

Update on the Functional Fluency Model in Education

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Abstract

The updated functional fluency model is presented with an outline of its research-based development. The ways in which the model links with, and is different from, other ego state models are explained. The educational relevance of the functional fluency concepts is emphasized. Ways of using the model for the personal and professional development of educators are indicated.

Education involves relationships. The more positive and effective these are in educational contexts, the more likely it is that all members of the learning group will thrive both as individuals and as lifelong learners (McCombs & Whisler, 1997). "Functional fluency denotes efficacy of interpersonal functioning in terms of flexibility and balance of the behavioural modes a person uses" (Temple, 2002a, p. iv).

The original functional fluency model of human functioning as described in the *Transactional Analysis Journal* (Temple, 1999) has now been updated. This is the result of the five-year research process of development of the Temple Index of Functional Fluency (TIFF©). TIFF is a transactional analysis psychometric tool for personal development and behavioral diagnosis of ego states. The understanding of the functional fluency model, and the ways that it can be used, depend on an appreciation of how and why it was developed and how it relates to ego state theory.

Rationale for the Development of the Functional Fluency Model

The updated version of the functional fluency

Some of the material in this article was previously published in an article entitled "Action on the Functional Model" in the EATA Newsletter (No. 76, pp. 4-8) and presented at the 2004 ITAA/CHILD conference in Bangalore, India.

model was developed according to certain important aims. The key task was to make clear the difference between talking about ego states and talking about functioning. To do this, it was necessary to make rational and consistent conceptual differentiations between the two and to express these clearly in the model.

In transactional analysis, functional analysis using the traditional functional ego state model has, in fact, not been an analysis of functioning, but an analysis of certain types of ego states that were categorized by particular functional characteristics. That model is not, therefore, a model of behaviors or functioning as such, but rather it consists of five multidimensional categories of ego states, which, confusingly, are sometimes referred to as behaviors and sometimes as ego states.

In contrast, the functional fluency model is simply a model of human functioning. By differentiating between the concept of functioning and the concept of ego states, I have uncoupled the functional fluency model from previous models of ego states.

In this process, certain crucial things have been achieved:

- By means of a carefully planned research process, I have created a stand-alone transactional analysis model of human social functioning that is valid and reliable as a basis both for behavioral diagnosis and for use as a tool for personal development. A key point here is that as well as standing alone, the functional fluency model is consistent with the original essence of ego state theory on which it is clearly based.
- I have made the functional fluency model compatible with other research and psychometric models (e.g., Baumrind's [1991] Parenting Styles, the Adlerian Basis A Inventory [Curllette, Kern, & Wheeler, 1993], and the Hogan Personality Inventory [Hogan, 1996]).

- I have avoided and moved on from the conceptual confusions in past ego state theorizing referred to by Stewart (1992, 2001, 2002).

It is important to note that my conceptual uncoupling makes possible a coherent and logical theoretical reconnection between analysis of ego states and analysis of functioning using the functional fluency model. In practice, either analysis can be used to illuminate the other.

Something important that I slowly realized through the research process was that to demonstrate conceptual differentiation from traditional transactional analysis models, I had to make it clear that the functional fluency model is not a model of ego states of any sort! It is a model of human functioning informed by ego state theory as well as by other theories.

There were two essential practical outcomes from this realization. First, I incorporated the suggestions of Ian Stewart and Valerie Heppel (and maybe others) who suggested that the use of stacked squares would be more suitable than stacked circles in my model diagrams. This is also consistent with Servaas van Beekum's (1996) ITAA conference presentation in which he pointed out the usefulness of drawing stacked squares to depict the functional aspects of ego states to aid conceptual understanding. Second, I now strictly avoid use of any Parent, Adult, or Child terminology in connection with the functional fluency model. I have created a new and appropriate terminology to describe and explain the functional fluency concepts. These developments are incorporated in TIFF materials and also feature both in the updated version of the 1999 *TAJ* article published in the *Zeitschrift für Transaktionsanalyse* (Temple, 2002b) and in my *EATA Newsletter* article of 2003.

Theoretical Outline of the Functional Fluency Model

The TIFF model is based on three aspects of human existence and functioning, namely growing up, surviving, and raising the next generation. These three aspects are fundamental to our humanity and more basic than personality factors or traits (Gopnik, Meltzoff, & Kuhl, 1999). (This is also true of the concept of

ego states, which may be why the ego state model can be used to diagram transference in ways that seem relevant across many cultures.) The three aspects, in essence, have to do with the survival and continuation of the species and could be said, therefore, to have a "biological mandate," a term used by Hogan, Hogan, and Trickey (1999, p. 6) with respect to the Hogan Personality Inventory.

The logical elaboration of these three categories of functioning into nine constructs, each indicating one clear concept (Neuman, 1994), uses Kelly's (1963) framework for analyzing the conceptual stages of complex constructs. Here there are three stages or levels: comprehensive construct, level one; subordinate construct, level two; and further subordinate construct, level three.

Level 1: Three Categories of Functioning

The three categories of functioning are outlined in Figure 1.

Level 2: Five Elements of Functioning

The social responsibility and self-actualization categories are then divided into two subordinate elements (see Figure 2). It proved more effective to keep the reality assessment category undivided and with the term "accounting" at this second level of construing in order to match the other four elements conceptually.

Level 3: Nine Behavioral Modes of the Functional Fluency Model

In the third level of construing (see Figure 3), the elements are divided qualitatively so that control, care, socialized self, and natural self all have both a positive and negative manifestations. (Accounting, because it is an internal, value-free function, is regarded quantitatively and measured in terms of "more or less" rather than "how well." In practice, using TIFF, when the final scores are displayed on a profile, all the ensuing analysis is a qualitative process; the nature of someone's accounting can then be explored in the collaborative feedback-dialogue).

All the modes are delineated by six adjectives that describe, as far as possible, the richness of each construct. These adjectives form the basis for the questionnaire in the TIFF instrument.

SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY	This is about UPBRINGING, the role of BEING IN CHARGE, carrying AUTHORITY	This is how we use our energy on behalf of others: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • grown-up self-responsibility • parental responsibility • professional responsibility for others, maybe temporary
REALITY ASSESSMENT	This is about SURVIVAL and being "WITH IT"	This is the basis for how we respond to life's moment by moment, to the here and now of life.
SELF-ACTUALIZATION	This is about GROWING UP AND BECOMING MYSELF	This is how we use our energy on our own behalf. It has to do with identity and expression of self throughout life.

Figure 1
Level 1: Three Categories of Functioning

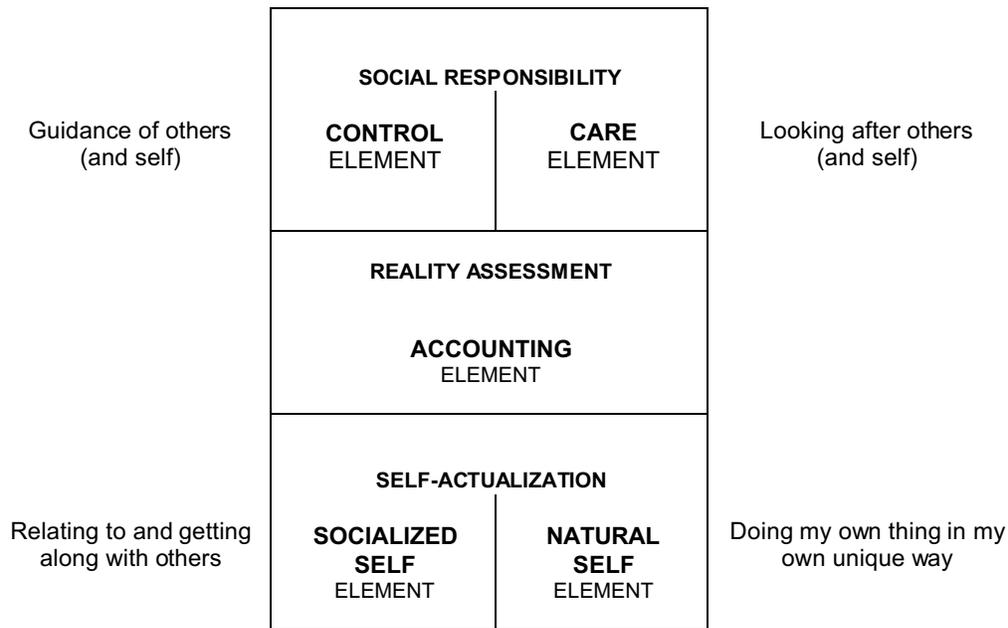


Figure 2
Level 2: Five Elements of Functioning

Negative control DOMINATING MODE	Negative care MARSHMALLOWING MODE
Positive control STRUCTURING MODE	Positive care NURTURING MODE
Accounting element ACCOUNTING MODE	
Positive socialized self COOPERATIVE MODE	Positive natural self SPONTANEOUS MODE
Negative socialized self COMPLIANT/ RESISTANT MODE	Negative natural self IMMATURE MODE

Figure 3
Level 3: Nine Behavioral Modes of the Functional Fluency Model
(These are the nine modes of behavior that are tested in the TIFF© instrument)

The five central modes of structuring, nurturing, accounting, cooperative, and spontaneous seem to me to equate to Karpman's (1971) Five Options and to offer a positive range and combination of ways of responding effectively. They have come to be known as the "Fabulous Five." The four negative modes are less effective ways of responding and can be explained

as being manifestations of contaminated aspects of Adult functioning. All nine modes are manifestations of an Integrating Adult ego state.

One of the most exciting parts of the research pilot ($N = 302$) results was the evidence that was found to support this claim. In fact, my original intuitive depiction (Temple, 1999) of

the functional fluency model superimposed onto a structural ego state diagram has been shown to make theoretical as well as practical sense (Temple, 2002a).

The combination diagram shown in Figure 4, which uses the Integrating Adult ego state model, is an updated version from which it can be seen that the functional fluency model could be used for behavioral diagnosis of any class of ego state.

The term “accounting” is of crucial importance. Depending on which class of ego state is activated, people may be accounting with their full here-and-now capabilities in Adult, with

the abilities and propensities of one of their Parent figures, or with the immaturity of one of their Child ego states. Identifying the nature of people’s accounting contributes to sensitive and accurate ego state diagnosis. It is often easier to recognize what people are doing than what they are not doing. It is another way to use the transactional analysis concept of discounting. (Bear in mind that the term “accounting” also offers a way to avoid the confusing past use of the word “Adult” to mean both an ego state and a type of functioning.) Although accounting is value free in theory, in practice it is the positive use that is emphasized

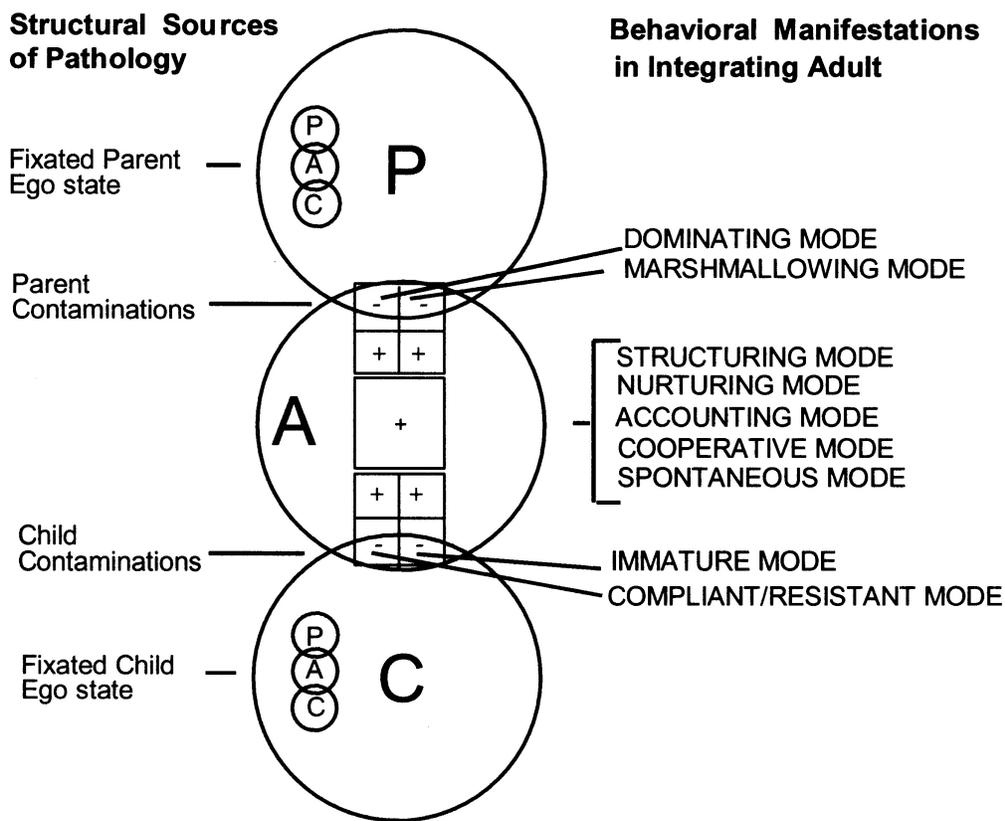


Figure 4
Combination Diagram: A Structural Model of Ego States with the Functional Fluency Model

and reinforced. This is because functional fluency is, in essence, an educational model, construed from an educational frame of reference and with educational aims. Accounting, therefore, is included as one of the five positive modes.

Educational Difficulties Inherent in the Traditional Transactional Analysis Functional Model

The research process clarified for me the scientific difficulties of using the traditional five-part functional model with its conceptual variabilities (Temple, 2002a). The overriding problem was that the five constructs (Controlling Parent, Nurturing Parent, Adult, Adapted Child, and Natural Child) are multidimensional and therefore unsuitable for psychometric measurement (Neuman, 1994).

Apart from this, I think that there is an inherent and quite serious difficulty—particularly, perhaps, for educators—in the ongoing use of the traditional transactional analysis functional model. I think that model reinforces cultural and historical stereotypes that are a hindrance to certain aspects of personal and social development that are badly needed as we enter the twenty-first century. As an educator, I want to promote empowering ways of exerting control, sensitive and empathic ways of caring, potent and assertive ways of relating with others, and vibrant creativity that enhances the world we all share. For this, a conceptually balanced model is crucial.

We need to ask, “Which characteristics does the traditional model reinforce?” “Which human attributes are invisible in that model?” “What might the effects be?” and “Which characteristics of human social functioning do we wish to reinforce?”

First, there has been a general assumption that “control” as a concept is negative and damaging. A review of the transactional analysis literature reveals how much more frequently examples of Controlling Parent exhibit these negative connotations. With certain important exceptions (Clarke, 1978; Clarke & Dawson, 1989), the concept of positive control does not have a name. This means that leadership offering inspiration, boundaries, and discipline is

not recognized or reinforced as strongly as the authoritarian type that involves coercion and fault finding. It matters not that the latter is decried or denounced. It is named and constantly described in transactional analysis examples, which inevitably reinforces the negative concept.

Conversely, caring has been identified and named only as nurturing and is assumed to be positive. The sort of negative caring often involved in Rescuing is not named on the traditional model, which makes it harder to differentiate between genuine kindness and compassion and harmful overindulgence (Clarke, Dawson, & Bredehoft, 2004). Fear of Rescuing can reduce people’s natural urge to nurture spontaneously and appropriately, while unidentified negative caring may go unchallenged.

A balanced combination of positive care and control is what is needed (Baumrind, 1991). This must include both the empowering guidance of structuring and the comfort and kindness of nurturing. Also, since people of all ages learn both by experience and example, positive care and control need to be both offered and modeled. Thinking in terms of ego state structure, this would mean positive input into C₁, P₁, C₂, and P₂, which would help to create and sustain good psychological adjustment.

Second, the term “adaptation” rather than “socialization” has been used in the traditional model. In transactional analysis, Adapted Child usually carries an assumption of negativity and undesirability. There is no naming of the positive social learning that develops people’s capacity to stand up for themselves in an “I’m OK, You’re OK” way, to consider others’ needs and feelings, and to collaborate assertively. This leads to the risk of people showing reluctance to conform in any way for fear of being labeled “adapted,” even in situations when some conformity would be helpful, considerate, and effective. In addition, rebellion may be stroked instead of assertiveness.

It is important to name and stroke all aspects of the cooperative mode so as to enhance people’s ability to relate well with others with social potency in order to enjoy living and working together.

Conversely, Natural/Free Child has been assumed to be positive and of a certain outgoing

temperament type. There is no naming of the negative aspects of this construct, such as an immaturity of self that shows up through egocentricity or impulsiveness that is hopefully outgrown by the time someone becomes an adult. This means that differentiation between the effects of lack of social learning and the effects of counterproductive social learning, such as submissiveness or defiance, is not provided for. Another danger is that people who are naturally of a quieter or more contemplative disposition can be led to believe that they somehow lack spirit because they do not fit the stereotypical transactional analysis Free Child image. Their reflectiveness can be mistaken for inhibition, their creativity can go unrecognized and unrewarded, and thus both they and the world can lose out.

People need to be encouraged to express their own uniqueness freely and to be in touch with their own internal driving force in order to be self-motivated and creatively energized on their own behalf. Once again, it is balance that is needed with an aim of developing a combination of both cooperative and spontaneous modes.

I think models and diagrams convey permissions simply through their design and terminology (Allen, 2002), which is why I have aimed to develop a balanced model that strokes positive ways of being in charge, positive ways of relating and expressing the self, and effective ways of accounting for reality.

In the transactional analysis world, we are fond of saying, "What you stroke is what you get." Educators, in particular, are aware that whatever they pay attention to is likely to increase, including behaviors. Those working with children know that it is more effective to tell them what to do rather than what not to do (i.e., "Walk down the corridor!" works better than "Don't run!"). Thus, in a model of social functioning it is vital to name and fully conceptualize the types of behavior that are effective so that we can notice, recognize, and reinforce positive functioning.

Diagnosis of ineffective functioning is also important, especially if done in a way that helps people to understand the often subtle differences between positive and negative modes of

behavior. For example, it is useful to tell the difference between a treat and overindulgence, between guidance and bossiness, between cooperation and compliance, and between impulsivity and spontaneity. This is why the functional fluency model is formulated as it is.

Using the Functional Fluency Model Educationally

When using the functional fluency model with educators, it is important to explore the full meaning of all nine modes, in particular to identify and stroke each person's use of the five positive modes. Experiential exercises help people to focus in detail on the nature of their effective use of these modes and how they integrate them. This is to appreciate and reinforce what people already do well. It is also helpful to note which aspects of these modes they would like to enrich and expand, thus extending both the depth and breadth of their positive ways of relating in the classroom.

Based on this foundation, people then explore their use of the four negative modes. With these, they are encouraged to identify occasions when they might use them. (We all have bad days sometimes!) It is important to be aware of the likely contexts, the likely people to be involved, and what is likely to trigger use of a particular negative mode. This self-exploration lays a basis for planning how to transform negative mode use. Noticing which positive modes(s) would be more effective in the circumstances, and working out how to switch into them, leads to planning for the desired behavioral changes.

Raising self-awareness in this way usually helps teachers identify which modes work best for them in different situations and which modes lead to trouble. The analysis of transactions is enhanced and helps teachers recognize how their use of different modes will influence students' modes of behavior as well as their motivation and achievement. The internal mechanism of accounting mode aids the teacher's choice of appropriate modes to use moment by moment, while use of the cooperative and spontaneous modes brings potency and life to classroom relationships. Most importantly, they will discover how skillful structuring and

nurturing will help children develop their own five positive modes.

Educators, after all, are using themselves as their prime tool in their work, so for them, personal and professional development are synonymous (Lerkkanen & Temple, 2004). TIFF and the functional fluency model are designed to assist in these processes.

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