

CULTIVATING A HEALTHY BRAIN FOR MINISTRY
USING THE FEUERSTEIN INSTRUMENTAL ENRICHMENT PROGRAM

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Abstract

The Bible has a lot to say about the qualifications a pastor will need to carry out his office. A sharp mind is not one of those qualifications God has given. However, maintaining a sharp mind will obviously aid a pastor's ministry. A sharp and healthy brain will allow him to successfully keep a schedule, solve problems, and communicate effectively. In order to cultivate a healthy brain a pastor could take part in a cognitive enrichment program. One such program exists called the Feuerstein Instrumental Enrichment (FIE) program. This program does not teach its students “what” to think but “how” to think. This program can further sharpen the pastor’s cognitive functions so he can care for himself and his congregation. The FIE program will improve the pastor’s cognitive skills used in organizing his schedule, preparing sermons and Bible studies, and adapting to ever changing circumstances so that his gospel work remains in center stage. This thesis will outline how the Feuerstein Instrumental Enrichment program could benefit a pastor’s ministry. The program will be described and then specifically applied to the pastoral office.

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INTRODUCTION

No one would deny that a pastor must be spiritually healthy. He must be well-versed in God's Word, ready to go to the Lord in prayer, live a life above reproach, and love the gospel he is proclaiming. These are essential qualifications needed to be a pastor. No one would deny that a pastor should also be physically healthy. He must be a good steward of his body, balance his diet, and exercise on a somewhat regular basis. A healthy frame will allow the pastor to serve as a gospel minister for many years and help him cope with stress while maintaining proper energy levels. Likewise, no one would deny that a pastor must also be mentally healthy. He must be able to process information, organize his thoughts, memorize, communicate effectively, make decisions and solve problems. A mentally healthy pastor will be in a better position to effectively teach, preach, counsel, and administrate within his call. Clearly, a pastor ought to be healthy spiritually, physically, and mentally.

Unquestionably, possessing sound doctrine, a heart for the lost, and love for God's people is most important for the pastor. Spiritual health is a given. Physical health may not be as essential for the pastor as a healthy spirit, but one would be going out on a limb to argue that physical health offers no help to the pastor's ministry. Mental health probably offers more to the pastor even than physical health. One wonders, however, whether the confessional Lutheran pastor gives his own mental health the care that is needed. Many amazing programs promoting spiritual growth for the pastor are available. A plethora of workout routines and programs are available to maintain physical health as well. Yet it seems to this writer that very few participate in any mental health programs. One would likely be hard pressed to name even one program utilized in the promotion of mental health or cognitive improvement.

For a vocation that requires so much cognitive awareness and mental sharpness, those who serve in the ministry rarely talk about the importance of keeping pastors' brains healthy. Many may view enrollment in a program to improve cognitive function as something only needed by those with cognitive defects, cognitive deficiencies, or those diagnosed with mental disorders. One might feel that participating in mental enrichment programs would single him out as suffering from a mental illness. Ignorance and stigma typically surround mental enrichment programs. Ignorance and stigma may be keeping many modern professionals, including pastors, away from some life-changing benefits.

Spending time in God’s Word is by far the most important activity a pastor can undertake in order to be prepared for ministry. Allowing God to speak to him through the Word is what will most improve the pastor’s ability to minister the gospel to others. As the Lord spoke to Joshua, “Keep this Book of the Law always on your lips; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful” (Joshua 1:8, 9).^{1,2} Every aspect of ministry is always to be done with the message of Christ at the center. “Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts” (Colossians 3:16). Regular Bible reading and prayer offer the pastor spiritual strength and strengthen his faith. Time spent in God’s Word will benefit the pastor’s ministry above anything else. Spiritual nourishment, exercise, and discipline are of the highest importance.

Just as spending time in the Word strengthens faith, so also getting into a routine of regular exercise will strengthen the body. Health and strength can be improved through physical training. The same is possible with mental capacity. The brain can be molded and strengthened just as much as the body can. In their book *Positively Smarter*, authors Marcus Conyers and Donna Wilson claim, “No matter what your age or current abilities you have the potential to improve the knowledge and skills you need to develop to achieve your goals – in the form of your brain’s amazing ability to change in response to learning.”³ As important as it is for a pastor to keep his body healthy, it could be argued that there are many fine pastors who rarely work out at all. Yet it almost goes without saying that a pastor must be cognitively adept in order to fulfill his vocation. The good news is that brain science has become a larger field of study in the last two decades, and the overwhelming verdict is that the brain’s cognitive functions can be improved.

When one wants to get physically stronger, the solution is pretty obvious; go to the gym and lift weights. But when one wants to strengthen cognitive function the solution may not be

¹ The Holy Bible New International Version (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011).

² All Bible quotations are taken from the NIV 2011, unless otherwise noted.

³ Marcus Conyers and Donna Wilson, *Positively Smarter* (West Sussex, United Kingdom: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2015), 23.

evident. There are no designated places for lifting mental weights. One might ask what programs or routines for cognitive improvement are out there, and if there are any which are effective.

The aim of this paper is to point people, specifically pastors, in the direction of one particularly successful and long-running cognitive improvement program. This program has been in use for more than 50 years and is currently implemented in more than 80 countries. The Feuerstein Instrumental Enrichment program will be held forth in this paper as a tool to prepare and keep ministers' brains equipped for their office; a tool that can fit the cognitive improvement niche of a pastor's repertoire.

The basic goal of the Feuerstein Instrumental Enrichment program is to enhance the brain's cognitive functions through mediated learning experiences. The program is administered by a trained mediator and utilizes learning exercises as the teaching tool. The pupil in the program spends anywhere from one to three years meeting regularly with the instructor. The cognitive skills will last a lifetime. And unlike normal education exercises, the Feuerstein Instrumental Enrichment (FIE) program doesn't teach a student "what" to think. It teaches a student "how" to think.

The pastoral office is undoubtedly a vocation requiring high levels of cognition. The FIE program will refine the pastor's cognitive processes such as problem solving, decision making, memory, comprehension, attention, and communication. These skills will have direct application in a pastor's daily work. Sermon preparation, time management, education, and effective communication will be directly aided by the sharpening of the cognitive functions taught by the FIE program. This program can give the pastor added competence and confidence in his often demanding line of work. The goal of this thesis is to prove that participating in the Feuerstein Instrumental Enrichment program could greatly benefit the pastor, further sharpening the cognitive functions needed to care for himself and his congregation.

WHAT IS THE FEUERSTEIN INSTRUMENTAL ENRICHMENT PROGRAM?

The Program's Founder: Reuven Feuerstein

Reuven Feuerstein was a Romanian Jew born in 1921. With a major in psychology, Feuerstein attended Teachers' College and Onesco College in Bucharest from 1940-1944, but

before he could obtain his degree, he was forced to flee for his life from the Nazis. In 1945 he relocated to Jerusalem and at this point two encounters were about to shape the pursuit of his life's work. Feuerstein says, "From a historical standpoint, two totally different encounters led me to develop the theory of Structural Cognitive Modifiability (SCM): first my exposure to Jean Piaget, who can be described as the modern founder of developmental cognitive psychology; and second, my encounters and responses with the children who survived the Holocaust during World War II in Europe."⁴

In 1945 Feuerstein began his work with children survivors of the Holocaust. Seeing the psychological and emotional stress these children suffered led him to seek ways to attend to their psychological and educational needs. He worked with a school whose goal was to rehabilitate them from their traumatic experiences. He carried on his work among the concentration camp survivors until he contracted tuberculosis in 1949. He was sent to Switzerland to recover and there he enrolled at the University of Geneva.

In Geneva, Feuerstein had his second major encounter. He studied psychology under Jean Piaget. Feuerstein says of Piaget:

In Piaget, I found an island of thought about the cognitive system...According to Piaget, the cognitive system develops structures and operations of thinking that are created in the course of interactions between the self and world at various stages of development and maturation. These thinking structures enable a person to organize the world that is experienced and plan it, to create new information from what is not experienced directly, and to build in thought an expanded world that is planned and organized. Piaget's theory planted in me the hope and potential for helping child Holocaust survivors.⁵

Feuerstein borrowed Piaget's groundbreaking new perspective on cognitive modifiability and applied it in his work with Holocaust survivors. His success in working with such victims confirmed "the possibility of drawing these children out of the chaos and of building for them a new life through the rehabilitation of their thought mechanisms."⁶ Feuerstein's work with Holocaust victims was only the beginning. His theory of Structural Cognitive Modifiability continued to develop and later was applied to people of all walks of life.

⁴ Reuven Feuerstein, Refael S. Feuerstein, and Louis H. Falik, *Beyond Smarter: Mediated Learning and the Brain's Capacity for Change* (New York: Teacher's College Press, 2010), 16.

⁵ Feuerstein, Feuerstein, and Falik, *Beyond Smarter*, 18.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 19.

Feuerstein went on to become a leader of learning enhancement and cognitive development. He earned his Ph.D. in 1970 at the University of Sorbonne, in France. His major areas of study were developmental, clinical and cognitive psychology from a cross-cultural perspective. Even before he earned his Ph.D., Feuerstein became the director of the Hadassah-WIZO-Canada Research Institute which later became part of the International Center for the Enhancement of Learning Potential (ICELP). He became the creator and director of the Feuerstein Institute and merged research, training, and service as he carried out his vision of teaching cognition especially to Down syndrome children and students with a variety of developmental disabilities.

Dr. Feuerstein received a number of awards for his groundbreaking work. He was awarded the Israel Prize in Education. He was decorated by the President of France for his work in training French workers, managers, and executives in the skills of intelligence. He was even a 2012 Nobel Peace Prize nominee. After a long life devoted to molding minds, Reuven Feuerstein died on April 29, 2014, but his legacy lives on. “There are currently under way more than 1,000 research projects on his work throughout the world involving all age groups from infancy to old age, in every setting from jungles to board rooms, and with every ability level from the profoundly retarded to the highly gifted.”⁷

The Malleable Brain

Feuerstein’s Instrumental Enrichment program operates on the basis of an important concept: brain plasticity, also called neural plasticity. Conyers and Wilson define neural plasticity as follows, “Neural plasticity or neuroplasticity refers to how our thoughts, actions, and sensory input (what we see, hear, say, and touch) change the structure and function of the brain and how reinforcing that learning through repetition and practice strengthens those neural connections.”⁸ New technology within the field of neuroscience now allows physical changes to be seen within the brain. A new, non-invasive form of an MRI called a functional MRI (fMRI) can monitor the flow of blood within the brain and witness which parts of the brain are

⁷ “About: Reuven Feuerstein” Creating the Future: New Horizons. Accessed October 31, 2016. http://education.jhu.edu/PD/newhorizons/future/creating_the_future/crfut_feuerstein.cfm

⁸ Conyers, Wilson, 23.

functioning by tracking the increase of blood flow. With modern technology the density of neural networks can even be seen.

When we focus our attention on information and engage in learning activities, the neural networks associated with those activities grow denser and larger, leading to what Fotuhi⁹ describes as “enhanced brain performance.” In fact, these physical changes in the brain can be so significant that they can be seen by the human eye on MRI scans – and these changes can happen in weeks and months, rather than years.¹⁰

Brain plasticity means the brain has an ability to change throughout a person’s lifetime. “Research is suggesting that the human brain can generate new brain cells, even into old age. If the brain is stimulated, at any stage in the life span, it will adapt, regenerate, and become more efficient.”¹¹ In short, the implication of brain plasticity means the brain’s cognitive functions can be improved, no matter the person’s age.

In order to understand brain plasticity a few things about the make-up of the brain must be mentioned. The human brain is full of potential, and its modifiability is almost endless. Eric Jensen in *Brain Based Learning* notes:

Humans have about one hundred billion (100,000,000,000) [brain] cells! When all linked together the number of connections our brain can make is variously estimated by [Huttenlocher, Edelman, and Ornstein] to be from 10¹⁴th power (a hundred trillion), 10⁸⁰⁰th power, to as much as ten followed by millions of zeroes.¹²

Brain cells, called neurons, have tiny arms or branches extending out from them called dendrites. If a neuron has many thick and dense dendrites this means the neurons communicate better with one another.¹³ The strengthening and multiplying of these dendrites, as just mentioned, can actually be seen on MRI scans. Essentially, brain plasticity refers to the strengthening of the neural network comprised of dendrites and the synapses between other neurons. The more intricately these neurons are woven together the “smarter” the person is likely to be. A connected neural network makes connections faster, handles input better, and processes information more quickly.

⁹ Dr. Majid Fotuhi is the medical director of NeuroGrow Brain Fitness Center and chief medical officer of Neurocore Brain Performance Center. He is an active member of the American Academy of Neurology. He is known and respected in the field of neuroscience.

¹⁰ Ibid., 23.

¹¹ Feuerstein, Feuerstein, and Falik, *Beyond Smarter*, 179.

¹² Eric Jensen, *Brain-Based Learning* (Del Mar, CA: Turning Point Publishing, 1996), 7.

¹³ Eric Jensen, *Teaching with the Brain in Mind* (Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1998), 30.

Much more could be said about the brain's physiology and how it plays into Feuerstein's belief in neural plasticity but Feuerstein himself didn't base his work on the evidence of physical change within the brain. Feuerstein implemented interventions with his students and knew there was a lot of change going on, but Feuerstein himself would have pointed to a change in mental processes not a change in the neural system itself. He writes:

Nonetheless, never in the senior author's most daring propositions would he have proposed that the changes observed following interventions were concomitant to or the result of changes in the neural system. It was hoped that this would be the case, and it was thought that it would be impossible to fully explain the changes without such a relationship, but we concluded that we could not speculate beyond our immediate observations... Today, however, the neurosciences bring us evidence not only of the modifiability of the individual's mental functions, but also that the changes that can be produced are in some ways (although not yet totally defined) not merely behavioral manifestations. They are not just changes in the structure of the behavior, of the mental processes, but are actually related to changes in both the hardware and the software of the neural system.¹⁴

Feuerstein's theory of Structural Cognitive Modifiability (SCM) has only been proven more feasible as neuroscience continues to improve. Conyers and Wilson say, "Scientists learned more about the brain in the last two decades than in the previous 200 years."¹⁵ That research of the last two decades has proven Feuerstein's long held belief that intelligence is not fixed; it is modifiable. Modern research has provided support for Feuerstein's theory of brain plasticity above and beyond what even he thought initially possible.

Feuerstein built his theory of Structural Cognitive Modifiability (SCM) from the foundation of brain plasticity. SCM has the goal of improving a person's cognition. Feuerstein defines cognition as "the great variety of activities starting from the sensorial – our five senses that gather data, observing certain elements in the outer reality, becoming aware of certain functions these objects are producing, comparing the various elements and creating relationships between them."¹⁶ He uses a glass of water and a tanker of 5 million tons of oil to illustrate his definition. Both objects are incredibly different in size, volume, and material, yet they have their

¹⁴ Feuerstein, Feuerstein, and Falik, *Beyond Smarter*, 172,173.

¹⁵ Conyers, Wilson, 18.

¹⁶ Reuven Feuerstein, Louis H. Falik and Refael S. Feuerstein, *Changing Minds and Brains: The Legacy of Reuven Feuerstein* (New York: Teacher's College Press, 2015), 89.

function in common – they are both containers of liquid. Identifying the relationship between these two objects is an example of a cognitive process being carried out.

Feuerstein sees cognitive processes as vitally important. People may not be aware of how much they use cognitive processes every day. Those who have deficient cognitive processes need help in order to adapt to situations in their lives, and even those who feel they have adequate cognitive processes will soon find there is always room for improvement.

Feuerstein outlines ten reasons why cognition is so important.

- 1) Cognition is important because perception is irreversible but cognition is adaptive and changeable.
- 2) Cognition permits the individual to control the environment at ever greater distances from the immediately perceived and experienced.
- 3) Cognitive processes help a person decide what to focus on, when to focus, and in what ways to focus.
- 4) Cognitive processes help the individual organize and sequence the great amount of information that comes into the system.
- 5) Cognitive processes transform the gathered data into mental structures to be reframed or elaborated later.
- 6) Cognitive processes generate new information not limited to what is derived from existent sources of information.
- 7) Once conceptualization occurs it can be communicated to others.
- 8) Cognitive processes enable access to the affective – emotional, attitudinal dimensions of human experience – what is commonly referred to as motivation.
- 9) Cognitive processes are in a constant state of animation, allowing meaningful adaptation to the world.
- 10) Cognitive processes enable recognition and acceptance of conflict as well as the ability to address it.¹⁷

The Program's Purpose

¹⁷ Feuerstein, Feuerstein, and Falik, *Beyond Smarter*, 25, 26.

One of the intended results of the FIE program is the recognition and modification of behaviors and emotions. Feuerstein discovered that cognition is tied to affect. Feuerstein dealt with many emotions and behaviors in his work with Holocaust survivors and special needs children. He believed that cognition enables people to modify their feelings and understand their behavior. There is a strong relationship between cognition and emotion.¹⁸ Feuerstein targeted the cognitive functions in order to shape emotion and behavior. By helping his pupils work through their cognitive processes he could enable them to understand and then modify their behavior and reactions.

Dr. Caroline Leaf also sees the connection between cognition and emotion. She equates controlled thinking with improved cognitive functioning and emotional balance. In her book *Switch on your Brain* she writes:

Capturing our thoughts in a disciplined way rather than letting them chaotically run rampant can bring about impressive changes in how we feel and think. This change is evidenced in cognitive, emotional functioning as well as at the neural level. My research shows that controlled focused thinking leads to impressive improvement in cognitive functioning and emotional balance.¹⁹

Another goal of the FIE program is to improve the cognitive functions involved with all three phases of the cognitive process. Feuerstein outlines the three phases:

In the cognitive process, there is first the *input phase*, describing the process of gathering of data; and the second, the *elaboration phase*, where the data gathered are put together, discriminated, changed, placed in categories, subjected to inferential thinking, turned into a source of relationships, incorporated in operations, and so on. The third phase in the mental act is *output*, where whatever I've gathered on the input level and manipulated on the elaborational level is then the source of a product and response.²⁰

In the *input phase*, the program aims to develop cognitive functions such as clear perception, accurate labeling, capacity to consider more than one source of information, and need for precision and completeness in data gathering. The FIE program seeks to improve *elaboration phase* cognitive functions such as accurate definition of the problem, selection of relevant cues, internalization of information, recognizing and understanding relationships, categorizing, inferential-hypothetical thinking, and using logic to arrive at and defend conclusions. The

¹⁸ Feuerstein, Feuerstein, and Falik, *Changing Minds and Brains*, 90.

¹⁹ Caroline Leaf, *Switch On Your Brain: The Key to Peak Happiness, Thinking, and Health* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2013), 55.

²⁰ Feuerstein, Feuerstein, and Falik, *Changing Minds and Brains*, 91.

program then aims to improve *output phase* cognitive functions such as considering the audience point of view, thinking things through before responding, staying calm, and being precise and accurate in communicating information²¹ (Appendix A).

The overall intended result of the FIE program is to create structural change. Feuerstein says, “Change that is structural will affect learning and behavior in deep, sustaining, and self-perpetuating ways.”²² Structural change means creating a principle and then being able to work off that principle for multiple applications. An example of this would be asking a child for an answer to a question and then also asking for two sensible reasons for the answer. This thinking will promote the child to find a deeper meaning. The child will run through a cognitive process and, if successful, will create a structural change. “And if a structural change is created, it will not remain confined to that event alone but will be given expression in many additional events that have similar or projected elements.”²³ These cognitive schemas can be applied and expanded to new or different situations.

Feuerstein lays out four dimensions of structural change: permanence, resistance, flexibility, and generalizability.²⁴ Permanence describes the learner’s ability to preserve what has been learned. Structural change has occurred if the learner is able to solve a problem using the acquired strategies the next day and long after that. If the structural change was unsuccessful then the learner encounters each problem as if it were a new experience. Resistance seeks to find if the learner can preserve what was learned even if the conditions and complexity of the problem are changed. Flexibility measures the ability to not just use successful problem solving strategies in exactly the same way each time but to adapt them for the situation. Generalization refers to the ability to think in the abstract. This allows someone to create structural changes all on their own.

Two words that help summarize the purpose of the FIE program are “intentionality” and “transcendence.”

Intentionality increases the meaning of the learning experience. Transcendence makes sure that the learning experience will not be limited to a particular situation but will actually be something that can be generalized, transferred, and applied in a very large

²¹ Feuerstein, Feuerstein, and Falik, *Beyond Smarter*, 107-119.

²² Feuerstein, Feuerstein, and Falik, *Beyond Smarter*, 39.

²³ *Ibid.*, 39.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 40-42.

number of situations that can be predicted from the beginning and in certain instances even chosen.²⁵

Success in the Instrumental Enrichment program isn't measured by how much the learner knows; rather, success is measured by the learner's ability to be an independent learner. The cognitive principles learned during the program transcend beyond the time of participation in the program. As was stated before, the FIE program does not teach a person "what" to think but "how" to think.

The FIE program is built on the foundation of brain plasticity, and its intended result is to improve cognitive function in all three stages of the cognitive process: input, elaboration, and output. This cognitive improvement is structural, meaning it is a long term cognitive transformation. But now the question must be asked, "For whom is the FIE program intended?"

At the program's inception, Feuerstein targeted deeply troubled Holocaust survivors. The trauma they underwent made it very hard for them to function cognitively. Feuerstein taught cognitive processes so those survivors could take an active role in society and succeed. He also worked primarily with children who were mentally retarded. His instrumental, mediated learning experience helped them create structure for their thoughts and allowed them to function beyond what was initially thought possible. Many parents and teachers, after seeing the results of the FIE program, call this change "a miracle." But Feuerstein would respond that although the changes appear miraculous, they are really the product of hard work and the use of well-defined interventions.²⁶ More success stories of the program will be shared later.

As effective as the FIE program is with those who have learning, psychological, behavioral, and medical problems, it is just as useful with those who are not diagnosed with any such deficiencies. Dr. Feuerstein, his son, and Louis Falik write in *Beyond Smarter*:

More and more people today need enrichment, because the demand for modifiability is increasing to such an extent that even the gifted and talented need it – not because of learning deficiencies but to bring flexibility to their thinking processes and the ability to change in response to ever increasing requirements.²⁷

An attendee at one of Feuerstein's lectures once said, "Feuerstein! Mediated learning experience is not just for retarded children or deprived children; it's for all of us! It is what makes us

²⁵ Feuerstein, Feuerstein, and Falik, *Changing Minds and Brains*, 82.

²⁶ Feuerstein, Feuerstein, and Falik, *Beyond Smarter*, 121.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 152.

human!”²⁸ People in all walks of life can benefit from Dr. Feuerstein’s cognitive enrichment program. Just because he began his work among those with mental deficiencies and the severely traumatized does not mean his program has no use among those who function at a high cognitive level.

Children with developmental disabilities or children with learning disabilities such as ADHD will likely find the most benefit in Feuerstein’s program. Yet many older students and adults still struggle with symptoms of ADHD. Many students still have to overcome learning disabilities even after completing their schooling. The FIE program is designed to help them.

FIE is currently being implemented in a large scale education project in Texas. The program named “Texans Can” is a group of thirteen academies using FIE to empower students who struggle in a traditional high school setting.²⁹ The Texans Can website cites the use of FIE in its curriculum:

Feuerstein’s Instrumental Enrichment was developed by Dr. Reuven Feuerstein and used with global success in both education and industry. This process uses the mediated learning experience to strengthen deficient cognitive functions and move the student from a state where the acquisition and mastery of academic content was previously difficult, to a state of being a learner who is more capable of successfully engaging rigorous and truly challenging academic content characterized by the following five goals:

1. The development of efficient, flexible and adaptive cognitive behaviors
2. The creation of a schema of universal academic concepts and vocabulary
3. The development of intrinsic motivation for learning and problem solving
4. The creation of extensive capacity for reflective thinking
5. The transformation of learners from passive recipients to active generators of information³⁰

The academies participating in Texans Can will be hosting the Feuerstein Institute’s Shores International Workshop in Dallas this coming June, 2017. This annual Feuerstein training workshop is now in its 38th year. The Feuerstein Institute’s website announces the purpose of the international gathering:

Over the course of this two week gathering, more than a dozen courses are offered in all aspects of Feuerstein training – Instrumental Enrichment, the Learning Propensity Assessment Device and the newly designed Tactile program for learners with ADHD. Educators, psychologists and specialists from a number of disciplines are given the chance to learn at the hands of the foremost experts and leading professionals in the

²⁸ Feuerstein, Feuerstein, and Falik, *Changing Minds and Brains*, 26.

²⁹ “Our Story,” Texans Can, accessed February 11, 2017, <http://www.texanscan.org/about-our-story/>.

³⁰ “Curriculum” Texans Can, accessed February 11, 2017, <http://www.texanscan.org/parent-student/curriculum/>.

Feuerstein Method. Shoresh is also an opportunity for Feuerstein Professionals to meet and learn from their peers. It is attended by hundreds of people every year, from all continents.³¹

Shoresh is held all over the world. The fact that Dallas will be hosting in 2017 is an indicator that FIE's value is finding its way into American schools.

Texans Can is likely the largest implementation of FIE in the United States currently, but a number of other notable academies implement FIE in their daily curriculum. Two Christian academies, Trinity Classical Academy in Santa Clarita California and Inter-City Baptist School in Allen Park, Michigan, cite FIE as an integral part of their curriculum. Trinity Classical Academy implements FIE directly in class daily for twenty to thirty minutes.³² Inter-City Baptist School implements FIE starting in kindergarten up through sixth grade. Their website states, "The integration of this critical thinking program has enhanced the already effective curriculum taught in K – 6th grade classrooms at Inter-City Baptist School."³³

Two other large scale implementations of the FIE program have taken place in Massachusetts and Alaska. A major empirical study of FIE was conducted in the Taunton Massachusetts Public Schools for approximately twenty years. Dr. David Martin in his paper on the evaluation of the program writes, "The significant positive results from within a framework of experimental versus control groups is noteworthy and points out the value of a school-wide (and district-wide) commitment as well as the critical role of an FIE Program Coordinator."³⁴ The program's use in six Alaskan school districts had similar positive results.³⁵

The FIE program is useful not just within education but in business too. The Feuerstein Institute has implemented Feuerstein's program among industries. Johns Hopkins University's website mentions some industries where the FIE program has been implemented:

One of the most rapidly developing areas in the last few years is the application of Mediated Learning and the intervention programs in industry. Especially in France, hundreds of industrial plants, including some of the most prestigious, are using IE and

³¹ "Shoresh International Workshops," Feuerstein Institute, accessed February 11, 2017, <http://www.icelp.info/international/shoresh-international-workshops.aspx>.

³² "Feuerstein's Instrumental Enrichment," Trinity Classical Academy, accessed February 11, 2017, <https://www.trinityclassicalacademy.com/feuersteins-instrumental-enrichment>.

³³ "Curriculum," Inter-City Baptist School, accessed February 11, 2017, <http://www.icbschool.org/1-3.asp>.

³⁴ David S. Martin, "Summary of Evaluation and Research Studies on Effects of Instrumental Enrichment" (August, 2011), 2.

³⁵ Martin, "Summary of Evaluation and Research Studies on Effects of Instrumental Enrichment," 6.

MLE to prepare their manpower for the great technological changes taking place in modern industry. As it was described by the head of a steel mill in Haironville, "We are among the oldest establishments in the field of iron and steel. Three hundred and fifty years of our existence have been marked by very limited change. In the first 300 years, only one technique was used in our industry. In the last fifty years, about ten techniques have been introduced. Now we have to prepare our manpower for techniques which we have not yet even identified. For this, IE (or as it is called in French, PEI) is most helpful." This is true for a very large number of industries, including Thompsons, Peugeot, SNECMA, and Hewlett-Packard.³⁶

A number of industries outside of France have also integrated the program into their worker training. Even Motorola in the United States has utilized this program. Johns Hopkins cites the program's purpose in industries is "to develop the self-directed flexibility of workers, reopening them for learning processes and orienting them towards a new way of thinking and a more efficient way of approaching new technology."³⁷ While most of the industries mentioned above are no longer implementing FIE, the program has a track record of finding a niche even within well-known corporations.

Feuerstein's program, initially just intended for those with special needs, has now gained worldwide recognition and is even implemented among the employees of large and successful corporations. The flexibility and adaptability this program gives to its students allows them to work more efficiently and innovatively. In short, "the ability to learn is a skill that demands development in all of us, no matter our intelligence or previous level of performance."³⁸ FIE is for everyone.

The Program in Action

In order to understand how the FIE program is designed to work, one must grasp the meaning of two integral concepts. First, one has to understand what it means for the program to be based on "instrumental enrichment." A second essential part of the program is the Mediated Learning Experience (MLE). These terms are fundamental in Feuerstein's program.

³⁶ Johns Hopkins University, "Creating the Future: New Horizons."

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Feuerstein, Feuerstein, and Falik, *Beyond Smarter*, 140.

The words “instrumental enrichment” are contained right in the name of the program itself: the Feuerstein *Instrumental Enrichment* program. Feuerstein says, “The term ‘instrumental’ denotes a process that applies specially designed tools to mediate the acquisition of enhanced cognitive functions.”³⁹ The standard FIE program is comprised of 14 different instruments. Some examples of these learning instruments include: Transitive Relations, Categorization, Comparison, Instructions, and Organization of Dots. Feuerstein describes the structure of these instruments:

The instruments are built as individual lessons that are gradually compiled into integrated work notebooks or portfolios that can be referred to and reviewed. They contain mainly pen-and-pencil tasks that are presented in different modalities – figural, verbal, pictorial, and numerical. The instruments deal in a focused manner with relationships because, in our opinion, understanding a relationship represents a basis for developing the type of abstract, creative, and flexible thinking required to obtain structural cognitive modification.

The goal is not to master the instruments themselves. Feuerstein uses the organization of dots exercise to explain the purpose of using instruments to achieve cognitive enrichment:

The contents of FIE are designed to activate thought processes. When we ask the learner to connect points and find geometrical shapes in a field of dots, it is clear that this task has content. But this content is only a means of activating thinking processes. We are interested in awakening the learner’s desire to plan, repress impulses, and find virtual relations between objects that exist solely by virtue of the organization that is introduced into them. Consequently, the content has no significance in itself; it is only a means to achieve our aims.⁴⁰

The motive behind instrumental enrichment is not to teach content but rather to teach cognitive processes. In the case of Organization of Dots, cognitive processes will turn a random, chaotic jumble of dots into a number of clearly defined shapes. “[The instruments] are constructed such that the learners arrive at an awareness of their thinking processes in the course of performing the tasks.”⁴¹ The instruments are merely the tool that brings about cognitive enrichment, maybe without the learner even realizing that enrichment is happening.

As one begins the FIE program, such random exercises as connecting dots, making comparisons, or categorizing may seem meaningless. But after each exercise page is finished the point is then to come up with a principle based on the experience. This principle will verbally

³⁹ Ibid., 136.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 140.

⁴¹ Ibid., 137.

summarize the cognitive process used in completing the exercise. This principle was not only realized after the exercise but actually internalized during the exercise. Subsequent instrumental exercises then build upon the principle learned in the previous exercise. As one progresses through the program the exercises become more difficult. Over time, the principles learned throughout the exercises change the way the learner thinks and solves problems. Feuerstein explains this internalization of principles, saying that “the mediated quality of meaning is expressed by a change that it brings about in learning – by rendering it understood, strengthened, integrated, and, in the final analysis, internalized as a system of principles whose guiding force is over and above the specific content in which it was acquired.”⁴² Mastering the content of the instrument is not important; mastering the cognitive process is.

The learning instruments are useful tools, but Feuerstein employs them as just part of his overall strategy. He writes:

At the same time, the tasks cannot stand on their own as a work instrument for the pupil. The instruments place the learner in situations where help must be accepted. Even adults who will not under any circumstances agree that someone else should “stir the tea for them” find themselves requesting assistance when working with the enrichment instruments.⁴³

The instrumental enrichment tools are used in conjunction with a mediator. This brings us to the next integral part of the FIE program: the Mediated Learning Experience (MLE).

When the MLE is mentioned let it be clear that the mediator is not a computer, a book, or even the learning instrument itself. The mediator in the FIE program is always a person. Feuerstein states this strongly when he says “the mediator can only be a human being... The mediator has a very important characteristic that neither a computer, book, nor tools have: The mediator has an intention.”⁴⁴

Feuerstein states, “My intention in mediating is to turn the immediate present encounter into an experience that will go much beyond and look for other meanings.”⁴⁵ Mediation has the goal of transcendence. Feuerstein says, “The mediating of transcendence creates in a human being a great diversity of possibilities of action and reaction, whose significance is the resulting

⁴² Ibid., 80.

⁴³ Ibid., 138.

⁴⁴ Feuerstein, Feuerstein, and Falik, *Changing Minds and Brains*, 19.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 26.

flexibility and creativity of response, and which enables the propensity for a permanent modifiability to adapt to new situations.”⁴⁶ Without a mediator the cognitive process learned during the exercise may not be internalized by the learner. When the learner becomes aware of what his or her brain is doing while completing the exercise they can then draw on that cognitive process in many other situations. Feuerstein states, “We are searching not for what human beings know now, but for what they are capable of reaching by means of mediation.”⁴⁷

All people learn through mediation in their lives. Think of a boy who runs down his driveway but trips on his shoelaces because he refused to tie them. He falls, skins his knee, and cries. His mother sees this and immediately goes to comfort him and put on a bandage but then she asks him, “Why did you fall?” The boy says he tripped on his shoelace. The mother asks, “So what will you do so that you don’t trip on your shoelaces and fall again?” The boy responds that he’ll be sure to tie his shoelaces first. This is mediation at a basic level. The mother could have simply run to the boy’s aid and taken care of him, but if she leads him to discover the problem and then to come up with his own solution, the important practice of tying his shoes will stick. Without the mediation he would more likely have the same problem later. Without realizing, the boy learned a process that will help him far beyond his immediate situation. This is transcendence. Because God created humans to be social creatures, the best way for us to learn is through interaction with others.

Instrumental enrichment and mediation are integral parts of the FIE program. Yet how will both elements and the learner interact within a session? A one-on-one session, for instance, begins with the pupil sitting down and the mediator getting out the learning instrument, which is a worksheet to be filled out with a pencil. For this example the learning exercise will be organization of dots. The mediator will first ask what the learner notices is different from the previous organization of dots page they went through in a former session. Each exercise builds on the previous one and becomes more complex. The mediator will also ask what strategies the pupil plans to employ in order to bring order to the chaotic smattering of dots on the page. Then the exercise begins and the pupil begins to connect the dots and make shapes. Sometimes the learning exercise is very difficult. The mediator will allow the pupil to work, but when he or she

⁴⁶ Feuerstein, Feuerstein, and Falik, *Beyond Smarter*, 77.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 127.

notices the pupil struggling the mediator will ask the pupil questions in order to help them focus on what they need to be looking for. No answers are given, but the mediator reminds the pupil to be planned and strategic in his or her approach to connecting the dots. The strategies the pupil initially planned to use may need to be modified due to the exercise being different and more difficult than previous ones. The mediator can guide the pupil to new approaches. This reciprocity between the pupil and mentor is a necessary part of the mediation.

Eventually the pupil finishes the exercise, and then the mediator's role becomes even more crucial. If no mediator were present the pupil would have accomplished a lot of dot connecting but probably would not see the implications of doing so or realize the application within a larger context. The mediator will ask the pupil why they struggled on certain parts of the exercise. This forces the pupil to think through his thought process and realize what cognitive functions he failed to use. The mediator may also get out a list of the cognitive functions and ask which functions were especially needed to complete the task (Appendix A).

The amount of instruments worked through in a single session will vary depending on the pupil. Sometimes more than one learning exercise is completed in a single session. How much is accomplished in each session and how long the sessions will run is up to the mediator and pupil involved.

Finally, perhaps the most important part of the exercise for achieving transcendence, the mediator asks what principle the pupil will create to summarize what he learned about himself and his cognitive process throughout the exercise. Here are some examples of principles established after completing some organization of dots exercises: "When I have a plan already in mind I have to be flexible and adapt my plan if necessary"; "When faced with a lot of clutter I have to prioritize"; "When I focus my attention I will work better." These principles are written down and are the main takeaway for the pupil to apply in all kinds of situations apart from just connecting dots. These principles may seem like common sense, but they are more than just words on a page. During the exercise, the pupil has actually internalized these principles and can utilize them in completing just about any task they are asked to do. The mediator will even ask the pupil to devise some applications where this principle will need to be utilized.

Bridging from the instruments to a principle and from the principle to life applications is critical for the program to have lasting effects. That is where having the mediator is beneficial. The mediator can help the learner make connections and ask questions that he may not ask

himself. At times the mediation can be trying. The mediator pushes a person to dig mentally deeper than they are used to and the brain is forced to evaluate information far beyond surface observations. Yet, when this is done, the brain is learning to replicate those thought processes for other situations.

Does the Program Work?

Many evaluations of the FIE program have been conducted since its inception. Janet Shiell conducted a meta-analysis of the program for her doctorate in philosophy at the University of British Columbia. In the abstract of her dissertation she announces, “A meta-analysis was performed on studies that had been conducted between the years 1979 to 1996. Thirty-six studies were analyzed according to their results from measurements in the cognitive/visual-perceptual, academic achievement and affective domains. The results from the meta-analysis were mixed.”⁴⁸ Shiell’s work emphasizes the difficulty in trying to conduct a comprehensive assessment of the program. The effect sizes were not consistently reported in the studies she analyzed. The way the results were reported was different and therefore hard to calculate. Standard deviations and sample sizes were not reported. Often no information was reported on the pupil, instrument selection, or the teacher’s level of training in the program.⁴⁹ This illustrates the difficulty in coming to a conclusive decision on the success or failure of the program. There are many variables to consider. No single assessment should be seen as authoritative, and Shiell makes the case that not even a large collection of assessments should be considered comprehensive and decisive in determining the program’s effectiveness.

In general, Shiell did not seem to come down on one side or the other in her assessment of FIE. She noted, “I believe this exploratory investigation is important because so many of the results of individual studies have been inconclusive or contradictory...It may be that in certain circumstances, the amount of improvement is not enough to justify expenditures; in others, the difference could be enough to justify pursuing a vigorous complete or partial program.”⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Janet Shiell, “A Meta-Analysis of Feuerstein’s Instrumental Enrichment” (PhD diss., University of British Columbia, 2002), 3.

⁴⁹ Shiell, “A Meta-Analysis of Feuerstein’s Instrumental Enrichment,” 84.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 33,34.

Because there are contradictory views of the program's success a negative critique must be warranted to some degree. FIE is likely not successful in all cases. Yet even negative critiques need to be taken with a grain of salt. Shiell noted some of the issues that could lead to negative assessments of the program. If the program were unsuccessful in creating substantial cognitive change, that may not be due to the program's ineffectiveness but a failure to properly implement the program. Shiell points to an inappropriate amount of teacher training and a teacher's lack of skill in mediation or cognitive bridging from the instrument to other applications. Another problem she cited with the assessments was that they were conducted before the program was taught for the proper length of time, often far less than recommended.⁵¹ Many reviewers also noted the need for more rigorously controlled studies.⁵² Carl Haywood of Vanderbilt University, in a review of one of Feuerstein's books, says much the same thing as Shiell:

The point is that examination of the studies that have failed to show much in the way of positive effects can yield important insights on the necessary and sufficient conditions for successful implementation of cognitive education programs in general and IE in particular. Past studies have suggested that there is an answer to the "how much is enough?" question: An investment of more than 75-100 classroom hours seems to produce significant gains in both cognitive development and some areas of school achievement, whereas a smaller investment of classroom time seems not to be associated with such gains. There are persistent suggestions that quality and intensity of teacher training, fidelity of program replication, and consultation and administrative support are extremely important variables in determining the success of this and other programs of classroom cognitive education (see, e.g., Feuerstein et al., 2006, pp. 441 and 443; Haywood, 1992). Whatever the omissions, it is gratifying to see presentation of relevant research.⁵³

The conclusion one comes to when delving into critiques of Feuerstein's program, and cognitive enrichment programs in general, is that they generally have positive effects as long as they are implemented properly. Haywood, who has done extensive research in cognitive enrichment programs, comes to this same conclusion. In his review of fifteen cognitive enrichment programs, including Feuerstein's, he writes:

Although program evaluation research in this area has not always been of distinguished caliber, there is now a sufficient accumulation of convincing studies to support a set of

⁵¹ Ibid., 31.

⁵² Ibid., 32.

⁵³ Carl Haywood, "Long-Awaited Update. Review of *Creating and Enhancing Cognitive Modifiability: The Feuerstein Instrumental Enrichment Program*" Research Gate (January 2008): 126, accessed November 23, 2016, <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/265554037>.

fairly consistent positive effects when the programs are applied systematically by well trained and supervised teachers. Such effects include significant elevations in IQ, improved cognitive development, enhanced school achievement, greater enthusiasm for learning, and some social effects such as reduced interpersonal conflict and greater cooperative learning.⁵⁴

One must be fair in assessing any critique of a cognitive enrichment program. Due to the variables in assessing the programs, thinking that the program is the automatic cure-all for every cognitive deficiency would be unwise. Yet thinking the program has no benefit at all is also unwise. One must be balanced in his approach to the FIE program. Just like physical strengthening programs, no single program is one-hundred percent successful. In weight lifting programs if the lifts are done properly, the equipment is available, and the one working out is motivated, the lifting program can have positive results. One must think along the same lines with the FIE program. If the tools are used correctly, the mediator is well-trained, and the learner is motivated then some cognitive improvements can be made. Another thing to keep in mind is that each individual will likely receive varying benefits or depth of benefits than another individual in the same program with the same mediator.

The FIE program does have its limitations, but the evidence for its success is also present. This has already been previously mentioned but must be said again: modern developments in neuroscience have supported Feuerstein's SCM theory and the results of the FIE program. Dr. Feuerstein lived just long enough to see the proof of SCM he was waiting for. He writes in *Changing Minds and Brains*:

I also recall asking the prominent neuro-scientist Karl Pribram how we can ever understand what the brain is doing to somebody who can use abstract thinking and can become able to apply whatever is learned in one activity to other different activities. He answered, "Feuerstein, be patient. It is coming." And here I am, grateful to see that my basic hypothesis that *behavior changes the brain no less than the brain determines the behavior* has become evidenced by the existence of noninvasive methods of studying the brain in a real-time fashion...Noninvasive modalities have shown us that a variety of functions can be modified, and – most important – that modifiability is effected in the individual's brain by the behavior imposed on the brain. New behaviors create new structures, pathways, and neural elements themselves. They will change the blood flow that will affect and be affected by the locus in which certain mental operations take place. They will affect the neurotransmitters, and affect even the generation of new neural

⁵⁴Carl Haywood, "What is Cognitive Education? The View from 30,000 Feet," *Journal of Cognitive Education and Psychology* 12, no. 1 (2013): 41, accessed November 23, 2016, <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/265553229>.

matter with new synaptic connections that were destroyed, so to speak, by necrotic processes in the brain.⁵⁵

These discoveries proved to Feuerstein that his neurological and behavioral work could be scientifically substantiated.

There are a number of supposed “miracle” cases. Yet Feuerstein would quickly point out that the cognitive improvement came about through effective use of the FIE program. A boy named Alex suffered from Sturge-Weber syndrome which caused the misfiring of neurons in his brain. Starting at age 4 he would have ten to fifteen epileptic seizures daily.⁵⁶ He eventually had a left hemispherectomy to remove the offending areas of the brain. In the process he lost the part of his brain responsible for language development and use. Surprisingly, after the procedure, he retained the ability to speak on a very basic level. But he was unable to learn to read, write, or do operational thinking. Five years after the procedure his mother brought him to Feuerstein. After more than three years of intensive mediation in the Feuerstein institute he regained his ability to speak, read, write, and perform mathematical operations. He even went on to complete a college program in the area of accounting. All the experts agreed that such a feat would be impossible. Only Feuerstein took in Alex to help him. At the time of writing *Changing Minds and Brains*, Alex was thirty-two years old and more assessments were being run on his brain. Feuerstein quotes one of the specialists involved saying, “His brain is doing what it is not supposed to be able to do!”⁵⁷ The barriers that everyone else saw for Alex were not barriers for the FIE program.

Another testimonial Feuerstein records is the story of Ron.⁵⁸ Ron lost a good portion of his frontal lobe. This led to his lack of the capacity to take his environment into consideration. This primarily affected his social judgment, causing him to communicate in an aggressive and insensitive manner. Feuerstein relates that when he first began working with Ron, he would kick the door to come in the room and scream like a small child. He would say rude comments about his instructors and the secretaries in the office. But after three years of working with Ron,

⁵⁵ Feuerstein, Feuerstein, and Falik, *Changing Minds and Brains*, 118, 119.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 97-99.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 99.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 119, 120.

Feuerstein reports that “the changes we observed were so dramatic that he became, following extensive treatment, one of the most gentle and considerate people that I know.”⁵⁹

The FIE program is not just filled with testimonies of “miracle” cases but also much simpler improvements among those who don’t suffer from any drastic cognitive deficiencies like Alex and Ron. This author, during his vicar year at Resurrection in Verona, WI, had the privilege to meet a mediator of the FIE program and some of her pupils. Terri Krueger, a former WELS teacher, is now a certified mediator of the FIE program. What follows are some testimonies from those who have participated in FIE with Krueger.

Gene Cate, owner and CEO of Cate Machine and Welding Inc., suffered from severe head trauma received in a concussion. Running his own business meant he would need his cognitive functions to be sharp. His injury prompted his participation in FIE with Krueger. One of the functions Cate says he struggled with was not being able to give structure to his thoughts in communication.⁶⁰ He admits he would become frustrated or upset when he was unable to communicate. But when asked about the single greatest benefit he received from the program he answered, “Speech and memory restoration. [This removed] some of the frustration from not being able to communicate without getting upset and even turning into headaches.”⁶¹ When asked if he was still benefitting from his participation in the program Cate answered:

Absolutely. I keep using things that Terri has worked with me on to think “precise and concise.” Anyone who knows me knows that I have always had a problem with that. After the concussion this became totally out of control. I became self-conscious about speaking in front of people that do not know what happened to me... This program tied with other health activities has helped me a lot. The only thing I regret is not starting it immediately after the concussion happened. I guess I felt I was so confused and not able to think clearly that it would be a waste of my time. Terri can take this right down to any level and that is so important.⁶²

This author found Cate’s final sentence above to be particularly accurate. Krueger knew how to apply the program to anyone at any level. That is what a mediator of the FIE program is meant to do. The program is for all people at any level. This shows itself in the variety of pupils this author interviewed.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 119.

⁶⁰ Gene Cate, email interview by author, October 18, 2016.

⁶¹ Cate interview.

⁶² Cate, interview.

The program works well with those who suffer brain trauma but also those who suffer from well-known disorders like ADHD. Luke Pudlo, member at Resurrection Lutheran Church, writes on some of the benefits of the program in and how it helped him learn to navigate the challenges of his ADHD:

Attention to detail is higher, memory recall is improved, and organizational abilities have drastically improved. Where the ADD once caused chaos and difficulty in tasks, there is now order and a set list of ways to proceed in varying life and work choices...my mind lies at a calmer state than it used to, where once it was chaos and varying thoughts, there now is a more calm, organized way of handling day to day activities. My brain picks up the smaller details in day to day life and files them away for better recollection for day to day use as well as work related instances.⁶³

FIE can bring “order to the chaos” of ADHD.

FIE is also a useful tool for teachers to have in their back pockets. Even if they are not implementing the full program in their classrooms, they can utilize some of the mediation techniques to help struggling students. Karen Bauer is currently a WELS teacher serving at St. Paul Lutheran School in Bangor, WI. Bauer has undergone training in the Feuerstein method and talks about some of the benefits it brings to her classroom. She says, “It has helped me ask more thoughtful questions in my classes. I also do better at asking questions in disciplining the children that makes them stop and think about what they are doing and how to change their actions.”⁶⁴ An awareness of proper mediation techniques will aid classroom instruction and management.

The program has lasting benefits. One student this author interviewed, Reynaldo Ramos, is now an honor roll student in high school but participated in the FIE program for four years in grade school, from 1st through 4th grade. He speaks strongly about the lasting impact the program has made in his education. When asked what he considers the single greatest benefit he received from the program Ramos said:

There were many benefits from the program that I received like how to properly speak and how to hold a pencil but I think that the greatest benefit that I have received from the program is being able to read. I had troubles reading because the letters would be like moving around on the page and it made reading extremely difficult...I am definitely benefitting from the program today. If it were not for the program, I would not be able to read, which would have been a huge issue in the higher grade levels.⁶⁵

⁶³ Luke Pudlo, email interview by author, November 13, 2016.

⁶⁴ Karen Bauer, email interview by author, October 22, 2016.

⁶⁵ Reynaldo Ramos, email interview by author, October 19, 2016.

The program can impart competence and confidence to students who seem to be falling behind academically. With FIE they can not only cope but also excel.

The critiques and limitations of the FIE program have been laid out alongside the evidence for its success. No cognitive enrichment program is perfect but the FIE program has some well documented success and favorable reviews from many of its participants.

HOW DOES THIS PROGRAM HELP THE PASTOR?

Limitations of the Program in Aiding Ministry

Any discussion of the power of the human mind must be tempered with the warning of relying on human reason. The Lord says in Proverbs 3:5, “Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding.” All the power and potential of the human mind should never be elevated above our trust in the Lord and his Word. A Christian holds every thought in its proper place, under Christ, as Paul states in 2 Corinthians 10:5, “We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.” Christians know “the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom” (1 Corinthians 1:25). The sacrifice of Jesus is ever the focal point of a successful ministry, not the pastor’s great ability to solve problems or use sound logic. A pastor submits his thoughts in obedience to Christ.

Terri Krueger, the FIE program teacher mentioned above, is also a WELS member. While a huge proponent of the program’s success, she too notes some areas of caution in the use of the program. In an email interview Krueger wrote:

While the benefits of this program are many, there is a danger, as in many things created by man. This program strengthens a person’s use of logic in problem solving. While using reason and logic help us solve many of our problems, the danger comes in relying solely on that logic. The temptation is there to become much more reliant on ourselves rather than on God. Even as I trained to mediate these exercises, my own brain began to process information differently. (I find I can’t even go into a store now to shop without a plan to be the most efficient I can be.) I look at many projects with different eyes than I used to as my brain has changed. I need to work every day to focus on God and his Word

to keep me grounded. I work to help others to reframe “problems” to see them as opportunities and challenges, and challenges as positives.⁶⁶

As Krueger notes, the FIE program seeks to impart logic and reason for solving problems. Reason and logic are great gifts of God and very useful, but one must be careful never to value reason or logic so highly that he no longer thinks he needs God’s help or love.

A pastor is always to remember his goal to “preach the word” (2 Timothy 4:2). The FIE program is useful for pastors in so far as it helps the pastor carry out his task of preaching the Word. This paper will seek to show some ways the program can aid in organizing, planning, and presenting the Word, but obviously it cannot take the Word’s place in giving the life-saving message to sinners.

However helpful the FIE program may be, Christians should always remember that no program or earthly assistance can ever fully supply all their needs. Only God will truly meet all needs. Paul reminds the Philippians, and Christians today, of this truth when he says, “And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:19). God has blessed us with many opportunities in this world for bettering ourselves physically and mentally, but only he can provide our souls with what they need. Only in God’s Word will we find what we really need for our souls each day.

Krueger notes the role of positive thoughts in helping a person to function effectively each day. She also notes that God’s Word is our primary source for that positivity. She writes:

The science research now tells us that positive thoughts create positive chemical changes in the body. The opposite is also true, the more negative the thoughts, the more negative chemicals are released into the body. But where do we look for those positive perspectives in our work and daily lives? There is only one source for us to focus on in order to get what we need each day- God’s Word.⁶⁷

Positive thoughts might be gained through proper brain function and cognitive clarity but a lasting, positive perspective is found only in the good news of grace recorded in Scripture.

The FIE program must be put in its proper place. It can be useful to a pastor but it will always be in a subordinate role in ministry. Ministry is carried out first and foremost by the use of God’s Word.

⁶⁶ Terri Krueger, email interview by author, October 20, 2016.

⁶⁷ Krueger, interview.

One downside of the FIE program is that it is designed to be implemented over a considerable amount of time. The program is designed to be presented as a two or three year program. Sessions are usually held at least once a week, preferably twice a week. The program recommends students to have one and a half to two hours of sessions per week. Clearly this may be an obstacle to many pastors whose time is often quickly filled with a variety of ministry tasks. Finding time to meet once or twice a week with a trained mediator could be difficult.

Yet before this becomes too much of an obstacle for an interested learner, let it be known that this author partook of the FIE program during his vicar year and completed a significant portion of the program in just six months. The amount of content covered in each session can be decided upon by the pupil and mediator. Those in pastoral ministry will often already have highly capable brains and so can handle multiple exercises in one session. The longer one is in the program the more likely he will receive lasting results from his training, but even just six months of intense training can make a difference.

While the time commitment could be an obstacle, a learner need not let that turn him or her away from the program. The program has transcendent value and its benefits are self-perpetuating. As noted previously in this paper, the program's benefits are designed to stick with the learner far after he has stopped participating in the program. So while this may be a relatively high time commitment for a year or two, once the program is finished, the improvements gained will not recede. Consider how much time a person could spend in a weight room or on a running regimen. Hours upon hours of training can make the body strong but as soon as the training is stopped, deterioration of muscle begins almost immediately. The FIE program only needs to be utilized for a set amount of time in order for its improvements to last. If this were true of a workout routine people would flock to partake in it. A couple years of brain training in the FIE program, while possibly rigorous, could give lasting benefit to a ministry. The time commitment is not insurmountable.

Another possible obstacle of implementing the FIE program in the ministry could be money. Each session costs a fee. Obviously the mediator of the program must make a living so a cost is to be expected. This fee stretched out over one, two, or three years could become burdensome. A pastor would be justified in turning away from the program due to the fees involved.

Yet, once again, this obstacle is not insurmountable. Many congregations have a continuing education fund set aside for their pastor. A pastor could explain his purpose in participating in the program, assuring his congregation that the program could help him serve them better. The congregation may then be willing to help him with payments through the continuing education fund.

If money is the main obstacle, one must remember that enrollment in the program does not go on indefinitely. A person will likely have no problem purchasing a monthly gym membership. He sees it as an investment in his physical health. He is willing to pay the monthly fee to keep his body healthy. Enrollment in FIE can similarly be seen as an investment in cognitive health. The money would not be wasted and, unlike paying a gym membership year after year, enrollment in the FIE program can be completed in less than three years.

Reasons Why the Pastor Needs Sharp Cognitive Function

One of the many reasons a pastor, in particular, can benefit from FIE are the circumstances surrounding humans in this modern world. In *Changing Minds and Brains* Feuerstein writes:

In the world that we live in, the needs for adaptation are greater than ever before. Imagine living 500 years ago; when you could live the same life, day by day and year by year, without having to change yourself; in fact, any change might well cause chaos in your life. However, at this point in our existence our ever-changing environment requires a great deal of adaptation on the part of the individual. The need for adaptation in response to changing conditions and demands requires that individuals modify themselves – in behavior, aspirations, ways of approaching things.⁶⁸

The world we live in is rapidly changing. An individual must be able to meet challenges and take information from the known to the unknown. Feuerstein makes this point repeatedly in his works. In *Beyond Smarter* he writes, “In the modern world, with the rapid and sharp changes that are an inseparable part of it, a person will be unable to adapt unless he or she can meet the challenges of the novel and unfamiliar... Today’s individual is required to cope with complex tasks, the like of which have never before been experienced.”⁶⁹ The basic cognitive functions

⁶⁸ Feuerstein, Feuerstein, and Falik, *Changing Minds and Brains*, 66.

⁶⁹ Feuerstein, Feuerstein, and Falik, *Beyond Smarter*, 89, 90.

needed to adapt and meet the challenges of our modern world must be sharp or one could easily be overwhelmed.

One of the main contributors to this need for more cognitive training now more than ever before is the advent of the internet and mass access to information. In *Changing Minds and Brains*, Dr. Feuerstein's son Refael wrote a chapter on the implications of the electronic revolution of the past few decades. Information is available at the click of a button. Answers can be found with little to no effort required in discovering them. Refael Feuerstein cites cell phones and smart phones as a major detriment in the development of social interaction skills.⁷⁰ He gives the example of a woman who asked him a question at a workshop but who started typing a message on her phone before he had barely begun to answer her. He also cites the typical story of a man and woman at dinner together, both staring at their phones, not talking with each other. Feuerstein is concerned by this modern development in social norms. This circles back around to promoting the need for real human mediation and contact, something the FIE program values above any other kind of mediation.

Another disconcerting aspect of modern technology is the damage it does to a person's attention span. Refael Feuerstein asserts that people's attention is not jeopardized only when they have a cell phone in hand. He maintains that such modern use of technology even changes our *attention practices*. Feuerstein writes:

It appears that the influence of the new technologies on attention lies not only in the competition with other factors (such as the teacher in class, friends, and so forth), but also in the change of our attention practices, even when our phones are turned off. The short messages characterizing the dialogue in the various social networks (Facebook, Twitter, etc.) have created a fragmented, abbreviated, shallow, and partial form of speech (and learning). The hunger for stimuli creates a situation in which a complex lecture that advances slowly to its goal causes the rapid disconnection of the young listeners from the lecturer. They are quite simply bored. Reading has diminished or almost been eliminated, because "it does not keep up with the tempo" of the supply of stimuli, relative to the alternatives.⁷¹

One does not have to search very far to see what the implications this development would have on a pastor's preaching. The effect of modern technology on attention spans is going to be hard

⁷⁰ Feuerstein, Feuerstein, and Falik, *Changing Minds and Brains*, 192.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 193.

for a pastor to overcome among his congregation members and himself. There is a critical need for planned behavior with the technology stimuli. There is a need to slow down and think.

Feuerstein also mentions the disappearance of effort. Effort is replaced by ease. Computers and similar devices have in many ways replaced the effort of human beings in the performance of complex and involved actions.⁷² This is not a bad thing and saves a lot of time and effort for the person to spend on other tasks, but this becomes a problem when such ease is taken for granted. People don't like waiting, and these days we don't usually have to. The Feuerstein program promotes the employment of effort. Refael Feuerstein asserts this when he says, "The main objective is to interfere with the convenience of automatic thinking that does not require effort...The graduate of mediating education is not afraid to make an effort. On the contrary, effort is welcomed and serves as a source of mastery and satisfaction."⁷³ Not only will the FIE program teach how to put forth mental effort but actually seeks to promote a love of using effort. Not only does the program ask the learners to consider a deeper meaning behind tasks by asking the question "why?" it also prompts the learner to want to ask "why?" all on his or her own.

Another bad habit our modern age has taught us is that we must multitask in order to accomplish our goals. Dr. Caroline Leaf in her book *Switch on Your Brain* writes very strongly about the negative effects of multitasking. She writes:

One of the plagues of modern existence is multitasking, which leads to the further plagues of "hurry sickness" and obsessive time management. The truth about multitasking is that it is a persistent myth. What we really do is shift our attention rapidly from task to task, resulting in two bad things: (1) we don't devote as much focused attention as we should to a specific activity, and (2) we sacrifice the quality of our attention.⁷⁴

Multitasking is the opposite of the way God designed the brain to function. Dr. Leaf goes on to support this assertion, saying:

This poor focusing of attention and lack of quality in our thought lives is the complete opposite of how the brain is designed to function and causes a level of brain damage. Every rapid, incomplete, and poor quality shift of thought is like making a milkshake with your brain cells and neurochemicals. This milkshake-multitasking creates patterns of flightiness and lack of concentration that are unfortunately often erroneously labeled

⁷² Ibid., 197.

⁷³ Ibid., 200.

⁷⁴ Caroline Leaf, *Switch On Your Brain*, 69.

ADD and ADHD and that are too often unnecessarily medicated, adding fuel to the fire. And it's a rapid downhill slide from there if we don't get back to our God-design of deep, intellectual attention.⁷⁵

Multitasking and trying to take in too much stimuli at once is becoming a way of life for many people in our time. This trend doesn't seem to be slowing down either. Flighty thoughts and trouble focusing are problems that many people will struggle with without ever realizing the true cause of them.

The FIE program could be a good tool for just about anyone, no matter their age or station in life, to use in combating the effects of our hyper-stimulative society. The FIE is equipped to help people control their thinking processes and focus. Refael Feuerstein states, "Mediating for consciousness and control of the thinking process is designed to overcome the effects that we have described above: to stop, plan, correct, to make assumptions about the continuation of the work process, and to assess what I have done while making a comparison with a model or instruction I have received."⁷⁶

All people need to be fortified against overstimulation, multitasking, and taking shortcuts in the cognitive process, but perhaps a pastor is especially in need of this cognitive fortification. A pastor will likely have a large variety of completely different tasks to complete each day. He will need the ability to focus and prioritize, categorize and organize. The pastor will need to be thorough and planned in his actions every day. If a pastor does the bulk of his work on a computer as he writes sermons, Bible studies, emails, and catechism lessons, then he will need to be careful of switching his attention to trivial articles, videos, or pictures while working. Focus is critical.

Another factor contributing to the great need for a pastor to have strong cognitive function and cognitive fortitude is the fact that he will be his own boss. The pastor's schedule is largely decided by himself apart from a number of non-negotiable time slots. The pastor must learn to not only be planned but flexible. New opportunities could spring up causing the pastor to shift gears. Emergencies could demand the pastor's attention immediately, causing him to have to rework his plan for getting things done. This age of fast digital communication has also added the need for a pastor to be able to navigate the possibility of almost constant contact with his

⁷⁵ Ibid., 69.

⁷⁶ Feuerstein, Feuerstein, and Falik, *Changing Minds and Brains*, 200.

congregation. Perhaps one of the biggest challenges for a new pastor especially will be the fact that he goes from being a student his whole life to suddenly being his own boss. He is no longer told what to do, how to do it, and when to do it. The pastor must be self-sufficient and capable to handle matters on his own.

Many careers require a person working their way up “through the ranks.” One may start as an office assistant and gradually be promoted to manager roles before becoming a CEO. This gradual process of elevation in a career allows a person to learn and grow as they take on more responsibilities later in their career. Not so for pastors. A pastor goes from a student to his own boss immediately. The FIE program can be especially beneficial for new pastors or vicars who are struggling to cope with their newfound responsibilities.

In sermons, devotions, Bible classes, and counseling situations the pastor needs to communicate clearly, concisely, and logically. Especially when handling and teaching God’s Word the pastor needs to be clearly understood. The last thing a pastor wants is for his meaning to be mistaken and for false teaching to enter the church due to unclear communication on biblical truths. Plus, even when biblical truths are being communicated correctly, the pastor would still do well to present those truths in a manner which can be digested and applied by his listeners.

Ways the Program Can Aid Ministry

In the list of qualifications for pastors which Paul gives to Timothy in 1 Timothy 3:1-7, one will not see the item, “must be mentally sharp.” Yet having healthy cognitive function will aid in the keeping of some of those qualifications. A pastor ought to be “temperate,” “self-controlled,” “able to teach,” and “not quarrelsome” (1 Timothy 3:2, 3). These qualifications in particular would be hard to effectively achieve without strong mental health. Using the planned, focused, and controlled cognitive functions taught by the FIE program could benefit the pastor in these endeavors. He will think through his actions before doing something rash. He will have awareness of social limitations and be clear and controlled in his handling of problems. His mode of resolving arguments will be fair and logical rather than impulsive or emotional. And his ability to teach could be greatly benefitted by sharp cognitive function. He will communicate accurately, clearly, and precisely. He will not just know information but how to get himself and

others to dissect a truth and apply it to their lives. He will learn how to get people to dig deeper and ask “why?” since he has already asked himself the same question. Participation in the FIE program is not commanded by Scripture and neither is having sharp mental function, yet the Bible would in no way prohibit or discourage a pastor from being mentally sharp to carry out his ministry.

The Bible clearly encourages the faithful use of one’s brain as a godly endeavor. Aiming to acquire a sharp mind is not a purely secular undertaking. In 1 Kings chapter 3, Solomon realized the importance of having a sound mind and discerning heart. In verse 5 God said to Solomon, “Ask for whatever you want me to give you.” Solomon asked for wisdom. He realized that as king over Israel he would need a sharp mind in order to best shepherd God’s people. In his position of authority, Solomon needed to be able to govern fairly and discern the proper course of action as he administered justice. No amount of money or charisma was more valuable to Solomon than a discerning mind.

Solomon’s case is unique. Pastors will not expect God to appear to them and give them whatever they ask for. Yet if a pastor could have one thing, he might want to follow the example of Solomon and pray for a discerning mind. As a shepherd over God’s people, possessing a discerning heart and mind is priceless. The ability to assess situations and solve problems fairly cannot be measured in gold. The FIE program will not give the pastor a wisdom as great as Solomon’s. However, the program can aid a pastor in making sound decisions as he leads a congregation. Striving to have a sharp mind like Solomon is more than a secular endeavor to obtain personal glory. Striving to have a sharp mind for the purpose of building up God’s kingdom and watching over his flock is a God-pleasing endeavor.

Christians recognize that God gave each of them their minds and all their abilities. Taking care of their minds just as they do their bodies is God-pleasing stewardship. Martin Luther in his explanation to the first article of the Apostles’ Creed confesses, “I believe that God has created me together with all that exists. God has given me and still preserves my body and soul: eyes, ears, and all limbs and senses; reason and all mental faculties.”⁷⁷ A person’s reason and mental faculties are gracious gifts from God the Father. A Christian will not only thank God for these gifts but gladly use them in service to God. Sharpening our mental faculties is a fruit of

⁷⁷ The Small Catechism, The Creed. 2 in Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert, eds., *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), 354.

our confidence in our good and merciful Father in heaven. In the Large Catechism Luther stipulates:

Hence, because everything we possess, and everything in heaven and on earth besides, is daily given, sustained, and protected by God, it inevitably follows that we are in duty bound to love, praise, and thank him without ceasing, and, in short, to devote all these things to his service, as he has required and enjoined in the Ten Commandments.⁷⁸

Using our minds and abilities wisely is a great way to give praise to our Father who blessed us with brains and the ability to sharpen them.

As a Christian using the FIE program, trust in God's love is what will get him through tough times. But a Christian holding tight to faith in Jesus can see the program's benefit in acting alongside their faith in overcoming difficulties. Jacob Beilke, a participant in the Friends of China ministry, noted some ways the FIE program, in conjunction with his faith, has helped him get through stressful situations. He says:

[The FIE program] has helped me to slow down and break apart large tasks and make them more manageable. I think I can take the big picture and look at it as smaller pieces now, which is really helpful. It has caused me to navigate some really stressful situations better. I also have recognized some of the faulty thinking I have and it has allowed me to pray about those thoughts and also get specific help.⁷⁹

Beilke says he is still benefitting from his time in the program. He mentions, "I still remember to look at things like dots and just break it down, stay calm, and work through issues little by little. That is a great blessing and benefit. Remembering that the real stress relief comes from a relationship with Jesus and that he will be with me in all struggles is really amazing!"⁸⁰

In much the same way as Beilke, Steven Pelischek sees the FIE program as a tool God used to help him get through tough situations. Pelischek served as a vicar at Resurrection in Verona, Wisconsin. While serving there, he participated in the FIE program with the Feuerstein program mediator, Terri Krueger. When asked how the FIE program personally benefitted him he responded:

First of all, nothing can or ever will replace time spent in the Word. In addition, when a person is so blessed with such invaluable *Christian* mentors and encouragers - as I am and was during my vicar year - you just have to thank God for these amazing blessings. But I would confidently and clearly suggest that God himself provides additional tools and programs -- through the intellect, talents and gifts of his human

⁷⁸ The Large Catechism, The Creed. 19 in Kolb and Wengert, 433.

⁷⁹ Jacob Beilke, email interview by author, October 21, 2016.

⁸⁰ Beilke, interview.

servants -- for the benefit of people like me. To be honest, the Feuerstein Instrumental Enrichment program is a great example of this (especially as it was used and administered under the guidance of my mentor & sister in Christ, Terri Krueger)...At such a sensitive crossroads, at which I decided to go in a new direction, this program provided me stability and a safe framework on which to build.⁸¹

For Pelischek, the program was a tool God brought into his life at the right time, and it gave him the structure he needed. He says:

This structure, along with a comfortable *environment* supplied under Krueger's tutelage, was so important for me because I've always struggled mightily with a plurality and overabundance of thoughts. In other words, for someone who over thinks, and overanalyzes, and is overly sensitive (i.e. people-pleasing, perfectionism, difficulty finishing tasks), the FIE program and its various units gave me a sort of skeleton structure to, first, *calm down*. For instance, at the beginning of each unit, the same phrase appeared: "*Just a moment... let me think!*" Even this little phrase - however simple and commonsensical - gave me *permission*, of sorts, to slow down and take my time. It was only the beginning of the narrowing and whittling down of the sheer large quantity of my own thoughts. The FIE provided a safe and simple structure to take a step back and eventually, have several small yet important epiphanies of how my brain has been operating... and to even realize some of the bad mental habits I've formed over many years, that can suddenly crop up like obstacles to my own confidence and success as a person.⁸²

Pelischek enjoyed the opportunity the program afforded his brain to slow down and process information. He asserts that the program helped him gain a level of confidence in himself and his work. Ultimately, he says the program was especially helpful in allowing him to reframe challenges and problems. He says, "Most of all, the FIE program has enabled me to more actively *fight* (not flee from) problems and, moreover, see those problems as opportunities, and even better, blessings from God in which to fully engage, enjoy, savor, and God-willing, remember."⁸³

The aforementioned Terri Krueger has now worked through the program with three vicars and two catholic priests. She explains her process of implementing the program and takes note of some ways the program would especially benefit a public minister. She writes:

The mediator works with the student(s) to work through the exercises and then to apply the skills learned to real life. It is this mediation that makes the instruments of value. When I mediate these exercises, I strive to guide the students to summarize what they have learned into a principle and then apply that principle to different aspects of their

⁸¹ Steven Pelischek, email interview by author, October 22, 2016.

⁸² Steven Pelischek, interview.

⁸³ Ibid.

lives including their work life and home life. For pastors and pastors in training this can include the areas of time management, sermon writing, Bible classes, and counseling. Each of those I have worked with so far has found these exercises helpful in all of these areas. In working with the cognitive functions of accurate labeling, using multiple sources of information, defining problems, using logic, summarizing, and using accurate verbal skills among others, most of the students have been able to better organize and prioritize their work days; balance their work time, family time, alone time; organize their thoughts for their sermons; and recognize when they need to ask for help. Most have been able to find a way to adjust their perspective when schedules and interruptions get in the way. When I work with those in the ministry, as well as other Christians, we are able to bring into our discussions the importance of personal Bible study and prayer time.⁸⁴

This author, having worked with Krueger, is impressed how easily the program can be applied to situations in life and especially to aspects of the ministry. Bridging from the instruments to a principle and from the principle to ministry applications is where the pupil will receive the most benefit. As Krueger asserts, this bridging is not only achievable but has also already proven effective with the handful of ministry students she has worked with.

Time management is likely the discipline receiving the most benefit from the FIE program. The feedback from those who have participated in the program reveals that their ability to manage time improved after even a short time in the program. The cognitive organization and flexibility skills gained from the program allow the learner to have a system for planning and the ability to change plans effectively. Benjamin Phelps, currently serving as a vicar at Resurrection Lutheran in Verona, WI, participates in the FIE program with Krueger, as Pelischek and this author did before him. When it comes to the program improving his time management skills Phelps says, “I am finding ways to give myself schedules and goals that are realistic and prioritized, yet flexible. This has helped me to bear the burden of my workload and balance that with my personal time, family time, and finding time to adjust and settle in to a new life and environment.”⁸⁵

Phelps is not alone in seeing the value of learning time management from the program. A student of the program currently serving as a Catholic priest, Father Joseph Zabinski, says, “[The program] helped me be less anxious and more able to navigate scheduling – to be able to think ahead/ look ahead [and] plan things out in advance...I am still benefitting from the program by

⁸⁴ Terri Krueger, interview.

⁸⁵ Benjamin Phelps, email interview by author, October 25, 2016.

way of being at peace with things when they come up unexpectedly and other times when I have a full schedule.”⁸⁶

Pastor Nathan Strutz at Resurrection in Verona, Wisconsin, also perceived that the greatest benefit of the program to his vicars was the time management aspect. He notes, “All the guys, so far, no matter where they were at, have benefitted by being better managers of God's gift of time, being more focused on getting tasks accomplished and setting a schedule that honestly has a lot of flexibility (that can be a great blessing or a great curse).”⁸⁷

The program can greatly benefit the pastor's stewardship of time. Since a pastor's schedule is largely dependent on his own decisions about when, where, and how to accomplish tasks, the program can give some structure to the pastor's planning process and equip him for success in the organization of his schedule. Of course, with every well laid plan one must remember Proverbs 16:9, “In their hearts humans plan their course, but the Lord establishes their steps.” Even the best laid plans can become useless if the Lord takes a person on a different course. At the same time this doesn't mean one must make no plans at all. Planning will actually give a pastor much more flexibility to deal with unexpected situations than if he did not plan at all. If the pastor wants some concrete methods of time management and also an internal understanding of how to organize his time, he would do well to participate in FIE.

Another discipline benefitted by the FIE program is sermon preparation. In a text study, many of the cognitive functions taught by the program will be helpful. Just as the mediator seeks to lead the pupil to deeper reasoning beyond the surface, so those principles of getting to the heart of a matter will be used by the pastor as he dives into a text. When seeking the text's malady, the pastor must ask the question “why?” multiple times until the specific problem is identified. The same will be done in finding the cure or specific gospel of the text. Uncovering the underlying problem and solution of a text will aid the pastor's organization of the sermon and its application to hearers. The program's focus on transcendent learning is also helpful in seeing how the text is applicable to hearers today. A principle is derived from the instrument or model and then applied. In the same way the model, God's Word, must be the starting point for finding

⁸⁶ Joseph Zabinski, email interview by author, October 19, 2016.

⁸⁷ Nathan Strutz, email interview by author, November 29, 2016.

the truth. That truth is then organized into an outline to express the truth in exposition, illustration, and application.

As useful as the program's principles can be in aiding text study, perhaps the most benefit a pastor can receive from the program is in outlining. At the outset of this author's vicar year, his least favorite part of the sermon writing process was outlining. Trying to turn a massive text study full of seemingly uncoordinated points was extremely difficult. After participation in FIE, outlining has become not only easier but is looked forward to. Finding the structure of a text is rewarding and makes the writing step faster and more efficient. A sermon that follows a logical outline will aid the pastor in his preparation and memorization as well as keep the congregation following along with the sermon's train of thought.

Of course, even a well organized outline can be abused. In *Preach the Gospel* Joel Gerlach and Richard Balge write, "The preacher who overuses [the outline] irritates his hearers no less than the preacher whose sermons amount to little more than a succession of pious thoughts..."⁸⁸ The preacher must not be robotic in his sermon presentation. The outline is useful in keeping the people's brains tracking along with the pastor but the sermon is more than words on a page, it is an audible proclamation. The pastor must write not just to appeal to the head but also to the heart. The FIE will be most beneficial in aiding the sermon's ability to be cognitively followed and understood. As beneficial as the program is in aiding sermon writing, it is no substitute for meditation on the words of Scripture itself and the frequent use of prayer.

The program's use of mediation for deeper meaning and its emphasis on the creation of structure will prove beneficial also in the pastor's teaching, whether he's teaching adult Bible study, catechism, or BIC class. Teaching is more than passing on knowledge. This is an emphasis of the FIE program. Teaching is also all about teaching people "how" to learn. Leading a student to an answer rather than giving an answer is going to cause more connections in the brain. The process of discovering the answer to a question or problem can be duplicated in the finding of an answer to a totally unrelated problem. This is the goal of the FIE program, and its objectives can also find their way into the pastor's teaching. The pastor can learn not only to teach "what" is in the Bible but also lead his students on a journey to discover "why" something

⁸⁸ Richard Balge and Joel Gerlach, *Preach the Gospel* (Milwaukee, Northwestern Publishing House, 1982), 35.

is in the Bible and its significance in their lives. He can also teach students how to read the Bible on their own. He can teach them how to ask questions of the text in order to understand what God has to say to them.

A number of the cognitive functions learned in the FIE program can be converted into questions, leading the learners to use each function in answering (Appendix A). For example, in teaching the cognitive function of accurate problem definition, a pastor can structure his Bible class to identify the specific sin showing itself in a narrative. He can teach selection of relevant cues by helping the students identify the use of certain vocabulary and context in order to find the meaning of a section of text. Questions that lead the students to compare, categorize, label, or summarize in their own words will aid those specific cognitive functions. Even without explicitly teaching the cognitive functions, the pastor can impart lasting and meaningful truths by leading the learners to use a variety of cognitive functions in answering. If the pastor has learned to master these cognitive functions, he can pass that ability along to others.

The pastor can also pass along the proper use of cognitive functions in personal counseling situations. The pastor will not just tell a counselee with a problem what to do. He will better serve individuals if he can lead them to discover problems, solutions, and plans of action on their own. This is true also in the pastor's use of Scripture in a counseling session. Instead of telling individuals what a passage means, he can lead them to discover that meaning and how it applies to their situation. In *The Counseling Shepherd* Armin Schuetze and Frederick Matzke write:

This approach can apply not only to giving an understanding of the meaning but also to making the proper application. "I want the persons being counseled to participate and draw conclusions for themselves. I ask, 'Do you agree that this is something that applies to you?' When they say, 'Yes,' as they often do, I feel there is a real breakthrough."⁸⁹

"Leading" people to the truth rather than "forcing" the truth upon them will help them internalize the information and help they receive from the Word. When people are able to take in the information, define their own problems, and solve their own problems, they are more likely to work on that solution than if someone tells them what to do.

Especially if the counselee is struggling in a relationship with another person, going through the input, elaboration, and output phases of cognitive functions will aid them in their

⁸⁹ Armin Schuetze and Frederick Matzke, *The Counseling Shepherd* (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1988), 32.

communication with the person whom they're in conflict with (Appendix A). For example, a pastor can teach counselees to be complete in their gathering of information, accurate in their labeling of the problem, and then also to respond calmly after taking time to think through their response. Having a set of predetermined cognitive processes can aid in overcoming the high emotions that may be present in a conflict.

The pastor himself will be able to draw on these same cognitive functions in his work of walking through the problem with an individual. For example, he can utilize the cognitive function of selecting relevant cues as he determines a counselee's sincerity. He can ask specific questions to get to the heart of the matter by picking up on cues in the person's tone, choice of words, and body language. He can learn to consider his counselee's point of view and be a voice of calm, Godly reason in some tense situations.

The applications of the FIE and the cognitive functions it teaches are numerous. Within the realms of time management, sermon preparation, teaching, and counseling, the pastor will find methods of applying what he learned in FIE to his work. Very likely the cognitive functions taught in the FIE program are already being used by the pastor as he serves a congregation. However, the FIE program will lead the pastor to be aware of his use of those cognitive functions. He will actively seek to use cognitive processes when he encounters challenges or problems in his ministry.

FIE: A SUPPLEMENTAL TOOL

If one comes across the Feuerstein Instrumental Enrichment program, it is this author's hope that the program is not written off as a fad. On the contrary, the program could potentially be very beneficial to a pastor's ministry. The program's history is proof that it has stood the test of time and recent neuroscience has done nothing but continue to support Dr. Feuerstein's ideas and methods. The program's use is finding success among many different people of differing gifts and abilities. Furthermore, the self-directed nature of the pastoral office and variety of responsibilities it includes makes the pastor a great candidate for cognitive enrichment.

If a person is curious whether the FIE program would benefit his ministry or future ministry, perhaps the best first step is to assess oneself. If one has trouble focusing for extended periods of time or easily gets distracted, then he could greatly benefit from the cognitive

discipline taught by FIE. If one has troubles with procrastination or easily feels overwhelmed by responsibilities, then he could benefit greatly from the planning and organization taught by FIE. If one struggles creating organized, logical outlines for sermons, then he could be greatly served by the FIE's focus on bringing order to chaos. If one struggles to properly plan for large projects, then he could greatly benefit from the program's ability to teach advance planning and goal setting. Even if one feels as if he has a strong grasp on all of the skills mentioned above, he would probably concede that there is room for improvement.

Of course the best way to see if the program would be beneficial is to try it and see what one thinks. A workshop would be easy to come by. The aforementioned Terri Krueger from Resurrection in Verona has already expressed willingness to supply a sample workshop. She has experience implementing the program among those in ministry or training for ministry. Obviously, the program may not be for everyone, but exposing the program to those who may receive great benefit from it would be a reasonable way to give the program some recognition.

This program can be implemented either in a one-on-one session or with multiple learners in a classroom setting. This author took part in one-on-one sessions but perhaps a better way to implement FIE would be for multiple pastors or pastoral students to take the class in a larger classroom setting. Some possible suggestions for implementing this could be within a modified Winterim class or an add-on to summer quarter classes at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. The program could also be introduced to a group of pastors within a circuit. A qualified FIE program trainer could possibly even come to teach the course to interested professors. Interested pastors or professors could also attend the Feuerstein Institute's Shoresh in Dallas this June, 2017. These are just a few suggestions of some ways pastors, professors, or pastoral students can experience the program for themselves and make their own verdicts.

Even if pastors choose not to get involved in the FIE program, hopefully this thesis will heighten the awareness of the importance for pastors to be mentally healthy. The FIE program and other cognitive enrichment programs or exercises can aid a pastor's ministry by giving him the tools to tackle a variety of challenges and duties.

Nothing will take Scripture's place as the most important ministry tool a pastor must be familiar with, regularly use, and rely on. The FIE program will not strengthen the pastor's faith or take the primary place of importance in a pastor's ministry. Nevertheless, the FIE program can be a fitting supplemental tool. The pastor will come across some golden opportunities to apply

what he learned in the program as he seeks to organize his thoughts, plan his schedule, tackle a problem, or communicate clearly. Further sharpening his cognitive functions will aid the pastor in taking care of his congregation. At the same time, he will be keeping his own brain sharp and healthy. Participating in the Feuerstein Instrumental Enrichment program is one excellent way the pastor can cultivate a healthy brain for ministry.

APPENDIX A

COGNITIVE FUNCTIONS

INPUT PHASE	
GATHERING INFORMATION	
<u>Cognitive Function</u>	<u>Deficient Cognitive Function</u>
1. Clear Perception	Blurred and Sweeping Perception
2. Systematic Exploration	Impulsive Exploratory Behavior
3. Precise and Accurate Labeling	Lack of Appropriate Labels
4. Well-developed Orientation in Time and Space	Lack of/Impaired Temporal and/or Spatial Orientation
5. Conservation of Constancies	Lack of/Impaired Ability to Conserve Constancies
6. Capacity to Consider More Than One Source Of Information	Inability to Use Two or More Sources of Information
7. Need for Precision, Accuracy and Completeness in Data Gathering	Lack of Need for Precision Accuracy, and Completeness in Data Gathering

ELABORATION PHASE	
PROCESSING/ USING INFORMATION	
<u>Cognitive Function</u>	<u>Deficient Cognitive Function</u>
1. Accurate Definition Of the Problem	Inadequacy in Recognizing and/or Defining the Problem
2. Selection of Relevant Cues	Inability to Select Relevant vs. Irrelevant Information
3. Internalization of Information	Lack of/Impaired Internalization
4. Planning Behavior	Lack of/Impaired Planning Behavior
5. Broad Mental Field - Remembering	Narrowness of the Mental Field
6. Recognizing and Understanding Relationships	Lack of a Need for Establishing Relationships * Episodic Grasp of Reality
7. Spontaneous Comparative Behavior	Lack of Spontaneous Comparative Behavior
8. Categorizing	Inability to Categorize
9. Inferential-Hypothetical Thinking	Lack of /Impaired Inferential-Hypothetical Thinking
10. Using Logic to Arrive at and Defend Conclusions	Lack of a need for Pursuing Logical Evidence
11. Spontaneous Summative Behavior	Lack of a Need for Summative Behavior
12. Adequate Verbal Tools	Inadequate Verbal Tools (for elaboration)

OUTPUT PHASE	
EXPRESSING THE CONCLUSION	
<u>Cognitive Function</u>	<u>Deficient Cognitive Function</u>
1. Considers the Audience Point of View	Egocentric Communications
2. Thinking Things Through Before Responding	Trial and Error Behavior
3. Waiting Before Responding	Impulsivity
4. Staying Calm	Blocking
5. Precision and Accuracy in Communicating Data and Information	Lack of Precision and Accuracy in Communicating Data and Information
6. Clear Visual Transport	Deficiency in Visual Transport
7. Adequate Verbal Tools	Inadequate Verbal Tools
8. Projection of Virtual Relationships	Difficulty in Projecting Virtual Relationships

**This deficiency can be related to several cognitive functions*

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