

Behaviourist and cognitivist learning perspectives for learning new sport



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Sport has become a great avenue for positive youth development (PYD) through the fostering of developmental assets; a reduction in the engagement in high-risk, antisocial and criminal behaviour and an increase in leadership skills and quality of life are evident in youths that have developed these assets, irrespective of environmental factors (Fraser-Thomas, Côté & Deakin, 2005). How developmental assets are promoted in sports programs also influences the exhibition of desired outcomes of PYD in youth: “ competence, character, connection, confidence and caring and compassion” (Lerner et al., 2000, cited in Fraser-Thomas, Côté & Deakin, 2005, p. 23). One of the desired outcomes, confidence, is generally described as “ a person’s perceived capability to accomplish a certain level of performance” (Bandura, 1977, 1997, cited in Feltz & Öncü, 2014, p. 418). As a coach in Cardio Tennis, it is important that I consider the effect learning approaches from the behaviourist and cognitivist perspectives have on the participant’s confidence when learning the volley.

Operant conditioning, a learning approach from the behaviourist perspective, is one method that could be adopted to foster confidence in participants learning the volley. Cassidy, Jones and Potrac (2008) highlighted that coaching in an operant conditioning setting involves the manipulation of the occurrence of a participant’s behaviour through consequences, given through reinforcement (increase) and punishment (decrease). Cassidy, Jones and Potrac (2008) also noted that both reinforcement and punishment are classified as either positive (presentation of stimulus) and negative (removal of stimulus). In cardio tennis, these can be implemented with both positive and negative effects on confidence. Reinforcement, especially positive

reinforcement, could foster the development of confidence in participants; an example of this in Cardio Tennis could be through rewarding a successful execution of the volley to try to strengthen the behaviour of a successful volley. Feltz and Öncü (2014) would agree that participants are more likely to perceive their past experiences volleying in Cardio Tennis as a success, have a more positive attitude towards Cardio Tennis and thus have more self-confidence in themselves to successfully execute the next volley if their efforts are rewarded and reinforced. However, the use of punishment in Cardio Tennis could be detrimental to a participant's self-confidence. Unlike reinforcement, the punishment of a participant for the failure to execute a volley in Cardio Tennis might make them perceive their past experiences volleying in Cardio Tennis as failures and, consequently, they would start to doubt their volleying abilities and fear embarrassing themselves, signs that their self-confidence has decreased (Feltz & Öncü, 2014). In positive punishment, participants might attribute the shame of doing undesirable activities such as doing laps around the court or push-ups in front of others as a reason for considering their past volley experience as being a failure. In negative punishment, participants seeing others participating in activities they are excluded from might be attributed as the reason for considering their previous volley experience to be a failure. Thus, the adoption of operant conditioning into Cardio Tennis could foster the development of confidence through reinforcement.

Observation learning, a learning approach from the cognitivist perspective, is another method that could be adopted to foster confidence in participant learning the volley. Albert Bandura (cited in Thomas, Morgan & Harris, 2016)

presented the idea that a participant's behaviours could be learned by the imitation of the behaviour of symbolic models. Roberts et al (cited in Cassidy, Jones & Potrac, 2008) suggests that the effectiveness of a model could increase if they were similar to the participant, meaning that participants in Cardio Tennis would be able to learn and visualise the execution of the volley better if a fellow participant executed it perfectly over a professional tennis player. This suggestion is mirrored by Feltz and Öncü (2014), who denotes that how a participant observe others doing an activity and imagines themselves doing it could influence their self-efficacy beliefs. Hence, confidence could be developed by a successful demonstration of a volley. Confidence could also be impacted by two phases within observational learning: reproduction and motivation. The reproduction phase involves the transfer of representations of modelled behaviour (developed from the attention and retention phase) into physical action, which can be easily facilitated if a participant has the necessary foundational skills to execute a movement like the volley (Thomas, Morgan & Harris, 2016). By using observational learning to teach the volley in Cardio Tennis, confidence can be fostered not only through a successful demonstration from a fellow participant, but also through the repetition of successful reproductions of the volley, as it was highlighted in the previous experiences that a participant's perception of past experiences associated with the volley could influence their self-efficacy beliefs (Feltz & Öncü, 2014). The motivation phase shares similarities with the behaviourist learning perspective in that behaviours are strengthened and weakened based on the feedback given by the coach, but unlike the behaviourist learning perspective, they can address more than the execution of the volley (Thomas, Morgan & Harris, 2016). But in most cases, <https://assignbuster.com/behaviourist-and-cognitivist-learning-perspectives-for-learning-new-sport/>

participants strengthen a behaviour after the reception of positive feedback and their self-confidence would increase in and the reception of negative feedback would decrease self-confidence.

Operant conditioning and observational learning both have the potential to foster the development of confidence in their own way. In both learning approaches, the behaviour of executing a volley is reinforced only if it produces a positive or desired effect such as a reward, which from experiences in sport and Cardio Tennis was great in boosting my self-confidence and motivating myself and others. But, the participant in an operant conditioning setting is limited to just the consequences of their actions as a reference for how a volley should be executed whilst the participant in an observational learning setting crafts a representation of the execution of the volley in their head from symbolic models before executing a volley. From my personal experiences growing up watching sport, visually imagining myself making amazing plays and shots that I saw on television always gave me confidence that I can do them, even if I ended up failing most of the time. Unlike operant conditioning, observational learning also considers the variety of abilities of the participants in Cardio Tennis. If I was to coach using operant conditioning, my only focus is to strengthen the behaviour of executing a successful volley. In my previous experiences with Cardio Tennis, I noticed that it was hard to improve on a certain skill in an operant conditioning environment because the coach only cared about trying to force me to replicate a successful result and did not provide additional feedback on what I did or did not do well. If I was coaching using observational learning, I would need to also consider a participant's skills,

such as coordination and reaction, during the reproduction phase to not only promote their learning of the volley but also increase the likelihood of them perceiving their experience with the volley as a success and gain more self-efficacy. There is no consideration for a participant's skills in an operant conditioning, and hence those that lack foundational skills to properly execute a volley are more susceptible to punishment and would not likely see an improvement in their volley because their self-confidence would decrease. However, some participants with high self-efficacy and have already had lots of experience with the volley may see punishment as added motivation or as negative reinforcement to improve on their volley to avoid punishment, something that observational learning does not have. Whenever I received punishment in sports and Cardio Tennis, depending on how I viewed my abilities and my experiences, I had either motivated myself to not make any mistakes in the future or I would have doubts about my abilities. However, because of the detrimental effect punishment has on fostering confidence, observational learning is a more suitable learning approach for Cardio Tennis.

After the consideration of the effect learning approaches from the behaviourist and cognitivist perspectives have on the participant's confidence when learning the volley, it would more suitable to adopt observational learning to foster the development of confidence in Cardio Tennis. This learning approach is more suited to Cardio Tennis because it can accommodate participants varying in abilities, especially those that would have struggled immensely in an operant conditioning setting. It is important in coaching that not only does the coach focus on getting results but also

consider how they can foster developmental assets that can create model citizens in both sport and society.

References:

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