

Vision Document

Transcendent Leadership: A Metaphor For Building Collective System Efficacy

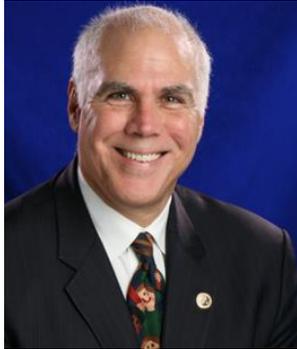
Dr. Anthony J. Magana III



Executive Summary

Education has changed drastically in a very short time. Researchers estimate that students will experience substantively lower educational attainment, skill development, employability, and learning productivity (Nadworny, 2020). The voyage out of this maelstrom requires a new heading, new maps, and new tools. It also requires a new leadership metaphor that embraces broad participation from diverse groups endeavoring to build collective system efficacy. The prevailing metaphors of transactional and transformational leadership establish the individual leader as separate from the rest of the organization. These metaphors must be challenged if collective systemic efficacy is to emerge. In order to realize collective potential, whole education systems must move from decision making by one leader to emerging leadership circles to leadership by the collective will—from transactional, to transformational, to transcendent leadership.

About Magana Education



Dr. Anthony J. Magana III is an online learning pioneer. He is the author of numerous research studies, scholarly articles, and three best-selling books. His latest book, *Disruptive Classroom Technologies*, introduced the T3 Framework for Innovation to wide international acclaim. The research-driven strategies in the T3 Framework for Innovation were shown to reliably double learning productivity. Dr. Magana's learning strategies have been implemented successfully in online, hybrid, and in-person learning environments. His methods and findings were recently peer-reviewed and inducted into the Oxford University Research Encyclopedia of Education, a global clearinghouse for breakthrough practices. Dr. Magana holds a Bachelor of Science degree from Stockton University, a Master of Education degree from City University, and an Administrative Credential and Doctorate in Educational Leadership from Seattle University.

Mission: To transform breakthrough educational research evidence into practical, concrete principles, strategies, and tools that reliably accelerate systemic learning productivity, wellbeing, and mastery.

“The effects of Information & Communications Technology (ICT) remain too low and understanding the “why” it is so low is critical. Sonny Magana has advanced our understanding of the Visible Learning and used this to advance a major step forward. His T3 Framework aligns beautifully with the Visible Learning claims, inviting ICT to move beyond the translational (surface), to also incorporate the transformational (deep), and the transcendent (transfer) learning. The T3 Challenge is a powerful, credible, and exciting challenge that Magana has offered us: Let’s do it!”

—**John Hattie, Laureate Professor, University of Melbourne**

“Dr. Sonny Magana is a visionary leader regarding what education can be if we truly embrace the potential of technology. Unfortunately, the bright promise of technology is still in the distance, somewhere on the horizon. If one views schools and schooling through the lens of Magana’s T3 Framework, though, that horizon can become clearer, more attainable, and more inspirational.”

—**Robert J. Marzano, CEO, Marzano Research**

*“The T3 Framework is a brilliant breakthrough in our understanding and use of technology for learning. Sonny Magana clearly portrays the nature and difference between translational, transformational, and transcendent use of technology. The identification of transcendent use is itself an innovation. On top of all this he shows us how to navigate through the T3 system with guiding questions, prompts, and rubrics. For those of us working on the frontier of deep learning *Disruptive Classroom Technologies*, and the T3 Framework is a much-needed gift”*

—**Michael Fullan, Professor Emeritus, University of Toronto**



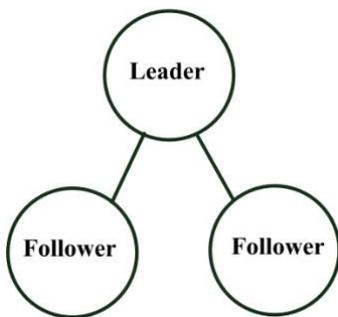
“Education needs new metaphors, metaphors so beautifully in keeping with the times that they succeed in getting us all to rise and rededicate ourselves once more to fulfilling our society’s highest hopes.” —Patricia R. Plante

On Leadership

The traditional view of a leader as a transactional powerholder is well established in scholarly literature dating back to the early 14th Century. The word *leader* first appeared in the English language in the early 1300s, defining a leader as person of power whose role is to tell others what to do. The leader directs, and followers follow those directives.

It wasn’t until the 19th Century that the word *leadership* appears in the English language, over 500 years later. The earliest definition of leadership included individuals other than the leader for the first time. As societies evolved there also arose a need for a new language to express the importance of the role of followers in a leadership dynamic. The more inclusive nature of the word leadership reflects an important language evolution, identifying leadership as more of a relationship between leaders and followers, not just an act of power-mongering.

Why did it take so long for leadership to emerge from the dark ages? Tools tend to fit the times. The language tools for human governance that served in the 1300s were no longer sufficient in the 1800s. A new language of leadership was required for a more literate, post-enlightenment society. Today, as societies become more interconnected and interdependent with technological advances, a new leadership metaphor is needed to transcend the illusion of separateness and shift organizational focus to the collective—transcendent leadership.



Transactional Leadership

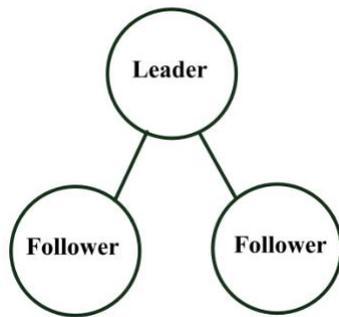


Transformational Leadership



Transcendent Leadership

Transactional Leadership



Transactional leadership, in which some type of exchange occurs between a leader and followers, represents the traditional view of the role of leaders and followers in organizations and is widely used.

Within the transactional leadership frame, leaders maintain a superior position that is separate and distinct from followers. The exchange between leaders and followers can either be mutually beneficial, or lopsided. The relationship between transactional leaders and their followers is conditioned on the exchange, which opens the door to self-interest trumping mutual benefit. Actions or decisions undertaken within the transactional leadership frame are generally more responsive to situations that arise, rather than proactive or strategic. The separateness between leader and follower serves to build tenuous transactions rather than relationships.

The transactional leadership frame is useful in maintaining the status quo. It is sometimes necessary and even well-suited for solving problems of lower complexity, or when decisions must be made between a small number of clear and well-defined choices. Transactional leadership is essential for the maintenance of any educational organization. A myriad of daily administrative tasks are served by the transactional leadership frame from budgeting to staffing. It would be difficult for school systems to function properly without effective transactional decision-making by a superintendent or building principal. What are some of the transactional leadership decisions or actions you have made in the last day, or week, or month?

A limitation is that if the transactional frame is the only leadership frame available, leaders may see every situation as requiring transactional leadership action. When the only tool in one's leadership toolbox is a hammer, one tends to see every leadership problem as a nail. While



transactional leadership can be situationally useful, it is insufficient for building collective system efficacy and should be perceived as a starting point, not a stopping point.

Transformational Leadership



Transformational leadership, in which followers are more involved in governance and decision-making, became a popular metaphor in the late 20th Century. Within the transformational leadership frame, both leaders and followers are brought closer together through shared collaborative experiences that lift each to new and higher states of betterment and mutuality. Interactions within the transformational leadership frame transform followers into leaders in their own right, and leaders into facilitators of that transformation.

Actions or decisions undertaken within the transformational leadership frame are generally more proactive, strategic, and are conditioned not on an exchange, but on the blurring of the separateness between leaders and followers. Transformational leadership serves to build more meaningful and sustainable relationships through greater empathy and mutual intentionality. What are some of the transformational interactions you have had in the last day, or week, or month?

The overarching focus of the transformational leadership frame is a merging of governance by one to governance by many. This is a necessary step towards developing individual self-determinism and the realization of personal potential. Increasing the diversity of people involved in organizational governance and decision-making is a far more effective approach to solving the highly complex, ill-structured problems that will arise. By focusing on individual metamorphosis, the transformational leadership frame is also far more effective for achieving incremental organizational growth and development.

Transcendent Leadership



Transcendent leadership, in which the role of leaders and followers are merged into the collective, is a metaphor that is required in these highly uncertain and complex times. The separation between leader and follower becomes both diminished and subservient to collective wellbeing and mastery. The whole is greater than the sum of its parts.

Through the transcendent leadership frame, the entire system changes from a collection of individuals to a meta-organization synthesized through a common vision, going above and beyond the normal range of possibilities and expectations. Organizations operating within the transcendent leadership frame are poised for holistic attainment of transcendent pursuits—such as the realization of collective system efficacy.

The transcendent leadership metaphor answers the clarion call for a governance and decision-making metaphor which is inclusive, trusting, and made more meaningful by the contribution of the collective. All means all, and actions within the transcendent leadership frame include all organizational members in dialogue and group consent processes, nurturing and celebrating creative and divergent thinking, and generating a willingness to serve the collective. It's not about me; it's not about you; it's all about us.

E Pluribus Unum is the Latin sentiment for this idea: Out of many, one. This is the foundational principle for that grand humanitarian and social experiment of self-governance and self-determinism called democracy. “The people,” collectively, is the fundamental tenant upon which the Founding Fathers of America imagined a Republic of soaring liberty, justice, and the transcendent pursuit of happiness for all. The transcendent leadership frame was the crucible in which the very idea of America was forged: A collective wholeness which transcends the illusion of separateness.



Transcendent Leadership and Collective System Efficacy

The metaphor of transcendent leadership expands upon the languages of transactional and transformational realities into one that evolves from independence to interdependence and wholeness. The transcendent leadership frame, deeply rooted in the American ideals of collective governance and decision-making, offers a language to help us build collective system efficacy in educational organizations. Collective system efficacy is the highly desirable state in which every individual—every leader, teacher, student, and stakeholder—in a learning organization believes that together they can and will realize their potential for attaining collective wellbeing and mastery for the betterment of all—personally, organizationally, and globally. The six steps for building collective system efficacy are listed in Table 1.0.

The 6 Steps for Building Collective System Efficacy

1. Build Organizational Awareness of Collective System Efficacy
2. Craft a Common Vision of Collective System Efficacy
3. Create A Common Language for Collective System Contribution
4. Promote Teacher and Student Leadership and Decision-Making
5. Build, Observe, and Evaluate Leading Indicators of Progress
6. Communicate and Celebrate Success

Table 1. *The 6 Steps for Building Collective System Efficacy*

Final Thought

Transcendent leadership is the next phase in the evolution of educational leadership. Educational systems face extraordinarily complex existential challenges that require embracing the emergent governance and leadership potential from all members of the system. Adding the transcendent leadership frame to one's leadership vocabulary provides a useful lens to apply when extraordinarily wicked problems arise that can only be solved by unlocking the collective potential



of the whole. The Transcendent leadership frame of mind will help to bring that collective to the fore. It is a tool for these times that will empower organizations to go above and beyond the tired range of minimum proficiency and limited expectations towards reimagining education through the lens of the extraordinary, the impossible, the transcendent pursuits. Only then can we truly build more perfect learning unions.

Goethe once opined that ruling was easy but governing was hard. The work of building collective system efficacy with transcendent leadership won't be easy. It will test leaders' resolve. It will require courage, commitment, and contribution to the collective—that's what makes it great.



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