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**Discuss the differences between skill, ability and technique and explain how you would structure practices to enhance these components of a fitness**

**Introduction**

In order to be a success at a particular sport, whether it's playing football in the back garden or playing Rugby for your country you must have skill, ability and technique. Skill is the ability to choose and perform the right techniques at the correct time, regularly and with the minimum of effort in a specific movement in a sport. Sportsmen use their skills to achieve particular objectives in their sport e.g. scoring a century in cricket. Ability is the make up of a sportsman. A number of different aspects of your make up can be taken into consideration whilst talking about ability e.g. Height, Strength and co-ordination. We inherit our ability from our parents. Techniques are the basic movements that we make in any sport e.g. a block start in a 100m sprint. We can combine a number of different techniques to create a pattern of movement e.g. the triple jump.

Skill, ability and technique are always closely linked. The book ' Advanced PE ' puts forward the equation:

"Skill = Ability + Technique."

This shows us the close link. The book quotes,

" In order to perform a particular skill in sport, we must learn the required technique. In order to learn the technique fully, we must have the necessary abilities."

This quote agrees with the idea that all three areas are needed to be a success at sporting activities.

Skill has been defined by a number of different experts. Here are two definitions:

"An organised co-ordinated activity in relation to an object or situation, which involves a whole chain of sensory, central and motor mechanisms" (Welford)

"Excellence of performance-the successful integration of a hierarchy of abilities (all the abilities we have) appropriate to a given task under given conditions. (Professor GP Meredith)

Both of the above quotes show the distinct link between skill, ability and technique. Skill can be broken down into a number of different types. These are: Cognitive skills, Perceptual skills, Motor skills and Perceptual motor skills.

In order to perform any skill in sports, you must have the ability to do so. Your ability is something that you are born with, so to improve it you need to train. Here are two definitions of ability:

"Motor abilities are relatively enduring traits which are generally stable qualities or factors that help a person carry out a particular act" (E. Fleishman)

"Motor abilities are innate inherited traits that determine an individuals co-ordination, balance, ability and speed of reactions" (R. Arnot and C. Gaines)

The difference between skill and ability is that a skill can be taught and changed and your ability is something that is inherited from your parents and cannot be taught.

Technique is something, which you need to have to complete a particular skill. It is often confused with skill. To perform a particular skill in any sport you will have to a required technique.

There are a number of classification continuums that may be used in conjunction with each other to build up a profile of a particular skill. There is Knapp's open-closed continuum, which involves skills being categorised into open or closed skills. An example of an open skill is a tackle in Rugby. It is very difficult to improve an open skill in any sport because the situation in which it occurs is always different but the skill will be improved over time through experience .An example of a closed skill is the shot putt. Closed skills can be improved easily due to the fact that there are no outside physical influences on the athlete, which means he or she can train easily for a closed skill.

There are other continuums such as coactive and interactive skills and also discrete and continuous continuum.

To structure practices to enhance your performance for agility is very difficult as you are born with your abilities. However an Australian sports psychologist has found ways of improving hand/eye co-ordination by doing special eye exercises. These exercises are starting to be used more frequently in sports such as cricket to improve hand/eye co-ordination but they are not yet proven to work. Technique, according to most textbooks can be easily enhanced and improved. Your technique can be enhanced and improved by feedback from coaches telling you to change certain parts of your technique e.g. keeping your head over the ball whilst playing a forward defensive in cricket. This feedback

can then be used to improve your technique and then you can go away and work on it in the next training sessions.

## **Conclusion**

The idea that ability cannot be improved I believe is wrong. Speed, flexibility and hand/eye co-ordination can all be enhanced. Speed can be enhanced by working on muscular strength in your legs and hand/eye co-ordination can be improved by special methods, which have been put forward by experts on the subject. The idea that technique has to be good to improve certain skills I also think is wrong due to some sports men and women have irregular techniques but still excel in there sport such as Jonny Wilkinson, who is one of the greatest conversion taker in the world at the current time. The idea that skill equals ability plus technique is the perfect way to describe how to be able to achieve a particular skill. However there are a number of different aspects which come into consideration when performing a skill and being successful at that skill.

The definitions of the three practices in these components of performances put forward in the research section by the experts are all clear definitions that show the true meaning of the terms skill, ability and technique. The idea that ability cannot really be improved I disagree with because both some top experts and others I know as athletes believe that there are certain ways in which you can improve on aspects such as hand/eye co-ordination. The way in which technique can be improved is pretty straightforward but it creates other issues such as why some sportsmen or women with a poor technique still excel in their chosen sport? Overall skill is developed by having good ability and having a technique that suits your body type.