

Instrument for Identifying Teaching Styles (IFITS)

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Purpose

The Instrument for Identifying Teaching Styles (IFITS) is an interval recording instrument developed to record the amount of time in which teachers use each of eight teaching styles originally identified by Mosston (1981). The first five styles [style A (command), style B (practice), style C (reciprocal), style D (self-check), and style E (inclusion)] are reproductive styles. The last three styles [style F (guided discovery), style G (divergent), and style H (going beyond)] are productive styles. A management category is also included in the instrument since when teachers are not employing one of the teaching styles they are involved in some type of managerial action.

Category Descriptions

Definitions of the eight teaching styles and management are found in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Definitions of the Teaching Styles and Management.

Reproductive Styles

Style A (Command): The teacher makes all the decisions. The teacher demonstrates or explains a task for the pupils to emulate, then directs the pupils' practice by giving commands. The pupils react only when told to do so by the teacher. The teacher evaluates pupils' performances in terms of congruence with the prescribed task. Example: Pupils "shadow" the service action demonstrated by the teacher during a tennis lesson.

Style B (Practice): The teacher demonstrates or describes a task and the pupils practice the task at their own pace. The teacher provides pupils with performance feedback. Example: The teacher demonstrates seam bowling during a cricket lesson and then circulates giving feedback to pupils as they practice.

Style C (Reciprocal): The teacher demonstrates or describes a task. The pupils then practice in pairs. One pupil (the doer) practices while the other pupil (the observer) evaluates his/her partner's performance and provides feedback based on criteria supplied by the teacher. During the practice phase, the teacher assists the observer while taking care not to take over the observer's role. Example: The teacher demonstrates correct discus throwing technique. During the practice phase, pupils work in pairs and take turns at throwing and providing feedback.

Style D (Self-Check): The teacher presents a task. Pupils practice at their own pace but are now responsible for analyzing their own performances. During practice the teacher does not provide performance feedback. Instead his/her role is to help pupils hone their self-evaluation skills. Example: The teacher demonstrates correct long jumping technique. During the practice phase he/she asks the pupils to evaluate their own performances.

Style E (Inclusion): The teacher models a task with several levels of difficulty. At the beginning of the practice phase the pupils choose the level of difficulty at which they feel most comfortable. During practice they are encouraged by the teacher to evaluate their own performances and decide when to change to a new level of difficulty. Example: The teacher demonstrates high-jumping with the "straddle" technique and allows the pupils to decide on the heights they wish to attempt to clear.

Productive Styles

Style F (Guided Discovery): The teacher asks a series of questions or sets a series of physical problems that when answered or solved leads the pupils to discover a desired skill or concept. Examples: (1) During a cricket lesson, the teacher asks a series of questions about body positioning while fielding which leads pupils to discover and understand the concept of the "long barrier." (2) The teacher asks the pupils to engage in two conditioned games of tennis, one on a "long thin" court and one on a "short fat" court. Pupils are then asked how they can best move their opponents around in these conditions so that they discover the drop-shot, the lob, and the concept of using angles.

Style G (Divergent): The teacher asks a question or sets a physical problem to which there are many possible answers or solutions. The pupils then set about finding and evaluating alternative answers and solutions. Examples: (1) The teacher provides the class with an assortment of suitable equipment and asks groups of pupils to design their own striking/fielding game. (2) During a track and field lesson, the teacher asks pupils to come up with different strategies that they might try if engaged in a 1500 metre race.

Style H (Going Beyond): The pupils identify problems and set about finding and evaluating alternative solutions. The teacher assumes the role of facilitator. This involves providing help when it is asked for and asking questions for clarification. Example: During a tennis lesson, pupils are asked to decide which skills or strategies they need to work on, to design and engage in activities which might lead to skill improvement, and to evaluate their own performances.

Management (M): The time the teacher is engaged in activity not related directly to instruction. This includes time spent beginning and ending classes, managing equipment, organizing, dealing with pupil behaviour, and any other tasks other than instruction or class management. Example: The teacher gives out floats to pupils participating in a swimming lesson.

NOTE: Definitions of teaching styles are based on descriptions provided by Jewett and Bain (1985) and the definition of management is based on descriptions provided by Phillips, Carlisle, Steffen, and Stroot (1986).

Procedures

Every 20 seconds a coder using IFITS makes a decision about which teaching style a teacher is using or whether he/she is engaged in managerial activity. These decisions are marked on the IFITS coding sheet (See Appendix). Within intervals in which two or more teaching styles are used, the least direct style (i.e., the style which is further along the spectrum from style A) is given preference and recorded. Within intervals in which management occurs but teachers also employ one of the eight teaching styles, the teaching style is given preference and recorded.

Summarizing and Interpreting the Data

Percentages of intervals are calculated for each teaching style and management, for the reproductive styles, and for the productive styles. For example, if a lesson had lasted for 30 minutes (90 intervals) and 45 intervals were coded as Style B the percentage of time allocated for style B would be approximated at 50% ($45/90 \times 100 = 50$).

References

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- Jewett, A. E., & Bain, L. L. (1985). The curriculum process in physical education. Dubuque, IA: Wm. C. Brown.