Describe "Fitt's and Posner's" phases of learning and explain how you would structure practices to enhance performance.

The Fitt's and Posner's stages of learning are a series of practices and learning exercises that will help people to learn specific skills by viewing others doing so.

'Learning is a more or less permanent change in performance brought about by experience' – Knapp 1973

Practice is the rehearsal of a performance in order to learn or improve a skill.

The two above definitions of learning and practice show that they are both linked. You cant learn without practice, and if you practice, you will learn. If you practice an exercise correctly, your performance should reflect this, but jumping from learning a skill, to being able to perform it expertly every time, is impossible, and this is where Fitt's and Posner's phases learning come in to play.

The Fitt's and Posner's phases of learning are split into 3 different stages, the cognitive, associative and autonomous stages. The three stages must follow each-other in sequence, so a stage must be learnt before moving onto the next one. It is possible to move up and down a stage, for example, if someone moves from the cognitive stage to the associative stage, but still cant quite perform the required skill, then they have obviously not perfectly learnt the cognitive stage, and must attempt to learn it again.

A learner will need to start off with the cognitive stage of learning. This is where a mental picture of the skill must be learned, in order to perform it. This mental image can be created by viewing the skill being performed by someone else who knows how to do it. If the learner doesn't get the correct image into their head, the skill will be performed wrong, so it is essential that they get the right. The more complex that the skill is, the longer it should take for the learner to get the correct image in their minds of how to perform the skill.

A good practise session for cognitive learners must be well structured by the coach. A warm up should be performed to start things off, and get the muscles in working order. A simple skill to pick up for a learner would be the side-foot pass in football. The learner must view the coach performing the pass, and the coach should talk through the actions so that the mental image of the skill is imprinted in the learners mind. Once the learner thinks that they have the correct mental picture, they must practice the skill with a partner, or with the coach, who will give feedback as to where the learner is going right or wrong. Once this phase has been mastered, it would be time to move on to the next phase.

The associative stage is where the learner must practice a skill with verbal feedback and guidance from the coach. This will help them to improve the way in which they perform the skill. This help from the coach is very important as they must identify exactly what the learner is doing wrong to correct them. Also, the learner should look towards professional matches to see how the skill is performed by professionals, so that their idea of how to use that skill in a game situation grows. The coach will be

able to start using more complex language to explain the skill as the learner should have started to build an understanding of what to do.

Associative learners should still have their practice controlled by a coach, but shuldnt need as much help as a cognitive learner. In these sessiona, the coach should take the learner through a warm up, and begin to introduce some more skills that would link in with the one they are currently learning at a cognitive level. The coach can then tell the learner what aspects of the skill they need to practice more, so that they can improve and perform a skill correctly. Once they have managed to get a good idea of how the skill is performed, they are ready to move on to the next stage.

The final stage of learning is the autonomous stage, at which the learner should by now be able to perform the skill without having to think about what to do. Not all performers will reach this level, but those that do have a greatly built understabding and are able to analyse their own performance of a skill, sop that they can correct themselves when they do something wrong. By now, the skill should have been totally perfected, but cognitive aspects must be included so that modifications to the skill can be made depending on the weather or environmental conditions. Even once the autonomous skill has been mastered, there is always room for improvement, and a skill can always be forgotten, and the associative stage will need to be re-learned in order to get back the ability to perform autonomously.

Autonomous learners should be able to practice and learn without a coach, although still training with a coach is a good idea. They can devise their own warm ups that should concentrate on the specific parts of the body used for the particular skill that they wish to practice, and should br able to use a skill in various situations, whether it be passing the ball between themselves and a friend in the park, or using that skill in a match situation where there are an unlimited number of option to place the ball to beat the opposition and complete the pass to a team mate. A coach will help them to improve their performance of the skill, and let them know if they are doing anything wrong.

In conclusion, Fitt's and Posners phases of learning can be regarded as important for structuring any sporting practice. All learning seems to develop through these phases. However, Fitts and Poseners fail to realise that some learners may already poses the ability to perform the first stage of learning. Therefore, practices should take this into account, and maybe use these developed learners as demonstrators in the cognitive phase.

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