

Myers-Briggs Personality Types? How do they matter to our learning advisor role?

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Abstract

This article came about from a conference presentation following a personal experience of the difficulty in communication posed by different Myers-Briggs personality types and the author's further exploration of their implications in the Tertiary Learning Advisor (TLA) role. Personality types are innately of who learners and TLAs are, thus requiring mindful education as another aspect of the whole person in our TLA work. The article is an exploration of the effect of personality types, further, the cultural factors of both learners and TLAs, as well as learners' personal life circumstances that may pose difficulties in TLA work and students' learning. The article further provides insights and solutions to support TLAs to be mindful and accommodating to the different types in themselves and their students to make their work more effective and less stressful for both students and TLAs.

Keywords: Myers-Briggs personality types, learning advisor role, 'type-talk' in education, cultural factors in education, personal life circumstances in education, different information processing styles in education

In December 2023, a colleague and I presented this title at the ATLAANZ conference. The presentation drew much attention from the audience and continued discussions afterwards. Some suggested I write a journal article to share the insight with a broader audience. Since then, I have intended to expand the action research on this important but often easily overlooked topic in TLA work. The outcome of the expanded action research is the present article.

The article is not an educational piece on the Myers-Briggs personality types, which require implementation by trained experts' effort, and which the author is not. The article is neither a piece on mindful education nor on a whole-person concept; both have been explored and presented previously by the author. This article is on the difficulties created by different personality types in the interactions between TLAs and their students. The article also presents the author's exploration of the challenges posed by cultural factors and personal life situations in the TLA role.

The particular interest in this topic was sparked by a personal experience of the author with her colleague and co-presenter at the conference. A reflection on that experience will be presented at the beginning of the article, followed by a literature review on *(personality) type talk*. The literature review identified a gap in research articles on personality types in education in relation to the TLA role. That is, no research was found to study how different personality types impact the interaction between TLAs and their students. The article then elaborates on the author's conference presentation, demonstrating a fuller exploration and presentation of what the author has found essential about personality types to the TLA role in their work, informed by the concepts of whole-person education and mindful education. Both mindful and whole person education are thus further understood in greater depth to include TLA and learner personality types and their implications for TLA work.

A Lived Experience

The interest in this topic was sparked by a personal experience between the author and their colleague.

The author is a liaison learning advisor for the School of Healthcare and Social Practice at Unitec. They received a request for a workshop on APA referencing as part of a Nursing classroom glossary activity, finding meanings for given words, which seemed straightforward enough for them. The colleague agreed to deliver the workshop with the author's support. Hence, an online meeting was set up for the author to explain to the colleague what the workshop was about and answer any questions. The author felt that it took a long time and many rounds of explanation, each with more details; still, the colleague was not satisfied and wanted to meet the subject lecturer with more questions. At one stage, the colleague declared that they needed more details and that they were a detail-oriented person. That information immediately released the author from the frustration and tiredness felt in

conveying their message. Later, it was found that their colleague equally shared the frustration and tiredness. It clicked in the author that the two staff may be of two different personality types in the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator: one might be identified as an *S* (*Sensing*), a detail-oriented person who needs all the details to make sense and work; and the author identifies as an *N* (*Intuition*), a big-picture person who runs with the vision and gets the work done. The author changed how they delivered their message, and the pair finally arrived at their mutual understanding, and the task was completed.

For the author, who has a great interest in researching any aspects of learning and development in tertiary education, it was not just an elongated communication on a requested workshop. The communication – or the difficulty in the communication – revealed yet another aspect of mindful and whole-person education that needed the author's attention because personality types are part of who we are, and they are thus relevant to teaching and learning. Mindful and whole-person education requires educators and learners to be conscious and mindful of the impact of (personality) type talks on their interactions with students. The author contends that TLAs should consider the impact of differences between their personality types and those of their students, as well as their respective ways of processing and communicating information. So, the author invited their colleague to co-develop their experience into a conference presentation and presented it at the ATLAANZ 2023 conference. After publishing two articles on mindful and whole-person education, the author wanted to add this to the Kete (basket). Hence, this article.

Literature Review

'Type talks', as a term for explorations of Myers-Briggs personality types and their impact on all aspects of life, has long been used and investigated since the rise of the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (Myers & Myers, 1980).

Literature Search Process

The Myers-Briggs Personality Type Indicator has been well established in therapeutic practice. As a trained psychosynthesis counsellor, the author is aware of its usage and popularity in the counselling and coaching fields. Yet this current article is about the impact of personality types on the TLA role, so the literature review is mainly focused on the relationship of personality types and education.

Searching for literature using the keywords “Personality types” AND “Education” on the Unitec Library search engine, with the parameter set for peer-reviewed articles from 2015 to 2024, returned 4,824 articles. Limiting the result to journals of “Education Sciences” brought this number down to 31 results. Reading the ones that were most relevant, I found a study on the relationship between personality types and educational motivations (Fuertes et al., 2020). In order to increase the number of results, I searched Google Scholar with the keywords “Myers-Briggs Type” and “Education”, with the parameters set to 2015-2025, which returned 16,400 results. Updated by adding the “sort by date” restriction, the outcome was reduced to 52 results. This search process revealed a great interest in personality types and their implications on different aspects of education, but none addressed specifically TLA work with students.

Literature Review Results

Skimming the abstracts of the top ten articles revealed that most studies are on the relationship or correlation between personality types and educational outcomes and choices (Bousalem et al., 2025; Das et al., 2025; Felix, 2025; Gao, 2025; Goo et al., 2025); one study was found on stress perception and personality preferences in nursing students (Li et al., 2025). Jach et al (2023) explored how personality types matter to education sciences, which is closest to my research interest. From the public library, I found books on the types correlating with success in jobs (Otto, 2002); career choices (Tieger, 2021; Wagele & Stabb, 2009); for personal development and growth to enhance life decisions (Hirsh, 2000; Witt, 2018); and finally, the famous and popular book, *Type Talk*, (Kroeger & Thuesen, 1988) elucidated the value of type-watching in enhancing personal and professional pleasure, and success. None was found to examine the effect of personality types on TLA roles, which this research intends to explore and present.

Type Talk and TLA Practice

Differences in Personality Types and Learning and Teaching

As the author explored the whole-person concept in education, they came upon the difficulty of working with different personality types without consciously knowing the barrier posed by their different types on the Myers-Briggs Personality Indicator scale. The personal

experience of the effect of differences in personality types in communication became a good starting point for another exploration of the whole-person concept in education: For instance, how many students who might be classified as *Detailed* on the Indicator are in the classroom of a *Visionary* lecturer? Moreover, how many visionary students are there in a detailed lecturer's class? All may be struggling in the dark, which could be slowing down their learning. If we knew our own different types and preferred ways of functioning, we could work with a conscious awareness to make the process easier for each other.

Further, the author became curious about how the personality types of students and educators affect the delivery and reception of teaching and learning in TLA work. What could be going on for our students if TLAs find it challenging to communicate when unaware of the different types we embody? If our students are, like the author, big picture people, will they feel bored and lose interest in communicating with detailed TLAs who give them all the details they deem unnecessary? Otherwise, will detailed students feel lost and frustrated when talking with a big-picture lecturer? Difficulties may arise due to our natural inclination towards a particular way of processing information based on our personality types.

Other Differences That May Influence Learning and Teaching

The author further considered other differences that TLAs and our students may present that have implications for our students' learning and development and the TLA's teaching. Those differences include cultural factors and personal life circumstances.

Cultural Differences

First, as with different personality types, different cultural heritages create in each learner/educator different ways of communicating and exchanging information. For example, in my experience as a TLA, I have discovered that most Asian students struggle with the Western style of getting to the point in their writing. Asian students' cultural training tends to focus on the big picture before getting to the specific situations they are asked to address in their assignments. Thus, they often miss the point and keep their lecturer's attention in suspense. The author appreciates the difference in their writing styles and often encourages their Asian students to consciously shift from the long-winded descriptions of the big picture (i.e., what is going on in the field where the specific situation resides) to getting onto the

specific situation straight away and addressing the assignment questions more directly than they would otherwise. The phenomenon of the Asian students' culturally-influenced different learning and writing styles has been studied by many other scholars (Green, 2007; Park, 2000, 2006; Zhang, 2018), just to name a few.

Further, the Chinese education concept, 教书育人 has dual missions or tasks; that is, teaching the book (imparting the knowledge), and at the same time, fostering the students to be conscious human beings through the educators' continuing personal growth and development. This continuing development and personal growth in the learning advisors/educators will help them better support their students with encouragement, as good examples for their students to consciously develop and grow. To the author, a Chinese New Zealander who was influenced by their Chinese upbringing, the TLA role includes facilitating students' learning and fostering students' development into consciously aware human beings that one hopes their community will have. Therefore, while supporting students in developing their academic study skills, supporting them in becoming the human beings they were born to be is as important; thus, the whole-person and mindful education advocated by the author (Dai & Toki, 2024a, 2024b).

For example, in practice, the author listened to students about their concerns in life situations as well as their academic pursuits and encouraged them to plan well and establish an effective study routine. This is because they are from a culture where family duties are part of their daily reality. Further, they study well in a group with their peers. With an effective study routine and their working together, they can complete their course tasks on campus and return home to be fully present to their families. After a couple of weeks at the beginning of the semester, the two Social Practice students learnt and developed skills to master their studies and to be managers of their time. They told the author they got A's and A+'s for their assignments, and their fellow students began asking them for help. Those students are now forming a study group for the author to support them on a weekly basis from this semester.

Those students have become human beings who may now be more conscious of their own responsibilities to actively respond to their life situations. They can not only manage their own studies but can also become supportive of their fellow students. They are managers of their own lives. In taking responsibility for their own lives, that awareness is part of who

they can become. Thus, they can remain active and reliable in all other areas of their lives, such as in their families and their community.

The second task of education in the Chinese educational concept (i.e., fostering students to become conscious human beings) is something that TLAs can do. Unlike lecturers, TLAs are not tasked with teaching a curriculum, nor are we restricted by the pressure to complete the curriculum in a limited timeframe, so our focus can be on fostering students' development.

Personal Life Differences

Second, some difficulty in communication could result from the students' life situations and a potential need for continuing development and personal growth. If TLAs can support students to overcome their challenges, it would be beneficial and encouraging for students to develop and grow to succeed.

For example, the author has supported an international student who failed her practicum twice as a nursing student. She came to support for language skills and for failing to communicate effectively with her preceptors or colleagues at her placement. However, after all the language and communication skills support, the student continued to present low self-esteem and confidence. She would lower her head when seeing her classmates approaching. Further conversation found that her landlord requested her to move out while her bond of over \$1,000 was withheld due to her moving out early (as requested by the landlord himself). She told me she considered letting go of the bond as she did not know how to communicate with the landlord because he appeared authoritative and aggressive.

The author saw this as an opportunity for the student to develop self-confidence and to know her value and capacity. The student was introduced to the local Citizens' Advice Bureau for advice and support. The student got her bond back and developed the confidence to have her truth heard and her rights defended. The experience of being supported and getting her bond back is an opportunity for personal growth and development in her life journey. The student also had an experience of accessing support available in the community to help her overcome challenges in her life in this country. The student went on to happily and successfully graduate to work as a registered nurse. This process of her becoming more consciously aware of her own personal growth and development on an evolutionary journey

in life could be transformative for her in being an active and reliable supporter of her patients' growth and development.

Possible Implications for TLA Practice

The personal experience of difficulty in communication between different personality types reminded the author to be mindful of their type as *INFJ* (*introverted, big picture, and feelings-oriented*). They prefer everything to be in good order. They are inclined to focus on the visionary message in the information, and they quickly move on to how the presented information affects the community's well-being in the long run (the big picture). Whereas for a different type, for example, *ESTJ* (*extroverted, detail-inclined, thinking-oriented, and orderly*), they could be attracted to and pay attention to other aspects of the same information, such as the numerical, detailed aspects and the rational logic of the information. Similarly, our students could process the same task differently due to their differing learning preferences, resulting from their personality types and cultural upbringings. Therefore, the author encourages fellow TLAs to take assessment to ascertain their Myers-Briggs personality types as a starting point. Knowing themselves and becoming more conscious of how they function in their daily interactions with others might enable them to understand more fully others whom they encounter.

For TLAs who have become more conscious of the impact of different personality types on their communication with their students, they could check if the student is aware of their type at the beginning of their appointment; otherwise, they could observe how the student approaches the information given to them. If the student seeks more detailed information, the student could be a detailed person; thus, the TLA could focus on providing more detailed and specific steps for solving the problem in question. When TLAs are conscious of their personality types and stay conscious of the impact of different types on their communication with their students, the satisfaction, effectiveness and success rate of the support may naturally increase, as in the author's communication with their colleague.

The author's experience as a TLA has powerfully affirmed the author's belief that students are human beings on their life journey when they come to us for academic support. The author believes that TLAs play a crucial role in the students' personal and professional growth, development as human beings, and their academic learning and development as students. The author's continuing exploration of the whole person in education, including

personality types and their implication on the TLA role, is the author's natural embodiment of that belief.

Finally, the author intends to support all students in becoming independent learners regardless of their cultural background. TLAs need to be aware that supporting students to become independent learners may require different processes with each student, dependent on each student's personality types, cultural heritages and life circumstances.

The author's approach to the differences identified above that present as barriers to students' success is founded on the belief that TLAs need to be conscious of the different personality types. Therefore, when they work with students, they can be more accommodating. Furthermore, assuming TLAs possess relevant knowledge of personality types, they can check if a student knows their personality type, or observe students for indications of what their types might be, to provide support in a way that may suit them. Since personality types are a person's innate preferences and inclinations to process information and communicate with other human beings, a conscious and aware person can choose to operate with a specific type on a particular task. Therefore, TLAs could encourage students to stay aware of their personality types and their cultural upbringings to move freely to relevant information-processing styles required for a task. With the support of a consciously aware TLA, students can be supported to become more independent as learners with an increased knowledge of their personality types, their different information-processing styles and requirements. This can help them adjust to any situation to find what suits them the most. Their success can thus be in their own making.

The pair of Social Practice students who are getting A's and A+'s are a good example of the benefit of the approach. The pair would work together and check against each other's judgment of each other's work, according to what they had learnt from the author during their previous appointments. Because they have become more aware of their own information-processing styles and ways of presenting their materials, they can self-support and support each other. In this sense, they have become more independent as learners. A sign of this was when they called the author to their study room only after they had self-checked their writing. The author's approach of support appears to have contributed positively to the continuing success of the students and their further support for others in their class, as well as in their community upon graduation.

Conclusion

Instead of theorising the situation presented, which will not directly benefit our practice, the author chooses to bring this matter to the attention of fellow TLAs through this article. The author believes that only when each TLA becomes conscious of their personality type's effect on their students will learning and development be enhanced and their practice more effective.

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