

The Role of Executive Functions

Executive Functions provide essential tools that support learners to access optimal learning. They act as a mechanism that accurately and consistently guides the cognitive processes towards the intended outcome. Cognitive skills involve the processing of information, which is enhanced when combined with good executive functions. In the absence of developed executive function skills, learning is not as effective or as consistent.

The BMT approach specifically targets the development of the EF skills in order to ensure learners take responsibility for their learning throughout their school years and beyond. The following six EF skills should therefore become an intrinsic part of planning when delivering a quality PE experience utilising the BMT methodology.

Focus of Attention

This involves the learner being able to choose to direct the attention onto something, either external or internal, whilst filtering out irrelevant information.

Working Memory

The learner should be able to remember what the task is, and stay focused over a period of time. This involves the collecting, collating, manipulating, and responding to information in much the same way as mental maths or the following of a series of instructions.

Inhibition control

Being able to regulate behavior over a period of time, and not become distracted by minor events. This is largely involved in learners managing impulsive responses, which in turn positively influences their levels of concentration.

Cognitive Flexibility

This refers to the ability to adapt when identifying solutions to problems. In simple terms it is being able to evaluate that plan A did not solve the problem and being able to come up with an adaptation (or plan B) to readdress the issues more effectively.

Planning

Being able to identify and structure incremental steps in order to achieve success.

Goal-Directed Behaviour

Identify specific targets that need to be achieved in order for success to be made when finding solutions to a range of problems that are presented in a variety of ways and in a variety of contexts.