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## **SPECTRUM OF TEACHING STYLES IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The AIESEP International Conference, June 9–12, 2016, sponsored by the University of Wyoming in Laramie, will celebrate the 50th anniversary of the “Spectrum of Teaching Styles”. Although this pedagogical theory was first published in 1966 by Muska Mosston, it has continuously influenced and internationally contributed to the field of Physical Education. The 50th anniversary celebration is an appropriate occasion to briefly acknowledge the history of the Spectrum’s international journey. The following historical account acknowledges the introduction and influence of the Spectrum in the former Czechoslovakia, beginning in 1971 and continuing into the Czech Republic era.

The first section of this article acknowledges the contributions of the Spectrum and its international acceptance. The second section focuses on Prague and the active role of the many scholars who studied, implemented, and researched the Spectrum. The third section presents some teaching style research results conducted by Faculty of Physical Education and Sport, Charles University (UK FTVS).

**Keywords:** rise and development of Spectrum of Teaching Styles; Spectrum Institute for Teaching and Learning; research; unifying model

**DOI:** 10.14712/23366052.2015.33

### **INTRODUCTION**

In 1971 Lubomír Dobrý, professor of kinanthropology, found a book in Paris that intuitively interested him. His interest quickly led him and his colleagues Svatoň, Šafaříková and Marvanová from the Faculty of Physical Education, Charles University in Prague (UK FTVS), to become the leading scholars in the study, implementation, and research effects of the Spectrum in the Czech Republic. Dobrý and his colleagues realized that the Spectrum theory had particular characteristics that differentiated it from other pedagogical theories.

## **The Spectrum of Teaching Styles**

**The Spectrum** was authored by Muska Mosston in the early 1960's and in 1969 he partnered with Sara Ashworth. The idea of the Spectrum grew from Mosston's frustration with the 'fragmentation' he found in education, and with the notion that different teaching approaches were being touted as the 'best' by various authors. The Spectrum theory did not approach teaching from this VERSUS approach (meaning – pitting one teaching style against another to determine the 'best' approach) but rather Mosston's Spectrum presented a comprehensive framework for understanding the teaching/learning process, and offered a systematic range of teaching approaches with discrete contributions to and opportunities for learning.

This NON-VERSUS approach to pedagogical alternatives is one of the most significant contributions of the Spectrum of Teaching Styles. Its universal and unifying framework provides a model for studying and implementing the elusive art and science of teaching.

Mosston observed that all teaching styles stem from the initial basic premise that teaching is 'a chain of decision making'. Each teaching style comprises a specific set of decisions and all styles can be arranged on a continuum from minimal to maximum decision making by either the teacher or the learner. This approach to the study of teaching was novel in that the options along the continuum not only presented the range of significantly different teaching options, but also they highlighted the inherent learning opportunities of each landmark teaching style. This approach reduces idiosyncratic preferences and fads as the bases for understanding teaching and moves the conversation about pedagogy to the structure and process in teaching.

The theory of the Spectrum delineates a gradual shift of specific decisions from the teacher to the learner. A different landmark style is identified when a specific cluster of decisions is shifted to produce a significantly different learning opportunity. The pedagogical intent of the Spectrum is that teachers will develop a repertoire of teaching-learning behaviours that they can implement in the classroom to maximize learning opportunities. Additionally, the decision structure allows for the designing of new alternatives to meet content and behaviour needs. The opportunities for pedagogical research are unlimited with the Spectrum.

## **International support of the Spectrum**

The Colleagues page on the Spectrum Institute's website was created to acknowledge the contributions of the hundreds of professors, teachers, students, and scholars from around the world who have continued to use and expand the theory of the Spectrum. Without the involvement of these colleagues the Spectrum would be a static theory on the library shelf. These colleagues have given life to the Spectrum framework.

See the Around the World map on the website for an overview of the countries where the Spectrum of teaching styles is known, studied, researched and used in schools and universities (<http://www.spectrumofteachingstyles.org>). For example: Australia, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, Cyprus, China, Finland, France, Greece, Jordan, Netherland, Scotland, South Africa, South Korea, Taiwan, Turkey, United Kingdom. A generous amount of publications, bibliografic references etc. is available.

For additional information about the history and the international use of the Spectrum go to the Spectrum of Teaching Styles.org website: <http://www.spectrumofteachingstyles.org>.

### **The international support of the Spectrum in Prague**

The Spectrum of teaching styles has been known in Czechoslovakia for a long time (from 1993 in the Czech Republic). The professor of kinanthropology Dobrý, Svatoň, Šafaříková and Marvanová from UK FTVS, were the first to be acquainted not only with the Spectrum book, but also personally with the authors of the Spectrum – Muska Mosston and Sara Ashworth.

The connection began in 1971 after Dobrý visited Merand during the FARS conference in San Rafael. Dobrý brought home Muska Mosston's book – Teaching Physical Education (1966). Later in 1978 at the AIESEP conference in Magglingen, Switzerland, Dobrý met Mosston and Ashworth and Merand and Marsenach (at that time Marsenach was well known and a reputable pedagogue in Europe). (For Dobrý's personal account of his meeting with Muska see: <http://spectrumofteachingstyles.org/colleagues-profile.php?ind=11>)

Mosston was surprised that his Spectrum was known in Czechoslovakia. At that conference Dobrý presented information about the results and influence that some of the teaching styles had on the behaviour of pupils in schools and on Faculty students' learning results. Additionally he shared that the teaching styles are a part of the teaching program at UK FTVS in the subject branch and special didactics in PE. Mosston showed a good sense of humour, when reacting to this information by saying "What? Teaching styles in Prague? Where is Prague?" A witty reply by Dobrý made their relationship closer.

Mosston and Ashworth visited Prague on two different occasions in 1985. Each time there was a meeting between UK FTVS staff and Muska and Sara. During these visits it was possible to personally exchange new information, knowledge and experience. During their second stay in Prague, they visited the gymnastic presentation 'Spartakiada' on Strahov one day. We should mention Mosston's exclamation about the teaching style called Style A. When thousands of participants in large exercising groups were uniformly performing to music, he cried: "Wonderful! Command style!"

For the first time in the Czech Republic the first six teaching styles along the Spectrum were translated in detail in the textbook *Didaktika sportovních her* (Didactic of Sports Games) by Dobrý for UK FTVS students in the chapter *Vyučování jako řídicí činnost* [Teaching as a Directive Activity] (1977, pp. 91–115). During that time several studies based on teaching styles were published by Hercig (1977), Teplý (1981), Pitrová (1984), and Hejduková (1988).

Other examples of studies that focused on Mosston/Ashworth's teaching styles in PE are included in the following reports: DÚ RÚMŠ (Partial target within the framework of projects of Ministry of Education) IX-05-03, Svatoň et al., 1990; a project of MŠMT ČR (Project of Ministry of Education, Youth and Physical Education), Svatoň et al., UK FTVS, 1993. The next presentation was by Svatoň in Olomouc 1981 at a conference focusing on the personalities of PE teachers. The theme *Teaching Styles in the Praxis of PE Teachers* was also demonstrated and discussed at several meetings called Tělo Praha (Body Prague). These seminars were organized for secondary and high school PE teachers for the whole republic.

Svatoň and Šafaříková, in cooperation with the videocenter of UK FTVS, are the authors of the video named *Didaktické styly ve školní tělesné výchově* (Teaching Styles in School PE), 1993. The English version was sent to Ashworth in the USA (1994) and as a reply Ashworth forwarded to Prague the new publication *Spectrum of Teaching styles. From Command to Discovery* (1990) and still later the 5th edition of book *Teaching Physical Education* (2002). These books were more advanced and enriched, including nine styles, and also dealt with cognitive base lines.

In 1998, the second edition of Dobrý's textbook *Didaktika sportovních her* for UK FTVS was published, with an updated chapter dedicated to the Spectrum (pp. 93–113). New results and style developments by Mosston and Ashworth were incorporated.

Dobrý and Šafaříková are retired, and Svatoň died in 2002. Consequently, there has been a decline in interest about teaching research. Nevertheless, at the UK FTVS the topic of Teaching Styles is a mandatory part of the subject *Didaktika školní tělesné výchovy* (Didactics of Physical Education in School) and an obligatory part of subject-specialist didactics in various different sport departments (sport games, swimming, gymnastics, and others). Currently, teachers continue their Spectrum involvement by trying to apply the teaching styles into Czech academic teaching conditions, and they are also able to present these styles to the students of UK FTVS as well as to other academic institutions and environment through seminars or publications for PE teachers – for example Šafaříková (2014, 2015) in the magazine *Tělesná výchova a sport mládeže* [Physical Education and Youth Sport].

Thanks to Ashworth, Dobrý, Šafaříková, Marvanová and some teachers at the Faculty still are up to date with Spectrum activities. Showing support is the mail sent to Dobrý and Šafaříková in April 2014, from which it is possible to quote: “The Spectrum Institut is pleased to announce that our redeveloped website is live: [www.spectrumofteachingstyles.org](http://www.spectrumofteachingstyles.org). The new website has updated theory and implementation information.”

## **Studying and research of the teaching styles at UK FTVS**

The retirement of Dobrý and Šafaříková resulted in a significant decrease of activity in the research and teaching of the Spectrum at the Faculty of Physical Education. However, teachers in the department of swimming sports and especially in the department of sport games continue to teach and be aware that knowledge of teaching styles is important, especially for special didactics and individual sports. Therefore they try to at least partially maintain the continuity with the previous activities in both teaching and research (the topic ‘teaching styles’ is the part of content of the subject *Theory and basic of didactics of sport games*). However, it must be admitted that research activities have been reduced to solving only partial problems within Bachelor and Master theses in recent years. We will now try to present briefly their results over the past five years.

A total of 10 qualification works – 2 Bachelor and 8 Master theses – were created in the monitored period in which the authors somehow focused on teaching styles. However, only in one study (Vachuta, 2010) are teaching styles the main topic. This study examined teaching styles in football training by comparing the Spectrum teaching styles used by two trainers in five training units. A predominance of the Practice Style and Convergent

Style were found. On the contrary the self-check style and the learner-designed individual program style were not used at all. The author notes that the use of a larger part of the spectrum is related to the educational level (licence) of individual coaches. A positive aspect of the work is the fact that it includes an instructional DVD, in which the author tried, in collaboration with one of the monitored trainers, to present examples of each teaching style in different parts of the training units.

Other works deal with the behaviour of the coach at practice or in the game, eventually with didactic interactions in a practice or game. The texts focused on the behaviour of the coach in the game, and the issue of teaching styles appeared only in the theoretical bases. The only exception was found in the work of Peerová (2014), in which the behaviour of the coach appeared in connection to training (the dominance of command style). We find more information about teaching styles in texts that deal with the effects of trainers within the training process. More information about teaching styles was found in literature that deals with the effects of the activities of trainers within the training process.

Hovorka (2012) found that observed training sessions were mainly conducted by using the command style. Only twice was the inclusion style used and only once was the self-check style used. Data ascertained was not further used in the presented text. Similarly Maurer (2014) observed pupils in training units on a football team. He found the exclusive use of the command style. In the conclusions suggestions were made for coaches to formulate learning (training) goals in a different way, and it was suggested that the guided discovery style should be used. It is sad to say that the implementation of the Spectrum in physical education classrooms was not researched more deeply during the observed period.

On reflection, it appears that, from the viewpoint of the Department of Sport Games, the implementation of teaching styles would benefit from a renewal of interest and research in the field of teaching. This suggestion could be approached from two levels: 1) Continue to solve particular issues within the student thesis and extend the interest to the training process not only in football but also in all sports games; 2) Raise the level of potential candidates with interest in research activities and link it with tuition incentives. Students can practice their practical performances in the subject *Didactics of sports games* and they can also use various methods from curriculum of sports games. A part of the task assignment should be not only using selected didactic styles, but also an analysis of practical realization and appropriate evaluation to achieve the desired effects. One of the side benefits could be even larger numbers of potential candidates becoming interested in this topic.

## CONCLUSION

Teacher praxis by way of the presentation of teachers' essays and diploma works of students of UK FTVS confirm that teaching styles can make the work of the PE teachers more interesting, colourful and easier, and can improve the atmosphere and interaction between the teacher and the student/pupil. However, this means that teachers need to learn these styles, practice them in their classrooms and determine what styles are more

appropriate in particular learning situations and for concrete age groups and for different types of classrooms, etc. Teaching alternative styles must be learned and practiced with feedback like any other skill.

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