The Spectrum of Teaching Styles: A Silver Anniversary in Physical Education

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In 1966, Muska Mosston introduced the Spectrum of Teaching Styles (referred to as the Spectrum in this feature) in his book Teaching Physical Education (Mosston, 1966). Now, 25 years later, the third edition of the book (Mosston & Ashworth, 1986) has been published, and the expanded Spectrum (Mosston & Ashworth, 1990) has been widely adopted in this country and around the world.
The authors of this feature include Muska Mosston and colleagues who have worked with him in the United States and in other countries. This feature will provide current information about the Spectrum in relation to its theoretical foundations, teacher education, research, other teaching research models, and education in selected areas of the world.

I have the pleasant, but difficult, task of introducing Muska Mosston and his ideas about teaching. I first heard about Muska Mosston in the late 1960s. He was creating quite a stir in the physical education profession by suggesting we weren’t teaching physical education effectively, and that there might be better ways. In 1970, when I went to Temple University, I observed Mike Goldberger using the Spectrum to design the undergraduate teacher education program. Students and cooperating teachers learned the model and used it to help integrate the theory and practice of teacher education. Today, 20 years later, I still haven’t seen any teacher preparation program with a better design. I met Mosston in the early 1970s and was so impressed, I took a graduate class he and Sara Ashworth taught at Temple University. Since that time I have spent many enjoyable evenings talking with (and listening to) Mosston.

Mosston is caring, creative, different, difficult, energetic, enthusiastic, prophetic, strong, and verbose. He loves life and lives it to the fullest. He has presented lectures or workshops in 30 states, seven provinces in Canada, and in Belgium, Brazil, Columbia, Czechoslovakia, England, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Holland, Ireland, Israel, Portugal, Scotland, Spain, and Venezuela. He has received many awards, including an honorary doctorate from the University of Jyväskyla, Finland.

The Spectrum starts with a simple premise: the teaching/learning process is based on a series of decisions made by the teacher and the learner before, during, and after learning. It then provides a comprehensive model of teaching styles based on who makes what decisions. Then when you are ready to locate the best style, he zaps you with another.

To reflect on the past, it would be a mistake to think of this feature as an early obituary for Mosston or the Spectrum. The basic ideas in the 1966 book have held up very well, but Mosston and his colleagues (especially Ashworth) have greatly clarified, modified, expanded, and enriched the Spectrum over these 25 years.

Finally, a note to my colleagues. For those not in teacher education, let me suggest that you read the third edition for fun. I predict you will say, as I did years ago, “Yes, that makes sense—an excellent way to conceptualize the teaching/learning process.” You might even learn something you can use. For my colleagues in teacher education, let me suggest that you re-read the third edition (or read the 1990 book). Compare it with other models about teaching/learning. If you find another model, or combination of models, that can provide a better basis for your teacher preparation program, use it and share it. If not, consider using the Spectrum for your students and cooperating teachers. I believe you will rediscover and help others experience an excitement about teaching.

References

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