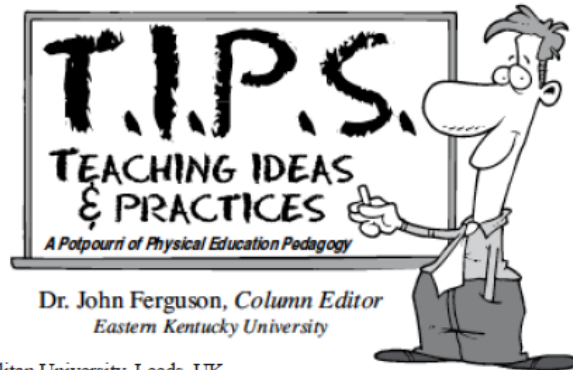


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# Teaching Styles in Physical Education and Mosston's Spectrum



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If you think back to when you were taught physical education in school, undoubtedly you will have been taught by a number of different teachers and these teachers may have had quite different instructional techniques. What is likely is that certain types of teaching appealed to you more than others, which in turn may have colored your own thoughts about that particular sport or physical education activity. So, for example in hockey or soccer, the teacher may have used a lot of skill-drill activities where you were encouraged to practice various skills relevant to the game. In gymnastics perhaps the teacher's approach was more formal and you were expected to do exactly as that teacher instructed.

The debate centers around the notion of "teaching styles" and this brief paper sets out firstly to clarify some of the confusion that exists regarding the term itself and secondly, shows how one model of teaching styles (Mosston, 1986) is an effective and creative way of teaching physical education today. What is meant by "teaching styles"?

The term itself has no agreed definition but the more widely accepted definitions refer to it as "a set of teaching

tactics" (Galton et al, 1980) "instructional format" (Siedentop, 1991). In PE circles the definition of it as "the general pattern created by using a particular set of strategies" (BAALPE, 1989, p.9) provides a neat working definition.

Over the last thirty years a number of writers in the United Kingdom have identified particular teaching styles and related them to philosophies of teaching or to specific learning outcomes (Bennett, 1978). Emerging from this work and that of other writers specifically in PE (Kane, 1974) are two important findings. Firstly, that integral to teaching styles is its effect on the involvement of students in the learning process. Secondly, while it is acknowledged that many teachers have their own individual styles of instruction, relying on personal preference is an unstable basis for effective teaching and that selection of a teaching style must be done on a more logical and scientific basis.

By far the most detailed analysis of teaching styles and behaviors came from work originated in the United States by Mosston (1966). His ideas on the interactions between teacher and student have been developed since

his initial publication and have provided a framework for teaching physical education in different contexts all over the world. So influential was it that the work that it was described as "the most significant advance in the theory of physical education pedagogy in recent history" (Nixon & Locke, 1973, p.1227). So why is it so successful? What is it about Mosston's ideas that make them so enduring? The answer lies in the framework for teaching which he called the Spectrum of Teaching Styles.

### *The Spectrum of Teaching Styles*

The Spectrum established a framework of possible options in the relationship between teacher and learner (Mosston & Ashworth, 1986) and was based on the central importance of decision-making. He grouped these into pre-impact, impact and post-impact categories and proposed that these govern all teaching. The pre-impact set is concerned with decisions made before teaching; at preparation phase and involves subject matter, learning objectives, organization and presentation. The impact set includes decisions relating to performance and execution while the post-impact set includes

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**T.I.P.S.** TEACHING IDEAS  
& PRACTICES  
*A Potpourri of Physical  
Education Pedagogy*

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evaluation of performance and feedback from learner to teacher.

The Spectrum incorporates ten landmark styles based on the degree to which the teacher or the student assumes responsibility for what happens in a lesson. This describes a continuum, where at one extreme is the direct, teacher-led approach and at the other lies a much more open-ended and student-centered style where the teacher acts only in a facilitator role.

*The teaching styles are:*

1. Style A Command - teacher makes all decisions
2. Style B Practice - Students carry out teacher-prescribed tasks
3. Style C Reciprocal - Students work in pairs: one performs, the other provides feedback
4. Style D Self-check - Students assess their own performance against criteria
5. Style E Inclusion - Teacher planned. Student monitors own work.
6. Style F Guided Discovery - Students solve teacher set movement problems with assistance
7. Style G Divergent - Students solve problems without assistance from the teacher
8. Style H Individual - Teacher determines content. Student plans the program.
9. Style I Learner Initiated - Student plans own program. Teacher is advisor.
10. Style J Self Teaching - Student takes full responsibility for the learning process.

The Spectrum offers a range of op-

tions to teachers that can accommodate students' diverse learning styles and meet the learning intentions of a teaching session more accurately. The table below shows the range of styles in the Spectrum and illustrates one of its key aspects: matching the appropriate teaching style to the learning intentions (outcomes) of a lesson.

*Variety is the spice of life*

The Spectrum provides a sound basis for analysis of one's teaching and the effectiveness of selected styles to meet particular learning intentions. It emphasizes relationships between the different styles, rather than their differences. It follows that effective instruction in PE takes account of this variety in teaching styles and an ability to use the style that is most suited to the teacher (Coates, 1997). By the same token it would be misplaced to assume that a given style is associated with a particular physical activity area or sport. The Spectrum was never intended as a straitjacket: quite the reverse. It permits a huge degree of freedom and celebrates the creativity of the individual teacher. In this way teaching is both art and science.

In teaching physical education the effective teacher is involved in adjusting and reviewing tasks set according to the needs and responses from the students. Being able to use various teaching styles identified in Mosston's framework creates an optimum working environment, maintains good discipline, sets high standards, facilitates pupils' thinking and achieves the mul-

tipl learning objectives integral to PE. Surely worthy of serious consideration in our teaching.

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## Teaching Styles in Physical Education and Mosston's Spectrum



Spectrum Style	Learning Intentions	PEexample
Command	Physical: Motor skill sequisition.	Performing a somersault on a tram-poline.
Practice	Physical: Motor skill development.	Groups of four practice the "dig" in volleyball.
Reciprocal	Social: Working with others. Cognitive: observing, analysis.	In twos, practice the set shot in basket-ball.
Self-check	Social: Helping others assess their own per- foramnce.	Shot putt in athletics. Success criteria on a teaching card.
Inclusion	Social: Maximizing involvement. Assisting others to succeed.	Using hurdles set at different heights & distances.
Guided discovery	Cognitive: Discovery learning.	Pupils try different start positions for the forward roll in gymnastics.
Divergent	Cognitive: Independent thinking. Social: confidence, group work.	Devising a new co-operative game using a rnage of equipment.
Individual	Cognitive: Planning.	Making individual decisions about a dance routine.
Learner initiated	Cognitive: Selection & application. Social: Personal and Responsibility.	Discussion with teacher/tutor about research topic.
Self teach	Cognitive: Understanding. Social: Independence	Little application to PE in schools.