THE ROLE OF PERSONALITY IN K-12 EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT
Personality, in an educational setting, can directly affect the attitudes, perspectives and behaviors of both educators and students, in terms of success and effectiveness, in the classroom. As a construct sometimes difficult to describe, understanding the role of personality in educational settings is invaluable to academicians, clinicians, parents and administrators. Towards that end, it is palpable to posit that educators have different personalities and that these differences are based on numerous variables, including the effects of the instruments used to measure personality. In this paper, the authors discuss the relevance of both the Kiersey Temperament Sorter II and the Big Five Personality Test as effective and accurate predictors of personality and effectiveness for pre-service educators in a K-12 educational setting. The authors also discuss the importance of the use of personality tests in the selection process for admittance into a teacher preparatory program. In addition, job satisfaction has a direct correlation to personality that may be determined through the use of personality tests. A thorough measurement and understanding of both student and educator personalities are imperative for successful classroom planning and management.

INTRODUCTION
Human fascination with the concept of personality reached its peak in the 21st century. Employers are using personality tests and suggestive interview questionnaires more often now than ever before in an effort to hire employees that are capable, qualified, and emotionally suited for work environment cohesion and profitability. No field or discipline is more intent on the study of personality than the field of education. Education’s interest in educator personality is essential to ensuring effective teacher practices and environments that are conducive to effective learning. In addition, the importance of student personality is thought to enrich teaching methods used by the educator. Teacher personality is important to the framework and effectiveness of classes and the cohesion of students’ personalities. Towards that end, when we study the role of personality in education, one must look at both individual attributes, as well as the instruments used to measure and determine personality in individuals.

WHAT IS PERSONALITY?
In an article written by Hadas (2011), Ortega (2009) describes personality as “‘stable traits or qualities in a person, as more dynamic moods that are related to the cognitive processing of emotions, or even as predispositions that have been learned through social experience’ (p. 193).” This description of personality explains the correlation between personality and cognition, as well as perception. According
to Hadas (et. al), “personality influences one’s perception of the world around them and how they interact within that world” (p. 3). In conjunction with this description of personality, Ayan and Kocacik (2010) explain how personality is developed as “under the influence of the inherited characteristics of the individual and the environment, in which s/he takes place in.” One indicator of personality is temperament. More specifically, an indicator measured by a popular instrument, the Kiersey Temperament Sorter II, can effectively assist employers and admissions representatives in the selection process for service and pre-service teachers. Service teachers include those who have completed a baccalaureate teacher certification program and are currently teaching, whereas a pre-service teacher is a college student who is studying to obtain a baccalaureate degree in teaching.

**KIERSEY TEMPERAMENT SORTER II**
The Kiersey Temperament Sorter II, also known as the KTS II, has been used for many years to describe personality and sort personality types into four generic groups, including: guardian, artisan, rationalist, and idealist. Guardians “speak mostly of their duties and responsibilities, of what they can keep an eye on and take good care of, and they're careful to obey the laws, follow the rules, and respect the rights of others” (www.kiersey.com, n. d., para. 11). It is widely accepted that teachers are typically guardians because “teachers tend to be those individuals that are practical and conscientious, or innovative and comfortable with value/emotion-laden judgments” (Decker & Rimm-Kaufman, 2008). Artisans relate mostly and speak of things that they see directly in front of them without an abstract influence. Rationalists enjoy new problems and puzzles. These puzzles intrigue them to learn more and to solve issues even if they are beyond their control. Finally, idealists look towards the future and talk of what they would like to happen and to experience. These four temperaments were created by a compilation of the five main personality traits: openness, conscientiousness, extroversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism. These five traits are the focal variables measured in the Big Five Personality Test, also used for measuring and determining personality.

**THE BIG FIVE PERSONALITY TEST**
Related to the field of education, the Big Five Personality Test describes the following five main personality traits: openness, conscientiousness, extroversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism, in an effort to accurately calculate the level of an individual’s job satisfaction. According to Ayan and Kocacik’s (2010) article *The Relation Between the Level of Job Satisfaction and Types of Personality in High School Teachers*, personality incorporates a special relationship between an individual’s scores and their temperament. Also, if a person scores high in all five areas of the Big Five Personality Test, their temperament is that of a Guardian. This is typically the personality and temperament of pre-service teachers. A pre-service teacher is usually a student in college who is studying to be a teacher and has been accepted into a School/Department of Education at an accredited college/university.

**PRE-SERVICE ACCEPTANCE**
Over the past three decades, there has been a rush of legislation and mandates to ensure that teachers are “highly-qualified.” One of the mandates includes a requirement that teachers be certified and licensed in the state(s) in which they teach. To organize these efforts and to ensure that this mandate is met, colleges and universities created Schools/Departments of Education. In these Schools/Departments of Education, the colleges created a system of requirements and prerequisites that students must meet before acceptance. Typically, the requirements for acceptance include a GPA of between 2.75 and 3.0 on a 4.0
scale, completion of education prerequisites, an application, an essay, a criminal background check, and a declaration of a “teachable major and minor.” A teachable major and minor is a major and minor that the college is accredited to offer as a teacher certifiable degree for either elementary education (Kindergarten to 5th Grade), or secondary education (6th to 12th grade). In recent years, it has become apparent, however, that these standards need to be stricter in order ensure, or to at least increase the possibility, that pre-service teachers and licensed teachers will be satisfied with their job and will therefore be successful. “Teacher personality profiles have been linked to many characteristics associated with effective schools: classroom management style; types of learning environments and patterns of teacher interactions; student achievement; and teacher attrition” (Hall, Peltier & Thornton, 2005). This article suggests that acceptance standards for pre-service teachers should include personality tests to ensure that the individual will be an effective, as well as highly-qualified, teacher.

TEACHER PERSONALITY
In order to effectively evaluate pre-service teachers, colleges and universities must evaluate personality. “It is critically important to understanding what they already believe and what personal attributes (e.g. personality) they have that may relate to their beliefs and learning” (Decker & Rimm-Kaufman, 2008). According to Decker and Rimm-Kaufman (2008), the importance of personality transcends traditional beliefs in education in order to accommodate for comprehension of rules and regulations, flexibility, and conscientiousness. The results of Decker and Rimm-Kaufman’s research show that “pre-service teachers scored higher on all five factors [of personality] compared to the normed sample” (2008, p. 50). The data indicates that pre-service teachers are more self-conscious and inferior then those in the control group. This same group also saw themselves as warmer and more adventure-driven, as well as more open to new ideas. They also scored high in the areas of agreeableness and conscientiousness. The personalities of pre-service teachers show that they are more conscious of their own feelings and abilities as well as open to new techniques and situations. On the contrary, service teachers show a noticeable personality change in a classroom setting depending on the personality of the students in the classroom (personal communication, June 30, 2011).

ETHICAL STANDARDS FOR EDUCATORS
The Michigan Department of Education’s *Michigan Professional Educator’s Code of Ethics* (2003) states, “[p]rofessional educators respect the inherent dignity and worth of each individual” (para. 3). By taking this into consideration, the multitude of different personalities inside of an educational setting, as well as the different cultures, an educator fulfills the Michigan Department of Education’s ethical standard of Mutual Respect. *The Michigan Professional Educator’s Code of Ethics* also explains that educators should promote the diversity of their classroom and adjust teaching practices to reflect this diversity to ensure the support of individual strengths (para. 5). Both mutual respect and the importance of diversity are also outlined as ethical mandates for educators in The Robert B. Miller College’s *Elizabeth H. Binda School of Education*’s conceptual framework and learning outcomes. In addition to having knowledge of the pre-service educator’s teachable content area and teaching methods, students in the *Binda School of Education* must also prove compassion for teaching, students, diversity and the needs of all students in the classroom. This incorporates understanding the basic foundations of educational psychology and student personalities for the purpose of creating a more unified and diverse educational setting. The *Binda School of Education*’s learning outcomes also incorporate providing opportunities for all stakeholders in a student’s education. This learning outcome outlines the importance for educators to
understand and appreciate reliable resources around a school system and the school’s respective community, including fellow educators, students, administrators, families, volunteers and community members. Providing these opportunities is a way for educators to better understand the collective personality of the community in which they teach, as well as the different types of resources available to them.

PRE-SERVICE VERSUS SERVICE
One explanation for the difference in personality between service and pre-service teachers is that pre-service teachers appear to be more anxious, nervous, and self-conscious in the competitive environment of teacher education. “Pre-service teachers educating themselves in such competitive settings may be more likely to experience feelings of stress and inferiority while competing with so many other high performing individuals” (Decker & Rimm-Kaufman, 2008). With the current job market status in the United States, pre-service teachers are discovering the real and disappointing prospect of being highly qualified with no employment opportunities. This prospect is causing pre-service teachers to do anything possible to create an advantage over their competition. Towards that end, the effectiveness of the teacher’s management techniques coincides with the personalities of the students to demonstrate the effectiveness and success of the teacher.

STUDENT PERSONALITIES
Unlike the data that shows all teachers and pre-service teachers have similar personalities, the personalities of students are as varied and diverse as are students themselves. In order to incorporate the personalities of the students into the lectures and lessons, it is important to provide lenience in the lessons, syllabi and assignments in order to provide an equal learning environment for all students involved. According to Hadas (2011), “It may be a challenge for the instructor to alter his teaching style, however by modifying the tasks and assignments and providing detailed lesson plans, it is hoped that the learners will have enough variance…to accommodate most of their… learning preferences” (p.4). In summary, by incorporating the different personalities of the students into the course, the teacher will be able to effectively teach the students and, in return, the students will be able to effectively learn the content material.

CONCLUSION
Cohesion of teacher and student personalities is important for the effectiveness and cohesion of both parties. The personality of a teacher is important when incorporating effective teaching practices with enriching learning environments. Education is one of the most looked-upon career fields which encompasses personality. Employers use personality to evaluate the potential effectiveness, work-ethic, and overall probability of a good person-job fit. Therefore, it must be of vital importance for colleges/universities to incorporate personality tests into their acceptance requirements for any School/Department of Education. This requirement will ensure that a pre-service teacher has the correct mind-frame and personality to be able to cope with the high stress environment of the classroom.
REFERENCES


