Essay Example

"Discuss the role of feedback in teaching and learning of physical skills"

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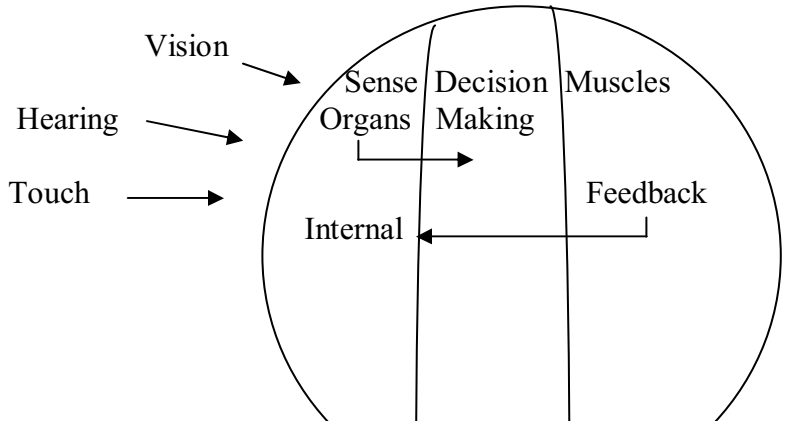
ref: Claire Haycock (2001)

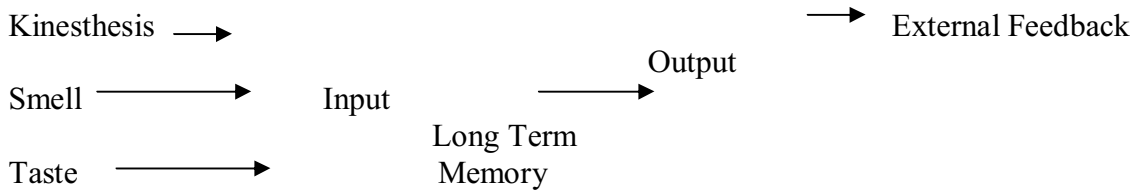
Feedback is used as a guiding tool and is central for good and successful coaching and learning. In order for the learner to learn new skills, there needs to be constant observations of their actions. Feedback is information from the environment which informs the athlete about their performance during and following the movement. Feedback is critical to a successful form of learning.

For feedback information to be of any value it should be compared against a model, therefore it is easy to detect and rectify any errors. The models must meet all the relevant criteria and at the same time be flexible to allow for individual variations. A model for a beginner will differ from a model for an expert. It is important that the learner plays apart in their learning and is aware of the model which they are working against as this could stimulate motivation.

Feedback provides information about performance. It acts as a motivator especially for learners. I was learning to play hockey and I felt I just couldn't do it. When I hit the ball, it went in the wrong direction. My teacher informed me that my stance was incorrect and so was the positioning of my hands on the stick. Once my errors were corrected, the level of the skill I was performing improved. When a coach gives information about an error, they must present it in a constructive manner so it has a positive effect rather than a detrimental effect. Therefore the coach should consider the manner the feedback is given, the timing as well as the kind and amount of feedback given. I studied a class where the learner could not perform a slap hit in hockey. The coach used negative concurrent feedback. The learner became demotivated and eventually gave up.

Feedback is used to provide information about performance. If the kind of feedback given is correct it will improve performance. Sometimes it is useful for the learner to visually see what they are doing wrong and how to correct it. It is important that the learner can interpret the feedback and judge it against a reference or model. There are a number of different forms of feedback and each can have different effects on the learner. A good way of assessing the correct kind of feedback to adopt is to use the 'Systems Approach'





The diagram above is a Systems Approach to human behaviour based on the model of Shedden, 1982' (*Acquiring Skill*)

This focuses the coach's attention on the perception and questions whether the learner has the perceptual problem, which may require an examination. It increases the chance of spotting errors and providing the right kind of feedback.

Feedback may be visual, aural or kinesthetic. Research has shown that people use different kinds of feedback in different situations. Some research has suggested that for closed skills, the appropriate form of feedback is knowledge of performance (KP), whereas for open skills requires knowledge of results (KR). In isolation, I was performing the hockey hit. I found that KP was very useful in an intrinsic and extrinsic form. I then progressed and put into a game situation and KR was more appropriate because the success was largely monitored by the outcome. When learning new skills, extrinsic feedback is useful from a coach or teacher as they have the knowledge about the skill, but once the learner is more confident and capable, they will be able to use intrinsic feedback where they are able to self analyse themselves. Most kinds of feedback which is used for a learner is determined by the coach and whether they feel the learner can cope with constructive criticism. Research has been conducted to prove that feedback is important. Crisfield quoted in Sharp, 1986,

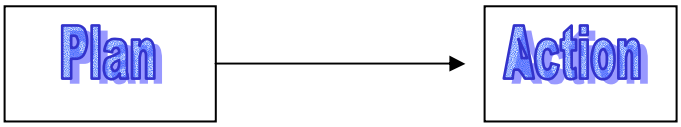
'Feedback is absolutely vital. It's very difficult to evaluate your own role without external feedback. I try to give two forms of feedback, objective feedback from game analysis as well as subjective feedback from my own perceptions. I try to give players feedback on a personal basis, face to face, and if that's not possible, which sometimes in a large team game it isn't, I'm forced to give them feedback on paper. I try to give feedback as soon as possible after the game but this depends on the individual and what has happened in the game.'

In some sports, feedback can be given concurrently, (throughout the game) or terminally, (at the end of the game). It is important the coach gets the timing right. Research shows that feedback should be given as soon as the performance is over, then the performer is less likely to forget the skill they have been performing. On the other hand, giving feedback so soon after the performance can lead to confusion and demotivation, especially if the performance went badly.

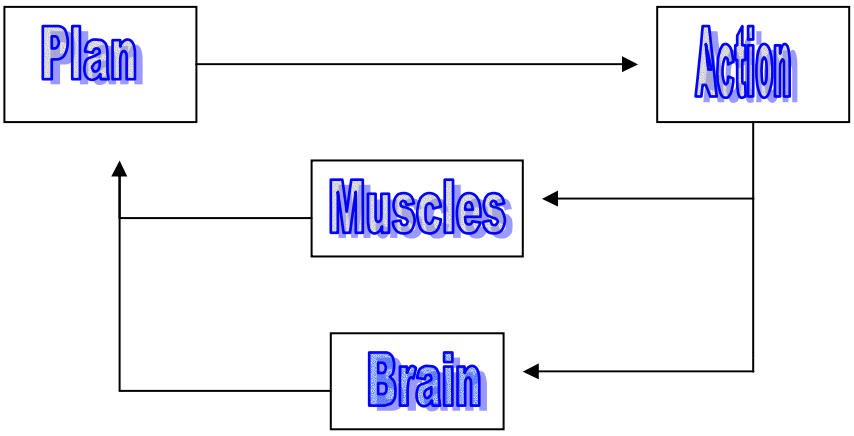
Guidance is also an important factor in learning a new skill and it reinforces feedback. There is a subtle difference between feedback and guidance. Feedback is what the performer did. Guidance is how the performer can improve. Visual learning during the cognitive phase helps the learner to develop a mental image of the task. When I was learning to play tennis, it helped me to watch the teacher show me how to hold the racket, hit the ball and follow

through. There is also verbal guidance which is used to describe the action involved. From my own previous experiences, I found that using verbal and visual guidance together was confusing. I recommend using visual guidance first followed by verbal. Mechanical guidance includes physical help, for example, to aid a performer to do a summersault in gymnastics. Types and combinations of guidance depend on the individual.

Schmidt (1975) and Martenuik (1973) researched feedback and suggested that the learning of skills was more a cognitive process and said there were three different levels involved with the amount of feedback given. The first was the open loop level of control.



This is where the skills are being performed subconsciously. The performer and performance will not be affected by any feedback received. At this stage the activity is so fast, there is no time to take in and adjust to feedback. For example, in hockey, the player would respond to an inaccurate pass appropriately without delay. Level 2 is the Closed Loop.



At this level of control, the skills are still performed subconsciously, there is attention paid to errors and these are adjusted without thinking. The brain is told the adjustment, yet it does not control the performance. The final level is the Closed Loop 3. This is where the performer is consciously performing and adjusting to feedback. Due to this, the performance is much slower. This theory suggests that the more experienced you are, the less feedback you need compared to a learner.

Another theory was made by Edward Throndike (1932). He suggested that positive feedback helps with the development of motor skills. This was the 'Law of Effect', where if a response is followed by a successful experience, then the Stimulus Response bond is strengthened and the performer becomes motivated, but if the response is negative, then the Stimulus Response bond is weakened, therefore demotivating the performer.

Linking in with positive reinforcement is the long term memory (LTM). When the performer learns a new skill it automatically goes into their short term memory (STM). If the performer receives positive feedback and enjoys the skill, it will then goes into the LTM which means the performer will remember it weeks later. If the skill was being performed and receives negative feedback and it could demotivate the performer and it could be likely they wouldn't want to perform it again, therefore it would probably not enter the LTM and be forgotten.

To conclude, feedback is a source of information which tells the performer the outcome of their movement. It can act in different ways and have different effects on people. Through my own experiences in sport, I find feedback very useful with the aid of guidance and I have found different sources of research which also agree.

References

- Acquiring Skill text book
- Advance PE for Edexcel
- Edward Thorndike (1932)
- Schmidt (1975)
- Martenuik (1973)
- Crisfield (1986)