. & Moursund, J. P. (1988): Integrative Psychotherapy in Action, Sage
Gardner, H. (1993): Multiple Intelligences: the theory in Practice. Basic Books
Goleman, D. (1995); Emotional Intelligence, Bloomsbury
Kahler, T. (1978): Transactional Analysis Revisited, Human Development Publications, Little Rock, Arkansas

Karpman, S. (1971): "Options" <u>TAJ</u> Vol. 1 No. 1

Lapworth, P., Sills, C., & Fish, S. (1995): <u>Transactional Analysis Counselling,</u>
     Winslow Press

Novey, T.B., Porter-Steele, N., Gobes, L., & Massey, R. (1993): "Ego States and the
     Self Concept: A Panel Presentation and Discussion" <u>TAJ</u> Vol. 23, No. 3

Stewart, I. & Joines, V. (1987): <u>TA Today,</u> Lifespace Publishing p281

Temple, S. (1990): "Being in Charge", <u>ITA News</u> No 27