Contextualised Skill Acquisition: Investigating the Skill and Expertise of Brazilian Footballers

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Abstract:
This thesis investigates the role of socio-cultural-historical environmental constraints influencing the development of association football expertise and skill in Brazilian players. Only a small number of studies in the field of motor learning have attempted to address this issue due to the qualitative, interpretive research approach required to analyse socio-cultural themes. However, considering that expertise in sports emerges from the complex interaction of multiple constraints, socio-cultural factors have to be further explored in a contextualised manner so that knowledge in the field of motor learning can be advanced. This thesis presents an interpretive, multi-methods approach to holistically investigate the interacting constraints on the development pathway of Brazilian football players.

In contrast to traditional positivist approaches, this thesis is based on the philosophical assumptions of the interpretive research paradigm and the epistemological and methodological tenets of Bronfenbrenner’s Bioecological Model of Human Development. In addition, to guide and generate data, this programme of work adopts ethnographic strategies of inquiry and related methods, including: contextual analysis, participant-observation, and open-ended interviews. Drawing upon the multi-methodological approach, this thesis proposes contextualised skill acquisition research (CSAR) as a suitable methodological framework to investigate skill acquisition in sport. Using this new approach, key findings show that the development of expertise in Brazilian footballers is a function of informal, even aversive variables ranging from the microsystemic level under the context of pelada, mesosystemic level under the context of home and federated clubs, exosystemic level under the context of poverty and macrosystemic level under the context of samba, capoeira, and malandragem.

The objective of this thesis is to promote methodological possibilities to investigate effects of socio-cultural constraints on expertise acquisition in sport. As such the thesis offers new theoretical and epistemological insights to the development of the proposed contextualised skill acquisition research framework. In doing so it seeks to build bridges across the methodological boundaries between sociology and motor learning in the first instance, rather than offering a unifying approach for the whole field.

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The Five-Stage Model of Adult Skill Acquisition. Stuart E. Dreyfus University of California, Berkeley. The following is a summary of the author’s five-stage model of adult skill acquisition, developed in collaboration with Hubert L. Dreyfus. An earlier version of this article appeared in chapter 1 of Mind Over Machine: The Power of Human Intuition and Expertise in the Era of the Computer (1986, Free Press, New York). Keywords: skill acquisition; learning; intuitive expertise; five-stage model.

Stage 1: Novice. Normally, the instruction process begins with the instructor decomposing the task. Contextualized teaching and learning builds upon a similar concept of putting academic activities into perspective to achieve the best teaching and learning outcomes. So, what exactly are contextualized learning activities, and how do they impact learning outcomes? Researchers and academics Berns, Robert G. and Erickson, Patricia M. published a paper that defines contextualized learning as a practice that endeavors to link theoretical constructs that are taught during learning, to practical, real-world context.