



RESEARCH

ST LEADERSHIP STUDY

HOGAN PERSONALITY INVENTORY (HPI): INTRODUCTION

by Jamie Estes, September 2020

“The data are quite clear that personality and leadership are closely connected—
who you are determines how you lead.”

Dr. Robert Hogan, *Personality and the Fate of Organizations*

In recent years, the topic of school leadership has filled bookshelves, conference agendas, and magazine pages. Many concerns about the future of independent school leadership have been aired, from retiring boomers and shortening tenures to lack of effective preparation. When schools are facing more competition and more pressure than ever, having the right leader in place is ever more important. As a search firm, our job is to help schools better understand their candidates and the organizational implications of their leadership style. Four years ago, Southern Teachers started using personality assessment as an important element of our retained search process. This study brings our understanding of personality and its relationship to leadership into its next phase.

We embarked on this study to learn about specific personality traits that distinguish independent school leaders. If we could develop a clearer understanding of this group's norms, we could vastly improve our use of personality assessments in our head search processes. Previously, assessments had helped us get to know each candidate better. What would be far more useful would be understanding how each candidate's personality traits compared to those of independent school leaders in general.

A second goal of our study was to introduce new concepts in personality science to independent school leaders. While many people are familiar with assessments such as Myers-Briggs and DISC in their own self-development, few have considered their broader potential uses. We wanted to introduce a different tool, Hogan Assessments. Founded in robust research, Hogan Assessments offer a more effective and versatile tool for the candidate screening and selection process, as well as in leaders' ongoing personal development.

We were thrilled by the number of school heads who participated in our study. The volume of data generated makes our final report even more significant and impactful. Here is a sampling of new questions and topics that arose in our initial efforts. We look forward to exploring these and others in the coming weeks, and we invite you to reflect with us:

- Are current trends and changes in pedagogy a reflection of younger leaders' personalities and preferences?
- What is the difference between leadership emergence and leadership effectiveness, and why is knowing the difference important?
- Why are many of our largest schools run by our quietest leaders?

- What is the dark side of being an empathetic leader?
- Might the ability to “get things done” hinder leadership success?
- What are the hidden costs of hiring an intellectually curious leader?
- What are the personality differences between male and female heads of school and how do they impact schools?

We recognize that personality assessments are not perfect predictors of performance, but neither are interviews, simulations, or reference work. The search process is always an uncertain endeavor. However, we do know that personality influences our day-to-day decisions, which eventually add up to a tenure, a career, and a lifetime. To better understand personality’s influence on leadership over the course of a career, we spoke to individual heads of school about their scores on each scale. We found their stories compelling. We hope you will, too.

This week, we provide a high-level overview of the personality results and their implications for understanding independent school leadership.

ABOUT THE ASSESSMENTS

We asked our study participants to take the Hogan Personality Inventory (HPI). Hogans Assessments are among the world’s most widely researched and commonly used personality assessments. Hogan Assessment tools are available in over 40 languages and are used in more than 50 countries by everything from small firms to Fortune 500 global companies. Hogan processes a million assessments each year. Over nine million people have completed them.

The HPI is used to predict “bright-side” personality, or what is seen when people are at their best. It focuses on characteristics that appear in social interactions and that facilitate or inhibit a person’s ability to get along with others and to achieve his or her goals. This tool is designed to predict occupational performance by measuring day-to-day personality characteristics that drive behavior. The deeply ingrained characteristics measured by the HPI impact how individuals approach work and their interactions with others.

The HPI includes seven primary scales:

- Adjustment: confidence, self-esteem, and composure under pressure
- Ambition: initiative, competitiveness, and desire for leadership roles
- Sociability: extraversion, gregariousness, and need for social interaction
- Interpersonal Sensitivity: tact, perceptiveness, and ability to maintain relationships
- Prudence: self-discipline, responsibility, and thoroughness
- Inquisitive: imagination, curiosity, and creative potential
- Learning Approach: approach for acquiring knowledge, valuing education

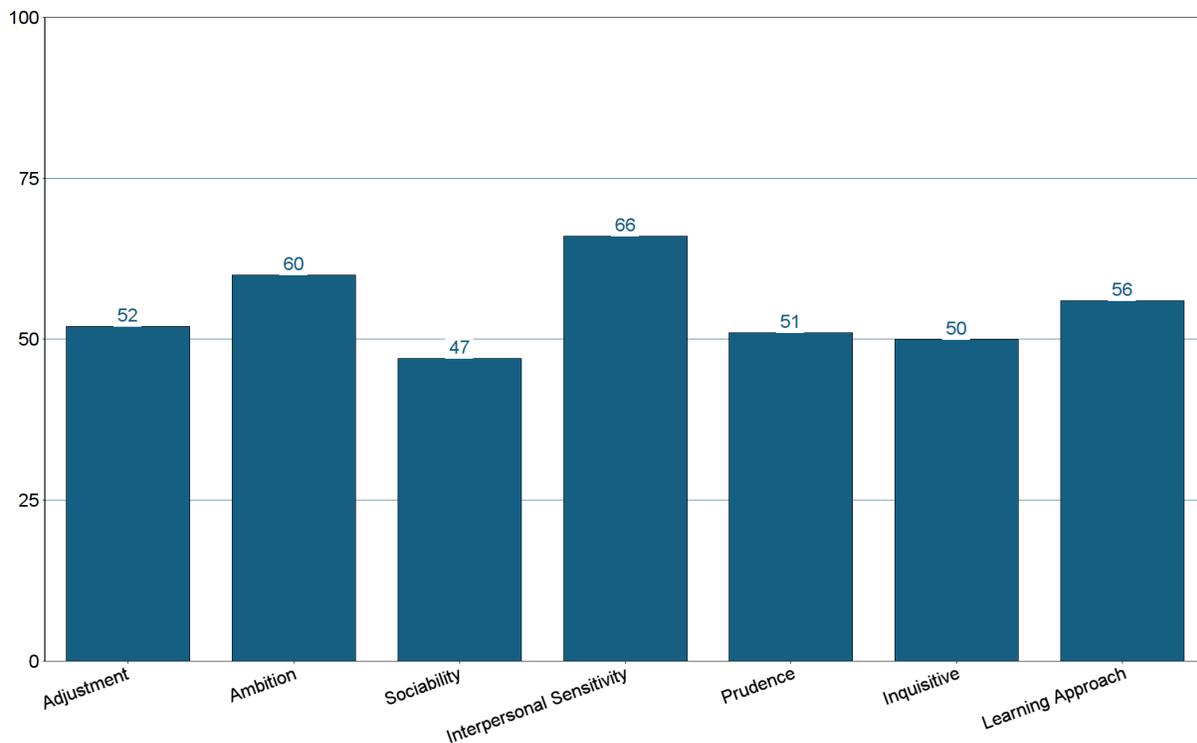


ABOUT OUR RESULTS

We invited approximately 600 current heads of schools from sixteen states in the South to participate in the study (some participants were retiring at the time they took the assessments). 247 heads agreed to participate and completed the HPI.

For our study, the mean scores in the chart below suggest the “average” results for school heads as a group. These scores do not convey the variability or diversity of individuals within this sample group. With larger sample sizes, there tends to be a regression to the mean. Thus, for example, it would be very unusual for a group to exhibit scores in the 80th or 90th percentile. Finally, it is important to note that the assessment data collected represents general trends within sample study groups and is in no way tied to actual on-the-job performance.

Independent School Heads Average HPI Scores



HPI RESULTS SUMMARY

In the areas of adjustment, prudence, and inquisitive, independent school heads show little difference from the larger population. They are no more or less emotionally stable, no more or less conscientious, and no or more less intellectually curious than professionals across industries. They are also very close to the average for sociability, though it is worth pointing out that only in sociability are they below the global norm. Heads of school, on average, score six points higher than average on learning approach, suggesting that they value traditional learning and the pursuit of understanding as an end to itself a bit more than the general population does.

In two areas, independent school heads are outliers. They are close to 10 points higher on ambition and 15 points higher on interpersonal sensitivity. Perhaps these two qualities make an individual more likely to become a head of school. We believe these two elevated scores shed light on what makes being an independent school head so difficult. Ambition is related to one's desire to get ahead and achieve individual and institutional goals. It is not surprising that those who rise to leadership are more ambitious. Interpersonal sensitivity is related to one's desire and ability to get along with others. Building and maintaining strong relationships is a key element of success and advancement in a social institution like a school. However, at times a leader's desire to move ahead in their career and achieve ambitious organizational goals can conflict with the desire to please as many people as possible. Corporate executives, by comparison, score in the 69th percentile for ambition yet below the 50th percentile for interpersonal sensitivity. In the corporate world, getting ahead outweighs getting along. Board members coming from a corporate background may benefit from understanding this key personality difference (and underlying difference in institutional values) from their professional peers and the heads of school they supervise.

In the coming weeks, we will dig deeper into the data to describe more thought-provoking findings and provide the voices of specific heads to add depth to our understanding. We hope that you will find this information interesting. Moreover, we hope it will help you better understand the role personality plays in the future of any organization and how you might use it to better understand yourself and those around you.

