

EXPLORING THE IMPACT OF TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP AND THE TRIAD OF INTELLIGENCES ON PRIMARY EDUCATION FOR CHILDREN AGED 9-11

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the impact of transformational leadership and the Triad of Intelligences (emotional, social, and metaphorical) on primary education for students aged 9 to 11. The theoretical model integrates Daniel Goleman's framework of emotional intelligence (EI), Matthew D. Lieberman's perspective on social intelligence (SI), but also George Lakoff's theory of metaphors and Gareth Morgan's view of metaphors as cognitive and cultural tools that form metaphorical intelligence (MI). Grounded in learning theories (Lev Vygotsky, Albert Bandura, and Urie Bronfenbrenner), the research explores how teachers' use of transformational leadership (TL) can foster students' emotional security, social engagement, and metaphorical understanding to promote learning. A quantitative correlational methodology was employed, consisting of structured questionnaires, both for students and for primary teachers. A total of 77 students and 5 teachers completed the questionnaires, and the findings aim to support the main hypothesis that transformational leadership based on the Triad of Intelligences (EI, SI, and MI) can enhance emotional, relational, and symbolic dimensions of learning in primary education.

KEYWORDS: *Emotional Intelligence, Metaphorical Intelligence, Primary Education, Social Intelligence, Transformational Leadership.*

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1. INTRODUCTION

In an educational system marked by change and complex demands, the teacher becomes the binding force behind educational practices that foster learning grounded in emotional, social, and metaphorical intelligence. These dimensions are especially necessary in primary education, where students develop communication and interpersonal skills while also cultivating metaphorical dimensions that enhance their imagination. Within this active conducive learning environment, students develop abilities that enable them to interact, to learn, and to grow (George, 2000). Thus, learning becomes more than a cognitive process. It involves emotions, relationships, and metaphors, a triad that supports the teacher's role in promoting active and enduring learning.

There is a sleeping giant in every school that can be awakened when schools create a culture where teachers become leaders. TL aligns best with the needs of schools by empowering educators to innovate and build supportive learning environments (Khoudri, 2024). Due to its main traits, inspiration and motivation, it is positively associated to EI (Harms & Credé, 2010; Goleman, 2016). Transformational teachers create a mission, a strategy, and a culture, making the difference between

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failure and success (Bass, 1990), and this journey begins with self-awareness of one's own thoughts, feelings, and actions (Covey, 2007).

Teachers are responsible for creating a reliable environment where primary dyads are formed, in order to generate and sustain mental and emotional growth (Capurso, 2015). They also build a community sense, a space where students can benefit from the guidance offered by a more knowledgeable one. Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) is this space where students go from what they can do alone to what they can performed with help (Ness, 2022). Learning also occurs when we observe and imitate (Magister, 2024). Bandura's Social Learning Theory states that students are motivated to engage in learning when they interact with others and the quality of their interactions determines the quality of their learning (Bandura, 1977). Transformational teachers should rethink how they lead and teach, and the Triad of Intelligences responds to this need by offering an integrative perspective that addresses the emotional, social, and metaphorical dimensions of learning. It empowers teachers to become architects of learning, building meaning, fostering connection, and nurturing imagination.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Transformational Leadership

Leadership is not achieved in isolation. Though research hasn't defined a clear profile of an ideal leader, authenticity remains the most important trait. Authentic leaders inspire and empower those around them, both by staying true to themselves and by building genuine connections with others (Arenas et al., 2017). Transformational leaders are authentic (George et al., 2007), charismatic and considerate, they pay close attention to every employee and meet their needs (Bass, 1990), as they create a culture of change and growth (Bass & Avolio, 1993). TL is considered to have evolved from other leadership types, such as charismatic, situational and transactional leadership (Covey, 2007), and it remains the core of leadership styles (Yang, 2013). The term transformational leadership was first coined by J.V. Downton in *Rebel Leadership: Commitment and Charisma in a Revolutionary Process* (1973) (Barbuto & Burbach, 2006; Covey, 2007). Five years later, J.M. Burns introduced the concept of transforming leadership in *Leadership* (Barbuto & Burbach, 2006; Covey, 2007; Anderson, M., 2017), and Bass formulated the TL theory (Bass, 1990; Yukl, 1999), stating that this leadership style is leadership performance, as it makes the difference between success and failure (Bass, 1990).

In 1978, Burns first introduced the concept of TL, as opposed to transactional leadership (Rafferty & Griffin, 2004; Barbuto & Burbach, 2006; Alegre & Levitt, 2014). In 1990, Bass formulated the four dimensions of TL, charisma (providing vision and mission), inspiration (setting high expectations and a purpose), intellectual stimulation (providing intelligence and problem solving), and individual consideration (offering personal attention and care) (Bass, 1990). The first dimension, charisma, was replaced later by idealized influence, emphasizing the impact the leader has on the followers (Bass & Avolio, 1993; Yukl, 1999; Rafferty & Griffin, 2004; Barbuto & Burbach, 2006; Alegre & Levitt, 2014; Anderson, M., 2017; Alainati et al., 2023).

Vision is the main characteristic of TL (Rafferty & Griffin, 2004; Anderson, M., 2017; Day et al., 2020; Sasan et al., 2023; Dagala et al., 2024; Heenan et al., 2024; Groenwald et al., 2024; Kilag et al., 2024). The next traits are motivation and inspiration (Leithwood & Jantzi, 1999; Barling et al., 2000; Covey, 2007; Yang, 2013; Anderson, M., 2017; Bush, 2018; Groenwald et al., 2024). Also, innovation (Pounder, 2005; Covey, 2007; Danielson, 2007; Kilag et al., 2024) and respect (Pounder, 2005; Covey, 2007; Danielson, 2007; Kilag et al., 2024) are also attributed to TL. Besides all these traits, TL is considered to bring intellectual stimulation (Bass, 1990; Rafferty & Griffin, 2004), to empower (Hallinger, 2003; Mulford & Silins, 2003; Sasan et al., 2023; Heenan et al., 2024; Kilag et al., 2024) and to promote change (Covey, 2007; Heenan et al., 2024). It is also characterized by

authority and influence (Leithwood & Jantzi, 1999), inspirational communication, and personal recognition (Rafferty & Griffin, 2004), purpose and ideals (Covey, 2007).

TL is viewed as the most appropriate leadership style for today's schools (Anderson, M., 2017), leading to school success (Pounder, 2005; Allen et al., 2015). It offers educators the opportunity to innovate and to create a supportive learning environment for students (Khoudri, 2024; Kilag et al., 2024). As its mission is to transform an ordinary organization into one that is aware of its goals and values (Burns, 2012), TL provides inspiration and support in order to foster creativity and innovation (Kilag et al., 2024). It empowers teachers to create a learning environment that fosters growth, both for students and teachers (Hallinger, 2003; Kilag et al., 2024). A transformational leader's skills are to bring new ideas and a shared vision (Yang, 2013). Transformational leaders are leaders of change (Covey, 2007; Heenan et al., 2024), they emphasize emotions and values (Yukl, 1999), having the following traits: to be inspired (and to show it), to be connected (and to stay grounded), to have a vision (and to communicate it), to pay attention (and to care), and to learn, accessing the power of their mind (Yukl, 1999; Covey, 2007; Alainati et al. 2023). Effective leaders respond to the changing needs of the school context (Hallinger, 2003), engaging their followers at a motivational level, in order to promote growth and elevation (Burns, 2012). Likewise, they build a school culture defined by trust, collaboration and motivation (Heenan et al., 2024).

Students resonate to TL due to its humanistic approach, where the teacher is seen as a role model, and a source of inspiration and motivation. Moreover, transformational leaders recognize their students' needs, offering encouragement and support, and helping them to gain autonomy in learning (Khoudri, 2024). When teachers address the four characteristics of TL, they foster motivation among students, creating a positive learning environment (Covey, 2007). Transformational performance isn't related only to academic competence. It is this ability of TL to cultivate a sense of community cohesion, motivating both students and teachers to strive for excellence (Alainati et al., 2023; Sasan et al., 2023).

2.2 The Triad of Intelligences

Emotional intelligence (EI) was first proposed by Salovey and Mayer in 1990 (Barling et al., 2000; Bar-On, 2006; Lee & Yazdanifard, 2013), representing "a group of related mental abilities" (Mayer et al., 2008, p. 504), and also including the ability to monitor emotions, to differentiate them or to use them in order to make decisions or to take actions (Mayer et al., 2008). Dewey had already introduced the concept of EI in 1909 (Landy, 2005; Joseph & Newman, 2010), understanding it as fundamentally social, and not as a feature of a single individual (Kauppi et al., 2020). Thorndike proposed three types of intelligence: mechanical (using objects), social (navigating human relations), and abstract (understanding ideas and symbols) (Thorndike, 1920).

According to Goleman, there are three models of EI: the first model was proposed by Peter Salovey and John Mayer, the second one was formulated by Reuven Bar-On, and the third model belongs to Daniel Goleman (Goleman, 2016; Goleman, 2018). The four dimensions of EI, in Goleman's model, are self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management. They are related to the ability to understand and regulate not only our emotions, but also the emotions of those around us (Goleman, 2016; Goleman, 2018).

EI is cognitive, measurable and functional, enabling people to make inspired decisions or to have better relationships (Mayer et al., 2008; Goleman, 2018). Managing emotions is a necessary tool in order to adapt and cope, as they should work for us, not against us (Bar-On, 2006). Emotions and cognition are not different dimensions, they are interconnected, contributing to behavior (Pessoa, 2008) and to a better understanding of learning (Yang & Damasio, 2007). Transformational teachers have academic abilities and personal qualities that enable them to inspire and to motivate students, offering them a direction for development. And at the core of this set of skills lies EI, which instills in students the desire to learn (Goleman, 2016).

Vygotsky's sociocultural theory emphasizes that emotional development is shaped through interaction with others in meaningful social context (Tudge and Wunterhoff, 1993). Learning can be enhanced by peer tutoring, students teaching students (Lieberman, 2013), but student performance takes place in the ZPD, where teachers create a positive learning environment to inspire and motivate students through emotions and empathy (Jacoboni, 2009). Transformational teachers create a safe space for learning, where students get involved, without fearing failure. Vicarious experience becomes a tool for self-regulation and a way to believe in our abilities (Bandura, 1971). And the more we imitate, the more we strengthen our connections to the group (Jacoboni, 2009).

Bonding with others is a basic human need and learning happens in an open environment where students feel trust, connection, care, and respect (Goleman, 2018). In order for learning to be effective, it must be connected to emotional, social, and moral background (Yang & Damasio, 2007). Learning isn't just a cognitive process, it is also grounded in emotions (Gabriel & Griffiths, 2002; Yang & Damasio, 2007). When designing a learning environment, educators should consider the fact that cognitive skills taught in schools are anchored in emotional functions (Yang & Damasio, 2007) and that the brain is focused on the social world, but classrooms aren't (Lieberman, 2013). Bronfenbrenner's microsystem is the first layer of a child's development, a space where transformational teachers interact and guide, in order to be effective and to promote growth (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). This ecological approach proves that emotional safety, trust, and respect are aspects of a supportive microsystem that fosters learning, where teachers design molar activities that offer meaning and goal to learning (Capurso, 2015).

Empathy is an important dimension of EI, because once teachers understand its biology, they can improve group performance (Goleman & Boyatzis, 2008). Transformational leaders rely on empathy to understand students' thoughts, feelings, and points of view (Barbuto & Burbach, 2006). Social interaction is beneficial for learning, and emotions add value to our interactions (Amaral & Guerra, 2022), and norms and values of the group should be grounded in emotions that sustain them (George, 2000). Without emotion, learning and recall would lack meaning and motivation, so teachers must understand the relationship between emotion and cognition when they create a learning environment (Yang & Damasio, 2007). The perspectives of Vygotsky, Bandura and Bronfenbrenner highlight that learning cannot occur without EI, since it is not just an individual ability, but a social process. For transformational teachers, EI serves as an educational tool through which they build trust, meet students' needs (Khoudri, 2024), and impact self-regulation (Goleman, 2016). Learning is emotionally mediated, it happens through observation and imitation, under the guidance of a role model (Bandura, 1977), in a safe microsystem. Transformational teachers' role is to nurture this emotional interaction, helping students to take control of their own learning.

Social intelligence (SI) was first mentioned in 1920 by Edward L. Thorndike, expressing the ability to interact with others (Thorndike, 1920; Goleman & Boyatzis, 2008; Boyatzis et al., 2020). Since then, it has evolved including a broader range of abilities, such as understanding social cues, managing interpersonal relationships or adapting to various social contexts. According to Boyatzis et al. (2020), "Social intelligence is the ability to live, love and work with others." (p.1). Vygotsky's ZPD aligns with this view, as it places social interaction at the foundation of every cognitive growth. It is by guided participation, collaboration, and challenge that learners internalize skills of thinking and communication (Vygotsky, 1998).

Socially intelligent leaders are defined by empathy, attunement, organizational awareness, inspiration and influence. They help others develop and they create a feeling of relatedness (Goleman & Boyatzis, 2008). Connection is the main trait of our social brains, being expressed through the mirror neuron system (Amaral & Guerra, 2022). Every interaction with others has an effect on the individual, and everybody becomes part of the community. This is the purpose of intelligence, as Dewey understood it, since the individual and the social are intertwined (Kauppi et al., 2020). Successful leadership means harmonizing people, so as to create identification, and attachment to the group (Lieberman, 2013). When people feel better, they do better (Goleman &

Boyatzis, 2008; Lieberman, 2013; Goleman, 2018). Bandura’s social learning theory also supports this learning mechanism, showing that we learn by observing others and imitating behaviors of those who belong to our social group, as learning is an individual endeavor influenced by the social environment (Tomasello et al., 1993).

In the classroom, transformational teachers intentionally create collaborative environments, where students interact, share, and learn. Students learn best when they work together, as they internalize new concepts and abilities (Shabani et al., 2010). TL creates a culture of growth (Bass & Avolio, 1993), and it aligns with the needs of schools to build supportive learning environments (Khoudri, 2024; Kilag et al., 2024). A transformational teacher has the traits that develop cooperation and collaboration within the classroom, and SI is the condition to read group dynamics and to guide students’ interactions. When infused in the educational practices, SI becomes a key skill of transformational teachers, helping them to connect, to influence, and to inspire. The essence of a group is connection, and this path can be achieved through communication, inspiration, and motivation (Godin, 2015). Bronfenbrenner’s ecological model highlights that in order to be effective these social interactions, called proximal processes, must happen in a face-to-face environment (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). The microsystem is socially mediated by the transformational teacher, who shapes this setting in ways that impact student growth, as the learning brain changes when it interacts with the environment (Amaral & Guerra, 2022).

Individual minds merge into a single system and efficient leaders know how to activate the brain’s networks to support change and learning (Goleman & Boyatzis, 2008). We are wired for connection (Lieberman, 2013). Our mirror neurons activate during social interaction (Lieberman, 2013; Goleman, 2018; Amaral & Guerra, 2022), allowing us to observe and imitate, so that we can improve learning and acquire new skills (Magister, 2024). Leaders create resonance within the group, and when there is physical attunement, the social neurons fire up, creating connections (Goleman & Boyatzis, 2008).

Although not yet formally established as a distinct construct, metaphorical intelligence (MI) can be understood as a set of cognitive abilities that function as a form of symbolic knowledge, emerging through interaction with both the environment and other people (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). It is a tool of cultural organization, modelling our way of thinking and acting (Morgan, 2006). Our brains crave *why* stories (Lieberman, 2013), so using MI in teaching can enhance not only communicative competence, but also the learner’s ability to transfer knowledge across contexts (Littlemore, 2001). In the classroom, MI serves as a bridge between the familiar and the unknown, enabling students to internalize learning. Metaphors foster deeper understanding, as they add new meaning to what we already know (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980), they encourage critical thinking, and they stimulate imagination, three core aspects for transformational leadership.

Metaphors can be found everywhere, not only in language, but also in thoughts and actions. Understanding them emerges from interacting with those around us or within an environment, thus adding new meanings to our reality, to such a degree that “the way we think, what we experience, and what we do every day is very much a matter of metaphor.” (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 3). In educational settings, teachers who use metaphors not only stimulate imagination, but also create symbolic frameworks that support identity, belonging and meaning-making. Effective managers and leaders should become skilled in reading the contexts and situations they operate and organize (Morgan, 2006). In the same way, transformational teachers know how to read the classroom, in the interactions with students (Lee & Yazdanifard, 2013). This ability helps them create stronger connections and respond to students’ needs (Yang & Damasio, 2007).

Reading minds could be one of the greatest metaphors of human experience, and it became possible once mirror neurons were discovered. The mirror neuron system activates when we observe and imitate others in order to learn and to transfer knowledge and skills (Magister, 2024). These “neurons that read minds” (Blakeslee, 2006, p. 2) allow us to understand intentions, to sense the feelings behind an action (Rizzolatti and Craighero, 2006; Jeon and Lee, 2018), so we could

become emotionally, socially, and metaphorically connected to others. And the more we imitate, the more connected we become (Iacoboni, 2009).

Metaphors are preserved in rituals, because they give structure and significance to our activities, reducing chaos and imbalance (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980), so learning could become metaphorically embedded in any human activity. A ritual is a metaphor that shapes the way we see, think and act in various contexts (Morgan, 2006), which is the purpose of learning, to induce change, to promote growth. This approach resonates with Vygotsky's theory, that learning is mediated through cultural tools, including language and symbols, and teachers, as the more knowledgeable ones, should maintain this interaction (Vasileva & Balyasnikova, 2019). Metaphors are symbolic tools and they assist students to construct meaning within their ZPD, a space that metaphorically expresses "an ever-changing distance between being and becoming." (Ness, 2022, p.2). When transformational teachers use metaphors on purpose, they foster students' thinking on a profound and creative way. Just as Morgan argued that our metaphors shape our organizational realities (2006), transformational teachers shape learning by choosing metaphors that expand students' imagination, emotions, and capacity for critical reflection. Teachers protect school's culture and preserve its memory (Danielson, 2007), and they do it also by using images, metaphors and stories that create a symbolic culture of the organization (Morgan, 2006). Transformational teachers influence students through emotional knowledge and foster their learning by using both rational and spiritual knowledge. In this educational space, all dimensions of learning are covered. Understanding emotions, building meaningful relationships, and using metaphors can become educational strategies that offer a foundation for growth.

The MI of the microsystem is connected to deeper cognitive and imaginative engagement. Teachers and students actively change the classroom context where they learn (Capurso, 2015). Teacher's scaffolding and peer interaction depend on the quality of social bonds, woven by the teacher's social intelligence (Vasileva & Balyasnikova, 2019). Since the microsystem is the first and most direct environment where students develop, transformational teachers should shape it intentionally, aligning emotional, social, and metaphorical structures with the sole purpose of fostering growth and learning. There are three core elements that defined the dynamic space where learning occurs, namely roles, relationships, and molar activities, whose role is to add meaning to every learning experience (Capurso, 2015).

Transformational teachers have emotional skills that help them to inspire, to motivate, and to encourage their students, helping them to monitor emotions, to cope with problems, and to interact (Lee & Yazdanifard, 2013). The ideal zone of optimal performance, where positive emotions are working together in a state of flow is also a state of maximum cognitive efficiency, when different regions in the brain synchronize (Goleman, 2018). In the classroom, defined as an educational form of organization, energy isn't used equally, but efficiently, allowing the teacher to regulate the knowledge fields (Brătianu and Bejinaru, 2019). Bronfenbrenner's ecological perspective offers a clear understanding of how metaphorical learning is shaped by the environment in which it takes place. The classroom, as a microsystem, becomes a symbolic space where students engage emotionally, socially, and cognitively through roles, relationships, and molar activities (Capurso, 2015). From this perspective, learning is not just acquiring information, it becomes transformation, driven by emotion, connection, and imagination. A transformational teacher organizes learning by distributing energy efficiently in the classroom, in order to promote growth, admitting that knowledge isn't equally found within the group. As conductors of knowledge fields, transformational teachers create intentional learning environments converting emotional and rational knowledge into relevant experience (Brătianu and Bejinaru, 2019).

3. METHODOLOGY

This study employed a quantitative, correlational research design to investigate the relationship between TL and the triad of Intelligences (EI, SI, and MI) in primary education. The aim was to explore how these aspects interact in real classroom settings and how they contribute to students' learning, by nurturing their emotional engagement, social interaction, and symbolic understanding. 77 primary school students, aged 9 to 11, and their 5 primary teachers answered the questionnaires. All the participants were selected from five different classes within the same educational institution, noted as following: S01-S13 for T01, S14-S26 for T02, S27-S44 for T03, S45-S60 for T04, and S61-S77 for T05. Each questionnaire consisted of 16 questions, distributed in four sections, according to the aspects being investigated: EI, SI, MI, and TL. The students' questionnaire was adapted to their cognitive level, and each item was rated on a four-point Likert scale: always, sometimes, rarely, never. The teachers' questionnaire evaluated their own leadership style, from a transformational perspective, and the use of the three intelligences in teaching and classroom management. A five-point Likert scale was used: 1 – not at all true, 2 – a little true, 3 – partially true, 4 – almost true, 5 – completely true. The questionnaires were distributed to students and teachers in physical format, without being influenced in any way when selecting the options. The data obtained were analyzed using Excel.

The research proposed 4 hypotheses: H1- Teachers' EI contributes to improved student learning. H2- Teachers' SI influences student collaboration and interaction. H3- Teachers' MI promotes student creativity and critical thinking. H4- TL increases student motivation and academic performance. The collected data provided valuable insights into EI, SI, and MI as perceived and manifested in the classroom, from a transformational perspective, both from students' and teachers' points of view. The following sections present the main results and their interpretation in relation to the research hypotheses.

Table 1. General means by dimensions (students) (class T01)

Dimension	Class Average	Estimate Level
EI	3.00	Medium
SI	3.06	Medium
MI	2.90	Medium
TL	3.35	Medium to High

Source: authors' research

Table 2. Teacher-Student Comparison by item (Class T01)

Item	Students' Average	Teacher's Self-Score	Difference
EI_1	3.15	5	+1.85
EI_2	2.54	5	+2.46
EI_3	3.54	2	-1.54
EI_4	2.77	5	+2.23
SI_1	3.08	5	+1.92
SI_2	3.31	5	+1.69
SI_3	3.69	5	+1.31
SI_4	2.92	5	+2.08
MI_1	2.46	4	+1.54
MI_2	2.69	4	+1.31
MI_3	3.23	5	+1.77
MI_4	2.23	4	+1.77
TL_1	3.62	5	+1.38

Item	Students' Average	Teacher's Self-Score	Difference
TL_2	3.00	5	+2.00
TL_3	3.15	5	+1.85
TL_4	3.62	4	+0.38

Source: authors' research

As it can be seen in Table 2, class T01 sees the teacher as moderately engaged on both emotional and social levels, though the teacher's own perception is definitely higher than the students. The only item having a negative difference is EI_3, where students rated the teacher significantly higher than his own self-assessment. (The teacher's question was „I intentionally create a safe emotional environment in the classroom.") This suggests that the teacher may underestimate their own emotional impact, while students are fully aware of it. The biggest difference appears when it comes to understanding others' emotions and expressing an inspirational vision, which means that the teacher's intentions don't have the impact expected. Regarding MI, the difference 1.5 – 1.8 suggests that students don't always perceive the use of metaphors or symbolic language, even though the teacher considers them an active part of the teaching style. TL is perceived moderately high by the students, although the teacher didn't rate it so.

Table 3. General means by dimensions (students) (Class T02)

Dimension	Class Average	Estimate Level
EI	3.50	Medium to High
SI	3.79	High
MI	3.00	Medium
TL	3.71	Medium to High

Source: authors' research

Table 4. Teacher-Student Comparison by item (Class T02)

Item	Students' Average	Teacher's Self-Score	Difference
EI_1	3.58	5	+1.42
EI_2	3.08	5	+1.92
EI_3	4.00	5	+1.00
EI_4	3.33	5	+1.67
SI_1	3.75	5	+1.25
SI_2	3.83	5	+1.17
SI_3	3.92	5	+1.08
SI_4	3.67	5	+1.33
MI_1	2.92	4	+1.08
MI_2	3.17	4	+0.83
MI_3	3.00	5	+2.00
MI_4	2.92	5	+2.08
TL_1	3.83	5	+1.17
TL_2	3.67	5	+1.33
TL_3	3.58	5	+1.42
TL_4	3.75	5	+1.25

Source: authors' research

As it can be seen in Table 4, students in Class T02 consider their teacher to be emotionally and socially involved, but not at the same level that the teacher indicated. Although there are no notable differences, they do appear at all dimensions. EI_2 has the lowest score, and the students' question

was „I feel safe when I speak about how I feel.” MI has one again the biggest differences, especially when it comes to using metaphors and stimulating imagination. This aspect supports the idea that symbolic elements are less visible in practice, even if the teachers scored them in theory. TL is positively perceived by the students, which validates the hypothesis that the teacher positively influences the classroom climate. The results also show that there could be a problem of communicating the pedagogical strategy, which should be put into practice more accessibly towards the students.

Table 5. General means by dimensions (students) (Class T03)

Dimension	Class Average	Estimate Level
EI	3.57	Medium to High
SI	3.72	Medium to High
MI	3.18	Medium
TL	3.67	Medium to High

Source: authors' research

Table 6. Teacher-Student Comparison by item (Class T03)

Item	Students' Average	Teacher's Self-Score	Difference
EI_1	3.76	3	-0.76
EI_2	3.37	5	+1.63
EI_3	3.78	5	+1.22
EI_4	3.37	5	+1.63
SI_1	3.78	5	+1.22
SI_2	3.81	4	+0.19
SI_3	3.69	4	+0.31
SI_4	3.61	5	+1.39
MI_1	3.22	5	+1.78
MI_2	3.02	5	+1.98
MI_3	3.30	5	+1.70
MI_4	3.17	5	+1.83
TL_1	3.57	5	+1.43
TL_2	3.55	5	+1.45
TL_3	3.62	5	+1.38
TL_4	3.94	5	+1.06

Source: authors' research

As it can be seen in Table 6, class T03 confirms the previous patterns, students positively see teacher's leadership and the use of intelligences, but at a lower level than the teacher. For EI, there are some moderate differences, which means that the teacher has a high emotional ideal, but it is not equally transmitted to the students. The only negative difference is at EI_1, when the teacher may underestimate their emotional engagement or maybe students perceive more support than it is consciously give. The teacher's question is "I can easily see my students' emotional states during class." For MI, the differences are the most significant, and the students' scores are over 1.7 points lower than the teacher's self-evaluation. The results indicate that this is an area where the teacher should try to strengthen the active and constant use of metaphors. Students positively perceive TL, although their scores differ from the teacher's self-evaluation. Vision, inspiration, and support are present, but maybe not in a constant or clearly perceived way by all the students.

Table 7. General means by dimensions (students) (Class T04)

Dimension	Class Average	Estimate Level
EI	3.55	Medium to High
SI	3.77	High
MI	3.25	Medium
TL	3.89	High

Source: authors' research

Table 8. Teacher-Student Comparison by item (Class T04)

Item	Students' Average	Teacher's Self-Score	Difference
EI_1	3.62	5	+1.38
EI_2	3.31	5	+1.69
EI_3	4.00	5	+1.00
EI_4	3.25	5	+1.75
SI_1	3.94	5	+1.06
SI_2	3.94	5	+1.06
SI_3	4.00	5	+1.00
SI_4	3.19	5	+1.81
MI_1	2.88	5	+2.12
MI_2	3.19	5	+1.81
MI_3	3.44	5	+1.56
MI_4	3.50	5	+1.50
TL_1	4.00	5	+1.00
TL_2	3.88	5	+1.12
TL_3	3.75	5	+1.25
TL_4	3.94	5	+1.06

Source: authors' research

As it can be seen in Table 8, class T04 reinforces the pattern found in previous classes, students consider the teacher to be involved, and emotionally present, but there are constant differences between their scores and the ones of the teacher. EI is rated at a lower score than the teacher's self-evaluation, suggesting that the emotional efforts may not be uniformly understood by the students. SI receives high scores, especially in interpersonal interactions, yet the largest gap appears in the ability to adapt to diverse social contexts (SI_4 „I create learning situations where students develop communication and collaboration skills.”) The most substantial differences are found in MI, where students have moderate scores, although the teacher's scores are at the highest level. TL is perceived positively, (especially TL_1 „My teacher makes me think that I can succeed.”) Overall, the results support the research hypotheses, but highlight a need for better alignment between teacher intentions and student perceptions.

Table 9. General means by dimensions (students) (Class T05)

Dimension	Class Average	Estimate Level
EI	3.27	Medium
SI	3.62	Medium to High
MI	3.10	Medium
TL	3.75	High

Source: authors' research

Table 10. Teacher-Student Comparison by item (Class T05)

Item	Students' Average	Teacher's Self-Score	Difference
EI_1	3.20	5	+1.80
EI_2	2.93	5	+2.07
EI_3	3.80	5	+1.20
EI_4	3.13	5	+1.87
SI_1	3.87	5	+1.13
SI_2	3.67	5	+1.33
SI_3	3.93	5	+1.07
SI_4	3.13	5	+1.87
MI_1	2.87	5	+2.13
MI_2	3.00	5	+2.00
MI_3	3.33	5	+1.67
MI_4	3.20	5	+1.80
TL_1	3.73	5	+1.27
TL_2	3.67	5	+1.33
TL_3	3.73	5	+1.27
TL_4	3.87	5	+1.13

Source: authors' research

As it can be seen in Table 10, class T05 confirms the general pattern, the teacher self-evaluates at the highest levels, while students perceive the teacher's emotional, social, and symbolical in a moderate, still positive way. EI has the biggest differences, especially in the area of understanding and managing emotions (EI_2 questions the teacher's empathy in relation to the students). Also, MI indicates a consistent discrepancy, being perceived by the students at a lower level than the teacher, and it should be more integrated through activities. TL is positively manifested in the classroom, which indicates that students are influenced by the teacher's vision, and motivation.

All together, the four hypotheses are partially or totally confirmed. H1 is partially confirmed. Students perceive their teachers as warm and attentive, but there are some differences between the teachers' self-evaluations and the students' perceptions. This suggests that there is room for improvement in how empathy and emotional regulation are visibly expressed in the classroom. H2 is confirmed. SI is constantly rated well by the students, with averages between 3.62 and 3.79, indicating that teachers create learning environments that support collaboration and connection. H3 is partially confirmed. Although teachers rate themselves very high in MI, students perceive this dimension significantly lower, with gaps reaching up to +2.13 points. It is definitely an area for improvement, as the symbolic message seems insufficiently internalized by students. H4 is confirmed. TL is the most positively perceived dimension, with student averages between 3.67 and 3.89, showing that students feel inspired and guided by their teachers. The overall conclusion is that the data obtained clearly support the main hypothesis that TL based on the Triad of Intelligences can enhance emotional, relational, and symbolic dimensions of learning in primary education.

4. CONCLUSIONS

This study explored the impact of TL and the Triad of Intelligences (EI, SI and MI) on primary education for students aged 9 to 11. While existing literature emphasizes the importance of emotional and social aspects in education, few studies examine their combined role with MI and their collective alignment with TL, in order to create a holistic approach to learning. This research contributes to bridging the gap by proposing a different perspective, anchored in three domains: to care (EI), to connect (SI), and to inspire (MI). This research suggests that integrating the Triad of

Intelligences into transformational teaching strategies may build a culture of connection, emotional safety, and symbolic meaning. As the findings indicate, such integration leads to stronger motivation, better collaboration, and enhanced creativity among students. The novelty of this study is the empirical confirmation that the emotional, social, and metaphorical domains are not isolated. They operate in synergy and are embedded in transformational leadership. What remains challenging is convincing educators that these dimensions should be implemented into the classroom. Further research is needed to refine tools for measuring their impact on learning and expanding the model to secondary education. Also, future studies could investigate how EI, SI, and MI can be used in concrete classroom practices and assessment tools, and how their interplay shapes students' academic performance. Comparative research across educational contexts could provide a deeper understanding of how TL interacts with the Triad of Intelligences to create a motivational environment.

Learning is not just about acquiring information, it is about transformation, driven by emotion, connection, and imagination. Besides the logical reasoning, learning, as a form of knowledge, also needs a combination of affective climate, social interaction, and symbolic dimension (Brătianu and Bejinaru, 2019). EI, SI and MI form the affective, behavioral, and cognitive pillars of a leadership style that cultivates "the wholeness of being" (Covey, 2007, p.10). Understanding emotions, building meaningful relationships, and creating metaphors could be educational strategies that offer a foundation for growth, supporting human cognition and development in the classroom, so that learning could become the most compelling *why* story our social brains crave to discover.

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