

Study discovers link between an instructor's leadership type and teaching styles  
in the higher education classroom.

by

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### Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between instructor leadership type and teaching style in higher education classrooms. One survey, the Kaleidoscope Profile (Haggart, 1997) sought to determine instructor leadership type and an instructor's approach to teaching curriculum in the workplace. It was administered to two groups of adjunct instructors. The first, a sample of 35 adjunct instructors from the Department of Graduate Teacher Education at Wilkes University in Pennsylvania. They were in the employ of Performance Learning Systems (PLS), an educational consulting company based in Nevada City, California. The same survey was administered to 65 adjunct instructors directly employed by Wilkes University (WU) in Pennsylvania. Results indicate that a statistically significant relationship existed between leadership type and teaching style for the combined group of PLS and WU instructors (N=60). In addition to classroom leadership types needing to be studied critically, the relationship between leadership type and preferred teaching style needs to be explored in greater detail. (Contains two tables).

### Purpose

This study examined the relationship between an instructor's leadership type and preferred teaching style in higher education classrooms. Both leadership type and teaching style are woven into the fabric of a teacher's or facilitator's profile, which is presented to students during their learning process. Both have the potential to be supportive or deleterious to students in their learning experiences.

### *Diversity*

The face of higher education is changing. More diverse students are matriculating than at any time in history. They present challenges to both institutions and instructional personnel. Adding fuel to the fires is the fact many students are enrolling in nonconventional courses (asynchronous computer-mediated, blended, real time extended education). The merging of technology literate students and those unfamiliar with any form of learning other than the traditional face-to-face in a classroom at a stated time and

place can be problematic. Instructors need to know how to best reach the conventional students, older students, culturally diverse students, developmentally challenged students, sensory challenged students, physically challenged students, learning disabled students, non-native English-speaking students, and concurrently encourage the technology savvy student. Instructional styles further are confounded by instructors' attempts to cope with economic and political factors (i.e., diminished funding, state and federal initiatives for education, and increased reporting and documentation). The result is instructors sense, covertly and oftentimes overtly, the pressures placed upon institutions to display accountability, and for them to demonstrate that their instructional styles yield an added value for students.

### *Responsiveness*

Today's learners are particularly vulnerable to classroom rigidity, and so the demonstration of classroom leadership type displayed becomes very important. The teaching style followed by an instructor factors into the issue because so many college students come from different backgrounds, have different expectations and needs, and carry vastly different responsibilities. For example, "colleges that diversify their student bodies and institute policies that foster genuine interaction across race and ethnicity provide the first opportunity for many students to learn from peers with different cultures, values and experiences (Gurin, Dey, Hurtado, & Gurin, 2002). Interactions stretch beyond initial contacts and "include learning about differences in background, experience, and perspectives, as well as getting to know one another individually in an intimate enough way to discern common goals and personal qualities" (AACU, 1985, p. 22; Gurin, et. al., 2002).

### *Review of Relevant Literature*

Leadership, as a distinct concept has received considerable attention during the past 50 years (Gregorc & Ward, 1977; Myers, 1980; Bass, 1985; Kuhnert & Lewis, 1987; Kirby, Paradise & King, 1992), but it remains ambiguous and controversial. It is a topic of considerable interest and there is abundant information available, but not on its application to teaching styles in a higher education classroom.

Historically, studies conducted on the qualities of leadership focused mainly within the parameters of the business, military, and corporate communities (Castle, 2001). Those studies utilized various leadership type indicators (i.e., The Thematic Apperception Test developed by Murray, 1943; The Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire developed by Bass & Avolio, 1990) to gather data on the leadership abilities of a specific personnel pool. The Kaleidoscope Profile (KP) for Educators, utilized in this study, was developed in 1997 by William Haggart to address the limitations of available leadership profiles not being educator-compatible, and in particular not addressing the concept of classroom leadership in education.

By virtue of actions taken and behaviors displayed, instructors are leaders in a classroom. They influence what occurs, what is covered, the format for learning, the climate for learning, and perhaps, to a degree yet unresolved, the extent of the learning by individual

students. The first three issues are of paramount importance for higher education institutions, and of particular relevance to teacher preparation programs. Clearly the fourth point, extent of learning by individual students, is the criterion for determining value added from the instructional process but this point is beyond the scope of this investigation. Gaining an understanding, even if rudimentary, of how instructor classroom behaviors (leadership types) and their respective preferences for teaching styles match up, if they do, is useful for helping existing professional instructors: become more sensitive to learner preferences, recognize how and when it would be appropriate to change a format for curricular presentation, and engage in reflective style so constructive changes might be initiated or existing styles maintained.

Marrying a study on preferred teaching styles with evidenced classroom leadership style is complex, and made more so when juxtaposed against efforts to understand student needs for maximum learning experiences. It is a study predicated upon sensitivity to the dynamics of a context and requires an instructor to display flexibility so as to accommodate to different learners, perhaps each evidencing different needs. Higher education instructors must plan, organize and implement their teaching styles for students within a finite period of time. In so doing, they make decisions on how to effectively communicate and deliver course content, efficiently manage class projects to ensure that learning occurred and curricular goals were accomplished according to a stated vision/syllabus (Higgins, as cited in Prichard & Sawyer, 1994; Lunenburg, 2003). At best, teaching is an art. At worst, it is a profession. The former implies creativity and continuous development of expertise. The latter conveys general competence in a discipline. The two are not truly dichotomous, but represent different axes for examining an instructional paradigm. Planning, organization, visioning, goal setting, communication, and managing activities all are aspects of effective classroom leadership (Bass & Stogdill, 1990). But individually they do not reveal what happens within a learning environment nor do they point to why persons might encounter difficulties with learning.

Thusly, this study sought to examine critically the suspected relationships between instructor leadership type and teaching styles in higher education classroom. Administering the Kaleidoscope Profile (Haggart, 1997) was used as the means for determining the leadership type (Intuitive Feeler, Intuitive Thinker, Sensing Judger or Sensing Perceiver) as well as the teaching style (Abstract Global, Concrete Global, Abstract Sequential, Concrete Sequential) of an individual instructor. The results from participants then were compared to determine if there was a relationship between the two dependent variables for each group studied. The issue addressed is presented here: Is there a relationship between an instructor's leadership type and preferred teaching style in the higher education classroom as measured by the Kaleidoscope Profile (Haggart, 1997)?

### *The History of the Kaleidoscope Profile for Educators*

The KP used qualifiers from parent instruments such as The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (1980), the Gregorc Delineator (1977) and the Keirsey-Bates Temperament (1984) sorter

to define leadership types and teaching styles used by educators. In a study conducted at George Mason University (Platt, 2003) reported that some construct items of the KP (1997) were not consistent with the parent instrument constructs. Specifically, Platt (p. 60) pointed out that the KP did not include the Keirse (1984) NT descriptor “demanding competence in self and others.” Not having this particular item as a choice on the KP could indeed impede one from obtaining a true measure of his or her leadership preferences. KP test-retest correlations ranged from .25 to .89 (Platt, 2003). In addition, the developer of this instrument reported a validity coefficient of 0.7, and a reliability level of .79, meaning that just 49% of the content variance in the profile was accounted for, and with retests, the same profiles were obtained 79% of the time. It was never formally analyzed by anyone other than its developer (Haggart, 1997) and Platt in 2003. A validity level coefficient below the chance level of .50, certainly is not noteworthy in terms of instilling confidence the instrument measures what is purported. Furthermore, the claims about a reliability coefficient of .79 must be viewed as built upon a questionable foundation. Yet the Kaleidoscope Profile (KP) (1997) was the only such vehicle found in professional literature that was built for and predicated upon professional educators. Acknowledging both the potential limitations and the possible benefits meant this investigation had to be considered as exploratory. Preferred teaching styles and evidenced classroom leadership types, were almost uncultivated topics of research. Also use of the KP was recognized as an imperfect instrument, but the only available addressing the subject.

The KP was available in two formats, both having the same content. The first format was a self-reporting, hands-on sticker folder. The second was the online version which was utilized in this study. Each version was capable of being completed by individual instructors or administered in a group setting. Each version required about 20-minutes to complete and self-score. The latter point, self-score, was an appreciably positive and considerable impetus to its adoption. Both folder form and online version contained the same four statements and participants were required to select a completing statement for the carrier phrases that appear below:

Statement 1: “While working I appreciate...”

Statement 2: “I prefer work-related communication to be...”

Statement 3: “At work, I enjoy...”

Statement 4: “At work, it is important for me to avoid...”

The online version required respondents to access the profile remotely at [www.plsweb.com](http://www.plsweb.com). Respondents selected “complete the *Kaleidoscope Profile for Educators*” (1997) icon from the PLS homepage in order to begin the survey. He or she was brought to a prompt to take the *Kaleidoscope Profile for Educators* (Appendix J). Respondents selected “Start the Inventory for Educators.” That brought them to the first in a series of four questions from which they selected responses. Respondents “clicked” on the phrases or preference indicators for each of the four statements. After completing each question by making their choices, it was necessary to select “accept choices” in order for the data to be compiled. Upon completing the process, a respondent received a “Profile of Preferences” depicting their preferred style of leadership and teaching style in the form of a numerical score. If a respondent desired more information about leadership

type or teaching style, it was available by clicking on the “more info” icons that appeared directly next to the preference indicator on the “Profile of Preferences” page.

Methodology

A sample of 100 graduate teacher education instructors who were working for Wilkes University (WU) and Performance Learning Systems (PLS) volunteered to take part in this study. Thirty five were employed as adjuncts by Wilkes but hired from Performance Learning Systems, a for-profit consulting company. The remaining 65 instructors were employed as adjuncts directly by Wilkes University. All 100 instructors were selected to participate in the study as a convenience sample, and were employed in an area identified as “Eastern Pennsylvania.” Eighty volunteers responded. Sixty surveys were considered to contain readable data.

Each volunteer was asked to complete the KP and forward their results (scores) to the researcher. All respondent information was kept confidential. The data collected was analyzed using the Chi Square statistic.

Results

Four qualifiers (Intuitive Feeler, Intuitive Thinker, Sensing Judger and Sensing Perceiver) were used to identify the variable leadership type and four qualifiers were used to identify the variable teaching styles (Abstract Global, Concrete Global, Abstract Sequential, Concrete Sequential). A table was created to provide a visual representation of the number of respondents whose profiles were described by the relationship of leader type (Y-axis) to teaching style (X-axis).

Table One

*Frequencies of Leadership Type as a function of Teaching Style*

# of Respondents = 60		Teaching style				Total
		Abstract Global	Abstract Sequential	Concrete Global	Concrete Sequential	
Leadership type	Intuitive Feeler	15	1	12	6	34
	Intuitive Thinker	0	0	4	0	4
	Sensing Judger	1	2	3	7	13
	Sensing Perceiver	2	1	6	0	9
Total		18	4	25	13	60

The following information is provided to help describe the most frequently occurring trait combinations for each group of instructors surveyed (N=60). These were the Intuitive Feeler/Abstract Global trait combination (N=15/60), the Intuitive Feeler/Concrete Global trait combination (N=12/60), the Sensing Judger/Concrete Sequential trait combination (N=7/60) and the Intuitive Feeler/Concrete Sequential trait combination (N=6/60).

After the data was cross tabulated then analyzed using the Chi-Square statistic, the following relationship was discovered:

Table Two

*Chi Square results for total number of participants (PLS + WUI=60); (p=.05)*

	Value	Degrees freedom	Result
<b>Chi-Square</b>	23.830(a)	9	.005
<b>N of Valid Cases</b>	60		

The calculation presented in Table Two was interpreted to mean a relationship existed between leadership type and teaching style for educators working in higher education classrooms. Therefore, the null hypothesis (H1-A<sub>0</sub>: There is no relationship between college instructor Leadership Type and Teaching styles as measured by the *Kaleidoscope Profile* (1997) was rejected, and the alternate hypothesis accepted; There was a relationship between college instructor leadership type and teaching styles as measured by the *Kaleidoscope Profile*. That finding held true regardless of gender (male, female) or group specification (PLS instructors, Wilkes instructors). These areas (gender, group specification) however, are currently under investigation and reports on these variables are the subject of two, follow-up studies.

### Discussion

This study was conducted to learn if possible relationships existed among four predetermined instructor leadership types and four preferred teaching styles used in a higher education classroom. The relationship(s) were determined from data collected after administering the *Kaleidoscope Profile* (1997). The four leadership Types were: Intuitive Feeler (NF), Intuitive Thinker (NT), Sensing Judger (SJ), and Sensing Perceiver (SP). The four Teaching styles were: Abstract Global (AG), Abstract Sequential (AS), Concrete Global (CG) and Concrete Sequential (CS). The importance of such information was related to two issues: processes for in-service training for professional educators, and also to pre-service preparation programs for future educators. Extending the above statement leads to the prospect for providing classroom instructors with more support for ensuring they are equipped to do the work

expected and desired, not only by an individual professional educator, but in response to accountability. The more effective such classroom instructors are with their students the greater would be the value-added component for postsecondary education. Also it would materially enhance the concordance between performance of such instructors and an institution's declared goal(s) for student learning. Another observation, and probably not the last one, is that there is little information related to the issue of classroom leadership type. Conceivably such behaviors(s) could be termed something other than leadership type, but the issue is to initiate conversation about how an instructor approaches the task of instruction in a postsecondary classroom and then the teaching styles favored when displaying such behaviors. It is an aspect of scholarship deserving attention, especially as it is the nexus among instructors, students, content and learning by the latter.

Postsecondary students now are a heterogeneous group when contrasted to a so called typical student population from 30–40 years ago, in terms of age, maturity toward learning, responsibilities, culture, expectations, learning styles, and perhaps a host of other factors. What an instructor does in a classroom, how it is done, and the manner by which it does or does not generate favorable responsiveness among most students markedly impacts the effectiveness of the instructional process and the value of the effort made by students. Ideally there should be concordance between the two. Regrettably it does not happen with sufficient consistency. This investigation has opened the door to another aspect of the instructional and learning connection. It presented issues needing further definition and certainly more refined study. It was an initial step to tying the knot between classroom leadership types and preferred teaching styles. Subsequent research may pursue the other end of the continuum; student learning.

### Implications

- 1) There is too much ambiguity surrounding the credibility of the KP for it to be employed as a tool for identifying presumed leadership styles and curricular preferences in classrooms. This statement is not intended to demean the instrument, but is presented as a cautionary flag against relying indiscriminately upon the results from its administration.
- 2) Making evaluative judgments often is viewed as the highest form of intellectual activity. Conceivably some persons responding to the KP do not understand the nuances of such activity, do not operate at that level, or become confused when presented with indistinct options.
- 3) According to Platt (2003) “there is no independent research that links preferences in various categories of the KP to preferences on parent instruments, especially in the modality and perceptual/organizational portions of the KP” (p. 61). And, at this time no claim is justified regarding the usefulness of the KP as an effective or even as a valuable instrument for assisting postsecondary instructors. Instead it can be said that the KP is a tool that has been advocated (Haggart, 1997) because it purports to give information on classroom leadership type and teaching styles preferred, but there is insufficient evidence to support the claims. Furthermore, there is insufficient evidence to support the categories used as connoting leadership type and teaching style. Both classifications (leadership

types and teaching styles), individually and in tandem, should be subjected to more vigorous study following sound scientific principles. But it must be acknowledged that the Kaleidoscope Profile (1997) ventured into an area of scholarship needing attention and therefore is the key to more study.

4) The phrasing used with the KP might be considered as too vague, and consequently persons responding to it are apt to be misled and respond in a manner that skews the results inappropriately.

5) The scope of this study was too grand. But having completed it there is value in reflecting upon how it might have been altered and narrowed to a single issue, such as the wording used in the response packages to the KP, or to the concepts of classroom leadership, or curricular preferences and how they are determined or defined.

6) Teaching is an art and not a science. At this time there are no clearly identifiable styles or procedures for ensuring that all persons seeking to engage in the art of teaching do know what is important about their abilities and attitudes toward learners. Perhaps instruments like the KP proved a glimpse into that nebulous world.

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