

## A CONTINGENCY-BASED PERSONALITY MODEL OF TEACHER PLACEMENT FOR INTERNATIONAL SINGAPOREAN PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN THAILAND

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**Abstract:** Effective teacher placement is one of the most difficult problems facing educational administrators today. The data shows that 25% of teachers are leaving the job within their first year of service and 50% within their first 5 years of service. Much of this teacher attrition is believed to be attributed to poor hiring and placement practices. With modern research highlighting the importance of teachers' personalities and dispositions to both their effectiveness and longevity, it is clear that new teacher placement models will be in demand.

The objectives of this research are as follows:

1. To investigate if there is a relationship between teacher personality and the academic success of their students
2. To compare these potential relationships across four core subject areas and grade levels 1-6.
3. To propose an effective contingency-based personality model of teacher placement for use in international Singaporean primary schools in Thailand.

**Keywords:** Contingency-based Personality Model, Effective Teacher Placement

### Background and Problem Statement

There is little doubt that teachers fill one of the most vital roles in society...to ensure that humanity is prepared to deal with the rigors and challenges of the future. Due to the enormity of this responsibility, teaching can be a remarkably stressful and taxing occupation. This is why the teaching profession has a far greater attrition rate than any job in the private sector (Thornton, 2005). In fact, 25% of teachers leave the job after their first year of service, and 50% leave the job within their first five years of service (Thornton, 2005). This is in great contrast to private sector professions, which have attrition rates of approximately 6% per year (Thornton, 2005). Habberman (2004) believes that half of all teacher attrition, within the first five years of service, can be attributed solely to poor hiring and placement practices. With this in mind, it is no wonder that many principals consider teacher placement to be the number one factor of school and student success (Kersten, 2008).

In schools today, principals are under a great deal of pressure from school boards, parents, local governments, national standards, and global benchmarks (Kersten, 2008). The success of principals and administrators is forever linked with student achievement. School administrators who are unable to facilitate gains in student achievement could be quickly out of a job. Let us take for example a piece of educational reform out of the United States. In 2001, the United States instituted the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act. The NCLB mandates that schools and school districts not only increase student achievement, but also raise the quality of teachers in these schools. This initiative is backed by research that teacher quality is the single most important factor to student achievement (OECD, 2005). The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), which does educational research in more than 30 countries, has several telling statistics in this area. In their 2005 statistical compilation, OECD found that a quality teacher could improve student percentile rankings by 4% per year, narrow the achievement gap between students of low-income and high-income families, and explain the difference of up to 23% in the variation of student test scores. This data makes it clear that finding, developing, and placing quality teachers is essential to the success of education programs. This demands that educational administrators begin developing new tools and strategies to place quality teachers in situations where they will find the greatest success.

### Quality Teachers

The question is what exactly makes a quality teacher? Is it merely things such as degrees, accomplishments, and course knowledge? Alternatively, are their qualitative things, such as personality and disposition, that factor into the mosaic that is the effective teacher? All too often teachers are concerned with credentials, achievement, and high stakes testing. It is so easy to be wrapped up in such things that we neglect and sometimes even forget the personal side of teaching. We forget that our students are human beings and that social interaction, in and outside of the classroom, are a large part of our jobs as teachers. It is our duty and moral imperative as educators to get back in touch with the interpersonal side of our duties. Several contemporary studies point strongly in the direction that a teacher's personality is a large component of their effectiveness. The first study that I would like to mention is a fifteen-year longitudinal and qualitative study completed by Walker in 2008. Over a fifteen-year period, Walker studied more than one thousand

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students from the United States, Canada, Bermuda, and the Caribbean. He asked students what teachers had the most significant impact on their lives. What he consistently found was that students mentioned personal traits and characteristics of teachers over academic qualifications (Walker, 2008). He was even able to pinpoint the 12 most prominent characteristics that made up an effective teacher in the eyes of students (Walker, 2008). This study clearly shows that personal characteristics of teachers are extremely important to students. Therefore, logic follows that qualitative things about teachers, such as characteristics, disposition, and personality, are all components that make up an effective teacher. In the eyes of students, it not so much what the teacher is, but rather who they are that counts.

The second study that I would like to discuss is one that was completed by Magno in 2007. Magno studied the link between teacher personality and efficacy to their effectiveness and success. Magno found that above all a teacher's personality was the strongest correlate to a teacher's success in the classroom (Magno, 2007). In fact, he found teaching efficacy, effective teaching, and teaching performance to all flow downward from personality characteristics (Magno, 2007). In other words, personality characteristics are the starting point for all forms of effective teaching (Magno, 2007). This study highlights just how powerful a teacher's personality is, not only to student's perceptions, but also to effective teaching. My research will complement the Magno study by pinpointing specific personality types of effective teachers. This will give the educational community more clarity into exactly how teacher personality relates to a student's success in the classroom.

The final study I would like to mention was conducted by Singh in 2007. In her research, Singh found that a teacher's disposition affects student learning, student motivation, and student development (Singh, 2007). Singh also found that the National Council for Accreditation of Teachers (NCATE) and the Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC), now require that all the teacher preparatory programs in the United States assess their teacher candidates disposition (Singh, 2007). This study shows that not only are the personal characteristics of a teacher important in all aspects of a students development, but the new modern trend could be that countries will require teachers to be assessed based on things such as disposition or personality. This is precisely what my study will help to accomplish. By furthering the link between teacher personality and student success, the educational community will realize the growing importance of learning to quantify the personal characteristics of

teachers. With this new knowledge of assessment, administrators will be better suited to staff their schools with the best possible candidates for the jobs, and the overall quality of education would be given the chance to improve.

### **Research Objectives**

1. To investigate if there is a relationship between a teacher's personality and the academic success of their students

2. To compare these potential relationships across four core subject areas and grade levels 1-6.

3. To propose an effective contingency-based personality model of teacher placement for use in international Singaporean primary schools in Thailand

### **Scope of the Study**

This study will be conducted using a full sample of all the International Singaporean Primary Schools in Thailand. Full data sets will be collected from all teachers and students in grades 1-6. Subject areas in consideration for this study will be core subjects only: English, Chinese, math, and science.

The reason for the selection of this sample is the researcher's previous work and knowledge of International Singaporean Primary Schools in Thailand. All of these schools in Thailand are following assessment standards handed down from the Singaporean Ministry of Education. This should lead to accurate and uniform results across all the schools, which will allow the research to develop a model with a high level of validity and generalizability for this set of schools.

(See conceptual framework in last page)

### **Methodology**

This study is classified as descriptive research, which will lead to the creation of a contingency-based personality model of teacher placement for use in international Singaporean primary schools in Thailand. The overall objective of this study is to create a model that will assist administrators in placing teachers in positions where both the teachers and students will find a high level of success. This will be achieved by investigating if there is any relationship between teacher personality and the academic success of their students. In addition, this data will be compared by grade level, subject area, and gender. This will be done to determine potential statistically significant differences, so that in turn they can be applied to the creation of the model.

### **Population and Sample**

The population within the scope of this study is international Singaporean primary schools in Thailand. There are a total of two schools that fit these criteria,

so the total population of these two schools will be considered for this study. However, only mainstream teachers and students will be considered. Remedial students and teachers will not be considered, whereas the fluctuation in ability levels would be too high to obtain accurate data. The total population used is presented in the following tables:

**Table 1: The Total Population**

School	Male Students	Female Students
S1	175	125
S2	203	149
Total	378	274
Total Population	652	
School	Male Teachers	Female Teachers
S1	10	11
S2	14	12
Total	24	23
Total Population	47	

### Instrumentation

The instrument selected for this study to assess teacher personality will be the Insight Personality Instrument. The Insight Personality Instrument is a 40-item forced choice personality test. The instrument is made up of 40 statements that are composed of characteristics that are unique to an individual's personality. The statements in the test are divided amongst the following 10 categories: values, motivation, communication, work, supervision, recreation, childhood, youth, education, and love. During the test, participants will read each statement and respond with how much each statement reflects them as a person. Responses range from 4 "always like me" to 0 "never like me". After completing all of the items, the columns are totaled to reveal the participants color spectrum. The highest score identifies the participant's primary color, the personality type that is most like them, while the lowest score represents the personality type that is least like them.

The Insight Personality Instrument has been proven to be both reliable and valid. It has a test-retest reliability score of .94 (Whichard, 2006). This clearly shows that the instrument is understood the same way each time it is administered and it achieves nearly identical results time after time. No gender differences are found with this instrument, which means that the instrument has no gender bias and is equally reliable and valid for both males and females (Honaker, 2003). The Insight Personality Instrument has also shown significant content validity with other personality tests such as the Myers-Briggs-Type-Indicator and the

DISC test (Honaker, 2003; Whichard, 2006). The instrument significantly correlated with all aspects of the MBTI at a .05 confidence level, which suggests a very strong relationship between the MBTI and Insight Personality Instrument (Whichard, 2006). The instrument also significantly correlated with 3 of the 4 aspects of the DISC test at a .05 confidence level and

1 of 4 at a .10 confidence level, again suggesting a very strong relationship (Whichard, 2006). This tells us that the Insight Personality Instrument has the ability to measure the same personality, psychological, and temperament characteristics as those found in the MBTI and DISC assessments. Finally, the Insight Personality Instrument also shows high construct validity along its ten identified dimensions, which tells us that the instrument actually measure what it purports to measure (Whichard, 2006).

### Data Collection

To secure data from the population of 652 students and 47 teachers, the researcher will travel to all of the schools personally. The Insight Personality Instrument will be administered to all of the teachers in the study. This will be done to accurately assess each teacher's personality score. Academic report cards will also be collected and reviewed for all of the students in the study. The cumulative averages of students will be reviewed, as well as their overall marks in the core subject areas of math, science, English, and Chinese. All of this data will be collected from November 2010-January 2011.

### Analysis of Data

In order to effectively answer the research objectives outlined in this study, the researcher will utilize the Statistical Package for Social Sciences statistical software. In addition, the researcher will seek the aide of an experienced statistician to ensure no mistakes are made. The following section outlines the statistical methods that will be used throughout the study.

To analyze the data of the first objective relating to the overall relationship between a teachers personality and the academic success of their students, mean and frequency distribution will be employed to determine the pattern and profiles of the data. From that point, correlation statistics, namely Chi-Squared, will be used to analyze the relationship between each personality type and the academic success of students.

The second objective, which compares the relationships from the first objective across four core subject areas and grade levels 1-6, will again utilize mean and frequency distribution to determine the patten and profiles of the data. Then correlation statistics such as Chi-Squared will be used to analyze potential relationships amongst and between the variables.

Finally, the third objective which relates to the proposal of an effective contingency-based personality model of teacher placement in international Singaporean schools in Thailand, will be analyzed by a panel of experts from both academia and school practitioners. The researcher will seek the counsel and advice of school principals, university professors, and boards of directors. This advice and direction will be used to adjust the model accordingly so that it may have an optimal design for practical use within its target demographic.

### Significance of Study

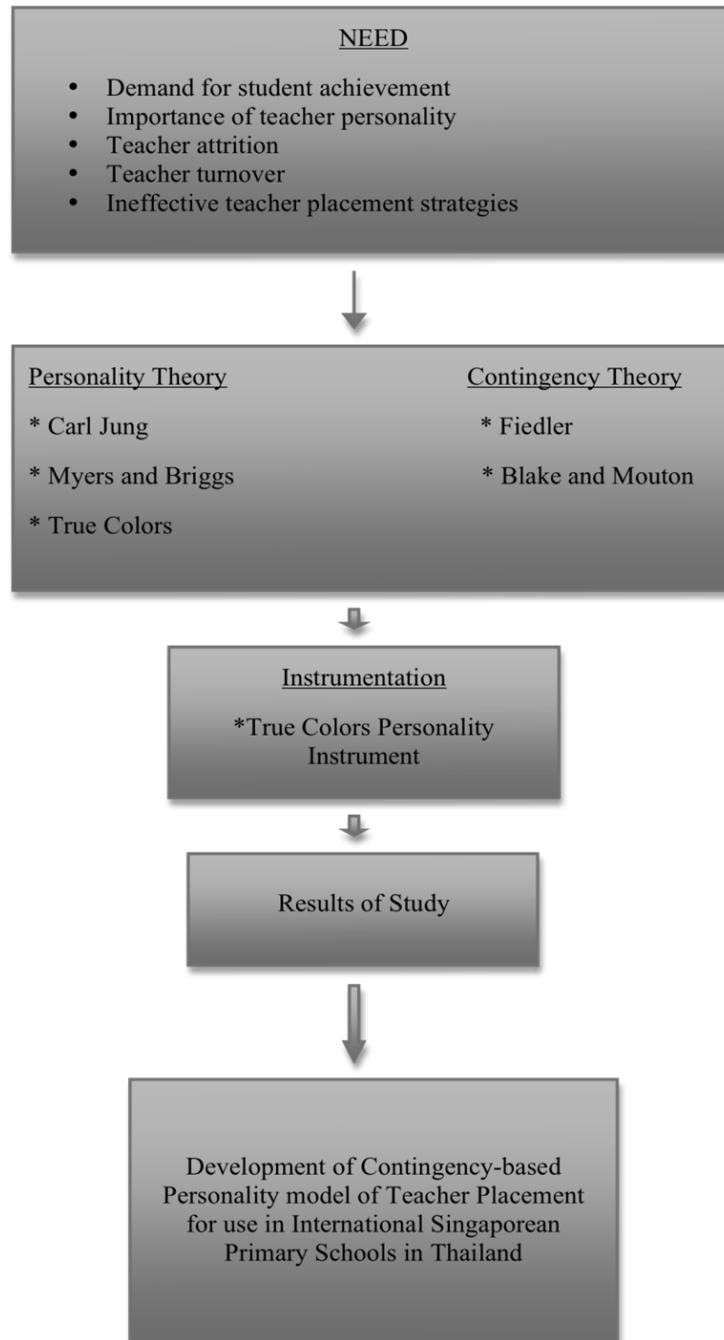
I feel that this study is of great importance because it will not only contribute to the educational research currently available, but it will also take that research in a new direction. Many studies have already looked at teacher disposition (Singh, 2007; Koeppen, 2004; Thompson, 2004; Wasicsko, 2002). However, few studies have analyzed teacher personality with student achievement. This study will help to bridge that gap.

In addition, it is important for us as educators to come to a better understanding of what works for students. We might very well find that some personality types make better English teachers for example, or that others make superior math teachers. This is knowledge that can help educators in leadership positions staff their schools with the best possible candidates for the positions available. In fact, the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher's (NCATE) and the Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium in the United States require that all teaching preparatory programs assess the disposition of their teaching candidates (Singh, 2007). They believe that a teacher's disposition plays as crucial of a role in a teacher's

effectiveness as their pedagogical skills and content knowledge (Singh, 2007). Thusly, I believe that the future trend of teacher assessment must also include the assessment of a teacher's personality. This information will assist us in building more effective models of teacher placement, and in turn, increase the overall quality and effectiveness of education as a whole.

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**Figure 1: Conceptual Framework**