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THE SPECTRUM THEORY

The Axiom:

**TEACHING BEHAVIOR IS A
CHAIN OF DECISION MAKING**

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 previous decision.

The Anatomy of Any Style:

PRE-IMPACT (≡)

IMPACT (≡)

POST-IMPACT (≡)

**SETS OF
DECISIONS
THAT MUST
BE MADE**

The anatomy is composed of the conceivable categories of decisions that must be made (deliberately or by default) in any teaching-learning transaction. These categories are grouped into three sets: the pre-impact, impact, and post-impact sets. The pre-impact set includes decisions that define the intent—the specific planning and preparation decisions for what is to occur; the impact set includes decisions related to the implementation—the face-to-face interaction of the teaching-learning transaction; and the post-impact set includes decisions concerning assessment—feedback about performance during the impact and evaluation of the overall congruence between the intent and the action of the learning experience.

The anatomy delineates which decisions must be made in each set to accomplish the particular goals and objectives of a specific style. In the reality of the classroom, these three sets of decisions are not linear in implementation.

The Decision Makers:

TEACHER: ———
max. ————— min.

WHO MAKES THE DECISIONS

min. ————— max.
LEARNER: ———

Both teacher and learner can make decisions in any of the decision 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 person's (the student's) is at minimum.

The Spectrum:

LANDMARK STYLES

- Command (A)
- Practice (B)
- Reciprocal (C)
- Self-Check (D)
- Inclusion (E)
- Guided Discovery (F)
- Convergent Discovery (G)
- Divergent Discovery (H)
- Learner-Designed Individual Program (I)
- Learner-Initiated (J)
- Self-Teaching (K)

By establishing who makes which decisions, about what and when, it is possible to identify the structure of eleven landmark teaching-learning approaches as well as alternative approaches that lie between each style on the Spectrum. In the first style (Command Style-A), which has as its overriding objective precise performance on cue, the teacher makes all decisions; the learner responds by adhering to the cued performance decisions of the teacher. In the second style (Practice Style-B), nine specific decisions are shifted from the teacher to the learner and, thus, a new set of objectives, which offer private and individual practice time, 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-learning approaches is delineated.

The Clusters:

- Command (A)
- Practice (B)
- Reciprocal (C)
- Self-Check (D)
- Inclusion (E)

↑ REPRODUCTION STYLES ↑

— DISCOVERY THRESHOLD —

↓ PRODUCTION STYLES ↓

- Guided Discovery (F)
- Convergent Discovery (G)
- Divergent Discovery (H)
- Learner-Designed Individual Program (I)
- Learner-Initiated (J)
- Self-Teaching (K)

Two basic thinking capacities are reflected within the structure of the Spectrum: the capacity for reproduction and the capacity for production. All human beings have, in varying degrees, the capacity to reproduce known knowledge, replicate models, recall information, and practice skills. Additionally, all human beings have the capacity to produce a range of ideas; all have the capacity to venture into the new thus providing the opportunity to tap the yet unknown. The first five styles (Command, Practice, Reciprocal, Self-Check, and Inclusion) form a cluster that represents teaching options that foster reproduction of existing (known, past) information and knowledge. The remaining styles (Guided Discovery, Convergent Discovery, Divergent Discovery, Learner-Designed Individual Program, Learner-Initiated, Self-Teaching) form a cluster that represents options that invite production (discovery) of new knowledge – this knowledge is new to the learner, it may be new to the teacher, or at times, new to society. The line of demarcation between these two clusters is called the *discovery threshold*. The discovery threshold identifies the cognitive boundaries of each cluster.

The Developmental Effects:

THE DEVELOPMENTAL EFFECTS

- Physical
- Social
- Emotional
- Cognitive
- Moral/Ethic

The structure of the decisions in each landmark style affects the developing learner in unique ways by creating conditions for diverse experiences. Each set of decisions in the landmark styles emphasizes distinct objectives that learners can develop. Objectives, aside from the content expectations, are always related to human attributes along the physical, social, emotional, cognitive, and ethical developmental channels. Because of the decision distribution in each style, every teaching event provides opportunities for learners to participate in, and develop, specific human attributes along one or more of the developmental channels.

