

1 Teaching Physical Education with the Inclusion Style.

2 The Case of a Greek Elementary School

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Abstract

This paper describes how two physical education teachers implemented the Inclusion Style of teaching in two fifth and sixth grade classes of a Greek elementary school that has never experienced decision-making and individualized teaching. An overview of Mosston and Ashworth`s (2002) Inclusion Style as well as how style E unfolded in the gymnasium is given. During teaching the teachers faced various problems regarding organization and students decision-making. In an attempt to remedy these problems they came up with tips based on students opinions about the Inclusion Style as well as on their own observations during teaching. They suggest these tips to any physical education teacher who is to teach elementary school children with the Inclusion Style for the first time. Also, two example criteria sheets are included to demonstrate the expectations of the students in Style E.

Teaching Physical Education with the Inclusion Style.

The Case of a Greek Elementary School

For many years Physical Education in Greece has been taught with traditional or teacher-centered approaches (Greek Ministry of Education, 1997). It was not until 1988 when the Greek Ministry of Education reformed the Physical Education curriculum and made suggestions requiring that students should be involved in decision-making and participate in individualized teaching experiences (Greek Ministry of Education, 1997). In spite of this decree, current Physical Education classes in Greek schools rarely provide for individualized learning (Zounhia, 1998) and they too frequently offer sessions that include little meaningful and systematic instruction (Papadopoulos, 1997).

A conceptual framework, commonly used in conducting research and delivering instruction in schools, is the Spectrum of Teaching Styles (Byra & Jenkins, 2000).

According to Mosston and Ashworth (2002) the Spectrum consists of a continuum of 11 styles each of which emerges as decisions shift between teacher and learner.

Styles A, B, C, D, and E represent the teaching options that foster reproduction of past knowledge, whereas styles F, G, H, I, J, and K represent options that invite production of new knowledge. Mosston and Ashworth's Spectrum of Teaching Styles, which introduces decision making, individualization, and a variety of teaching-learning approaches (learner-centered), was presented in Greece by Mosston and Ashworth very recently (1991, 1993, 1996). However, the Spectrum has remained relatively unused by the majority of Greek Physical Education teachers because in- and pre-service training do not introduce this framework. Additionally, by tradition and practice, teachers feel compelled to have complete control over the students and play the dominant role in the classroom (Papastamatis, 1988).

1 While abroad as post grad students and later as in-service teachers, we were
2 trained in the appropriate use of the Spectrum of Teaching Styles. This training
3 motivated us to implement numerous episodes in the different teaching styles (B, C,
4 D, and E) to elementary school children for the last three years. A primary emphasis
5 was placed on the Inclusion Style of teaching. But why the Inclusion Style?

6 Style E introduces an idea that cannot be found in the other styles of the
7 Spectrum: the same task is designed on different levels of difficulty. Apart from the
8 nine decisions in the impact set, learned in previous styles, (posture, location, order of
9 tasks, starting time per task, pace and rhythm, stopping time per task, interval, attire
10 and appearance, and initiating questions for clarifications), the students new decision-
11 making role in Style E is to make three additional decisions: (a) assess their level of
12 performance against the task choices; (b) select a level of difficulty (an entry point)
13 which is appropriate for them to begin the task; and (c) check their own work against
14 criteria prepared by the teacher (Mosston & Ashworth, 2002). In this style, the teacher
15 does not give feedback about the performance of a task. This is the responsibility of
16 the student. The role of the teacher is to prepare the tasks and the levels of difficulty
17 within each task, observe students' performance, answer questions by the students,
18 and respond to the students' role in decision making, that is to communicate with
19 students about their accuracy of self-checking task performance and their appropriate
20 selection of the level of difficulty (Mosston & Ashworth, 2002).

21 We are of the opinion that of all the styles of the "Direct Cluster" (Styles A, B, C,
22 D, E) the Inclusion Style allows for more practice time by all learners because it
23 accommodates individual differences to the greatest extent. All students are included
24 in the teaching-learning process and the vast differences among students (differences
25 in size, shape, physical attributes and so on) are acknowledged because performance
26 choices on different levels of difficulty exist within each task (Mosston & Ashworth,

1 2002). Therefore, the teaching-learning climate of Style E provides active participation
2 and success in the tasks, and continuous development in the physical and emotional
3 domains (Mosston & Ashworth, 2002). We believe that if the goal of Education is
4 inclusion, then Style E episodes must be implemented in the classroom.

5 In 1999 we implemented the Inclusion Style, for the first time, in two fifth-grade
6 and two sixth-grade classes of an elementary school located in Athens. At the
7 elementary level Physical Education is taught twice a week. The school had available
8 indoor and outdoor facilities (volleyball and basketball courts), adequate sport
9 equipment, and many different apparatus such as balls of different sizes and weight,
10 baskets, volleyball nets and goals.

11 Our students had never been taught with the Inclusion Style and we expected
12 that they might feel uncomfortable with the new teaching-learning conditions and
13 taking decision-sharing responsibilities. However, we wanted to see how they would
14 react, what problems in teaching would arise, and how we would overcome these
15 problems.

16

17 Tasks

18 The subject matter taught included tasks taken from the national analytical
19 program of Physical Education (Greek Ministry of Education, 1997). The Greek
20 Ministry of Education (1997) suggests that the following tasks should be taught at
21 grade five and six: volleyball (set, underhand serve, forearm pass, bump), basketball
22 (one hand set shot, jump shot, lay up), and football (throw in, forward pass, kick). The
23 factors that determined the levels of difficulty were the size and the weight of the balls
24 (i.e., small, medium, large), the size of the baskets (small or large), the size of the
25 target area (large or small), the height of the net and the basket, the width of the goal,
26 and the distance (close, in between, far) from a given target (the basket, the goal or

1 the area on the volleyball court). Therefore, the tasks themselves were designed for
2 inclusion by manipulating factors such as distance, height, weight, and size.

3

4 Description of a Style E Session

5 In order to teach with the Inclusion Style we followed the guidelines given in
6 Mosston and Ashworth`s (2002) textbook. Here, we shall confine our comments to
7 describe, briefly, what we did.

8 First, we had to make students understand the general objective of the style,
9 which is to include learners in a task by shifting to each learner the decision about
10 which level of difficulty to enter into the task (Mosston & Ashworth, 2002). Therefore,
11 we presented the concept of Inclusion¹. We found that it is not necessary to mention
12 this concept every time we entered the gym because it seems that 10-12 year old
13 students can grasp it easily. After the first two sessions we did not mention it again.
14 Also, we specified the role of the students (the decisions they had to make) and our
15 own role. After that, we presented the subject matter and identified the factors that
16 determine the degree of difficulty. Moreover, we explained the logistics (students and
17 equipment organization) and established the parameters, that is setting the limits of
18 the area for doing the tasks (i.e., the school yard, the basketball court or any other
19 smaller area) and the length of the episode (an episode is a unit of time and may
20 include more than one task). We are of the opinion that the teacher should extend the
21 limits of the area as far as he/she can but still have close contact with all the students.
22 The students should not be “out of sight”. Also, when some students finished the
23 tasks earlier than the allocated time for an episode, we either asked them to repeat
24 the tasks or assigned them a new task until the time was up.

25 Furthermore, we asked the students to use criteria sheets to assist them in
26 remembering the tasks and cutting down on repeated explanations by the teacher

1 (Mosston & Ashworth, 2002). The task sheets included (see figure 1 and 2 for an
2 example):

- 3 • Identifying information (name of the student and class)
- 4 • The factors that affect the degree of difficulty (i.e., distance from the basket and
5 size of the ball) as well as the levels of difficulty.
- 6 • To the student. This space describes the purpose of the activity as well as other
7 relevant information that the student might need.
- 8 • The task. This space describes the quantity for the task (i.e., number of sets and
9 the number of successful trials out of total number attempts in each set) and
10 asks the student to write down the level of difficulty he/she wants to choose as
11 well as the number of successful attempts.
- 12 • Performance criteria. This space describes the particular aspect of the sport that
13 will be practiced (i.e., one hand shot) and its parts. Verbal and pictorial
14 information about what to do and how to do it are included in this space.

15 After we described the criteria sheets to the students, they picked up the criteria
16 sheets and were allowed to disperse. They chose the level of difficulty and performed
17 the task. After the completion of the task they assessed their performance against the
18 criteria sheet. They could move to another level of difficulty if they felt that the one
19 they selected was too difficult or not difficult enough (although they did not, as the
20 reader will see later). We observed the class for a while and then we moved about to
21 contact each student and (a) questioned them about the critical skill elements (the
22 performance criteria on the task sheets) to determine whether they are self-checking
23 performance accurately; (b) checked if they could make appropriate decisions about
24 which level in a given task they were most capable of performing. In addition,
25 following the suggestions of Mosston and Ashworth (2002), we attempted to keep
26 communication among the students to a minimum since Style E is designed for

1 individual, private practice in the part of students. The student is not supposed to
2 socialize during the sessions but instead he/she should privately pursue decisions and
3 choices (Mosston & Ashworth, 2002).

4 At the end of the lesson we assembled the class for a closure, which lasted for
5 2-5 minutes. During that time, apart from giving general feedback to the class and
6 making comments about the next session, we asked the students how they felt about
7 this new way of teaching the subject matter and if they had any difficulties in making
8 decisions and accepting their new roles.

9

10 What We Observed

11 Our students were not accustomed in making decisions and had never been
12 taught with the Inclusion Style. Therefore, they were awkward in making some of the
13 decisions specified by this style. As a result problems, which hindered the smooth
14 flow of the lessons, arose. During the first week, after the end of each session, we
15 kept a record of what the students did or did not do. A summary of our account is
16 given below.

17 It was obvious that from the first session the majority of the students made
18 certain decisions in unison. Those decisions were: (a) order of tasks and starting and
19 stopping time; when the session included more than one task (usually five to six) we
20 asked students to do the tasks in any order they wanted and also decide when to start
21 and stop doing the task. However, the majority did the tasks in exactly the same order
22 and started and stopped the execution of the tasks together! This resulted in getting
23 tired quickly (especially the weak ones) but they took steps to keep up with the rest of
24 the class at all cost. They behaved as if they wanted to compete against each other;
25 (b) interval; each student was allowed to rest between two tasks especially if the task
26 was a tiring one (i.e., repetitive jump shots) and also decide on the duration of the

1 interval. We noticed that during the interval between two tasks they remained quiet
2 but sometimes they chatted together to decide on the order of the tasks; (c) initiating
3 questions for clarification; they did not ask us about clarifications (although they were
4 allowed to) but instead they asked each other; (d) location; after they picked up the
5 task sheets they dispersed in the gym but they tended to gather around the same spot
6 which usually was me (!) and be close to each other. Apparently, our students could
7 not work individually and privately. Discipline problems did not arise and children
8 were orderly, in general.

9 With regard to the selection of the entry point (level of difficulty) more than half
10 of the fifth- and sixth-grade students were in the habit of forming small groups (usually
11 five-six students in each group) and “conferred” together to decide on a level and then
12 performed at this level. This resulted in students` choosing levels of difficulty at which
13 they could not complete the tasks or be successful. For example, one of the groups
14 chose the maximum distance from the hoop and the large ball to get it through the
15 hoop. None of them got it through the hoop though! When we approached the
16 students in the group and asked how they were doing in the role, all students replied
17 that they were unsuccessful. Our feedback, then, was, “Why don’t you choose a
18 different level at which you can succeed?” and we got the following response,
19 “Because some of our peers in the other group can get the big ball through the hoop
20 and we want to do the same and beat them!” (Indeed, there were some students who
21 were successful at that level). The same happened with other tasks such as serving
22 the volleyball over the net (here the factors that determined the levels were the size
23 and weight of the ball and the distance from the net). It was obvious that those groups
24 of students were competing against each other trying to show off their abilities and,
25 thus, they selected levels that were too difficult for them. That behavior was as
26 frequent with boys as with girls.

1 What The Students Said

2 We felt justified in asking the students about the Inclusion Style of teaching
3 because we believed that their feelings and opinions would help us to come up with
4 “strategies” to remedy the problems mentioned in the previous section. Thus, during
5 the first week and at the end of each session we asked them how they felt about the
6 Inclusion Style and their involvement in the decision-making process and if they found
7 it difficult to make decisions.

8 Children`s general opinion of the Inclusion Style was positive: “It is fun.” “It
9 interests me.” “I do not think that I want to be taught with this style all the times but it
10 is good.” With respect to decision-making they made some complaints: “We have to
11 make quite a few decisions and, so, we do not remember them all during the lesson.”
12 “It is better when the teacher makes some of those decisions for us.” When we asked
13 them why they made the decisions in unison they responded: “Because we are used
14 to cooperating with our peers and working together.” “Last year we formed small
15 groups and did everything together.” “We feel good (perhaps they meant comfortable)
16 when we do the same tasks at the same time and at the same pace.” “When we do
17 the exercises together it is like competing, which is fun.”

18 We also asked them about the levels of difficulty within each task. The general
19 response was rather negative. They found it boring that every time they selected a
20 task they had to indicate, on the task sheet, at what level they thought they could do
21 the task and then record at what level they actually did it: “We believe that even if
22 there are no levels we can learn the new tasks, anyway.” “It is a waste of time to try
23 the different levels before we do the task and then do the task.” However, the minority
24 believed that it is helpful to have different levels in each task: “Our weak peers can do
25 all the tasks now.” “My strong friend can work at difficult levels and be successful.”

26

1 Tips

2 Based on our teaching experience, our knowledge on teaching, our
3 observations, and students opinions, we moved on to come up with “hints and tips” to
4 remedy the problems we faced during the first week. Although we wanted our
5 students to demonstrate competency in different movement forms, we put special
6 emphasis on our students` learning to demonstrate responsible personal behaviors by
7 sharing decision-making responsibilities. Besides, the intent of the Greek Ministry of
8 Education (1997) and NASPE guidelines (1995) reflects this goal. Therefore, for the
9 next four weeks we did the following:

- 10 • To help students make the impact decisions individually and not in unison, we
11 told them that we wanted them to work individually and not interfere with each
12 other`s decisions. They could talk to the others but not for suggesting how to
13 make the impact decisions. We thought it necessary to repeat the above at the
14 beginning and at the end of each session until students internalized the above
15 behavior.
- 16 • Another tip we used to prevent them from chatting with each other about
17 decision-making was to tell them where to stand in the gym. Usually some feet
18 way from each other. Also, the tasks were designed in such a way as to prevent
19 them from working in groups (i.e., set the ball in the air, set the ball to the wall).
20 So, the location decision was not shifted to them, at least in the beginning, until
21 each of them could make the rest of the impact decisions on his/her own.
- 22 • Students complained that they could not remember all the decisions they had to
23 make. Because making decisions was something new to them we decided to
24 shift one or two decisions at a time (assessing and selecting a level of difficulty
25 were shifted to them from the beginning because these decisions are the
26 essence of Style E). First we introduced decisions about initiating questions for

1 clarification and pace and rhythm. We kept these two for a session. Then we
2 introduced the “order of task” and “interval” decisions, then the “checking their
3 own task performance” decision and last the “location” decision. After we had
4 shifted all the impact decisions to them, we had them tell us (usually before the
5 sessions started) how many decisions they had to make and what each decision
6 stood for. We wanted them to remember these decisions every time they
7 entered the gym.

8 • During practice time when we observed students who made an impact decision
9 together, we approached each of them and asked them to remember what we
10 said about privacy in decision-making. If the student could not remember, we
11 told him/her and moved on to the next learner. If there was a big group of
12 students who did not work privately in making the impact decisions we called
13 them around us and repeated to them what we said, in the beginning of the
14 session, about making decisions individually.

15 • Another issue, which arose from the discussions we had with students, was that
16 of competition. According to our students sayings they made decisions in unison
17 or chose difficult and same levels for practicing a task, because this gave them
18 the chance to compete against each other. Again, we had to repeat many times
19 that the focus was not for them to compete against each other. Competition is
20 against oneself and one`s own standards (Mosston & Ashworth, 2002). We
21 used the idea of getting “special benefits” in physical education sessions; i.e., “if
22 John gets the ball through the basket eight times today and next week he
23 improves to ten he will become the captain of the basketball team for two weeks!
24 However, if John tries to have more successful attempts than Mark he will not be
25 able to be the leader”. We found that this reward system works and children

1 understand, little by little, that there is no point in this practice experience to
2 competing against each other.

3 • Teaching them to select a level of difficulty at which they were most capable of
4 performing was an arduous task. Although they grasped the concept of inclusion
5 easily it seemed that making this decision was not seen as important to
6 improving performance (see the What the Students Said section). We had to
7 stress that: “In a class students differ in strength, accuracy, speed, height and
8 weight and all have the right to participate in PE lessons. Choosing the levels of
9 difficulty in a given task helps learners, regardless of how tall, heavy, fast, strong
10 or accurate is, to be able to perform a task that they might like”. Moreover during
11 practice time, we asked students, who chose levels too difficult for them, to
12 select the least difficult skill options so that they could see what their ability level
13 with a particular task was. Then they could move to a new level of difficulty at
14 which they could perform a task successfully. Also, we instructed them to try all
15 the different levels of difficulty within a given task before they made a final
16 decision about the selection of the level.

17 • We found it helpful to hang charts on the walls of the gymnasium with students`
18 role expectations so as to serve as reminders and urged them to consult the
19 charts often.

20 We applied the above tips for four weeks (eight sessions). Although implementing
21 new teaching approaches takes time (Jenkins & Todorovich, 2002), we worked
22 towards teaching our students to make the decisions specific to Style E. To our
23 delight we saw that after the fourth week students started making these decisions on
24 their own initiative and not in unison with each other. They were practicing individually
25 and chatting was reduced to minimum. Moreover, competition against oneself rather
26 than against the others was the predominant class climate. Also, students were

1 willing to try the different levels of difficulty within a given task before they made the
2 final selection. We watched them step backward to less difficult levels to succeed in a
3 task or step forward to a more difficult level to challenge themselves. As time
4 progressed, our directions to them about role and behavior expectations were reduced
5 to just a few cues. Right after they entered the gym almost all students knew what
6 they were supposed to do (which decisions to make and how). Consequently, we had
7 more time now to focus on task performance.

8 Apart from our observations, students` responses to the changes (tips) we
9 introduced attest to the effectiveness of the tips in remedying the problems. Most
10 responses were positive: "The pictures on the walls (they meant the charts) are funny
11 and helps us to remember what we have to do in Physical Education lessons."
12 "Working on your own is nice." "I like doing things without the help of my peers but
13 sometimes it gets boring!" "Competing against each other can be hard sometimes."
14 "Now, I can make a task difficult or easy (she probably referred to the choice of the
15 difficulty levels) which I like." "Look at me! I can get the ball through the hoop as
16 many times as I want (that student had chosen an easy level of difficulty). I really love
17 basketball now!" "Now, I can choose the heavy ball to hit the target...now, I can test
18 my strength!"

19 If physical education teachers are to be prepared to accommodate students`
20 different skill and ability levels by creating conditions for multiple entry points, they
21 must have the knowledge and ability to implement the Inclusion Style (Mosston &
22 Ashworth, 2002). Accomplishing the goals of the Inclusion Style requires that
23 teachers make sure that students are aware of their role expectations and, above all,
24 provide opportunities for them to live up to the expectations.

25 Physical education teachers who use the Inclusion Style in their classes for the
26 first time may encounter the same problems that we did (and perhaps others). The

1 tips we suggest may help them to teach their students to internalize their role
2 expectations and behave accordingly. We believe that this process can be difficult at
3 times; however, the rewards for the efforts will sooner or later become evident.

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1 Authors` notes

2 We want to say a big *THANK YOU!* to Sara Ashworth who acted as a reviewer for an
3 earlier draft of this paper.

4
5 Footnotes

6 ¹ The concept of Inclusion is clearly illustrated by Mosston and Ashworth (2002). We
7 hold a rope some feet off the ground and asked our students to jump over it. We
8 noticed that some of them were able to clear the rope. The rest failed. We explained
9 to them that the above task was designed for exclusion: a small minority of the class
10 succeeded in completing the task; jump over the rope. Then, we asked the students
11 what changes could be made in the above task design to allow for inclusion of all
12 students. What should be done to have all students jump over the rope? We got
13 various responses. One of them was to slant the rope. Then, we asked the students
14 to jump over the slanted rope. We watched them spreading along the rope and
15 jumping over at varying heights. Then, we told them that with the new task design
16 everyone was included because everyone, regardless of physical abilities, was able to
17 clear the rope. We stressed that the new task design (the slanted rope) was
18 congruent with the major objective of style E: all students could choose the degree of
19 difficulty within the task and, thus, be included in the task (Mosston & Ashworth,
20 2002).

1 Figure captions

2 Figure 1. Shot criteria sheet for fifth and sixth graders

3 Figure 2. Forearm pass criteria sheet for fifth and sixth graders

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Basketball - Shot criteria sheet for fifth and sixth graders

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Name _____

Class _____

FACTOR 1

Level	Distance from the basket
1	Close (1,5 meters)
2	In between (3 meters)
3	Far (4,5 meters)

FACTOR 2

Level	Size
1	Small
2	Medium
3	Large

TO THE STUDENT

1. Select a level from which you think that you can make successful attempts and place the appropriate number in the box below.
2. Do the task.
3. Compare the execution of the task with the performance criteria.
4. Decide whether to repeat the task at the same level or at a different level.

THE TASK

Choose a distance (distances are marked on the basketball court) and a ball size. Take 10 set shots and record the number of times you get the ball through the hoop.

SET	DISTANCE	SIZE	SCORE
1			/10
2			/10
3			/10

PERFORMANCE CRITERIA

1. Take a comfortable balanced stance by placing both feet side by side.
Focus the eye on the rim of the basket before and after the shot is released.
Hold the ball on the shot hand at eye level.
Place the shooting hand behind the ball.



2. Extend the knees while bringing the ball up past the eyes.
Extend the elbow towards the basket.
Release the ball with a high arc.



3. Extend the arm and hand towards the basket.
Follow through with a limp wrist.



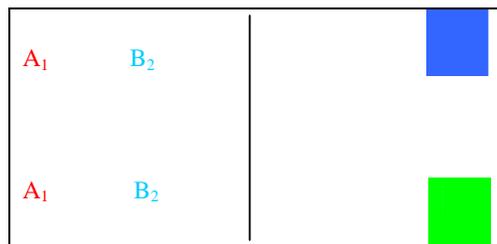
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Volleyball - Forearm pass criteria sheet for fifth and sixth graders

2

Name

Class



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TO THE STUDENT

5

1. Select a level from which you think that you can make successful attempts.

6

2. Do the task.

7

3. Compare the execution of the task with the performance criteria.

8

4. Decide whether to repeat the task at the same level or at a different level.

9

THE TASK

10

Find a partner. Choose a distance (A₁ or B₂) and a target (the whole court or one of the colored areas).

11

Ask your partner to throw you the ball. Perform 10 forearm passes and record the number of times you

12

hit the chosen target.

13

SET	DISTANCE	TARGET	SCORE
1			/10
2			/10
3			/10

14

15

PERFORMANCE CRITERIA

1. Stagger the feet about shoulder width apart with the knees bent. Clasp the hands together with the back of one hand in the palm of the other. Extend the arms with the elbows together so that the flat inner surface of the forearm creates a rebound surface.



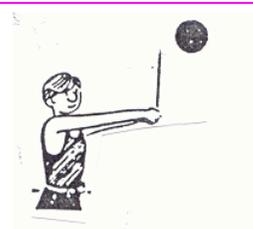
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2. Contact the ball on the soft, inner part of the forearms (half-way between the elbow and the wrist). Straighten the knee and extend the body upwards. Keep arms steady. Then move into the ball as the knees are straightened.



17

3. Continue with full extension of legs. Follow through with the arms towards the target but not above shoulder level (shrug your shoulder and push the ball to the target with the forearms).



18