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Discuss how the organisation of practices and the style of teaching affect the learning of motor skills.

A motor skill is an action or a task that has a goal and that requires voluntary body or limb movement to achieve the goal. There are many different styles that can be adapted by coaches to teach a learner to accomplish this goal.. When a coach presents a new skill to a learner they must decide the best way to transmit the knowledge that they have.. The four types of guidance are visual, verbal, manual and mechanical. Visual guidance is widely used when teaching motor skills because during the cognitive phase of skill learning visual guidance helps the learner develop a mental image of what they need to do.

The main type of guidance types chosen depends on the personality, motivation and ability of the performer. The nature of the skill being taught also has to be considered. It is vital that demonstrations must be accurate and should hold the learner's attention. They should be repeated but not be too time consuming. Play as video clip of motor skill in slow motion may help the learner to pick up the skill. This type of guidance is used mainly at the start of a teaching skill.

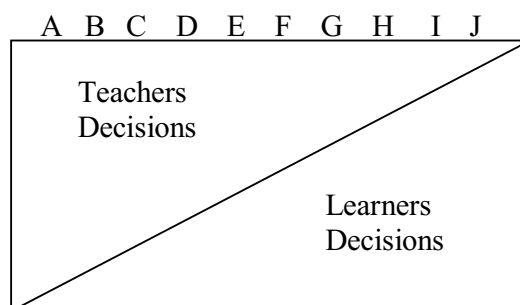
Verbal guidance should be used with the visual guidance to explain what is happening as they run through demonstrations. When a coach uses verbal guidance the coach must make sure they don't talk too much as the performer might lose interest and get bored. Asking the learner questions might help personal development and build up confidence and test understanding. It isn't very effective if used on its own.

Manual or mechanical guidance can reduce fear in dangerous situations e.g. wearing armband when learning to swim. It gives some idea of kinesthesia awareness of the motion. The intrinsic feedback received could be incorrect and may encourage bad habits. These two guidance types are useful in the early stages of learning.

Every coach has their own style of teaching depending on the performer. Some coaches are very extrovert when others are very open and sociable. More introverted people adopt a style which ensures they don't get into situations where they feel uncomfortable. Some are naturally more appealing than others and so they tend to use a more teacher-centred approach. Coaches need to be aware of their own personality characteristics and abilities before they decide on the approach they will take.

The type of activity being taught also has an influence over the style the teacher adopts. For instance, if the activity is dangerous the coach is more likely to adopt a serious and strict role. If the activity is more complex and the demands are high, a more explanatory style will be appropriate.

In 1986 Mosston and Ashworth identified a range of styles and made a spectrum of teaching styles. (Shown below)



When the coach makes more decisions, the style is said to be more 'command'. When the learner makes nearly all the decisions the style is said to be 'discovery'. The spectrum includes many styles between these two extremes. At about C or D the style is more 'reciprocal'.

The most successful coaches are able to adopt a range of styles, depending on the variables. It's important to ensure an enjoyable and productive atmosphere, and motivation can be enhanced if personal achievements are recognised. The teacher should analyse the variables in each situation so that performance and motivation can be optimised. The best style to use if the teacher has good discipline and the group is large, or the situation is dangerous, is the command style. The learner can end up as a clone of the coach. The reciprocal style of teaching allows more social interaction and encourages a sense of responsibility. Group members must be mature enough to handle the responsibility and have reasonable communication skills (not for beginners). Coaches must remember that it is very difficult to 'unlearn' skills, and the learning process could be severely delayed.

Practise sessions must be well planned, taking into consideration the skill to be learned, the performer and the environment. If the skill is too complex, with many items of information to process, the skill should be split up into sub-routines and each part taught separately. If the skill is highly organised, and the sub-routines closely interrelated, then it is better to teach as a whole. If the skill is in a serial nature, then the progressive-part method may be appropriate. Using this method each section is taught and linked into the next. The operant method of teaching allows learning by trial and error and reinforcement of appropriate responses. Variable practice is important to build up a schema in the long-term memory. Massed practice is generally not as effective as distributed practice and involves a practice session with no or few intervals. Massed practice is better for more able performers and can help with over learning. Distributed practice involves relatively long periods of rest. It can help with motivation and delays fatigue. Mental rehearsal is facilitated through this approach. Over teaching generally helps the performer to retain information in the long-term memory. Over learning helps ensure that the performer reaches and stays in the autonomous phase of learning.