

Name:

Instructor:

Course:

Date:

Article Review

Practice Doesn't Make Perfect is an article by Maria Konnikova which touches on how performance and practice relate. The article also contains insights from recent research; this is meant to offer an extensive perspective concerning the issue. Nonetheless, the tone set in the article is biased because it focuses most of its argument supporting the ideology of the author despite the arguments against it. Therefore, this paper will analyze the content of the article and identify the concepts that led to the ideas enlisted in it.

Konnikova implies that even though it is believed that practice will certainly improve an individual's skills, the relationship between achieving something and being proficient in it is not easy. Konnikova notes that practicing for an average period of time is not enough to achieve perfection by stating that, "If you look closely at ten thousand hours as an average, rather than absolute, number, you can start to see a problem with it" (para.6). This statement may mean that determination alone will not guarantee that someone will be perfect at something; therefore, talent is the only way to achieve success in a certain field. However, Konnikova also insinuates that if talent is not nurtured or given proper support a skill may not be mastered.

Konnikova further writes that, "We cannot predict with accuracy who will become elite in a given field, but we know that genes and environment matter and that we all have different

natural peaks that we can reach through application and training” (para.9). This statement implies that the concept of hyper specialization has influenced people’s perception by implying that there is no need to pursue something unless you have the ability to do it excellently.

Alternately, Konnikova has criticized Hambrick and the manner in which he supports the notion that practice makes perfect. She writes that, “Every day, for hours, he’d be out swinging and putting. He expected to find himself on his way to glory. Except it didn’t quite work out that way” (para.1). She wrote this because she wanted to emphasize the fact that even though he practiced a lot to be perfect at golf, he still failed; so this means that practice may not always ensure that one will have better skills in a particular area of interest. In a way, Konnikova tries to challenge Hambrick’s ideology by pointing out how he failed to achieve perfection in the activities that he was interested in even though he practiced many times.

Konnikova also investigates the factors that may ensure that practice will lead to successful achievement of perfection. For instance, she states, “he told me he had yet to encounter someone presenting him with evidence that anything other than practice matters. (He did, in a later conversation, add that the age at which one begins practicing can make a difference in someone’s achievement level)” (para.4). In this fragment she introduces age as the factor that may ensure that practice makes perfect. However, she remains adamant and sticks to the ideology that even if someone starts practicing at a tender age, it does not mean that they will be experts in their area of interest.

The article also investigates whether being perfect at something could be caused by genetics or through inheritance. Furthermore, she tries to gauge if practice is the only way to achieve perfection by mentioning that if it is the only way then it means that one cannot inherit

specific abilities that would make them achieve perfection. She writes, “Do natural, heritable abilities really mean nothing?” (para.7). Conversely, every individual is different which means that a combination of abilities that result in success or failure are unique depending on the person. Therefore, there may be a continuum of hard work versus innate talent but this still depends on the person. The idea that being born with talent exempts an individual from practicing as suggested by Konnikova, is not valid because determination and hard work is still needed to nurture innate talent.

Konnikova has also criticized the way Hambrick categorized the power of practice in terms of the level of expertise. She points out that, “In sports- one of the areas in which deliberate practice seems to make the most difference- it turned out that the more advanced the athlete, the less of a role practice plays” (para.12). She is trying to show that the level of expertise does not mean that it is necessary to practice even more. This means that if someone has higher expertise, then they do not need as much practice as an individual with lower expertise. However, this still does not prove that preparation and talent exempt someone from practicing more in order to improve their abilities. Some of the issues that are raised in the article regarding practice are not relevant because the author is simply pointing out concepts that do not explain the importance of practice in a significant manner.

Even though the article criticizes the concept of practice makes perfect, Konnikova has managed to prove her theory by examining academic contributions on the topic by pointing out the evidence they have offered in their explanations. Therefore, this article should be read because it offers someone a different perspective of a common rule. Furthermore, she has done detailed research on how practice fails to perfect someone’s abilities. The article provides a clear

understanding of how practice is perceived by different individuals and then adds her beliefs concerning the topic in question.

Konnikova has also tried to prove her ideas by narrating her personal experiences in an effort to link them with the topic in question. For instance, she writes, “If, for instance, he himself could choose any trainer and design the perfect training plan, could I become a world-class pianist? (I chose this example since I played for many years in my youth and easily have ten thousand hours in hand) (para.8). This is a clear indication that she is not disputing the notion of practice makes perfect based on insufficient evidence, rather it is also based on what she has gone through already.

Lastly, even though she was arguing that practice does not make perfect, she has acknowledged the fact that, “we cannot predict with accuracy who will become elite in a given field, but we know that genes and environment matter and that we all have different natural peaks that we can reach through application and training” (Konnikova para.18). This statement shows that she does not advise against practice but it is important when pursuing perfection. Generally, the article is interesting because it does not just include the opinions of the author but also different perspectives of scholars in psychology and science. Therefore, the ideas presented here create a level platform that gauges whether practice is valid in achieving perfection.

Work Cited

Konnikova, Maria. "Practice Doesn't Make Perfect." *The New Yorker*, 28 Sept. 2016,
<http://www.newyorker.com/science/maria-konnikova/practice-doesnt-make-perfect>