Ericsson Paper: Motor Learning Essay, Research Paper

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03/08/97

The main point in Ericsson et. Al.(1993) is that in order to achieve expert

performance, one must engage in deliberate practice with the explicit goal of

constant improvement. This theory further dismisses to a large extent the role

of genetics, in which Ericsson reasons that there has been no great correlations

between the attainment of superior performance and inherited traits. The

purpose of this paper is to show agreement with Ericsson’s theory, but only to

the extent that deliberate practice is just one of many factors which must be

included in order to gain expert status. Also, the task at hand can be a major

determinant of how large a role practice plays in improvement. For example, in

endurance sports such as marathon running, some are genetically endowed with a

high aerobic capacity/VO2 max, and if these “special” people develop and

improve their performance through deliberate practice, they can attain expert

status. In contrast, the “average” person may also engage in an equal amount of

practice but will never be able to achieve that same level of performance

because their body is physiologically incapable. Furthermore, physiologist Dr.

Astrand contends that up to 90% of the variance in aerobic performance is due to

one’s genes, regardless of training programs. (McArdle,1994). But sports like

golf are probably influenced very little by genetics because skill acquisition

far overshadows physical ability. History provides many examples of athletes

who apparently has a poor genetic endowment, yet by hard training and motivation

went on to international success (Shepard,1987). In conclusion, expert

performance is most likely due to a complex interaction of psychological,

physiological, and biomechanical factors (Powers, 1994); factors whose

importance is dependent on the nature of the task at hand.