

The 3 R's for Teachers: Reflect, Refine, Revitalize

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The heartbeat of every classroom depends on the relationship between the teacher and the students. In the classroom itself, regardless of external conditions, the teacher is the orchestrator of the relationship. The teacher is the one who invites the mind and soul of the learner to participate in the relationship and contribute to its development. The teacher is the one who kindles the heartbeat and stokes its fire.

There are questions, however, that periodically arise in the mind of every teacher: "Is it possible to maintain this heartbeat?" "How can I keep my students involved?" "How can I keep myself motivated while isolated in my classroom?"

The 3 R's for teachers are offered as a possible paradigm for maintaining the heartbeat of teaching. "Reflect," "Refine," "Revitalize" are steps in a dynamic flow — each is an imperative process, each is a power unto itself, a power that is very personal, very private. The 3 R's, however, constantly intertwine to create new realities for the teacher and for the student.

The "Spectrum of Teaching Styles" (Mosston and Ashworth, 1990) offers the teacher a framework of options in teaching that can be used as criteria for reflection. A teacher can ask him/herself questions such as: "Where am I on the Spectrum?", "How many styles do I use in my teaching?", "Do I know the impact of each style on my students?" "Am I anchored in one particular style?" "Am I willing to expand?"

An Overview of the Spectrum of Teaching Styles

The fundamental proposition of the Spectrum is that teaching is governed by a single unifying process: decision making. Every act of deliberate teaching is a consequence of a prior decision. Decision making is the central or primary behavior that governs all the behaviors that follow: how we organize students; how we organize the subject matter; how we manage time, space, equipment; how we interact with students; how we choose our verbal behavior; how we create and conduct the cognitive connections with the learners.

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All these are secondary behaviors; all emanate from prior decisions, and all are governed by those decisions.

Identifying primary decisions and understanding the possible combinations of decisions opens up a wide vista for looking at teacher-learner relationships. Each option in the teacher-learner relationship has a particular structure of decisions that are made by the teacher and by the learner. The Spectrum of Teaching Styles defines the available options or styles, their decision structures, the specific roles of the teacher and the learner in each style, and the objectives best reached by each style.

Six Premises of the Spectrum

Figure 1.1 is a schematic overview of the structure of the Spectrum of Teaching Styles. The structure is based on six underlying premises, each of which is described below.

1. **The Axiom** - The entire structure of the Spectrum stems from the initial premise that teaching behavior is a chain of decision making. Every deliberate act of teaching is a result of a previously made decision.
2. **The Anatomy of Any Style** - The anatomy is composed of the conceivable categories of decisions that must be made in any teaching-learning transaction. These categories are grouped into three sets: the preimpact set, the impact set, and the postimpact set. The preimpact set includes all decisions that must be made prior to the teaching-learning transaction; the impact set includes decisions related to the actual teaching-learning transaction; and the post-impact set identifies decisions concerning evaluation of the teacher-learner transaction. The anatomy delineates which decisions must be made at each set.
3. **The Decision Makers** - Both teacher and learner can make decisions in any of the categories delineated in the anatomy. When most or all of the decisions in a category are the responsibility of one decision maker (e.g., the teacher), that person's decision-making responsibility is at "maximum" and the other's is at "minimum."
4. **The Spectrum** - By establishing who makes which decisions, about what and when, it is possible to identify the structure of eleven landmark styles as well as alternative styles that lie between them on the Spectrum.

In the first style (Style A), which has as its overriding objective precise replication, the teacher makes all the decisions; the learner responds by adhering to all the teacher's decisions. In the second style (Style B), nine specific decisions are shifted from the teacher to the learner, and thus a new set of objectives can be reached. In every subsequent style, specific decisions are systematically shifted from teacher to learner — thereby allowing new objectives to be reached — until the full Spectrum of Teaching Styles is delineated.

5. The Clusters - The structure of the Spectrum of Teaching Styles reflects two basic human capacities: The capacity for reproduction and the capacity for production. All human beings have, in varying degrees, the capacity to reproduce known knowledge, replicate models, and practice skills. All human beings have the capacity to venture into the new and tap the yet unknown.

The cluster of Styles A-E represents the teaching options that foster reproduction of past knowledge; the cluster of Styles F-K represents options that invite production of new knowledge — that is, knowledge that is new to the learner, new to the teacher, and — at times — new to society.

6. The Developmental Effects - Since decisions always influence what happens to people, each style affects the developing learner in unique ways. The spectrum provides a framework for studying the influence of each style on the learner in the cognitive, affective, social, physical, and moral domains.

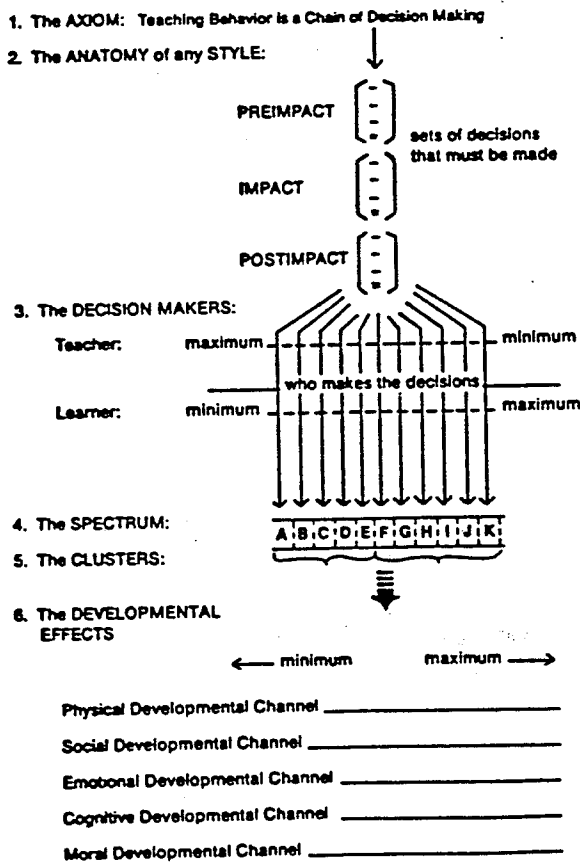


FIGURE 1. The Structure of the Spectrum

The Essence of Each Style**Style A - Command Style**

Immediate response to a stimulus.

Performance is accurate and immediate.

A previous model is replicated.

Style B - Practice Style

Time is provided for the learner to do a task individually and privately.

Time is available for the teacher to give feedback to all learners, individually and privately.

Style C - Reciprocal Style

Learners work in partner-relationship.

Learners receive immediate feedback.

Learners follow criteria for performance designed by the teacher.

Learners develop feedback and socialization skills.

Style D - Self Check Style

Learners do the task individually and privately.

Learners provide feedback for themselves by using criteria developed by the teacher.

Style E - Inclusion Style

The same task is designed for different degrees of difficulty.

Learners decide their entry point into the task.

Inclusion of all learners.

Learners decide when to move to another level.

Style F - Guided Discovery Style

The teacher, by asking a specific sequence of questions, systematically leads the learner to discover a predetermined "target" previously unknown to the learner.

Style G - Convergent Discovery Style

Teachers present the question, the problem. The intrinsic structure of the task (question) requires a single correct answer.

Learners engage in reasoning (or other cognitive operations) and seek to discover the single correct answer/solution.

Style H - Divergent Production Style

Learners are engaged in producing divergent responses to a single question.

The intrinsic structure of the task (the question) provides for possible multiple responses.

The multiple responses are assessed by the Possible-Feasible-Desirable procedures, or by the verification "rules" of the given discipline.

Style I - Learner-Designed Individual Program Style

The learner designs, develops and performs a series of tasks organized into a personal program.

The learner selects the topic, identifies the questions, collects data, discovers answers, and organizes the information.

The teacher selects the general subject matter area.

Style J - Learner Initiated Style

The learner initiates the style(s) in which he/she will conduct the episode or a series of episodes.

Style K - Self-Teaching Style

The learner initiates his/her learning experience, designs it, does it, and evaluates it.

The learner decides how to use the teacher.

The teacher accepts the learner's decisions and provides general conditions for the learner's plans.

Each style on the Spectrum delineates:

- The decisions made by the teacher.
- The decisions made by the learner.
- The set of objectives reached by the given style.
- The appropriate task design.
- The appropriate feedback form.

Knowing the styles and applying them in a deliberate manner maximizes the congruity between intent and action.

The Training Program - Process and Issues

The Spectrum training program has three goals:

1. To understand the structure of each style and its contribution to the developing student.
2. To develop insight into one's own teaching behavior and identify one's place on the Spectrum.
3. To internalize and use as many styles in the classroom as one can in order to reach more students and more learning objectives.

The three goals are addressed in three phases of the training:

1. Theory of the Spectrum.
2. Micro Teaching.
3. Macro Teaching: Implementing the styles in the classroom.

**1. The Theory Phase Involves:**

- a. Presentation of the structure of each style.

- b. Demonstration of each style — live and on videotape.
- c. Analysis of the demonstrated episode by using the theoretical models as criteria for determining the congruity between intent and action.
- d. Exercises in application to various subject areas and various grade levels.
- e. Discussion of the implication of each style to cognitive behavior, feedback form, affective development, social development, class management.

Issues to Deal With:

This phase invites the teacher to REFLECT upon his/her concept of teaching, past experiences in teaching, degree of flexibility, willingness to accept the existence of options, willingness to learn to shift from style to style.

2. The Micro Teaching Phase Involves:

- a. Practicing the use of each style in safe conditions.
- b. Learning to prepare teaching episodes by using given styles.
- c. Teaching short episodes (5-10 minutes) to 2-3 learners, using the given style.
- d. Videotaping the episodes.
- e. Viewing and analyzing the episodes with a peer and by oneself.
- f. Using the theoretical models of the given styles (and the analysis tools) as criteria for determining the congruity between intent and action.
- g. Deciding whether further practice and taping is needed to reach greater competency in the given style.

Issues to Deal With:

This phase invites the teacher to REFINE his/her teaching of a given style, overcome the initial frustration of learning new behaviors, willingness to behave in new ways, willingness to trust the learner's ability to shift behaviors, ability to receive feedback from a peer in order to ease the learning of a new style, and becoming proficient in self analysis.

3. The Macro Phase Involves:

- a. Preparing classroom episodes.
- b. Teaching classroom episodes to the entire class by using various styles.
- c. Overcoming the initial awkward feeling of behaving in a new way.
- d. Becoming aware of corresponding learner's behaviors.
- e. Developing the ability for self-analysis.
- f. Learning to accept feedback from the visiting trainer who observes the class, offers feedback and works with the teacher

- on maximizing the congruity between intent and action.
- g. Continuing to work with peers in mutual class observations, mutual planning and reciprocal feedback.

Issues to Deal With:

First and foremost, the need to develop patience with oneself during the initial attempts to use the styles in one's own classroom. It takes time to learn a new skill, a new behavior. Second, the need to be patient with the students. It is new to them, too. It takes time and patience to travel together from style to style and enjoy the added contribution of each new style. As you travel along the Spectrum of Teaching Styles, you expand your teaching and you REVITALIZE.

Developing the skill of using multiple styles enlarges the repertoire of the teaching-learning relationship, it increases the confidence of teachers in reaching more students, and it creates conditions for reaching more learning objectives. The multiple new connections with students invites more students to participate in learning and in productive classroom activities.

When teachers and supervisors become skilled in the Spectrum they experience not only a common language but they develop new linkages and new roles among themselves. They become more involved with each others professional growth, they exchange ideas, and they assume new leadership roles in the school community.

References

Mosston, Muska and Ashworth, Sara. (1990). *The Spectrum of Teaching Styles: From Command to Discovery*. White Plains, NY: Longman.