

Discuss 'Fitts and Posner's' phases of learning and explain how you would structure practices and competition.

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

To elevate in skill, you need to practise correctly-
'Correct practise leads to improvement' (John Honeybourne, Michael Hill and Helen Moors, Physical Education and sport)

All aspects of sport require learning. Despite the speed at which different people can learn new skills, Fitts and Posner (1967) introduced the three phases of learning to skill acquisition; cognitive, associative and autonomous.

The earliest stage of skill learning is the cognitive stage; this includes a lot of trial and error. All faults should be recognised or the learner will learn the skill incorrectly. If the skill is performed correctly it is important that he is praised. This will give him more confidence and make him want to continue extending his skills. This helps the performer to realise why failure occurred so they know what to avoid the next time they attempt it. Watching demonstrations by people that can do the movement correctly will help beginners to visualise the actions in their head. (Mental rehearsal) If the coach or teacher is unable to perform the action, someone who can perform it correctly or a video will be shown. This way the beginner can associate what they're doing, with what they have seen.

Learning to play a team sport such as basketball learning basics, bouncing the ball will be the first stage. The learner will see the visual bouncing the ball with their hand spread out and relaxed rather than tense, the visual will not be using the palm of their hand, but their fingertips, they also need to realise the controlling is coming from the wrist rather than the whole arm. This is likely to happen with the performer at the cognitive stage, as beginners tend to make jerky movements. To prevent this from happening the coach would carry out dribbling practises.

In badminton, watching the correct stance and hitting the shuttlecock will be the first stage of learning. The visual will be standing with a clear stance, with their feet apart for balance, alert and waiting with the racket up and ready. Once the shuttlecock has been hit towards their side of the net they will bring his arm backwards to get a swing and bring it back forward to hit the shuttlecock.

In gymnastics the main key points are balance, co-ordination, and skill. Learners watching someone performing gymnastics will notice the accuracy and timing. When learning to do a cartwheel, the learner sees an image of someone executing the move correctly and attempt to replicate the body actions.

The associative stage is the second stage of learning, and by this stage the learners are now trying to improve the skills they learnt whilst in the cognitive stage. Movements begin to look correct, and the more practises that occur the better they are at performing them. It is essential that the performer receive feedback from people

watching their performance so that they can understand what they are doing right or wrong, so they can work out what to change. The learner will be able to associate the movements produced with the mental image they have. Positive feedback will let the performer know they are doing the movements right which in return will enhance their performance. Negative feedback will let them know what they are doing wrong and will help them to correct themselves. Sometimes learners will return to cognitive stage to make sure they are performing the basic skills correctly.

This is also the stage where motor programmes are formed- this is a sequence of movements is stored in the long-term memory of the performer.

Learning to do a lay up in basketball requires you to be able to run, dribble and concentrate on where you're going and what's in front of you all at the same time. Learners will not face all these problems at once; it will be taken one task at a time. The coach/teacher will carry out practise and drills to teach the learners the skills separately until all skills where at a high enough level to perform and then put them together.

Now the learner has learnt to stand and hit the shuttlecock they will now focus on ways of making the performance better, less errors, fluent movements.

The gymnast at this stage will also be working on the quality of performance and needs help doing this, again, from feedback. Once the feedback is given the learner may notice things that were being done wrong that they hadn't noticed before.

The autonomous stage is the final phase of the skill learning process. Movements are made without mental planning/automatically and this is only obtained after much practise and quality repetition. Mistakes may still be made but at this stage the performer will be able to recognise his own mistake and say what was done wrong, why he did it wrong and how he can do it right. The movements are performed fluently with no conscious thought about them being wrong. If practise is not continued whilst at this stage the performer may return to the associative stage.

In basketball, the performer can now focus on tactics and skill, and also knows what needs to be done if any errors are made. If a shot is taken and missed, they will know to get the rebounds or run back and defend.

In badminton, the player's movements will almost be automatic; he will not be focusing on hitting the shuttlecock or any of the basic movements, but visualising where to hit the shuttlecock and how to catch the opposition out.

In gymnastics the gymnast will now be focussing on extending routines and personalising moves to make them look better.

If the skills that have been learnt are not regularly practised then it is likely the performer may return to the associative stage. This is also known as reversibility.

To structure practises the groups of learners will vary so you should pair or team up people with the same or similar abilities, as this will help the performers improve. If they are still at the cognitive stage, the practises will be fairly easy and will focus on the basics, such as dribbling, shooting, passing etc.

If the learners are at the associative stage the practise will need to be a bit harder as the learners will be coming to learn new things and to improve the performance they already have, so the practices would involve things such as, small team games, and 3-point shooting.

At the autonomous stage the performer will need harder practise but at this stage they may have already taken part in most drills so will just be doing more vigorous training, maybe for longer, but making it harder in little ways.

Before starting the practise the area in which the practise is going to be carried out in, needs to be big enough and safe enough. Any other objects needed for practise has to be checked for safety.

You also need to consider the weather conditions as this may affect the game if it is an outside sport.

When competitions are being formed, the ability of the players should be the main concern. The word competition means to compete, and if the people you are working with/against are not good enough or way to good then there is no point as it is simply not a fair competition.

Bibliography.

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Word count- 1277