

MOSSTON'S TEACHING STYLES THROUGH A PHYSICAL LITERACY LENS

As teachers of physical education (PE), we will have experienced many different teaching styles, as a pupil, through our teacher training, by observing fellow professionals and through continuing professional development. We often use teaching styles and models that we are comfortable with or that we feel have the most impact on students. However, it is apparent, from both observations of and discussions with teachers in many different countries, that teachers of PE are not always aware of the rich variety of pedagogical approaches that are available to them or the impact they can have on an individual's development. It is also becoming apparent that teachers of PE are increasingly considering physical literacy as a focus for PE. This article aims to consider how the varied teaching styles suggested by Mosston and Ashworth (2008) can provide a teacher of PE with a wider range of strategies to choose from when considering how to impact most effectively on an individual's physical literacy through PE. It will be followed up in the next edition of *Physical Education Matters* with a reflection on pedagogical models through a physical literacy lens.

Physical literacy, UNESCO (2015, p. 24) suggested, "is the foundation of PE, it is not a programme but an outcome of any structured physical education provision". Physical literacy can be described as "the motivation, confidence, physical competence, knowledge and understanding to value and take responsibility for engagement in physical activities for life" (IPLA, 2017). It has also been described more recently through the Physical Literacy Consensus Statement for England as "our relationship with movement and physical activity throughout life" or how we "move, connect, think and feel during movement and physical activity" (Sport England, 2023). As schools become more aware of the importance of developing each child holistically through physical education, physical literacy is increasingly becoming the focus of PE. But how can we ensure that our pedagogical practices are impacting on an individual's physical literacy?

Many teachers will have been introduced to Mosston's Spectrum of Teaching Styles through their PE teacher education and, hopefully, they will also have been introduced to a range of teaching models. An understanding of the impact of these pedagogical approaches on an individual's holistic development should allow teachers to choose the appropriate teaching style or model to bring about the desired impact on the children they are teaching. As teachers aim to support pupils with their physical, affective, cognitive and social

development through PE, they should be able to draw from a range of styles and models that will have the most significant impact on physical literacy development. Choosing the right style or model for the needs of each child is challenging, but if teachers understand the potential impact of each style, they will be in a better position to make the correct choice. The following information aims to encourage teachers of PE to consider their current pedagogical practices and reflect on the impact that using a wider range of teaching styles might have on their pupils' physical literacy development.

Mosston's Spectrum of Teaching Styles (Mosston and Ashworth, 2008) is a framework for understanding and implementing different teaching approaches in PE that can elicit learning in, through and about physical education and that can also impact on individuals in relation to developing their physical literacy. Unfortunately, this article does not have time to go into detail about the spectrum, so I suggest that you follow the link at the end of the article and download the free book. Essentially, however, the spectrum consists of 11 teaching styles, moving from a very much teacher-led approach towards a pupil-led approach. No one style is more important than any other; however, the richness is provided by the ability to utilise the different styles at the appropriate time to bring about a desired outcome. The next section of this article will provide an example of each style and consider some of the potential opportunities to develop physical literacy through PE, in relation to inclusivity, challenge at the right level, feeling safe, being motivated, instilling confidence, developing physical competence, increasing knowledge and understanding, and developing social skills such as communication, teamwork and leadership.

Command: The teacher instructs the students to perform a specific exercise or skill, such as aerobic exercises, on command. Everyone does the same thing at the same time on the teacher's command. Responding to commands, immediate feedback and efficient use of time all allow for a safe environment to be created. This can be particularly important for establishing overall control of a class or ensuring safety in more risky activities. Students may feel more comfortable and confident in this environment and may be motivated by the enthusiasm of the teacher in command mode. A teacher commanding activity can mean that the student responds without thought, which may encourage engagement in a physical activity, especially if the task(s) can be achieved by all participants.



Practice: The teacher provides advice on how to execute a particular skill or practice, such as dribbling a basketball, and provides feedback as the students are practising. Here the teacher provides clear guidance and structure to a practice activity as well as teaching points that can be focused on. The student should feel comfortable and confident in the environment, knowing what is expected, what a specific skill should look like and that they will receive feedback from the teacher according to their needs. The practices should challenge and motivate the learner to become engaged and be appropriate for each individual, being differentiated if necessary. Key points shared by the teacher about the target learning criteria develop knowledge and understanding and, if support, challenge and encouragement are appropriate, students should improve their physical competence, which will motivate them to use the skill in the next challenge or task.

Reciprocal: The teacher will arrange for students to work in pairs and instruct them to take turns performing a specific skill, such as throwing a frisbee, while the other student observes and provides feedback on their technique, based on specific criteria. This can also be accomplished in trios where two students practise and one feeds back. Working with friends, in small groups of two to three, provides a more comfortable environment for many students and they will often feel more confident. Observing and critically reflecting on the performance of others challenges students and often leads to enhanced knowledge and understanding. Communicating and receiving feedback from peers is an important social skill, whilst a focus on supporting others' learning and knowing others are supporting your learning can enhance motivation to improve and physical competence.

Self-check: The teacher provides a checklist of criteria for a specific skill, such as serving a volleyball, then asks the students to reflect on and assess their own performance against specific criteria. Reflecting on specific criteria, by yourself, can enhance and reinforce knowledge and understanding if the criteria are clear, relevant and appropriate. Encouraging ownership of learning and independence can positively influence confidence

and motivation in students. Having a clear focus on a learning task where specific criteria are highlighted can also enhance the physical competence of students.

Inclusion: The teacher provides different challenges that allow everyone to choose how to challenge themselves. An example of this would be where different heights are provided in high jump or distances in triple jump and the student can choose the level at which they want to work and challenge themselves. Allowing students to choose which challenge they would like to engage in enables everyone to be involved and motivated within the learning situation, if the challenges are appropriate to the learners within the class. Appreciating one's own physical competence or level of knowledge and understanding is important from a confidence and motivation point of view. Having a range of challenges allows for progression and inclusion for all, which is a key feature of physical literacy.

Guided discovery: The teacher poses a problem, such as how to get a ball into a specific target area in an invasion game, then guides the students to discover the solution through questioning and trial and error. Students will be guided towards discovering a specific response, so they will be challenged cognitively as well as physically to find the appropriate response. As the teacher poses questions that allow the students to discover the response, there is an element of growing confidence, success and understanding. Working with others and discussing potential solutions to a problem can also improve social skills, leadership and teamwork.

Convergent discovery: The teacher poses a problem, such as how to generate flight for a long jump, then asks questions so that the students can converge on a single answer. Experimentation from a physical and cognitive point of view allows students to be challenged and guided towards discovering an expected response. Acknowledging and understanding the appropriate response increases confidence and motivation to engage in future problem-solving activities. Working with others on solving a problem can help to improve communication, teamwork, leadership and social skills.

Divergent discovery: The teacher poses a question which asks the students to produce as many varied ways as possible to solve a problem. An example could be to consider strategies to get past an opponent in a 2 v 1 rugby situation. This style allows students to activate divergent thinking and become emotionally, cognitively and socially engaged in producing alternative ideas. Working in groups to solve the problems encourages shared thinking and students should feel valued for their contributions. Students will feel the emotional and cognitive energy that the production of ideas can generate, and physical competence should develop through the many trials that will take place.

Individual programme: The teacher encourages students to work on individual programmes by themselves. An example of this would be asking them to create an individualised fitness programme, based on their specific needs and goals. The student works on that programme independently, but with teacher support where required. This style allows students to take responsibility for their learning. It can challenge them cognitively as they will need to research and trial strategies related to the challenge. They may be confident knowing that the teacher will be available for advice and support, but they may also be motivated as the challenge will be relevant to their personal learning and needs. With the focus being on physical activity, their competence will be a key focus of attention.



Learner-initiated: In this style, the students ask to work on a task themselves. An example of this would be a gymnastics sequence or a defensive strategy in a game. The teacher will be available to provide support and guidance if required. The learner chooses to be independent and challenges themselves by assuming the responsibilities for creating their learning experience. This independence can improve and demonstrate confidence and motivation for a physical activity challenge. At this stage, the student will probably have the physical competence, knowledge and understanding and is now confident and motivated to put this into effect.

Self-teaching: In this style, the student decides what they want to learn or work on and why. They might decide that they want to learn to juggle to integrate this skill into a performance. They will locate instructional materials, such as videos or written instructions, then work independently to learn a specific skill. As with the previous style, this independence demonstrates a motivation, confidence, physical competence, knowledge and understanding that the student will be able to use when choosing their learning challenges, which they can work on independently or in a group situation relative to their area of physical activity interest.

Hopefully, you will have appreciated the variety of opportunities that Mosston's Spectrum of Teaching Styles provides to develop elements of physical literacy. Incorporating various teaching styles from the spectrum into PE programmes can help students to develop not only physical skills but also the knowledge, motivation and confidence required to promote physical literacy. By providing a diverse range of teaching approaches, educators can address the various components of physical literacy, ultimately supporting individuals on their physical literacy journey. PE is a multifaceted subject that can support holistic development in relation to promoting healthy active lifestyles, as well as the development of physical, affective, cognitive and social skills in individuals. Teachers have a range of strategies at their disposal that can affect different children in different ways. As practitioners, it is our job to utilise the best strategies and models to provide positive physical activity experiences which impact effectively on students' physical literacy.

For a link to a free download of Mosston and Ashworth's (2008) Teaching Physical Education (1st online edition), visit: <https://spectrumofteachingstyles.org/> ■

REFERENCES

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