

FACILITATOR STYLE INVENTORY (FSI)

by Richard Brostrom

Teaching people for leadership roles in learning groups can be difficult, particularly when one consults the often conflicting "how to" literature on the subject. The classic debate between *behaviorists* (emphasizing control, shaping, prompting, reinforcing, token economy) and *humanists* (advocating freedom, spontaneity, student-centering, individuality, feelings) is just one example of basic differences.

A person new to facilitating and teaching can be confused by these separate advocacies or feel obliged to follow an unnatural "teaching" script simply because a text says it is *the* way.

DESCRIPTION OF THE FACILITATOR STYLE INVENTORY (FSI)

The Facilitator Style Inventory is designed as an orientation experience--one that explores various beliefs about the teaching-learning process and helps a facilitator/ teacher form decisions about the use of various methods and techniques. More than just techniques, however, participants learn about themselves and their personal impact on others in the teaching-learning setting. The goal is to develop a flexible set of alternative procedures and personal skills appropriate for learners, teachers, and facilitators, and for the task itself.

The FSI consists of 15 stem phrases, each of which has 4 completion statements. The completion items correspond to 4 major instructional orientations: the behaviorist, structuralist, functionalist, and humanist approaches.

Adapted for the UniServ and Organizer Facilitator team 2024 by Ellen Holmes

Facilitator Style Inventory

Instructions: For each of the following 15 phrases, rank the 4 completion statements given in the order that completes the phrase to your best satisfaction. Give your most favored statement a rank of 4; your next favored, 3; your next, 2; and your least favored statement, 1. Place your ranking for each statement in the square to the right of that statement.

	Your Ranking	
1. In planning teaching, I am most likely to...		
...survey the problem and develop valid exercises based on my findings.		C
...begin with a lesson plan – specifically what I want to teach, when, and how.		B
...pinpoint the results I want and construct a program that will almost run itself.		A
...consider the areas of greatest concern to the participants – and plan to deal with them, regardless of what they may be.		D
2. People learn best...		
...when they are free to explore – without the constraints of a ‘system’.		H
...when it is in their selfish interest to do so.		G
...from someone who knows what they are talking about.		F
...when conditions are right – and they have an opportunity for practice and repetition.		E
3. The purpose of teaching should be...		
...to develop the participants’ competency and mastery of specific skills.		A
...to transfer needed information to the learner in the most efficient way.		B
...to establish the learner’s capacity to solve their own problems.		C
...to facilitate certain insights on the part of the participants.		D
4. Most of what people know...		
...they have acquired through a systematic educational process.		F
...they have learned by experience in trial-and-error fashion.		E
...they have gained through a natural progression of self-discovery rather than some ‘teaching’ process.		H
...is a result of consciously pursuing their goals – solving problems as they go.		G

5. Decisions on what to be covered in a teaching event...		
...must be based on careful analysis of the task beforehand.		A
...should be made as the learning process goes along and the learners show their innate interests and abilities.		D
...should be mutually derived, by the learner and the teacher/facilitator.		C
...are based on what learners now know and must know at the conclusion of the event.		B
6. Good teachers start...		
...by gaining proficiency in the methods and processes of training – how to teach – and then bringing in the content.		F
...by recognizing that learners are highly motivated and capable of directing their own learning – if they have the opportunity.		G
...by mastering the field themselves and becoming effective ‘models’ for the learners.		H
...by considering the end behaviors they are looking for and the most efficient ways of producing them in learners.		E
7. As a teacher I am least successful in situations...		
...where learners are passive, untalkative, and expect the trainer to do all the work.		D
...that are unstructured, with learning objectives that are unclear.		A
...where there is no right answer.		B
...when I am teaching abstractions, rather than concrete, specific ideas.		C
8. In a teaching event, I try to create...		
...the real world – problems and all – and develop capacities for dealing with it.		G
...a learning climate that facilitates self-discovery, expression, and interaction.		H
...a stimulating environment that attracts and holds the learners and moves them systematically toward the objective.		E
...an interesting array of resources of all kinds – books, materials, etc. – directed at the learners’ needs.		F
9. Emotions in the learning process...		
...are utilized by the skillful trainer to accomplish the learning objective.		A
...have potential if the trainer can capture the learner’s attention.		B
...will propel the learner in many directions, which the trainer may follow and support.		D
...provide energy that must be focused on problems or questions.		C

10. Teaching methods...		
...should be relatively flexible but present real challenges to the learner.		G
...should be determined by the subject.		F
...must emphasize trial and feedback.		E
...must allow freedom for the individual learner.		H
11. When learners are uninterested in a subject, it is probably because...		
...they do not see the benefit.		C
...they are not ready to learn it.		D
...the instructor has not adequately prepared the lesson.		B
...of poor planning.		A
12. Learners are all different:		
...some will learn, but others may be better suited for another activity.		H
...the best approach is to teach the basics well and put learners on their own after that.		G
...with an effective training design, most tasks can be mastered by the majority of learners.		E
...an experienced teacher/trainer, properly organized, can overcome most difficulties.		F
13. Evaluation of instruction...		
...is done by learners, regardless of the instructor; the instructor should be a sounding board.		D
...should be built into the system, so that learners continually receive feedback and adjust their performance accordingly.		A
...is ultimately decided when the student encounters a problem and successfully resolves it.		C
...should be based on pre-established learning objectives and done at the end of instruction to determine learning gains.		B
14. Learners seem to have the most regard for a teacher who...		
...taught them something, regardless of how painful.		G
...guided them through experiences with well-directed feedback.		E
...systematically led them step-by-step.		F
...inspired them and indirectly influenced their lives.		H
15. In the end, if learners have not learned...		
...the teacher has not taught.		B
...they should repeat the experience.		A
...maybe it was not worth learning.		C
...it may be unfortunate, but not everyone can succeed at all tasks.		D

SCORING THE FACILITATOR STYLE INVENTORY (FSI)

Sum all the numbers that you placed in the "A" and "E" boxes in the Training Style Inventory. Place this total in the "A + E" box in the table below. This is your behaviorist score. Do the same for the following totals: "B" and "F"; "C" and "G"; "D" and "H."

A+E	B+F	C+G	D+H
Behaviorist Score <i>"New behavior can be caused and 'shaped' with well-designed structures around the learner."</i>	Structuralist Score <i>"The mind is like a computer; the teacher is the programmer."</i>	Functionalist Score <i>"People learn best by doing, and they will do best what they want to do. People will learn what is practical."</i>	Humanist Score <i>"Learning is self-directed discovery. People are natural and unfold (like a flower) if others do not inhibit the process."</i>

Reflection Questions

1. In which instructional orientation (i.e. behaviorist, structuralist, etc.) your highest score? Your lowest score? Do your scores surprise you in anyway or reaffirm what you already know about yourself?

2. Review the Strengths and Limitations table on the next page. For your highest rated instructional orientation, what are your visceral reactions to what is written in the table? Explain. Do you have any examples that reinforce these strengths or limitations? Explain.

3. Review the terminology on page 7 of this handout. Place a check in the top five descriptors that you would use to best describe your facilitator style. How might these points be helpful to your co-trainers?

	Strengths	Limitations
Behaviorist	"The Doctor": clear, precise, and deliberate; low risk; careful preparation; emotionally attentive; complete security for learners; a trust builder; everything "arranged"; protective; patient; in control.	"The Manipulator": fosters dependence; overprotective; controlling; manipulative "for their own good"; sugar-coating; hypocritical agreeing; deceptive assurances; withholding data.
Structuralist	"The Expert": informative; thorough; certain; systematic; stimulating; good audio-visual techniques; well rehearsed; strong leader; powerful; expressive; dramatic; entertaining.	"The Elitist": preoccupied with means, image, or structure rather than results; ignores affective variables; inflexible (must follow lesson plan); dichotomous (black or white) thinking; superior.
Functionalist	"The Coach": emphasizes purpose; challenges learners; realistic; lets people perform and make mistakes; takes risks; gives feedback; builds confidence; persuasive; gives opportunity and recognition.	"Sink or Swim": ends justify means; loses patience with slow learners; intimidating; insensitive; competitive; overly task oriented; opportunistic, return-on-investment mortality.
Humanist	"The Counselor": sensitive; emphatic; open; spontaneous; creative; a "mirror"; non-evaluative; accepting; responsive to learners; facilitative; interactive; helpful.	"The Fuzzy Thinker": vague directions; abstract, esoteric, or personal content; lacks performance criteria; unconcerned with clock time; poor control of group; resists "teaching"; appears unprepared.

Facilitation Styles

The following terminology has been adapted from Richard Brostrom's Teaching Style Inventory (TSI) to provide language to adult educators when identifying their teaching styles. It is likely that your teaching styles are pulled from multiple columns of instructional orientations.

Behaviorist	Structuralist	Functionalist	Humanist
• Clear, precise, and deliberate • Low risk • Careful preparation • Emotionally attentive • Complete security for learners • A trust builder • Everything 'arranged' • Protective patient • In control	• Informative • Thorough • Certain • Systematic • Stimulating • Good audio-visual techniques • Well-rehearsed • Strong leader • Powerful • Expressive • Dramatic • Entertaining	• Emphasizes purpose • Challenges learners • Realistic • Lets people perform and make mistakes • Takes risks • Gives feedback • Builds confidence • Persuasive • Gives opportunity and recognition	• Sensitive • Emphatic • Open • Spontaneous • Creative • Non-evaluative • Accepting • Responsive to learners • Facilitative • Interactive • Helpful

References

- Mager, R.F. *Preparing Instructional Objectives*. Fearon: Belmont, CA: 1975.
McClelland, D.C., et al. *The Achievement Motive*. Halsted Press: New York: 1976.
Roger, C.R. *Freedom To Learn*. Charles E. Merrill: Columbus, OH, 1969.
Skinner, B.F. *About Behaviorism*. Knopf: New York, 1974.

Based on and adapted from *Developing Effective Teaching Styles* by Richard Brostrom. Copyright © COMCOR, 1975. This material may be freely reproduced for educational/ training/ research activities only. Permission for systematic or large-scale reproduction or distribution--or inclusion in other publications--must be obtained from the copyright holder.

Richard Brostrom is president of COMCOR, Madison, Wisconsin, a training and development consulting firm that publishes *Seminars*, the Directory of Continuing and Professional Education Programs. He is an organization development practitioner, a business development consultant, and a frequent workshop leader at the University of Wisconsin Management Institute.