

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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