



(Bridge House College, 2014)

THE ESSENCE OF LEADERSHIP

PROFESSIONAL SKILLS III

Leadership & Excursion Assignment

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(tcuonhumantrafficking, 2015)

Introduction

Leadership competences for public managers are essential, as they have to perform in a complex environment and guide and thus cooperate effectively with different actors in order to counter obstacles and reach their objectives before certain deadlines. In fact, leadership provides the essential combination of skills to influence others, and therefore the leader has to distinguish itself from the mainstream group. Fundamental skills are intelligence, politeness, patience, communications skills and able to speak clearly in public. Moreover, a good intuition and creativity are also vital, as a leader has to make quick decisions under pressure and difficult circumstances. Besides the positive skills and competences, it is critical for a leader to avoid arrogant, hypocrite and respectful behavior, because then the willingness of the people to obey to order decreases, and this tends to be reinforced by the group and social pressure.

Moreover, one has to take into account that developing effective leadership qualities is a complex and time-consuming process, which requires significant efforts and multiple failures to modify approaches and strategies. In addition, leadership skills are not only essential in the professional sphere, but also in families and social environments, where there may be need for regulators and enforcers.

(Bridge House College, 2014) (Forbes, 2012) (University of Kent, 2011)

The diagram below illustrates which fundamental skills are required to function as an effective leader.



(University of Kent, 2011)

As the extensive comprehension of leadership skills and strategies is vital to function in the increasingly globalized world, International Public Management students have attended a lecture about leadership theory by Mr Jasper van Koppen, on Monday 5 April from 16:30 to 18:00 in ov5.09 at The Hague University of Applied Sciences. This lecture included the various definitions of leadership and the development in strategies, courses of action (COA) and focus on KEY-objectives. Moreover, the lecture included the four main forms of leaders which are: authoritarian, participative, consultative and laissez-faire. Therefore, by the end of the lecture the IPM students received a solid foundation of various forms and dimensions of leadership.

Subsequently, the IPM students could utilize this knowledge to conduct 2 kinds of online competency-skills tests, in order to determine what their strong and weak characteristics are, and especially what they should focus on during the IPM-leadership excursion at the Fort 1881 at Hoek van Holland, where the students could utilize and analyze the various theories and flaws of their leadership conducted during the activities. Moreover, this excursion was essential, in order to make students fully realize that leadership is more than just a theory and some rules, but especially developed and modified by intensive practice.

This paper will firstly provide a reflection on the lecture about leadership theory and attempt to illustrate the atmosphere and interactions during the lecture. Moreover, there was an exercise in class between groups of students with a surprising twist, which was essentially about the process in which leadership develops and thrives. Secondly, this paper will reflect on the online competency self-tests and its outcomes.

Thereafter, there is a significant shift, as the theoretical knowledge and comprehension will be connected to the practical activities of the IPM excursion. In order to fully illustrate the advantages and flaws, an extensive reflection and analysis will be made about the excursion activities and its surprising results.

Finally, this paper will present a conclusion in which it attempts to describe the importance of this leadership excursion and how that may affect the International Public Management students in their personal lives, career and academic development.



(Silverserper, 2015)

Reflection on Lecture Leadership Theory

The first-year International Public Management students have attended a thought-provoking lecture about leadership theory by Mr Jasper van Koppen, on Monday 5 April 2016 from 16:30 to 18:00 in ov5.09 at The Hague University of Applied Sciences, The Netherlands. Before the lecture started most students were talking with each other loudly and were enthusiastic about the lecture, as they were curious what the lecture and the connected excursion would be like. Moreover, students were discussing all details about the upcoming exams, as they were insecure or curious how difficult these would be and if their level of comprehension would be sufficient to obtain a minimum grade of 5.5.

Initially when Mr van Koppen started his lecture, most people were silent and listened to the introduction. Then, Mr van Koppen showed a slide with 6 completely different individuals marked by their position and actions in the world, each with their own legacies, which were in enormous contrast: Ms. Angela Dorothea Merkel, chancellor of Germany since 2005 (Biography, 2016); Mr. Barack Hussein Obama, the first African-American 44th president of the United States of America (Biography, 2016); Mr. Adolf Hitler, ruthless dictator of Nazi Germany and central figure of the Holocaust tragedy (Biography, 2016); Mr. Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin, president of Russia since 2012 (Biography, 2016); Mr. Nelson Mandela, first black president of post-apartheid South Africa and Nobel prize winner in 1993 (Biography, 2016); Angelina Jolie, Hollywood's "leading" actress and known for relationship with actor Brad Pitt (Biography, 2016).

These people left a great impression in the world, especially Hitler in an abhorrence inhuman sense. However, these people have a combination of skills and competences in common: they have tremendous leadership characteristics and use these to manipulate, mobilize and shape people in their favor and for their own, either commendable or atrocious, objectives and goals. When this slide was shown, the class became chaotic and everyone started to project their notions, opinions and analysis. Moreover, one could sense that the majority of the class made the major link between these six people. One could clearly notice that most students became very enthusiastic about the lecture and its content: it was an eye-opening and thought-provoking combination of people.

Secondly, the students received multiple, simple and complex, definitions of the concept 'leadership'. Some of the simple definitions given were: to force others to do something, to motivate others to do something and to tell others what to do. More detailed descriptions provided were: the ability to get participants in an organization to focus their attention on the problems that the leader considers significant: a process of social influence in which one person can enlist the aid and support from others in the accomplishment of a common task. In addition, more complex and extensive definitions were given: A leader is one or more people who selects, equips, trains, and influences one or more followers who have diverse gifts, abilities and skills and focus the followers to the organization's mission and objectives, causing the followers to willingly and enthusiastically expend spiritual, emotional, and physical energy in a concerted coordinated effort to achieve the organization's missions and objectives.

One could state that these various definitions are given in order to make one actively and intensively think about the concept of leadership, and make connotations from his own experiences and prejudices. As a result, one becomes more aware of the leadership processes and strategies in its own environment, and thus can better manage and anticipate on leadership challenges.

The following one-liner of president Ronald Reagan of the United States (1981-1989) was also projected: **“When you can’t make them see the light, make them feel the heat”**. This could make one think about the rules of enforcement to others, and most likely make a negative connection with leaders who used their position to cause intensive suffering, like Adolf Hitler exterminated almost 6 million Jewish civilians.

In fact, the word ‘heat’ may be interpreted by some as referring to hell and suffering, and therefore negative. Tragically, many Jewish people were burned in concentration camps in Nazi Germany. Therefore, one could interpret it as a paradox. (Goodreads, 2009)

Thereafter, the lecture proceeded towards the early forms of leadership and how these have developed in our complex and violent world. It distinguished between born leaders, man-made leaders, the context in which a leader has to function, and characteristics of inspiring leaders. One could argue that the essence of this analysis in context is to illustrate that the surroundings of an individual are essential for the amount of support he can obtain, and this will be reinforced by the essential combination of skills as discussed before. Moreover, it also underlines the socialization process, in which we learn, assimilate, reproduce and exchange values and norms as an essential development in the leadership capacity of a particular individual.

(Cohen, Kennedy, 2013)

What is more, the lecture provided the development of leadership from its early stages in the 19th century until the ‘inspiring’ in our contemporary and globalized world. In the 19th century leadership was innate, and characterized by particular characteristics. These leaders were mostly dominant and imposed their will and strategy on others. In the 30s and 40s they were characterized by the following distinguishing personal characteristics: intelligent, able to critically think, effective communicative skills, drive to perform and to excel over others, taking initiative, persistent, risk-immunity and self-tolerance. The second half of 20th century was characterized by man-made leaders, and shaped by situational approaches and behavior. The focus was not on who x-leader was, but what x-leader did. In a later stage, there was a subtle shift towards increased importance of relationship between the leader and his “subordinates”. By the end of the 20th century, leaders were significantly affected by the particular situations they had to function in and how they adjusted their approaches. Moreover, these leaders regarded their values and ideologies as essential in their process of leadership and strategy. Thus, the main focus was not only long on the behavior of these particular actors, but also on their expectations, the behavior and expectations of their subordinates, organizational and cultural policies and their explicit demands and tasks.

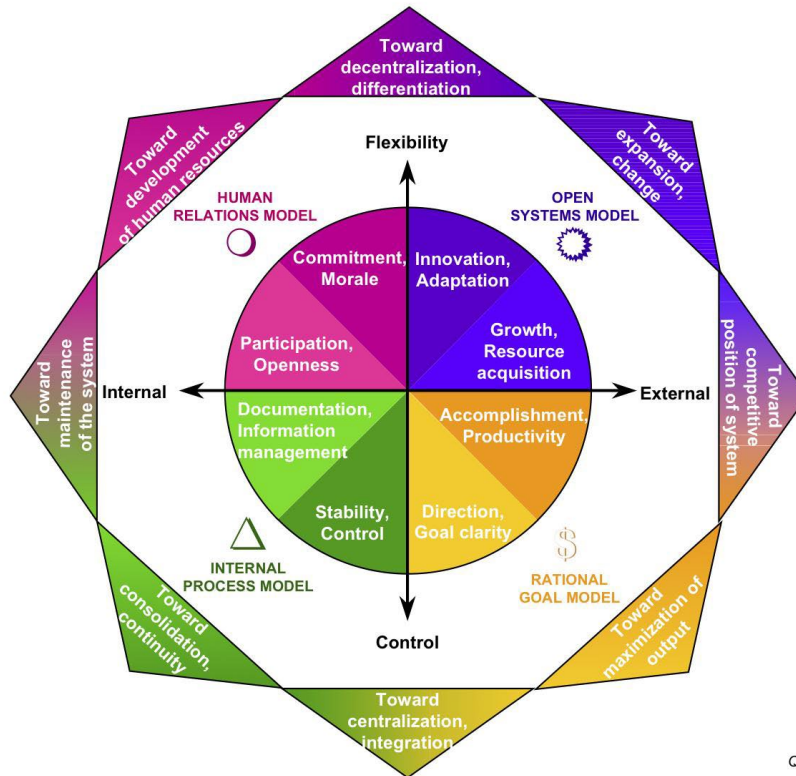
However, nowadays, it's mostly about inspiring leaders who can unify and mobilize people by their charisma and personality in combination with their leadership competences. The main focus is on shaping and influencing another's behavior in order to reach a shared objective. Here the focus is more inclusive and extensive: on the distinguishing qualities of a person, the skills and competences, the behavior, the relationship with others and the context in which one has to function.

One could argue that this development process is crucial to understand, as it provides more insight in the development of the characteristics and requirements of leadership. Subsequently one can better understand how to modify its own way of leadership in the increasingly globalizing intertwined complex world.

Then, the value of certain actions was illustrated as a means to emphasize the level of importance of certain actions and behavior. There was the effort value: the amount of work which one is prepared to invest and use to reach its objectives. Subsequently, the performance value: of course it is important how hard you are willing to work, but it has to lead to solid and effective results, otherwise it is a failure. Moreover, the competence value, as a means to measure and judge the combination of skills and competences.

What is more mentioned is the future value: this is also essential as people, especially subordinates, demand stability and predictability towards the ongoing development, which also serves their own intertwined interests and objectives. And one of the most essential and fueling values could be the commitment value, as that reflects the loyalty and willingness to work hard and give other issues up in order to reach and strengthen the position and strategy of the company, community or objective.

Hereunder, the Quinn competing values framework diagram illustrates how various resources and capabilities interact with processes which can affect the outcome. The complexity of this diagram represents essentially the complexity of human beings and their behavior and personality in all its dimensions.



Quinn (1996)

(appliedinnovation, 1996)

Moreover, four types of leadership forms were presented during the lecture in order to illustrate what characterizes those types and what its advantages and flaws are. First there is the authoritarian form of leadership, which is defined as centralized power and authority in one single actor, who is primarily focused on the execution of a task and does not feel obliged to provide accountability and argumentation. The main advantage of this form is that the decision making process and its implementation is rapid: however, a major flaw is that it is fragile and prone to violent uprising due to grievances of the subordinates.

President of Turkey, Raci Tayyip Erdogan, embodies a centralized authoritarian leader who does not accept any form of opposition, commands his subordinates how they should act and rules with an iron fist. Therefore, decisions are made quickly and he does not feel responsible, nor accountable for these acts which in many cases transgress human rights and Geneva conventions.

Mr Erdogan is primarily focused on one main objective for which everything else has to be destroyed: the implementation of a presidential system so that Erdogan can centralize all his power and become the Sultan of the so-called Ottoman Empire. (Burc, Copur, 2016)

The second is participative leadership, which means that there is cooperation and participation between all actors and the leader. In contrast to the authoritarian form, this form of power is decentralized in which all actors work in a team towards a main objective. Here the leader is accountable to his team, and subsequently this ensures, or at least stimulates, the leader to behave in a reasonable manner and ensure security and well-being of his subordinates. This form may be utilized in an organization in which separate teams, each headed by a manager or leader, work towards a main objective within a certain time period. The main advantage here is that a wide array of individuals who each have their own skills, experiences and strategies can exchange their ideas and suggestions, which will reinforce and complement the main strategy and course of action. Subsequently, it's the task of the leader to regulate and catalyze this input and make it compatible with the main objective. However, the major drawback is that the decision making process is slow, and therefore should be punctually managed by the leader.

The third form is the consultative form of leadership, which is characterized by decentralized influence and power, in which the team also provides ideas and suggestions, and also bears a part of the responsibility. However, in the end the main leader remains responsible for the actions and consequences. The main advantage here is that it's clear to determine the responsibility of the main actors: however, this form of operation needs intensive training and practice.

Laissez-Fair is the fourth form of leadership and refers to the informal structures in which the team operates, and subsequently this results in confusion as there is no clear leadership. The main advantage here is that there is much freedom for personal input and exchange of ideas and suggestions. In contrast the responsibility and accountability are difficult to determine, as there is no clear leadership. One can state that these various kinds of leadership forms are presented in order to clearly illustrate what the advantages and downsides of certain structure are, and also what interactions take place within these structures.

It is essential to take into consideration that there are no solid dividing borders between these forms of leadership, as there tend to intertwine, reinforce, clash and challenge each other. Moreover, there can be certain aspects of a consultative leadership which are utilized in various degrees in authoritarian styles of leadership and vice versa.










To determine the most effective leadership, the context and actors have to be analyzed, as these variable actors significantly affect and shape the process. Moreover, there should be an inclusive diagnosis in which the situation and the actors are recognized and evaluated. One should also be flexible and capable to adjust to certain circumstances, as there is never one solid approach for every complex situation. Moreover, it must be emphasized that communication is essential and must be direct and motivating, as the team of subordinates have to understand clearly what should be done in which sequence, and what obstacles they should take in mind in order to anticipate on those.

Then there was a small but very meaningful in class activity in which the students had to form groups of 4 or 5 persons and discuss a difficult situation in which a specific form of leadership was required which had to deal with ethical and moral issues. We were with 5 people in our group. Everyone had some ideas and started to share those with each other; however, I tried to listen carefully and regulate the conversation in order to keep it clear and to the point. Moreover, I asked some extensive explanation from a female colleague “A” who shared her thoughts and then I asked the other 3 colleagues, 2 males and 1 female what their ideas were on the suggestions of colleague “A”. Therefore, I regard myself as the main leader of that mini project, because I regulated and moderated the discussion with the main objective to keep it clear and to the point.

Moreover, I tried to give much opportunity to my colleagues to exchange their ideas and feedback, and therefore I utilized the participative and consultative form of leadership. At the end of the exercise Mr van Koppen said that who had the lead in the conversation was the leader of the day, and most student began to laugh and talk loudly that they were the obvious leader. However, I want to place a critical note with this statement, as I believe that sometimes a leader has to put itself on the background and listen very carefully and critically what is said, and subsequently interrupt on critical moments to guide and redirect the conversation. Moreover, a leader could function like a kind of supervisor who aims to ensure the main objective of the whole team as a collective, and not serve its own selfish or egocentric interests. In addition, I noticed that there was no clear distinction between my male and female colleagues in their level of activeness or participation, rather it is much more determined by their personality, skills and competences.

In the end of the lecture the students received a quote by Dr. R.M. Belbin: “A team is not a bunch of people with job titles, but a congregation of individuals, each of whom has a role which is understood by other members. Members of a team seek out certain roles and they perform most effectively in the ones that are most natural to them. According do Belbin there are 9 different roles and each refer to a particular skill set. In order to be most effective, one needs a combination of all these skills.

The essence of this model is that one needs to be in balance, meaning to comprehend a sufficient degree of a combination of these competences and skills, in order to be an effective and viable leader.

Team Role		Contribution	Allowable Weaknesses
Plant		Creative, imaginative, free-thinking. Generates ideas and solves difficult problems.	Ignores incidentals. Too preoccupied to communicate effectively.
Resource Investigator		Outgoing, enthusiastic, communicative. Explores opportunities and develops contacts.	Over-optimistic. Loses interest once initial enthusiasm has passed.
Co-ordinator		Mature, confident, identifies talent. Clarifies goals. Delegates effectively.	Can be seen as manipulative. Offloads own share of the work.
Shaper		Challenging, dynamic, thrives on pressure. Has the drive and courage to overcome obstacles.	Prone to provocation. Offends peoples feelings.
Monitor Evaluator		Sober, strategic and discerning. Sees all options and judges accurately.	Lacks drive and ability to inspire others. Can be overly critical.
Teamworker		Co-operative, perceptive and diplomatic. Listens and averts friction.	Indecisive in crunch situations. Avoids confrontation.
Implementer		Practical, reliable, efficient. Turns ideas into actions and organises work that needs to be done.	Somewhat inflexible. Slow to respond to new possibilities.
Completer Finisher		Painstaking, conscientious, anxious. Searches out errors. Polishes and perfects.	Inclined to worry unduly. Reluctant to delegate.
Specialist		Single-minded, self-starting, dedicated. Provides knowledge and skills in rare supply.	Contributes only on a narrow front. Dwells on technicalities.

(Belbin, 2016)

Finally, the students received 2 links for self-assessment tests, in order to determine what their strong and weak skills are and the utilize this knowledge at the IPM leadership excursion day at Fort 1881. The students received explicit advice to take into account the various leadership styles, traits and behaviors and to reflect upon these during the leadership excursion.

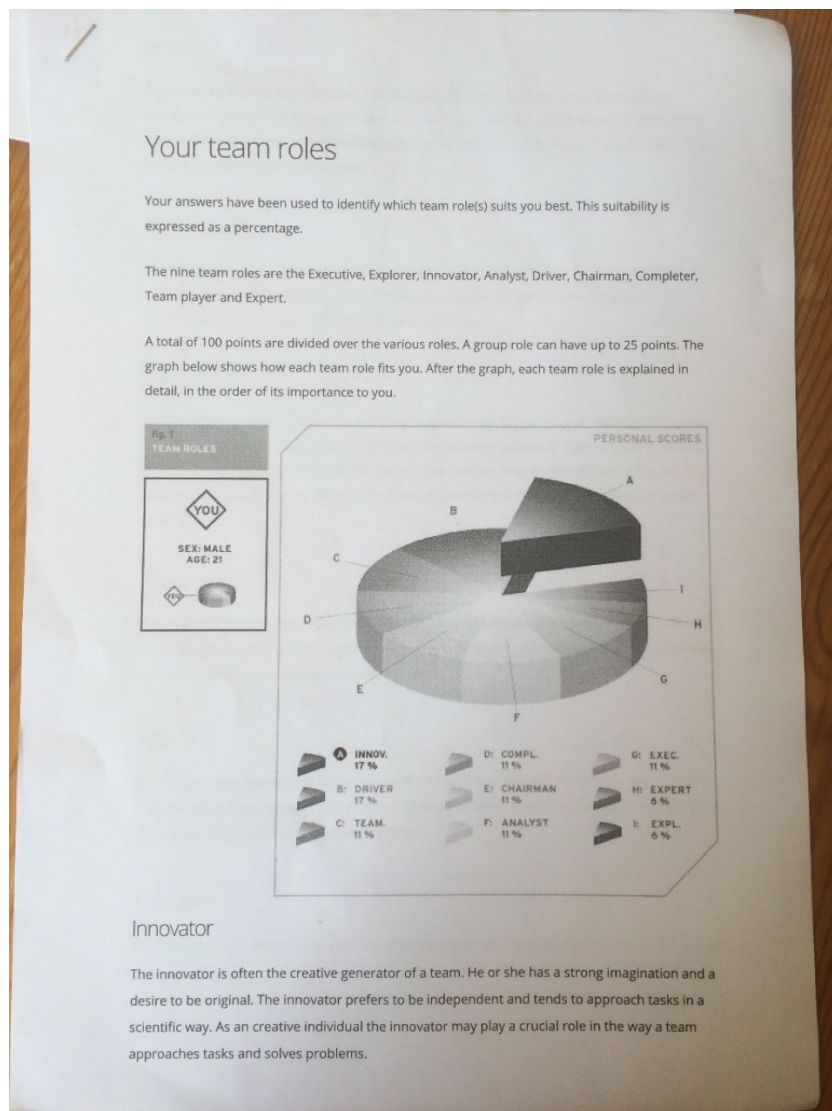
The following section of this reflection paper will briefly reflect upon the online self-assessment tests, and thereafter an extensive reflection will be presented about the IPM leadership excursion at Fort 1881 at Hoek van Holland.

Reflection Competency Skills Self-test

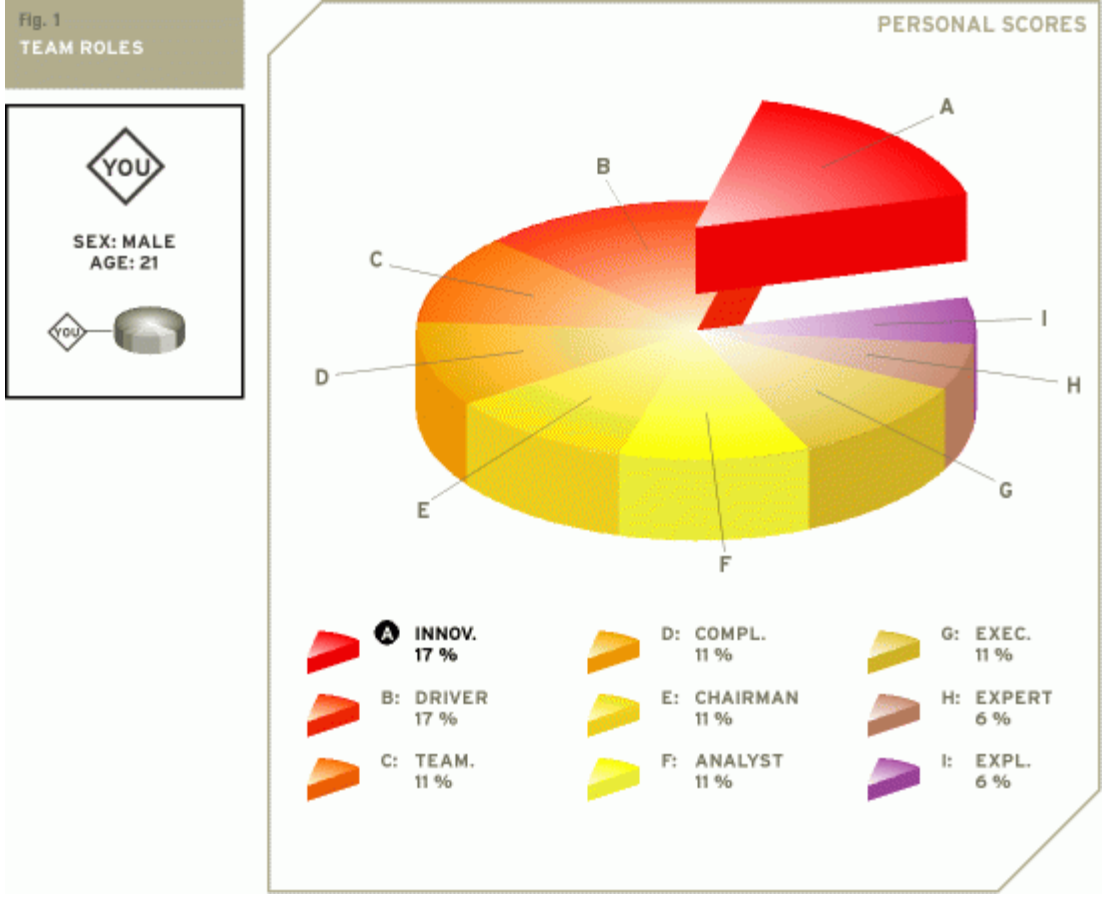
One Thursday 7 April, one day before the excursion, I made two online competency-skills self-tests. The first test was a team-roles test at <https://www.123test.nl/groepsrollentest/>. It was a short and simple test, and therefore I would like to question the reliability and specificity of this test. However, it provides a quick overview of your main characteristics and competencies.

In my case the following were the results: 17% innovator; 17 % driver; 11% team; 11% completer; 11% chairman; 11% analyst; 11% executive; 6% expert; 6% explorer.

Unfortunately, I have to question some of the results and accuracy of this test, as I am certainly an executer and explored: however, this simplified test must not be over-estimated, as it is very short and simplified, and therefore not solid and credible. In contrast, it is very clear that I am a innovator, as I am a co-founder of Ad Pacem, a new organization in the Hague which strives to organize thought-provoking events, which are fertile meeting points of people driven by justice and humanity, in order to work towards peace and justice in our violent world. Hereunder the overview of the results:



(123test-team-roles-test, 2016)

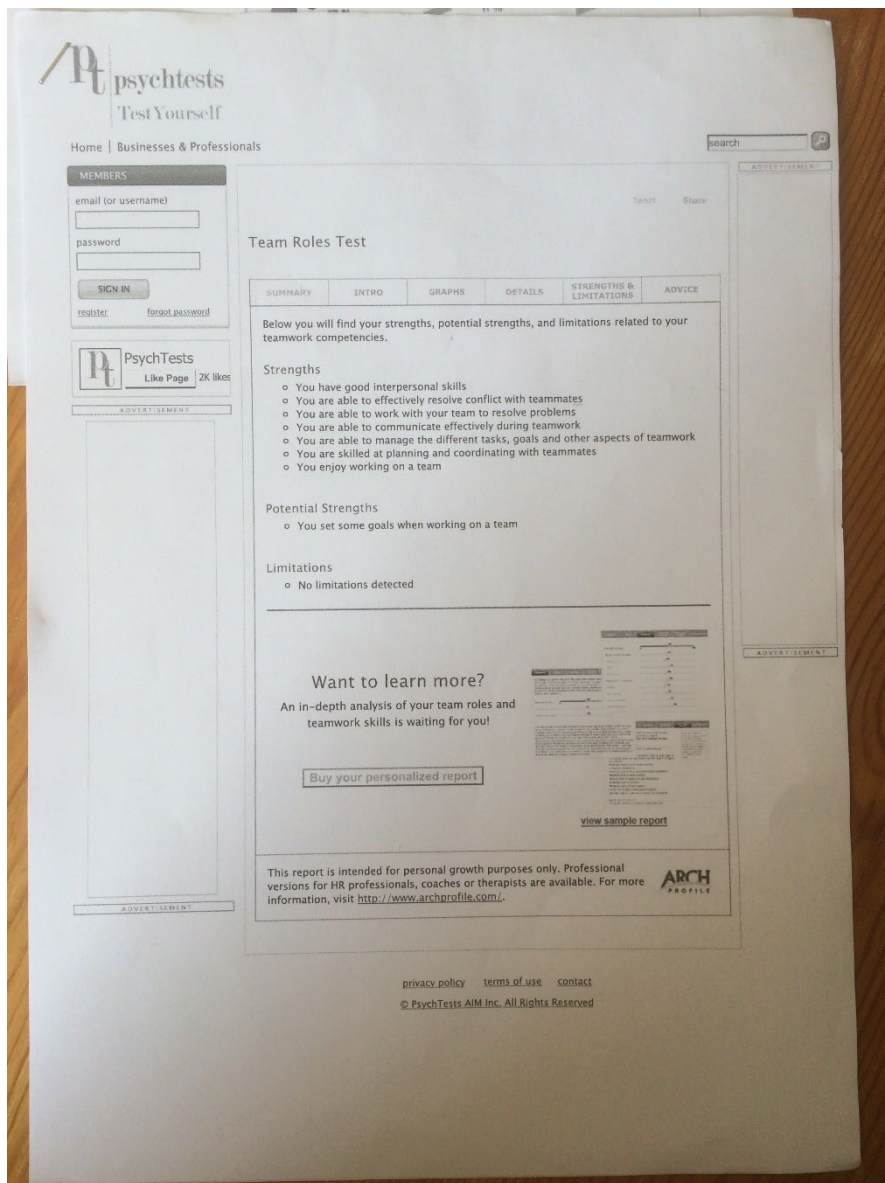


(123test-team-roles-test, 2016)

The second test was a long and extensive test with specific questions about complex cases and challenges on <http://testyourself.psychtests.com>. Therefore, I regard this test as a reliable and comprehensive test. My strengths were the following: I have good interpersonal skills; I am able to effectively resolve conflict with teammates; I am able to work with my team to resolve problems; I am able to communicate effectively during teamwork; I am able to manage different tasks, goals, and other aspects of teamwork; I am skilled at planning and coordinating with teammates, and I enjoy working in a team. One of the potential strengths was that I have to set goals when I work together in a team.

I regard this test as very accurate, because I can find myself in the results. I am naturally able to effectively work together with a diverse group of people towards a main objective. Moreover, I see that my competencies and skills keep improving as I work more intensively together with people on projects. Nowadays I am in the Think & Do Gender Tank @ lighthouse, and together with a team we strive to organize thought-provoking events about gender-inequality. Moreover, I do extensive research at Accenture in Amsterdam in order to create a Refugee Talent Hub Platform which aims to match refugees with the supply and demand of the Dutch labor market. This is essential to mention, as I sense that my ability to deal with challenges and deadlines within a project has significantly improved, as I learn from my mistakes and modify my approaches. One can state that making mistakes is essential in life, as long as you learn from these mistakes and modify the approaches.

Hereunder the overview of the online testyourself-psychtest.



(testyourself.psychtests, 2016)

Both of these online-competency tests were very helpful in the assessment of one's competencies and skills. It also spiked a moment of honest self-reflection and evaluation, as this "mirror" is essential in life, because constructive feedback is required to improve characteristics and strategies.

Moreover, it was very helpful do conduct these tests in preparation for the leadership excursion in order to be consciousness of certain behavior from actors, and to determine the effectivity and main flaws.

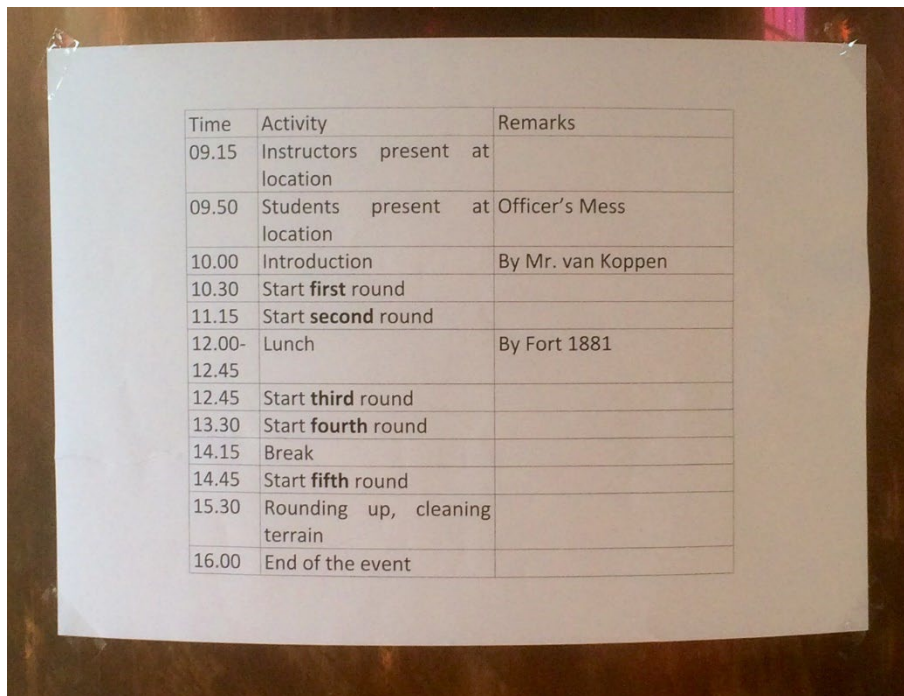
Reflection IPM Leadership Excursion Fort 1881

On Friday 8 April the International Public Management students attended a leadership excursion at Fort 1881 in Hoek van Holland. The students had to be on the location on 09:50: however, some students were too late. Together with a classmate I bicycled from The Hague to the location in Hoek van Holland which we regarded as a healthy warming up. Moreover, exercise is good one's physical and emotional condition, and thus beneficial for the excursion day itself.

When all students were present in the main building of the Fort 1881, Mr van Koppen gave us a brief introduction of the rules and activities of the day. Moreover, at a certain moment he commanded all students to start counting, in order to determine how many students were present. Initially, most students were reticent, and were looking to each other. Then, someone shouted one, subsequently another student said two, and so on, until 41. In the line of counting I was number 11, as I didn't want to interrupt someone in his count.

This small exercise already embodied the dimensions and complexities of leadership activities, as nobody really stood up and commanded that we should count in a specific order. Subsequently, this exercise could be described as a laissez-faire type of conduct. One could perceive this exercise as an implicit trigger to wake students up and stimulate them to think about the processes which were utilized during the activities.

Then we received an overview of the day's activities and the sequence in which we should conduct these.



Time	Activity	Remarks
09.15	Instructors present at location	
09.50	Students present at location	Officer's Mess
10.00	Introduction	By Mr. van Koppen
10.30	Start first round	
11.15	Start second round	
12.00-12.45	Lunch	By Fort 1881
12.45	Start third round	
13.30	Start fourth round	
14.15	Break	
14.45	Start fifth round	
15.30	Rounding up, cleaning terrain	
16.00	End of the event	

(IPM leadership Excursion Fort 1881 Hoek van Holland, 07-04-2016)

The students received a number on their hands when they walked out of the door, and in that way they were classified in separate groups. I received number four, and was scheduled in a group with total 8 people which consisted out of 3 males including myself, and 5 females. I tried to especially focus on the distinction between male and female behavior, as I am doing research on the innate behavior between male's in female's, and the results of these findings would be interesting to present during the regular meetings of the Think & Do Gender Tank.

The first exercise was named the Game of Thrones: a so-called imaginative acid-river with multiple wooden blocks which had to be safeguarded against the actor who rushed towards the wooden block which remained unprotected, due that someone ran to another block that was close to the actor who aimed at occupying the wooden block. Initially, there was no clear leader in this game, as 2 colleagues, 1 male and 1 female together with me discussed what would be the best strategy. In the beginning the game did not proceed smoothly, as the leader who was a female, did not clearly give orders, but allowed the other team members to share their thoughts. However, after multiple attempts, the team listened more carefully to the leader who gave about the strategy. The observer was a female who also agreed with the previous stated before, and stated that we should have made a better strategy from the beginning.

The second game was called Rome Attacks: it was a catapult exercise in which the team had to build a catapult construction in order to launch a ball 15 meters aimed at a target. Here, there was 1 main male leader, assisted by 2 supporting leaders, who gave the suggestions how it was best to construct the catapult. I was one of the supporting leaders, and tried to exchange my suggestions about the ideal construction, which the rest of the team accepted. At a certain moment, Mr van Koppen stated that we had to ensure safety and this spiked us to think better about our construction. The team accepted the authority of Mr van Koppen as an experienced teacher with credible military expertise, and thus another female of the team suggested to slightly modify the construction, to which the whole team agreed, as it was a viable structure. At this exercise it became clear that it was much better to utilize a participative and consultative form of leadership, as all the team members could reinforce each other, and 8 people know more than one single person. The female who observed praised that we succeeded in building a viable structure and actually launched the ball towards a significant distance of approximately 15 meters. Thus, in conclusion this activity required active teamwork and suggestions, in order to modify approaches and reach the main objective.

See hereunder the photos:



(catapult game, 07-04-2016)



(catapult game, 07-04-2016)

The third exercise was aimed at building an "A" construction in order to lift a team member without touching the "A" structure itself. Here I was the leader, but I utilized the consultative and participative leadership form. Especially at this activity, it was essential to work closely with each other in order to reach the main objective to lift the structure. Moreover, one could sense a more serious approach, as one of the team-members could be hurt if the rest of the team did not work together to prevent an accident. The observer was a male and agreed that we closely worked together and that we took each other's suggestions into account.



(A construction game, 07-04-2016)



(A construction game, 07-04-2016)

The fourth game was called “blind bearer” in which close cooperation between actors was required. Basically, there was an obstacle course, in which two blindfolded actors who hold each other were guided by a leader who made sound-commands on a flute to command the blindfolded actor to take certain directions. Here, there were 2 teams. I observed the 2nd team in which one male and one female were blindfolded and guided by a leader who was a male. The leader had to utilize the authoritarian from of leadership, as her command was the only thing the blindfolded actors could utilize to reach their objective. Moreover, I was the observer here and I sensed that the blindfolded participant exactly obeyed the orders from the authoritarian leader.



(blind bearer, 2016)



(blind bearer, 2016)

In the blind bearer game, it was essential that the blindfolded participants exactly did what was commanded by the leader, as this ensured their safety and to success of the objective.

The fifth game was a swamp-game in which close cooperation between the team members was required. The only safe spots in the swamp were 3 tires, and the team could utilize 2 wooden planks to reach the safe side of the swamp. Here, the leaders were 2 females which utilized the participative and consultative form of leadership. Moreover, the team was enthusiastic about the game because the atmosphere was positive and ensured a successful operation. The observer agreed that solid teamwork and adjustments ensured the success of this activity.



(Swamp game, 2016)

Unfortunately, there was not time enough time left to do the sixth activity, and at the end of the 5th activity everyone gathered at the main building of the Fort. Here, we had a solid evaluation headed by Mr van Koppen, in which all the experiences were surprisingly positive.

During my observations of the excursion day I concluded that leadership qualities are not defined by gender, sex, religion or any other such aspect, but rather the personality of someone and the will to take responsibility and charge over a particular objective and to ensure that others remain safe. As frequently stated by males in patriarchal societies that women cannot be effective leaders, I have convinced and can counter these statements by my own experiences and observations.

Moreover, the excursion day was characterized by comradeship and loyalty, and this ensured that there was a positive and stimulating atmosphere in which all participants were ready to help each other. In addition, in the breaks many males played football with each other, and this was much fun. It was surprising that there was not female during the soccer game.

During the lunch break all the participants of the excursion day received an inclusive lunch, which was very essential in order to have enough energy during the activities.

Conclusion

The combination of the extensive lecture about leadership, the online-self tests and the leadership excursion was a very enriching and thought-provoking course, as it stimulated critical self-analysis and thus self-development. Moreover, one could argue that especially for IPM students these leadership competences are essential in their future careers as policy advisors or managers of large-scale projects.

In fact, the consciousness of essential leadership skills and competences can stimulate personal development and the ability to deal with challenging and complex situations, in which multiple opposing actors, strive towards incompatible goals, or in the worst case, aim at fighting each other.

Moreover, this experience learned that making mistakes is essential, in all aspects of live, as long as one does learn from its mistakes and modifies its approaches. In addition, the value of communication within teamwork also proved to be vital, as this is the lifeline for successful exchange of strategies and feedback.

I especially became aware that we have to deal with a wide range of people in our daily life's, either in private circumstances or in the professional sphere. Each of them have their strong skills and competencies, and their weak sides, which may clash with other actors and interests. Thus it is essential to have a set of strong skills to be resilient and have the capability to deal with difficult situations and challenging tasks.

The essence of leadership is therefore, that one has to be realistic, pragmatic, flexible, and resilient to obstacles, opposing actors, critique and other complex challenges, and armed with the comprehensive set of skills and competencies one can ensure to reach a main objective and to protect his subordinates and stimulate process and development.

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