

Notes on The Spectrum of Teaching Styles

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Presented to the Second and Third General Sessions
Of the 1969 S.A.P.E.C.W. Conference
Memphis
February 19, 1969

Since the audience in these sessions comprised both people who were quite thoroughly familiar with the “Spectrum”* and some who were not, it was decided to approach both sessions through a discussion of scattered issues related to the spectrum rather than presenting a prepared paper which reflect only my specific selected interests at the moment of writing.

So, these notes are based on the comments made during the conference and recorded by Virginia Peters.

These post conference notes represents summations of comments made by the speaker, as intended prior to the conference and answers to questions asked by the participants.

1. The FOCUS is on TEACHER’S BEHAVIOR

When one observes teachers, listens to them, talks about their work, and examines most of the pedagogical literature (certainly in physical education) two striking realizations come to light:

A. Teachers REFUSE to see that there is an ORGANIC relationship between their behavior and the behavior of students.

B. Teachers REFUSE to acknowledge the irreversible fact that since there are a variety of “learning styles” there also must be a variety of “teaching styles”.

And these two sets of styles must be congruent at any given teaching act in order to accomplish any stated educational objectives – teacher’s objectives, student’s objectives or both.

*Mosston, Muska (1966) Teaching Physical Education: From Command to Discovery
Charles E. Merrill. Columbus, Ohio

This refusal is perhaps anchored in the traditional belief that teaching is Idiosyncratic; that is, totally dependent upon the individual teacher's ability, fancy, whim, mood, needs, purposes, and so on.

If indeed it is so, than there is no sense going on with the discussion. There is no need to study pedagogy. Let us just continue with the prevailing pedagogical anarchy.

Shall we uphold and reinforce the conviction that TEACHERS CANNOT LEARN? CANNOT CHANGE? It seems like a spectacular PARADOX. The very people who are engaged in the transmission of knowledge, the modification of emotional and social behavior of their students are themselves incapable of going through these processes in the face of continuously growing amounts of knowledge in the behavioral sciences and psychology of learning.

2. The GENESIS OF THE SPECTRUM OF STYLES

Four reasons prompted the genesis of the spectrum.

- A. The incongruities between Teaching Behavior and Learning Behavior.
- B. The incongruities between educational philosophies uttered and the actual behavior of teachers.
- C. The voluminous and scattered information and research about learning which does exist but has not affected teaching behavior.
- D. The incredible poverty of work done in analyzing the act of teaching.

The need for a comprehensive theory of teaching or a Universal Model of Teaching Behavior is quite clear.

The need is both intellectual and operational. One must know what one does in order to do it with integrity. It is the violation of integrity which precipitated the design of

the spectrum. It is the violation of the integrity of subject matter in any given discipline which demands better insights into the teaching act. It is the violation of the teacher's integrity which mandates a thorough understanding and analysis of what the teacher does and does not do, says and does not say.

After all the magnificent work done by so many learning psychologists, behaviorists, cognitive psychologists, social psychologists, psychoanalysts, and others it became necessary to interpret the variety of theories into a workable model that can be used in the classroom and the gymnasium. It became necessary to develop an integrated-conceptual model of teaching behavior built on a clear and consistent PREMISE, a model which embraces the variety of known learning PROCESSES and provides for the CONSEQUENCES of the teaching-learning transactions. Thus – the genesis of the spectrum.

3. The question of P & P form

There is no need to defend models in the social sciences. Models are theoretical descriptions of the limits and relationships of an idea, a concept, a construct. Models of teaching behavior serve as a very helpful guide for responsible action. The function of a model is to offer a direction, define boundaries and identify specific content – in this case the content of Teaching Behavior. Teaching behavior here is identified as specific “sets of decisions” which are defined, described, and prescribed in the Anatomy of A Style, the cornerstone of the Spectrum.

Now – the clearer the model, the more consistent the total structure of any model of Teaching Behavior the easier it becomes to APPROXIMATE its content and internalize it to one's own behavior, and hence the idea of P & P, namely – the

pure and perfect form of a given style of teaching.

The relationship between a state of P & P model of a given style and the process of behavioral approximation on the part of a teacher serves as a powerful Diagnostic tool for discriminating between RELEVANT and IRRELEVANT decisions in a given teaching learning transaction.

Perhaps good teaching can be defined as reducing the irrelevancies in the T – L transaction, and the excellent teacher is the one who approximates the P & P state and reduces the number of irrelevant decisions to zero.

4. Mobility along the Spectrum

“Is it necessary to experience the entire Spectrum?” “Is it necessary to travel from style to style in the order of the Spectrum?” These, and similar questions of MOBILITY are quite frequent. These can be answered with some degree of safety on two different levels:

A. Intellectual – Theoretical

B. Behavioral – Operational

A. One must move “From Command To Discovery” (the sub-title of the Spectrum) in order to comprehend the intellectual cohesiveness of the Spectrum.