An Elaboration on the Concepts of Ability and Skill in Physical Education

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ABSTRACT: Your ability is the skills and qualities which make it possible for you to achieve a task. These are stable and enduring characteristics which are genetic and can be either completely perceptual, completely motor or a combination (known as psychomotor). Skill is the learned ability to bring about predetermined results with maximum certainty, often with the minimum outlay of time or energy or both. Learning a skill is a process that occurs due to a result of hard work, practice and a player’s level of experience. Determination is also required for success and there must be a clear aim and direction of what has to be achieved (goals). The ultimate aim is to be able to perform the skill with maximum efficiency in terms of fluency, time and energy. Coordination motor abilities are particularly important at the initial stages of the sports development of a competitor. A high level of coordination improvement since the earliest years makes it possible to make use of technical and tactical skills during a sports completion effectively. A well-formed basis of Coordination motor abilities in young sportsmen is maintained at a later age and is an important reason for faster and more accurate teaching of other, more difficult movement tasks. The present papers undertakes to elaborate upon the concepts of ability and skill in physical education through the modern outlook towards the PE.

KEYWORDS: Physical Education, Ability, Skill, Coordination Motor Abilities

1. INTRODUCTION

Physical education is a course taught in school that focuses on developing physical fitness and the ability to perform and enjoy day-to-day physical activities with ease. Kids also develop skills necessary to participate in a wide range of activities, such as soccer, basketball, or swimming. Regular physical education classes prepare kids to be physically and mentally active, fit, and healthy into adulthood. An effective physical education program should
include engaging lessons, trained P.E. teachers, adequate instructional periods, and student evaluation.

In Physical education in its many manifestations has always been concerned with the body and its capacities. The form that this has taken, however, has been shaped by the social and cultural contexts in which physical education has been practiced, and the ways it has been situated in relation to the broader context of the education of children and young people. Implicitly or explicitly, physical education has earned its place in schools through the work that it claims to do in producing particular kinds of citizens/subjects; citizens often differentiated on basis of gender, class, race and their intersections. For example, in Victorian England and colonial Australia, physical education and school sport were implicated in maintaining social class and gender differences through differentiated forms of physical training and school sport in the elite private girls and boys schools and the government elementary schools. In these physical education contexts, ‘ability’ has been imagined very differently for different groups of children: on one hand, the ability to perform in competitive organized sports and, in the other, the ability to move the body in unison to perform movements designed to exercise the body for the purposes of health and training in obedience to authority [1]. This differentiation of ‘ability’ is a theme that persists in contemporary practices of physical education. In elite private schools, physical education and particularly school 4 sport, continues to be valued and resourced, because of the work it does in shaping particular abilities – abilities that are integrally linked to embodied and symbolic capital; that is, subjective and embodied changes created through the acquisition of skill and the challenges of physical activity pursued to a high level of performance. The abilities so developed, particularly in the context of boys’ elite schools, are recognized as having important exchange value in social life beyond school. The differentiation between physical activity for health and physical activity as symbolic capital persists in contemporary schools, and contributes to the profoundly different life outcomes for children in elite private schools compared to those in most government schools. We return to this theme below to argue our case through empirical work investigating the place and meaning of physical activity in young people’s lives.

Physical education plays a critical role in educating the whole student. Research supports the importance of movement in educating both mind and body. Physical education contributes directly to development of physical competence and fitness. It also helps students to make informed choices and understand the value of leading a physically active lifestyle. The
benefits of physical education can affect both academic learning and physical activity patterns of students. The healthy, physically active student is more likely to be academically motivated, alert, and successful. In the preschool and primary years, active play may be positively related to motor abilities and cognitive development. As children grow older and enter adolescence, physical activity may enhance the development of a positive self-concept as well as the ability to pursue intellectual, social and emotional challenges. Throughout the school years, quality physical education can promote social, cooperative and problem solving competencies. Quality physical education programs in our nation’s schools are essential in developing motor skills, physical fitness and understanding of concepts that foster lifelong healthy lifestyles [2].

2. ABILITY- THE CONCEPT

The In the education literature on ability, it generally seems to be taken for granted that ‘ability’ is something that you are born with, but on which you can capitalize. It follows that some people are understood as having more ability than others. On the other hand, sitting side by side with this discourse is a discourse which privileges effort, that is some people can make up for their ‘lack’ of ability through hard work. In some ways the kind of ‘character’ that this suggests may be preferred to that of those who throw away their ‘ability’ through ‘lacking’ effort. Within the context of a sociology of education, the discussion of ability coheres around the practice of streaming and differential schooling and the consequences for children of the working class. From this point of view, the relationship between ability (as measured by school tests and tests of intelligence) and achievement is not transparent but constituted in unjust social relations which disadvantage those who do not have the cognitive abilities valued in academic contexts. The point at issue here is that, despite the intention to provide a common school experience, the ‘dividing practices’ of sorting and streaming produce different experiences of schooling which further differentiate groups on the basis of ability, where differences in ability are demonstrably associated with social class [3].

An individual’s abilities are shaped by biological and physiological factors (Fleishman, 1964). The composition of an individual’s muscular tissue is certainly going to affect his physical proficiency motor abilities such as strength, endurance, and flexibility. Physiological deficits in the development of rods and cones would also limit an individual’s perceptual–
motor abilities, potentially affecting reaction time. Abilities are also affected by environmental factors. For example, children who are afforded formal education will continue to develop their verbal and reasoning abilities throughout their academic years, just as children who participate in physical fitness- or sport-related programs will develop their motor abilities. The rate at which abilities develop varies across childhood and adolescence, both within individuals and across individuals. This is largely due to growth and maturation changes. The rate of development levels out between the ages of 18 and 22 years, remaining relatively stable throughout adulthood.

3. SKILLS – THE CONCEPT

The quality of a performance is largely determined by how skillful the performer is. Different skills are needed to perform and participate in different sport activities. The individual becomes familiar with these skills by practicing, which eventually leads to mastering the skill. Once the skills are mastered, they can be executed effectively, consistently and efficiently within a competitive game or activity.

Therefore, we can define skill as the learnt ability to choose and perform consistently the right techniques (basic patterns of movements) at the right time with maximum certainty and efficiency.

3.1. Types of Skill

There are many different sports and an amazing variety of physical skills. Physical skills involve the movement of the body and are normally called motor skills.

Motor skills take time to learn and are the result of a series of mental and physical processes developed through practice.

Some motor skills involve movement of a large group of muscles. These are known as gross motor skills. Example: activities that use large blocks of muscle to produce powerful and skilful movement such as javelin throws [4].

Other motor skills involve the movement of a small group of muscles. These are called fine motor skills. Example: the action of the wrist movement in a badminton shot. Gross and fine motor skills need to be repeated consistently for successful performance.
Motor skills can be divided into open and closed types. The division between open and closed skills is based on the type of situation or environment in which the skills are used.

3.2. Open Skills

These are performed in situations that continually change and the player has to keep adapting to the changes as they happen. Successful performance depends on the player's ability to see what is going on, accurately interpret what is happening, anticipate and act in the right way at the right moment. Example: intercepting passes, moving into position to receive passes and saving a goal, etc.

3.3. Closed Skills

These are performed in predictable and stable conditions. You have to try to produce the movement in the same way each time. Skills such as cartwheels in gymnastics and free shots in basketball are examples.

Most motor skills in sports lie somewhere between open and closed and can be considered as being at either end of a continuous system or continuum. Between the two ends of the continuum are skills made up of both open and closed elements. A continuum is a line which allows for skills made up of open and closed elements to be shown.

All skills need to be practiced under conditions as close as possible to those that they are going to be performed in. Open skills need to be practiced in situations that involve change. Closed skills need to be practiced in exactly the same way each time - repetitively. Skills with open and closed elements need both types of practice.

3.4. Phases of Skill Learning

The learning of skills goes through phases. The length of each will depend on the difficulty of the skill, level of ability and the amount of practice. The three distinct phases are the cognitive, the associative, and the autonomous.

Cognitive phase - This is the beginner's phase. The skill is new. Clear demonstrations, simple instructions and practice are needed. Emphasis must be on technique and not outcome.
A lot of errors, jerky performance and inaccuracies will occur. However, praises for correct actions must be given.

   Associative phase - Techniques are learnt and the concentration is on practising the skill. Performance improves, fewer errors are made, and the individual begins to analyse movements and make corrections through internal (use of senses) and external (the coach) feedback.

   Autonomous phase - Expertise is developed and the skill is now performed automatically. The skill is now performed consistently, effectively and efficiently. More concentration is on decision making concerning strategies and tactics. Example: a tennis player concerned about where to play the best shot, rather than the shot itself.

   Knowing about the different phases helps coaches to plan training activities that match the development of each performer. It is important to learn the skill correctly as you move through the phases because bad habits in the cognitive or associative phases can be difficult to correct later.

4. DIFFERENCE BETWEEN ABILITY AND SKILL

   If one talks about intelligence, will he classify it as a skill or an ability? How about one’s expertise in computer programming, is that a skill or is it more likely an ability? Yes, skills and abilities can be problematic for some because several people don’t know if a certain attribute they have is an ability or a skill. These terms seem the same but they really are different from each other. So what’s the difference between the two?

   Skills are abilities! For example, an athlete can have the ability to run for 20 rounds around the oval for as short as 30 minutes. This exceptional ability is then considered to be one of the athlete’s skills. It is therefore something that can be learned and acquired through training for example. Skills can be cognitive, perceptual and motor. It is the former if it involves thinking, perceptual if there’s some information interpretation included and the latter if movement is of the essence.

   Skill is a composite of abilities, techniques and knowledge. These are the ones that make one do tasks at a higher degree or standard. These are more goal directed and is seen through improvements or positive changes in one’s performance.
Conversely, ability is the generic make up of the person either perceptual or motor in nature that can be inherited from one’s parents. In many instances, abilities can also be a combination of both perceptual and motor attributes (psychomotor). It is also important to note that abilities are the underlying attributes that bring out the skills or make up the skills of an individual. Like the example above, an athlete can have the skill of running fast for long distances only if he, to begin with, has the endurance or has the ability to run. In addition, abilities can be directly linked to one’s physical attributes. If a person has lots of speedy twitch fibers in his leg and has good coordination then more or less he has the inherent ability of becoming a sprinter but this does not directly imply that he is going to become a skilled sprinter [5].

Abilities are more of qualities that enable you to do or perform a particular task. Compared to skills, abilities are much stable and enduring. Common examples of abilities that can be observed or assessed are: muscular endurance, strength, flexibility, coordination and balance.

Ability is the internal quality that makes it possible for a person to learn or master a skill easily [7]. Abilities are either there or are lacking, but every person has a different set of abilities because of his genetic code that he gets from his parents. This is why we find that some people are good at languages, and others are naturally good at sports. Some make good dancers while others cannot learn to dance smoothly and look as they are being made to dance because of their innate abilities or the lack of these abilities. Sports that require good hand and eye coordination are picked up easily by people having inherent quality of good coordination. On the other hand, there are people who are innately good at sports that require muscle power or endurance.

Remember, skill can be acquired easily if the person has inborn ability required for a particular task. Additionally, the person needs to learn the techniques needed to master the skill. Thus, ability is a must for a person to acquire a skill. However, history is replete with examples of disabled people acquiring skills through hard work and sheer determination [8].

Therefore:

• Ability is the genetic makeup of a person that disposes a person towards particular jobs and professions while skills are learnt or acquired.

• The reason why some people are good at languages while others are good at music is basically because of their different genetic makeup.

• However, some people acquire a skill without having the ability to master it.

• Ability in general is required along with knowledge and techniques to master a skill.
5. CONCLUSIONS

Unlike skill, which is a learnt ability, and it can be developed in someone if he/she put his time and efforts in it. The efforts need to be voluntary, systematic and sustained, to acquire a skill and satisfactorily undertake various tasks and activities. In this article excerpt, you can find all the important differences between talent and skill, you might be unaware of. After reviewing the above points, it is easy to state that ability differs from skills in a sense that the former is inherited while the latter is acquired. Ability along with skills is considered as a refined ability. If a person does mastery in his talent, then he will be able to fulfill his life goals easily and effectively.

REFERENCES