

# Physical Education Student Teachers' Perceptions of Mosston's Spectrum of Teaching Styles and Their Willingness to Implement Them in Practice Teaching

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## ABSTRACT

*Teaching styles significantly impact learning experiences in Physical Education (PE), influencing student engagement, skill development, and overall learning outcomes. Mosston's Spectrum of Teaching Styles provides a structured framework that ranges from teacher-centered to student-centered instructional methods, offering diverse approaches to PE instruction. This study explores the perceptions of PE student teachers regarding Mosston's Spectrum and their willingness to implement these styles during practice teaching. Utilizing a qualitative research approach, data were gathered through surveys and interviews with second-year PE student teachers enrolled in a Bachelor of Physical Education (B.P.Ed.) program. The findings provide insights into the challenges, preferences, and readiness of future PE educators in adopting diverse instructional methods. Additionally, the study examines how external factors such as institutional policies, mentorship, prior teaching experiences, and peer influence impact the implementation of teaching styles. Understanding these aspects can offer valuable implications for teacher training programs, helping to bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application in PE instruction. The study concludes with recommendations for enhancing teacher education programs by fostering mentorship, professional development, and experiential learning opportunities to support a wider adoption of diverse teaching strategies.*

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**Keywords :** Physical Education, Teaching Styles, Mosston's Spectrum, Student Teachers, Practice Teaching, Pedagogy, Teacher Training.

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## Introduction

The effectiveness of Physical Education (PE) is largely determined by the teaching styles employed by instructors, as these influence students' learning experiences, engagement, and skill acquisition. Mosston's Spectrum of Teaching Styles provides a structured model that classifies instructional methods along a continuum from teacher-directed approaches, such as command and practice styles, to student-centered methods like reciprocal teaching, guided discovery, and problem-solving. While student-centered approaches are widely recognized for their ability to enhance learning outcomes and student autonomy, their implementation in PE classrooms remains a challenge due to various contextual and institutional factors.

Understanding student teachers' perceptions of these teaching styles and their willingness to implement them during practice teaching is crucial for improving PE teacher training programs. Research indicates that while novice teachers may acknowledge the benefits of student-centered methods, they often gravitate toward traditional, teacher-controlled styles due to ease of implementation, familiarity, and classroom management concerns. Additionally, external factors such as institutional policies, curriculum structure, mentoring programs, and peer influence play a significant role in shaping teaching style preferences and adoption.

This study seeks to address these gaps by exploring how PE student teachers perceive Mosston's Spectrum, the extent of their willingness to implement different teaching styles, and the challenges they face in doing so. By examining these aspects, the research aims to provide insights that can inform teacher education programs, ensuring that student teachers receive the necessary support and training to effectively incorporate diverse instructional methods in their teaching practice.

## Research Problem

While Mosston's Spectrum provides a structured framework for diverse instructional methods, little research has explored how student teachers perceive these styles and the factors influencing their implementation during practice teaching. Furthermore, there is limited understanding of how institutional frameworks, mentoring, and curriculum design influence their willingness to adopt student-centered methods.

## Literature Review

Mosston and Ashworth (2008) categorized teaching styles into a continuum ranging from command-based instruction to student-led discovery, offering a framework that accommodates varying levels of teacher and student involvement in the learning

process. The spectrum includes styles such as Command, Practice, Reciprocal, Self-Check, Inclusion, Guided Discovery, Divergent, Individual, Learner-Initiated, and Self-Teaching styles, each with distinct pedagogical applications in Physical Education (PE).

Research suggests that student-centered teaching styles enhance motivation, engagement, and skill acquisition in PE (Metzler, 2017). These approaches, such as guided discovery and problem-solving methods, encourage students to actively participate in their learning, fostering autonomy and decision-making skills (Dyson et al., 2016). Studies by Goodyear and Dudley (2015) further highlight that student-centered instruction promotes critical thinking and creativity, leading to deeper learning and improved skill retention. Additionally, Harvey and Jarrett (2014) found that when students engage in inquiry-based learning and self-directed tasks, they develop greater confidence and adaptability in physical activities.

However, studies also indicate that novice teachers may favor traditional, teacher-directed methods due to familiarity, ease of implementation, and perceived classroom management benefits (Cothran et al., 2005). These teacher-controlled approaches, such as the command and practice styles, provide structured learning environments that facilitate skill repetition and discipline maintenance. Novice teachers often experience difficulty managing student autonomy while ensuring instructional effectiveness, leading to a preference for more predictable, structured methods (Harvey et al., 2020).

Institutional support and structured professional development play a crucial role in the successful adoption of student-centered teaching styles (Kirk, 2010; Casey & MacPhail, 2018). Teacher training programs that emphasize exposure to diverse teaching styles, hands-on teaching experiences, and mentorship opportunities contribute to a higher likelihood of student teachers implementing student-centered approaches (O'Sullivan & Dyson, 2017). Dyson et al. (2020) further stress the importance of reflective practice, collaboration, and feedback in assisting teachers in transitioning from traditional methods to flexible, student-driven approaches.

Despite the pedagogical benefits of student-centered instruction, institutional barriers such as rigid curriculum structures, assessment constraints, and a lack of professional development opportunities often hinder its widespread adoption (Casey & MacPhail, 2018). School policies, administrative expectations, and peer influence significantly impact how teachers choose and implement teaching styles. Studies suggest that schools fostering professional learning communities and promoting continuous

pedagogical training enable student teachers to feel more confident in experimenting with varied instructional methods (Kirk, 2010).

Furthermore, contemporary research highlights the role of digital tools and technology-enhanced learning in supporting flexible teaching styles in PE. According to Casey et al. (2021), incorporating digital platforms for feedback, assessment, and skill development facilitates a more student-centered learning environment, allowing for greater differentiation and individualized learning experiences.

## **Methodology**

### **Research Design**

This study employs a qualitative research approach to explore the perceptions, experiences, and willingness of first-year PE student teachers in implementing Mosston's Spectrum of Teaching Styles. A descriptive survey design was used to gather insights into how student teachers engage with various instructional methods and the challenges and facilitators influencing their choices. The study relies solely on questionnaires to collect data, ensuring a standardized approach to capturing participant responses.

### **Participants**

The study focuses on student teachers enrolled in a Bachelor of Physical Education (B.P.Ed.) program who have completed foundational pedagogy courses and are engaged in practice teaching. Participants were selected based on their familiarity with Mosston's Spectrum and their active involvement in lesson planning and instructional decision-making. Purposive sampling was used to ensure that only those with prior knowledge of Mosston's teaching styles participated.

### **Data Collection**

Data were collected exclusively through structured questionnaires designed to assess participants' familiarity with Mosston's Spectrum, their preferred teaching styles, and factors influencing their instructional choices. The questionnaire included Likert-scale items, multiple choice questions, and open-ended responses to capture both quantitative trends and qualitative reflections.

The questionnaire covered various aspects, including awareness and understanding of Mosston's teaching styles, frequency of use of different teaching styles during practice teaching, confidence in implementing student-centered methods, perceived benefits and challenges of diverse teaching approaches, and institutional and mentor support in adopting different teaching styles. The questionnaire was distributed electronically

to ensure easy accessibility for participants. Responses were collected anonymously to encourage honest and unbiased feedback.

## **Data Analysis**

A thematic analysis approach was used to interpret open-ended responses, identifying key themes such as perceptions of Mosston's Spectrum, willingness to implement different styles, and challenges or facilitators affecting adoption. Quantitative responses from Likert-scale items and multiple-choice questions were analyzed using descriptive statistics to identify trends in teaching style preferences. The analysis process involved reviewing all questionnaire responses to ensure completeness and consistency, categorizing open-ended responses based on recurring themes, identifying patterns and key findings that align with or diverge from existing literature, and comparing trends across different participant groups, such as those with prior teaching experience and those new to teaching. To enhance reliability, triangulation was applied by cross referencing different questionnaire responses to ensure consistency in participant perspectives.

## **Results and Discussion**

### **Perceptions of Mosston's Spectrum**

Most student teachers recognized the benefits of varied teaching styles, particularly student centered approaches like guided discovery and reciprocal teaching. These methods were perceived as valuable for fostering student engagement, critical thinking, and autonomy in learning. Many student teachers acknowledged that incorporating student-centered teaching styles could enhance the overall learning experience by encouraging active participation and deeper understanding. However, despite their recognition of the benefits, a significant number of student teachers favored command and practice styles due to their ease of implementation and concerns about maintaining classroom control. The structured nature of these approaches provided a sense of security, especially for novice teachers who lacked experience in managing diverse learning needs. Additionally, some student teachers expressed apprehension about students' ability to effectively engage in self-directed learning without disrupting the flow of the lesson.

Previous research (Cothran et al., 2005; Metzler, 2017) has indicated that while student-centered teaching styles promote better skill acquisition and motivation, they also require a high level of planning, adaptability, and confidence from teachers. Many student teachers in this study echoed these findings, indicating that their limited teaching experience made it challenging to implement methods that required

flexibility and individualized instruction.

## **Willingness to Implement Teaching Styles**

While student teachers expressed a general willingness to incorporate diverse teaching styles, several factors limited their adoption of student-centered approaches. One of the key concerns was classroom management, as novice teachers feared that allowing students more autonomy could lead to disorder and decreased lesson effectiveness. This concern aligns with prior studies (Kirk, 2010; Casey & MacPhail, 2018), which found that beginner teachers often struggle with balancing structure and student independence.

Additionally, student responsiveness played a significant role in shaping teaching preferences. Some student teachers believed that certain styles, such as guided discovery or problem-solving, required a level of student motivation and self-discipline that might not always be present in a typical PE class. The varying skill levels and learning attitudes of students further influenced their decisions, as some feared that open-ended teaching styles might not cater effectively to all learners. Institutional expectations also emerged as a major determinant of teaching style choices. Many student teachers felt constrained by traditional curriculum structures that emphasized content delivery and standardized assessment. The pressure to meet institutional guidelines and ensure students acquired fundamental skills led to a preference for more direct instructional methods. Universities and schools that lacked a strong emphasis on student centered teaching further discouraged novice teachers from experimenting with innovative styles. Despite these limitations, student teachers who had prior exposure to diverse instructional strategies demonstrated a greater willingness to adopt student-centered approaches. Those who had participated in mentorship programs or had opportunities for guided experimentation with various teaching styles expressed higher confidence in integrating different methods into their lessons.

## **Challenges and Facilitators**

Many student teachers had limited exposure to non-traditional teaching methods, with minimal hands-on experience beyond command and practice styles. This lack of familiarity led to hesitation in implementing student-centered approaches. Additionally, time constraints in lesson planning posed a significant challenge, as developing student-centered lessons required additional preparation, which was difficult for novice teachers managing multiple responsibilities. Institutional expectations and rigid curricula further restricted the adoption of innovative teaching styles, particularly in schools that prioritized traditional models and standardized



assessments. Many student teachers also preferred familiar strategies, often relying on the teaching styles they had experienced as students, which reinforced traditional methods over more student-centered approaches. Another significant concern was the fear of student disengagement, as some teachers worried that granting students more autonomy might result in a lack of participation and focus during lessons.

Despite these challenges, several factors facilitated the adoption of diverse teaching methods. Supportive mentors played a crucial role in guiding student teachers through the implementation process, offering both encouragement and constructive feedback. Structured training in varied teaching methodologies within teacher education programs also proved beneficial, as hands-on practice with different styles enabled student teachers to build confidence in their application. Institutional policies that encouraged innovative teaching and emphasized student-centered learning created an environment where new teachers felt more comfortable experimenting with different approaches. Furthermore, practical experiences such as supervised teaching placements, peer teaching, and action research projects provided student teachers with opportunities to explore, refine, and implement diverse instructional strategies effectively.

### **Institutional Influence**

Universities and training institutions that actively promoted student-centered learning demonstrated a higher willingness among student teachers to implement diverse teaching styles. Programs that incorporated reflective practice, peer collaboration, and exposure to real-world teaching scenarios provided student teachers with the tools and confidence to adopt Mosston's Spectrum in a meaningful way. Furthermore, professional development workshops, continuous assessment, and mentorship initiatives were found to be key contributors to successful implementation. When institutions fostered a culture of pedagogical innovation and provided clear support structures, student teachers exhibited greater flexibility in their instructional approaches.

### **Conclusion and Implications**

This study highlights the importance of targeted training in diverse teaching styles for PE student teachers. While awareness of Mosston's Spectrum is high, practical constraints such as classroom management concerns, student responsiveness, and institutional expectations influence the extent of implementation. To bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practice, teacher education programs must incorporate structured mentorship, peer collaboration, and hands-on experiences that allow student teachers to explore and refine their instructional techniques in

real classroom settings. Practical exposure to different teaching styles, combined with opportunities for reflective practice and feedback, can help build confidence in implementing student-centered approaches. Institutional support, including professional development programs, curriculum flexibility, and an encouraging school culture, plays a crucial role in ensuring the successful adoption of diverse teaching methods. Teacher education programs should prioritize experiential learning, interdisciplinary collaboration, and technology integration to equip student teachers with the skills necessary to navigate various instructional challenges.

Future research should explore longitudinal studies tracking the long-term impact of teacher training programs on teaching style adoption, as well as investigating the role of digital tools in facilitating diverse pedagogical approaches. Strengthening institutional policies that encourage innovation in PE instruction can further promote student engagement and effective learning outcomes in physical education. By addressing these factors, PE teacher education programs can ensure that student teachers are better prepared to implement Mosston's Spectrum of Teaching Styles, ultimately enhancing the quality and effectiveness of physical education instruction worldwide.

## Recommendations

Teacher education programs should integrate experiential learning opportunities to provide student teachers with hands-on practice in diverse instructional methods. Mentorship programs play a crucial role in supporting the adoption of varied teaching strategies by offering guidance and real-world insights from experienced educators. Additionally, professional development workshops focused on student-centered instruction can equip teachers with the necessary skills and confidence to implement innovative teaching methods effectively. Institutional policies should also be designed to promote and encourage the adoption of student-centered approaches, ensuring a supportive environment that fosters instructional innovation and adaptability.

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