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Leonard Sax, M.D., Ph.D.

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Who We Are

New ways of thinking about people

by Steven Reiss, Ph.D.

Self-Discovery in Leadership Training

Motivation and leadership

Published on December 6, 2011 by Steven Reiss, Ph.D. in Who We Are

More than 1,000 professionals worldwide have been trained in *motivation analysis*. They apply their skills in multinational businesses, world-class athletics, hospitals, and schools. I have asked for case studies showing what they can do.

Thomas Mengel, PhD; Professor of *Leadership Studies*, Renaissance College, University of New Brunswick reported the following innovative program for application of 16 intrinsic motives to business leadership education. This case study was written by him. I am quoting with his permission.

Students have different motivations and learning styles. Unfortunately, traditional teaching often does not sufficiently take this into consideration and as a result, fails to motivate and engage many students because their individual sources of meaning, their specific motivation determinants, and their individual learning style preferences are not known.

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Steven Reiss is Emeritus Professor of Psychology and Psychiatry at The Ohio State University. [more...](#)

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At the 2010 WSMP conference in Indianapolis I presented the administration of the Reiss Motivational Profile (RMP) as a new element within the context of leadership education at Renaissance College (University of New Brunswick, Canada). The adoption of this new approach to teaching and learning about (leadership) motivation was accompanied and evaluated by a research project in the context of the scholarship of teaching and learning (September 2010 - June 2011). This project was funded by the Teaching and Learning Priority Fund of the University of New Brunswick and supported by IDS Publishing (RMP) and by HayGroup (Learning Style Inventory).

Throughout this research project various profiles were introduced, administered, and evaluated to the 2010 cohort of leadership students at Renaissance College: The Reiss Motivational Profile (Reiss 2000, 2008), the Kolb Learning Style Inventory (Kolb, 2004), and the Student Leadership Practices Inventory (Kouzes & Posner, 2008). Furthermore, these profiles were embedded in learning modules about motivation and leadership, learning and leadership, and leadership behaviour and practices. Finally, focus groups and surveys were conducted to assess the student opinions on the profiles and the respective learning opportunities in the context of leadership education. The results of this research project were presented at the 2011 WSMP conference in Vienna.

The classroom assessment did provide quantitative data that help understand the root causes of student motivation and learning. A brief first survey after administering the RMP and returning the results indicated that 62% found the RMP to be rather or very accurate (70-100%); 48% thought it was 'half-accurate'. The RMP of the 2010 cohort resulted in a few interesting insights particularly regarding the motivation of (leadership) students for learning and leadership:

1. Except for 'idealism' the cohort average for all desires is close to normal distribution
2. The higher than average score for 'idealism' might reflect the program's appeal to students with high motivation for social and humanitarian causes

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3. The desire to acquire knowledge and to think ('curiosity') of these students is not higher than that of the general population; they attend university for a variety of reasons

4. Leadership students do not necessarily demonstrate a higher than average need for influence of will; they are interested in leadership studies for a variety of reasons (for example, they might consider 'leadership' as a means to the end of 'making the world a better place')

5. Overall, emerging leaders are 'made' of very different profiles that lend themselves to a variety of different leadership styles and behaviours

Interviews with individuals and focus groups allowed to qualitatively and thoroughly assess how self-knowledge helps them to be more or less engaged learners. For example, the RMP helped these two students to learn the following about leadership:

"That power isn't everything. My power was actually -2".

"When I think of a leader, I have a certain vision. I learned from this course, that a leader may not necessarily always fit that image. Any of us here could be a leader. When I used to work it was that only certain people could be leaders. This course broadens your mind, and makes you realize that everyone has potential".


For others, the RMP helped them better understand themselves and their particular needs when organizing their daily lives:

"It forced me to think about myself. It was kind of an awaking. Mine said I have a high need for order and physical activity, and I know that, if I don't make a list or don't plan my day, it isn't productive. Or if I don't do physical activity for a few days, I get really down in the dumps. This year lately, I've been ignoring these basics needs and the profile reminded me. It was a reminder...of who I am".

"When we first read this book I did not fully understand why we were learning it, therefore I decided not to take the test in the model. However, when we were shown the results in class and when I saw how every person is different from the rest of the people I was very impressed. Interested of what I saw that day in class, I went back and I did the test in the book to find out more about what the profile would say about me. After doing the assessment I was surprised to see the results, I learned many things about myself that I didn't know before, for example I scored very high on power. I also learned thing about myself that I knew I had but never really wanted to admit to myself, for example I scored really low on saving. The Reiss profile also turned out to be really accurate; which is something that I highly doubted when I first read about the profile. The Reiss profile helped me identify several aspects of my personality and it also helped me recognize how unique I was from other people. I believe that I was very lucky to be introduced to this book and to have the opportunity to assess myself through this profile".

Comparing the three profiles/inventories introduced and discussed in class, some key learnings are presented as follows:

- In regard to the Kolb Learning Style Inventory, students mentioned:
 - "it was not very helpful because it did not reveal anything new"
 - "I found it somewhat confusing"
 - "The language used in the Kolb inventory was not common - a little harder to follow and less meaningful"
 - "did not contribute greatly to my understanding of learning"
 - "Helped me understand how I learn and how to collaborate with others who learn different"
 - "I really enjoyed doing the tests. Really interesting to discuss too!"
 - "I didn't really learn anything from the inventory about leadership"
- On the Leadership Practices Inventory students had the following to say:
 - "I cannot remember what this inventory was"
 - "These are useful and helped me to visualize the leadership process"
 - "These were practical approaches to leadership that made what we learned in class easier to apply outside of the classroom"
 - "Helped me find my preferred leadership style"
 - "for some reason I can't remember what it was"
 - "Which areas I should try to improve on in order to be al more effective"

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leader"

"Everybody can be a leader. Everybody has different desires and motivations and we can learn to be a leader"

• Finally, regarding the RMP they highlighted the following:

"It was interesting to do and to see how the results were (or weren't) reflected in our lives. It made the leadership topics in class more relatable to our personal leadership styles"

"helped me to better understand myself and others a lot. By knowing that different people have different levels of desire for 16 basic desires, I can better understand why people act the way they do and why certain things are important to me. I found the testing very accurate too"

"it gave me a clearer sense of my passion and the reason why I act I think the way I do"

"I feel that Reiss Motivation Profile relates to leadership through knowing yourself and others. Reiss Motivation Profile helped me understand my values, which is needed to be a confident successful leader and it helped me understand others. Understanding others is also important to help inspire a shared vision and help people find meaning in goals"

"All different qualities can make different leaders - there is not one ideal characteristic"

"I learned that we all can be leaders. We may just lead in different ways"

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