

Facilitation Skills

In an active classroom environment the role of a teacher is often that of a facilitator, supporting pupils as they learn and develop skills in, for example, assessing evidence, negotiation, making informed decisions, solving problems, working independently and working with others. Pupil participation and involvement in their learning is essential.

Sometimes it is appropriate for the facilitator to take on a particular role/function in an attempt to enhance the learning within the class or to challenge their thinking in a new way. Some of these possible roles include:

Neutral facilitator: The facilitator enables the group to explore a range of different viewpoints without stating their own opinion.

Devil's advocate: The facilitator deliberately adopts an opposite stance to confront people, irrespective of their own views. This method is slightly 'tongue-in-cheek'.

Declared interests: The facilitator declares their own position so that the group knows their views.

Ally: The facilitator supports the views of a particular sub-group or individual (usually a minority) within a group.

Official view: The facilitator informs the group of the official position on certain issues e.g. official organisations, the law etc.

Challenger: The facilitator, through questioning, challenges the views being expressed and encourages the pupils to justify their position.

Provocateur: The facilitator brings up an argument, viewpoint and information which they know will provoke the class, and which they do not necessarily believe, but because they are authentic beliefs of other individuals or groups, they present them convincingly.

In-role: The facilitator may "become" a particular person or caricature (for example a church leader or a politician), putting across their arguments and position to the class.

The above facilitation roles have their advantages and disadvantages and it is important to weigh these up in planning your lessons. Questions to think about may include:

- How will I feel about taking on these roles?
- Can I think of areas in my existing practice to which some of these roles may be applied?
- Do I sometimes take on some of these roles unconsciously?
- Are there any specific needs in my class to be taken into account?
- What strategies can I use to deal with difficult and challenging issues that may be raised?
- Am I clear as to what my learning intentions and outcomes are for the lesson etc?