

A Rose by Any Other Name: Educator, Instructor, Facilitator, What Are You?
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Abstract

As the teaching style changes from behaviorist to constructivist, from ‘sage on the stage’ to ‘guide on the side,’ the question arises of the meaning of this altering style for the person or persons assigning the grades in the course. How does a change in title affect the responsibilities associated with that title? What does the term mean in relation to what is expected of an educator? Exploring the new pedagogies touted today for teaching and learning, particularly online, and how these changes are reflected in the new titles used, this article will strive to answer the question, “is an educator by any other name still a provider of knowledge?”

Opening *The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language, Fourth Edition*, the definition of educator is “(1) one trained in teaching; a teacher; (2) (a) a specialist in the theory and practice of education, (b) an administrator of a school or an educational institution.” The definition of instructor, on the other hand, is “(1) one who instructs; a teacher; (2) a college or university teacher who ranks below an assistant professor.” Facilitator, on the other hand, is not even mentioned in this dictionary, except as an alternative format of the word ‘facilitate.’ Looking at the definitions of the terms educator and instructor, the word ‘teacher’ is listed in both. This raises the questions of which is the appropriate name to use, and does the title affect the image portrayed?

Problem

With the changing nature of education, and the issue in the English language with a multitude of words that can be used interchangeably, one starts to wonder at what is the correct address to use for that person who assigns grades to the other members of a

learning environment. Shi (2006) notes that language affects identity – the term we use to identify ourselves helps define the role we play in the learning environment, regardless of our belief system. The traditions associated with the terms used in education, as well, Holmes (2004) found, influence the nature of the interactions in the classroom. How students react to us as instructors is influenced, in part, by the term we use to identify ourselves (Holling & Rodriguez 2006) and how students themselves interpret these terms (Lin & Kinzer 2003). The first thing that must be done is to define who we are, before we expect students to know what is going to happen in the learning environment they are entering. As Hwa-Froelich and Vigil (2004) have found, interactions in any setting involve a preconceived notion of the roles of the participants, partially based on the image portrayed with the title of the participants.

Literature Review

Research into the terms commonly used for ‘that person in front of the class who assigns grades,’ leads to the following fifteen terms to be considered: expert, professor, teacher, tutor, coach, disciplinarian, guide, guru, faculty, facilitator, instructor, advisor, counselor, master, and mentor as presented in *Roget’s New Millennium™ Thesaurus, First Edition (v 1.3.1)* and retrieved on April 11, 2007 from Thesaurus.com. It was then researched to see which of these were cross-listed as a synonym for another (see Table 1). Teacher was considered synonymous with all but two (counselor and expert). Facilitator was not listed in the thesaurus, and thus no synonyms were found. Tutor was a close second with the number of synonyms (N = 9), while disciplinarian and expert were synonymous with the least, with disciplinarian only being synonymous with teacher and expert being synonymous only with advisor.

Table 1: Synonyms Amongst Terms

	advisor	coach	counselor	disciplinarian	expert	facilitator	faculty	guide	guru	instructor	master	mentor	professor	teacher	tutor
advisers	--		X				X	X		X				X	
Coach	X	--								X		X		X	X
counselor	X		--					X				X			
disciplinarian				--										X	
Expert	X				--										
Guide	X		X					--	X	X	X	X		X	X
Guru					X			X	--		X	X	X	X	X
instructors	X		X				X			--	X	X	X	X	X
Master				X	X			X	X	X	--			X	X
mentors	X	X	X				X	X		X		--		X	X
professorate							X			X			--	X	
Teacher	X	X	X	X				X	X	X	X	X		--	X
Tutors	X	X					X		X	X	X	X	X	X	--

Further examination of the synonyms for these terms suggests additional information regarding how these terms are viewed by the creator(s) of thesauri. The term ‘authority’ is seen as synonymous with expert, disciplinarian, guru, and advisor, but not with teacher – a term synonymous with the other four. Babysitter, a term found to be synonymous with teacher, is also found to be synonymous with tutor and instructor. While both ‘authority’ and ‘babysitter’ are found in this range of terms as a synonym, they do indeed bring to mind strongly different images. What one must consider when determining the label to use for the person at the front of the room is ‘what image do I want to portray through the title I give myself?’ Do I want to be seen as authoritarian, or more maternal as a babysitter?

An expert, as per the synonyms available in *Roget's New Millennium™ Thesaurus, First Edition (v 1.3.1)*, is synonymous only with advisor – not with any of the other terms under consideration in this paper. A guide, synonymous with eight of the other terms other study, is also seen as a teacher, tutor, guru, instructor, advisor,

counselor, master, or mentor. A guide, however, is not seen as an expert, a professor, a coach, a disciplinarian, or a faculty. This makes one wonder about the idea of a ‘guide on the side’ – does the learner really want someone who is not an expert and who cannot discipline when needed?

A guru, according to the thesaurus, is synonymous not only with expert, professor, teacher, tutor, guide, master, and mentor, but also with authority, leader, and sage. When visualizing a guru, a teacher or professor, or a ‘sage on the stage’ might come to mind. Yet, the guru is also considered to be equivalent to the mentor, the tutor, or the ‘guide on the side.’

As can be seen in Appendix A, the list goes on with samples of the synonyms available for each selected term. What does this mean for the person left holding the chalk? In 2005, Chung noted a deficiency in current distance learning, the lack of lecture. According to Chung, the lack of a ‘sage on the stage’ is not a one-size-fits-all complaint. Rather than distinguishing between behaviorist and constructivist teaching methods, Chung differentiates between those subjects that need ‘teaching’ and those that need ‘observing.’ However, Arndt (1999) notes that even in the theatre, where the emphasis is on active learning, or constructivism, many courses are still taught in the lecture, or behaviorist, method. Beyond theatre, Yang and Tang in 2003 noted that there is still not a trend towards changing the traditional classroom pedagogy, even with the growing impact on education systems globally of e-learning, distance learning and asynchronous learning.

Chung’s (2005) two ends of the spectrum can be aligned with the behaviorist – constructivist debate in some ways. This debate, is more, however, between lecturing

and discussing, rather than lecturing and experiencing. In 1999, Clark remarked on the debate he had heard about during attendance at conferences regarding who is delivering the learning and changes in the role of the professional educator. These debates are still occurring today, as demonstrated in part through this paper.

Jones (2006) compares the “sage on the stage” vs “guide on the side” continuum to active teaching/lecturing vs. facilitating student learning. Jones notes that one cause of the return to the Socratic Method, or constructivism, is the increasing availability of information for learners. This influx of alternate primary sources of information (or sages) replaces the teacher as the ‘font of knowledge’ and causes a need for role change. Of particular interest is Jones’ indication of a change in terminology – from lecturers or teachers to mentors, coaches, catalysts and guides. Jones later addresses the change in emphasis from “what to learn” to “how to learn,” again a change from behaviorist or “sage” to constructivist or “guide.” This need for change, Jones notes again, is because of the influx of information and knowledge from other, often technologically-based, sources that are frequently viewed as the ‘sage’ or ‘font of knowledge.’

In 1998, Wildman remarked as well on the change in terminology, from ‘lecturer’ to ‘learning coach,’ and the need to be aware of resistance to such a change. He goes on to discuss the change in teaching, or learning, as a power, where the power changes from ‘over the students’ to ‘with the students.’ Rather than teaching to the students, you are teaching (or learning) with the students. Wildman’s definition ‘lecturer’ or having power over the students is similar to the behaviorist approach, or the ‘sage on the stage;’ while the definition provided for ‘learning coach’ or ‘power with the students’ is more aligned with the constructivist approach.

King (1993) puts it another way, does the professor pour knowledge into the empty container of the student's head, or does the professor expect the students to think for themselves and to produce knowledge? Should the sage provide knowledge for direct reproduction or should the guide provide the aide needed to produce new knowledge? King also brings forth the idea of who is at the center of the learning process – the instructor (behaviorist) or the student (constructivist).

Perrin (2001) raises the idea of “mentor in the center,” an inane progression in the change from “sage on the stage” to “guide on the side.” According to Perrin, the shift is not in teaching or learning styles, but rather on the value placed in peer-to-peer exchange. Using the behaviorist/constructivist ideals as polar opposites, this value of peer-to-peer exchange can be considered as none versus heavy reliance upon peers, respectively. Perrin's idea of “mentor in the center” seems to put equal emphasis on guiding peer-to-peer exchange and on providing the information in order to help keep the peer-to-peer exchange going along the correct track. Finding the right combination to become the most effective ‘mentor in the center’ is the challenge often at hand (Chute, Sayers, & Gardner 1997).

Halonen (2001) also notes that postmodern times defies the tidiness of a dichotomy between behaviorism and constructivism. Rather than having to choose, as popularized in the 1990s, between being a ‘sage’ or a ‘guide,’ between lecturing or active learning, Perrin's (2001) idea of a ‘mentor in the center’ provides a middle-ground.

Morgan (1999) noted a change in teaching style, that ‘stand and deliver’ or ‘sage on the stage’ or behaviorist – the traditional methods – has been coming under increasing attack for decades for its lack of ‘guiding from the side’ of students’ learning processes.

Changing from the 'chalk and talk' method to the 'keyboard and type' method is not always an easy one, as this is not a direct transition. This change requires not only a change in medium for provision of knowledge, but also a change in media (Meyer 2002; Treleaven & Cecez-Kecmanovic 2001). Both the knowledge provided and the way it is provided changes based on the technology. But should this be a totally black-and-white change or can it be a partial one, as noted by Perrin (2001) and Halonen (2001) – the 'mentor in the center.'

While the online world requires action to be able to indicate presence (Bignaut & Trollip 2003; Martyn 2003; Spiceland & Hawkins 2002), this does not always mean constructivism. Presence can also be indicated by answering direct questions that have forced answers (such as a yes/no or a multiple choice – one right answer type question), which is more suited to a behaviorist approach. It is only when the change becomes not only in the medium of the instruction but also in the instructional style that the transformation truly occurs effectively (Tely 1999). This change in style is necessary for both learners and instructors, to change from dissemination by one to creation by all; from instructor domination to collaboration by all (Tam 2000).

Backlund, Ivi and Javidi (1996) noted that instructors assess both cognitive and behavioral areas of students. While this is true in theory, often it is not the case practically. For the purpose of this paper, however, it will be assumed that instructors assess both areas in the course of their learning experiences with students. How does this need to assess in both methods affect the students' learning methods and the instructor's style of teaching? This proposed need to assess students in both areas creates a challenge, particularly with the growing use of technology which decreases the

geographical divide, to meet the needs of increasingly diverse student bodies (Backlund, Ivi & Javidi, 1996).

Findings

An informal survey participation request letter was sent to the DEOS-L listserv with a request for participation in a survey on this topic as posted on SurveyMonkey.com. Sixteen members of an unknown membership number responded to the anonymous online survey. Of these 16 respondents, 7 reported being faculty, while none reported being graduate or undergraduate students and the remaining 9 reported a position of 'other.' The survey consisted of one question with a multitude of terms to rank on a four point scale between constructivist and behaviorist, with an option of Not Applicable being available for each term (see Appendix B). The terms examined for opinions of each term as being more of a constructivist or behaviorist approach were: administrator, advisor/adviser, advocate, assistant, authority, boss, chief, coach, commandant, conductor, consultant, controller, counselor, demonstrator, director, disciplinarian, docent, don, educator, employer, enforcer, example, expert, facilitator, faculty, fellow, formalist, friend, genius, governess, guardian, guide, guru, head, helper, instructor, lecturer, master, maven, mentor, monitor, partner, pedagogue, preceptor, principal, professor, researcher, scholar, schoolmaster, superintendent, supervisor, teacher, trainer, and tutor.

Of the terms surveyed (N = 55), 44 of the items received responses of 'Not Applicable.' Those terms receiving this response any more than two times (N = 26) were not considered for further study, as this is a 12.5% response rate of not applicable,

indicating these terms should not be studied. This led to a sample of 44 terms being studied in this research.

Upon analysis of the 44 terms, facilitator was deemed by 12 of the respondents to be constructivist, with three respondents rating the term as closer to constructivist than behaviorist, and only one respondent deemed the term to be behaviorist. No respondents declined to rate this term.

The terms partner, friend, and advisor/adviser were deemed by half of the respondents (N=8) each to be a constructivist term. One respondent each also deemed the term to be behaviorist. One respondent each also declined to rate this item, reporting 'Not Applicable.' Where these terms differ in their connotations is on the border between constructivist and behaviorist. Six respondents found more of a constructivist connotation in partner, five found so with the term friend, and four found so with the term advisor or adviser. Two respondents found a behaviorist leaning in the term advisor or adviser, while only one found so in the term friend, and none found so in the term partner.

The terms guide and coach each had a 37.5 percent response of a connotation of constructivist (N = 8), and only one respondent each finding the term to be behaviorist. No respondents declined to rate either of these two terms. While eight respondents (50%) found the term guide to lean more towards constructivist, only seven found the term coach to do so. Two respondents found the term coach to lean more towards behaviorist, while only one found the term guide to do so.

The terms advocate and assistant each had five respondents indicating a constructivist image. However, while nine respondents indicated the term advocate

leaned more towards constructivist than behaviorist, the term assistant only had one respondent. Five respondents indicated the term assistant had a leaning more towards behaviorist than constructivist, and three respondents reported an imagery of a behaviorist. Only one respondent found the term advocate indicated a connotation of behaviorist, and none found the term to be indicative of behaviorism. One respondent reported 'not applicable' to the term advocate while two respondents so indicated for the term assistant.

Three additional terms were reported to have constructivist leanings by more than half ($N = 9$) of the respondents. These terms are tutor, helper, and mentor. Mentor was found by one quarter ($N = 4$) of the respondents to be constructivist, while only two found the term behaviorist. The term helper was found by three respondents to be constructivist, with two finding the term to lean more towards behaviorist. It was surprising to note that more respondents found mentor ($N = 2$) to be behaviorist than found the term helper ($N = 1$). The term tutor was found by three respondents to be more behaviorist, while two found the term to be behaviorist.

Three additional terms were reported by two respondents each to be constructivist: counselor, educator, and conductor. The term conductor was found by six respondents to lean towards constructivist, while five respondents found the term educator to do so. While three respondents found the term conductor to lean towards behaviorist, four respondents found the term behaviorist. The term conductor seemed to be vague as eight respondents found the term on the constructivist side and seven found the term on the behaviorist side. The term educator also seemed to be vague, as five respondents found the term to lean towards constructivist while eight found the term to

lean towards behaviorist. The term counselor had eleven respondents reporting the term leaning towards constructivist, with two respondents leaning towards behaviorist, and only one finding the term behaviorist.

The term consultant, on the other hand, while having eleven respondents reporting the term leaned toward constructivist, had only one respondent reporting the term being constructivist, and four respondents leaning towards behaviorist.

The remaining terms had either one (N = 7) or no (N = 6) respondents indicating the term portrayed strong constructivist. Six terms had 75 percent or more respondents indicating that the term was neither constructivist nor behaviorist. The term teacher was truly in the middle, with six respondents each reporting a leaning towards constructivist or behaviorist and one respondent each indicating constructivist or behaviorist imagery. This indicates that the most neutral term to use is the term teacher, although two respondents reported the term 'not applicable.'

The term monitor was similarly middle-ground, with five respondents leaning towards constructivist and six respondents leaning towards behaviorist. However, while no respondents indicated a portrayal of constructivist, three respondents indicated a portrayal of behaviorist, leading to an indication that this term has more of a behaviorist than constructivist connotation.

The terms instructor and trainer each had twelve respondents in the middle. However, while instructor had five respondents leaning towards constructivist and seven leaning towards behaviorist, trainer was the reverse. The term instructor, however, also had one respondent indicating constructivist imagery while the term trainer had no respondents in the constructivist column. Instructor had three respondents indicating

behaviorist while trainer had four. These two terms had a slightly stronger lean towards behaviorist, although both terms had the majority of respondents (75%) in the middle.

The term scholar had 13 respondents in the middle, with no respondents in the constructivist column. The majority of the respondents (N = 9) reported a leaning towards behaviorist, with one respondent indicating behaviorist, and four respondents indicating a leaning towards constructivist. The term faculty, on the other hand, had 14 respondents indicating neither constructivist nor behaviorist, with 5 indicating a leaning towards constructivist and 9 indicating a leaning towards behaviorist. While the term faculty has more leaning towards behaviorist, there is no strong feeling one way or the other on the term, indicating that this term, too, may be considered more neutral than other terms with a stronger behaviorist image.

The term expert had respondents only on the side of behaviorist, with ten indicating a leaning towards behaviorist and four indicating full behaviorist connotations. The term authority also had strong behaviorist connotations, with 13 respondents indicating the term brings forth an image of behaviorist, while one respondent found a leaning towards behaviorist in the term. Only one respondent found the term authority to be constructivist, indicating that the term authority best indicates a behaviorist approach.

The term lecturer also had a strong behaviorist connotation, with ten respondents indicating such. Five additional respondents indicated the term had behaviorist leanings for them, while only one respondent found the term to have constructivist leanings and no respondents found the term to be constructivist. It was surprising to note that the term master had less of a behaviorist implication than the term lecturer. The term master had nine respondents indicating its implications of behaviorist, with four indicating a leaning

towards behaviorist. While only one indicated a leaning towards constructivist, an additional respondent found the term master to indicate constructivist.

The term controller was the third most indicative of behaviorist, with eight respondents reporting such, and five additional respondents indicating a leaning towards behaviorist. While no respondents indicated the term implies a leaning towards constructivist, one respondent found the term controller to imply constructivist.

The term director was found by 11 respondents to be behaviorist at some level. Five of the respondents found a leaning towards behaviorist while six found the term to indicate behaviorist. Two respondents, however, found the term director to lean towards constructivist, and one found the term to be constructivist.

The term professor, often used in the post-secondary world, was found to be more behaviorist than constructivist in its connotations. The term professor was found by 6 respondents to indicate behaviorist, while another six found the term to lean towards behaviorist. Only two respondents felt the term leaned towards constructivist, while one respondent felt the term indicated constructivist.

Conclusions

The terms we use for the person at the front of the room can vary. However, when we use a term, what does that indicate about the beliefs of the teaching style of that person? Whether the neutral 'teacher,' the strongly behaviorist 'authority,' or the strongly constructivist 'facilitator,' or any other term, what does this indicate to both the student body and the person themselves about their role in the academic setting? It is only through research in the meanings of these words, and future research with a larger

population on the connotations of these words, that one can truly understand the implications.

The changing philosophy from behaviorist, or 'sage on the stage,' to the constructivist, or 'guide on the side,' learning and teaching styles brings about a change in title. In the past, there was only one name, but now with the changing philosophies, what one is called can truly change the dynamics in the room.

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Appendix A

	advisor	coach	counselor	disciplinarian	expert	facilitator	faculty	guide	guru	instructor	master	mentor	professor	teacher	tutor
administrator											X				
advisers			X				X	X		X				X	
advocate			X												
aide	X														
assistant													X	X	
authority	X			X	X				X						
babysitter										X				X	X
boss											X				
captain											X				
chaperon								X							
chief											X				
clinic							X								
coach	X									X		X		X	X
college							X								
commandant											X				
commander											X				
conductor								X							
conqueror											X				
consultant	X														
controller											X				
corps							X								
counselor	X							X				X			
demonstrator										X					
department							X								
director	X							X			X				
disciplinarian														X	
docent								X						X	
dons							X						X	X	
drillmaster		X		X											
educator		X											X	X	X
employer											X				
enforcer				X											
escort								X							
example								X							
expert	X														
fellows							X						X		
formalist				X											
friend	X														
governess														X	X
guardian														X	X
guide	X		X						X	X	X	X		X	X
genius								X							
guru					X			X			X	X	X	X	X
head											X				

Appendix B

Term	Constructivist			Behaviorist	Not Applicable
Administrator	0	2	5	6	3
Advisor/Adviser	8	4	2	1	1
Advocate	5	9	1	0	1
Assistant	5	1	5	3	2
Authority	1	0	1	13	1
Boss	1	1	2	9	3
Chief	1	1	3	8	3
Coach	6	7	2	1	0
Commandant	1	0	2	10	3
Conductor	2	6	3	4	1
Consultant	1	11	4	0	0
Controller	1	0	5	8	2
Counselor	2	11	2	1	0
Demonstrator	2	2	6	3	3
Director	1	2	5	6	2
Disciplinarian	1	0	2	10	3
Docent	1	4	5	2	4
Don	1	2	4	4	4
Educator	2	5	8	0	1
Employer	0	3	7	3	3
Enforcer	1	0	0	11	4
Example	3	3	5	0	4
Expert	0	0	10	4	1
Facilitator	12	3	0	1	0
Faculty	0	5	9	0	2
Fellow	1	7	0	2	5
Formalist	0	0	4	6	6
Friend	8	5	1	1	1
Genius	1	0	3	3	9
Governess	1	1	4	7	3
Guardian	1	2	8	2	3
Guide	6	8	1	1	0
Guru	2	4	5	0	5
Head	0	1	5	6	4
Helper	3	9	2	1	1
Instructor	1	5	7	3	0
Lecturer	0	1	5	10	0
Master	1	1	4	9	1
Maven	0	0	5	4	7
Mentor	4	9	1	2	0
Monitor	0	5	6	3	2
Partner	8	6	0	1	1
Pedagogue	1	2	7	2	4
Term	Constructivist			Behaviorist	Not Applicable

Preceptor	0	3	4	3	6
Principal	0	3	1	9	3
Professor	1	2	6	6	1
Researcher	2	4	5	1	4
Scholar	0	4	9	1	2
Schoolmaster	1	2	3	7	3
Superintendent	1	1	1	8	5
Supervisor	1	1	3	9	3
Teacher	1	6	6	1	2
Trainer	0	7	5	4	0
Tutor	2	9	3	2	0