

Theories of Formation and Training: A Reading of Foundations and Practices

نظريات التكوين والتدريب، قراءة في المنطلقات والممارسات

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Received :27-12-2025

Review Date :28-12-2025

Accepted :28-12-2025

Abstract :

This study addresses issues related to formation, training, and preparation from the perspective of theoretical foundations, which are primarily shaped by the most important theories, whether general or specific. The aim of the study is to conduct an analytical theoretical reading of these theories based on the specialized theoretical literature in the field. The novelty of this reading lies in proposing a newly developed classification of these theories, whereby they are categorized into general theories—represented by the major well-known schools of thought in psychological theory—and specific theories, which are more closely associated with perspectives focused on investment in human resources and professional development.

Keywords: formation theories, general theories, specific theories.

المخلص:

تعالج هذه الدراسة القضايا المرتبطة بالتكوين والتدريب والإعداد من منظور الأسس النظرية التي تشكلها أهم النظريات العامة والخاصة في هذا المجال. وتهدف الدراسة إلى تقديم قراءة تحليلية نظرية لهذه النظريات بالاعتماد على الأدبيات النظرية المتخصصة. وتتمثل جدة هذه القراءة في اقتراح تصنيف جديد لهذه النظريات، حيث تم تقسيمها إلى نظريات عامة تتمثل في المدارس الفكرية الكبرى المعروفة في علم النفس، ونظريات خاصة ترتبط بصورة أوثق بالمقاربات التي تركز على تنمية الموارد البشرية والاستثمار في الكفاءات والتطوير المهني.

الكلمات المفتاحية: نظريات التكوين، النظريات العامة، النظريات الخاصة.

- Introduction:

When discussing training theories, it is impossible to ignore learning theories, the very foundation of the pedagogical approach. These theories constitute an essential scientific framework for developing training and development programs. This is explained by the inherent link between training and development, on the one hand, and education and learning, on the other, as mentioned earlier in the conceptual introduction.

Learning theory is considered the cornerstone of training theory. Training programs are simply the application of this theory, as the training process involves efforts that program designers deem effective for participant learning. If an individual in training fails to learn, it may be due to neglecting certain principles of learning theory. This is why those responsible for training programs place paramount importance on the fundamental psychological principles of the learning process (Al-Khatib and Al-Anzi, 2008, p. 157).

However, the specific nature of the training and learning process, particularly its focus on adults, has led to its grounding—in addition to learning theories—in other, more specialized and targeted theories. This is especially true regarding the adoption of certain principles based on an andragogical learning logic specific to adult education, distinct from the pedagogical logic intended for children. This implies adaptations of teaching methods and approaches to implementing training activities, since what works for children is not necessarily suitable for adults. Furthermore, these theories take into account group dynamics, the mechanisms of interaction between members, and the distribution of roles and tasks within the group. At the individual level, they consider the intellectual, physical, and emotional characteristics of adult learners, as well as their inclinations, interests, abilities, and aptitudes.

Through the study of this theoretical heritage, we have been able to classify training and learning theories into general and specific theories. General theories are based on recognized learning principles, which in turn rely on the most important theories that have established the appropriate scientific framework for explaining human learning. These theories fall into three main categories: the behavioral approach, the cognitive approach, and

the social approach. Specific theories, on the other hand, are based on principles of adult education, such as adult education theory, expectancy theory, group dynamics theory, and so on.

1. General Theories

1.1 Behavioral Theory

This theory is based on the existence of associative relationships between stimuli and their behavioral responses. In other words, learning occurs when a stimulus becomes capable of controlling and regulating a behavioral response. This principle was highlighted by Pavlov and Skinner in their concepts of classical conditioning and operant conditioning. It should be noted that the strength and nature of these associations vary according to situations and circumstances, as well as their frequency. Among the most important principles of behavioral theory are: (Al-Azzawi, 2006, pp. 83-84)

- The stimulus-response principle, according to which human behavior is influenced by the external environment.

- The reinforcement principle, according to which human behavior is reinforced as the frequency of stimuli increases, leading to a greater frequency and regularity of responses.

- The principle of behavior modification: the capacity of human behavior to be modified by changes or modifications to the stimuli that triggered previous behaviors.

- The principle of behavior affiliation: human behavior is situated within the hierarchy of human needs. The more training programs focus on these needs, the more likely undesirable behaviors are to be modified and undesirable behaviors reinforced.

- The principle of effect: the more a human behavior leads to greater success, creativity, or a greater reward, the more it motivates individuals to progress in their learning.

- The principle of preparation: the greater the psychological and physical preparation, the better the learning process.

1.2 Cognitive Theories

These theories are based on the principle that learning is an internal mental process that shapes and reorganizes cognitive structures resulting from the interaction between the individual and their learning environment. Among the most important are (Al-Azzawi, 2006, pp. 84-85):

- Jean Piaget's theory of cognitive development.
- Robert Gagné's theory of predisposition to learn within the framework of the hierarchical system.
- Wortimer and Tolman's Gestalt theory of experience and intuition.
- Jerome Brose's theory of representation.
- Osiel's theory of the preparatory organizer. The following pedagogical and training principles derive from these theories:
 - The principle of learning through direct interaction with the learning object and environmental stimuli.
 - The principle of engaging as many physical senses as possible during learning to promote assimilation and integration.
 - The principle of progressive learning: from the concrete to the semi-concrete, then to the abstract and the organized.
 - The principle of the holistic effect of the situation (or field) and the integration of its elements into a unified whole during the learning process.
 - The principle of the cycle of prior experience and acquired attitudes in the learning process, which influences the individual's motivation toward the intended learning.
 - The principle of insight and critical thinking as fundamental factors in the acquisition of knowledge and skills.
 - The principle of progressive learning: from simply referring to a word to understanding a concept, then a principle, and finally to problem-solving.
 - The principle of receptive and participatory learning: from the general to the specific and the detailed.
 - The principle of exploratory or inquiry-based learning, which relies on the active role of the learner or trainee in the inquiry process, starting with the specific and the detailed, then synthesizing them to arrive at conclusions and generalizations. The principle of holistic understanding, which the learner achieves when they develop in an

educational environment that provides the conditions and elements necessary for learning and problem-solving, is based on reflection and interaction with these elements. This reflection allows them to find a solution to the problem posed, a solution that constitutes insightful learning.

1.3 Holistic Humanism

These theories complement behavioral and cognitive theories of learning and training. They posit that learning is a holistic human process, not limited to observable behaviors or mental structures, but encompassing the individual's social and personal being. Human development is holistic and interconnected: all behavioral and mental components, values, attitudes, and social and individual tendencies interact to enable this development and transformation. For proponents of the holistic approach, education and training constitute a comprehensive process that considers the human body, its organs, and its mind, and prepares individuals for adaptation and success. Among the most prominent figures in this theory are Carl Rogers and John Dewey, whose theories include:

- ✓ Social influence
- ✓ Pragmatism
- ✓ Motivationalism

Inquiry and experience The following pedagogical and training principles can be deduced from these theories (Al-Azzawi, 2006, pp. 86-87):

- ✓ Individuals acquire their values through their relationships with others, within the framework of the social and human institutions that constitute them. Their community (center, role, behavior).
- ✓ Attention to the emotional and affective aspects of education and training, implying respect for fundamental values and principles in the workplace.
- ✓ The use of simulation techniques and role-playing in teaching and training processes.
- ✓ Emphasis on human motivations and incentives to stimulate learners' interest in the subject matter.

- ✓ Establishing a link between the learner's goals and motivations and the objectives of the work and the organization.
- ✓ Learning by doing. - Theory and its practical application in real-world situations are essential for the learner and the trainee.
- ✓ Use of self-directed learning materials – learning modules, training kits, scheduled training, and IT tools – within the training program.
- ✓ Integrating the individual: training efforts must therefore target the individual as a whole (mind, body, spirit, and emotions).

2. Specific Theories

2.1 Theory of Adult

Education Adult education refers to activities dedicated to adults, or the effort an individual makes for targeted personal development. It is practiced without formal constraints and is not directly linked to employment. When adult education began to be organized at the beginning of the 20th century, the only model available to trainers was that of child education. As a result, until recently, adults were trained like children. This explains the many difficulties encountered by adult educators, such as high rates of academic failure, lack of motivation, and poor performance. A debate has therefore arisen regarding the relevance of the child education model for adults. Some have suggested that adults learn best if they actively participate in defining the timing, method, and content of their learning. However, until the 1950s, empirical research on adult education had not yet begun, and the differences between children's and adults' education were not yet clearly established. Another study showed that adults engage more in voluntary learning outside of formal schooling than in structured programs, and that they are self-guided in their learning. (Reda, 2013, p. 87)

These theories were based on certain data, particularly those relating to the physical, mental, and emotional characteristics that distinguish adults from other categories of learners and that must be taken into account when developing education and training programs. Among these characteristics are the tendency towards independence and a taste for individual work, the ability to think autonomously and an interest in solving concrete problems, the capacity to adapt to new things, the tendency to justify one's behavior and

adopt defensive positions, the ability to draw on particular experiences and expertise in one's professional field, as well as other characteristics and particularities that have aroused the interest of researchers and those interested in adult education.

According to Reda (2013, p. 87), adult learning theory is based on the following principles:

- ✓ Adults easily learn what is useful to them.
- ✓ Adults learn new things that they can relate to their previous experiences.
- ✓ Adults learn through practice and participation.
- ✓ Adults have difficulty remaining passive for extended periods.
- ✓ Adults do not readily accept the ideas and experiences of others; they tend to be skeptical.
- ✓ Adults learn best when they have some control over their learning environment.

This theory is sometimes called, according to Al-Khater (2010, p. 143), "adult learning theory." It focuses on adult learning and how adults are educated. Since most educational theories and institutions are designed for young people, psychologists considered formal theories to be limited. They therefore developed andragogy, which concerns adults. Among the researchers who contributed to its development was Malcolm Knowles, who was interested in teaching this age group. Sylvester (1997, pp. 158-159) considers andragogy (or adult pedagogy) and pedagogy as applied sciences drawing their elements from the basic sciences, and in this case, from the humanities. The branch that attracts the most attention is, of course, the psychological branch related to learning. Three psychological schools of thought focus on learning:

- ✓ Behaviorism: This school of thought, predominant during the first half of the 20th century, posits that learning is a transformation of behavior induced by environmental stimuli. Learning is the cornerstone of Behaviorism theory. One of its founders, Burrhoughs F. Skinner (1904-1990), drew pedagogical conclusions from it, which can be summarized as the application of encouragement or "positive reinforcement" based on the results obtained through questionnaires.

- ✓ Developmental Psychology: A leading figure in this school of thought, Jean Piaget (1896-1980) developed a theory of the developmental stages of children and adolescents, based on the concept of the construction of learning acquisition.
- ✓ Cognitive psychology: Emerging in the 1960s, it challenged behaviorism and shifted its focus to brain activity, mental processes, and information processing pathways. Cognitive psychology is one of the major branches of cognitive science, which includes the philosophy of knowledge, neuroscience, and artificial intelligence. It explores sensory perception, that is, the necessary sorting the brain performs within the mass of information it receives. This research has also demonstrated that memory is a complex phenomenon, involving both mental representations and images, and problem-solving.

This theory is important because most adults have not received formal schooling. Many believe that learning occurs through experience; therefore, trainers must create opportunities for learners to acquire new experiences independently, that is, to integrate their knowledge with that of the trainer. The following table illustrates this theory.

2.2 Group Dynamics Theories and Their Application to Administrative Processes

This theory is based on the psychological relationships and interactions that allow group members to reach a shared understanding, grounded in common values and the system of personal emotions that govern them. From these theories, we deduce the principles to be adopted when developing the following training (education and professional development) programs: (Al-Azzawi, 2006, p. 88)

- ✓ Establish a shared philosophy to govern the organization to which the various groups belong.
- ✓ Involve trainees in defining and validating objectives.
- ✓ Implement clear and regular communication channels between superiors and subordinates, and vice versa, and optimize communication between trainers and trainees.

- ✓ Foster team spirit and maintain high morale within the group.
- ✓ Create a positive organizational climate, based on trust, tolerance, and camaraderie, among all stakeholders in the educational and training process.
- ✓ Welcome and consider different viewpoints objectively and rationally.
- ✓ Treat all group members fairly and objectively.

The group is considered one of the simplest and oldest forms of human organization. Its importance is undeniable. It constitutes a social imperative, an essential human unit that no society, large or small, can do without. It is also a determining factor in any organization. It can be considered one of the most important factors that positively or negatively influence an individual's activity and effectiveness. Consequently, it has been the subject of in-depth studies by sociologists, to which social psychologists have made significant contributions, making it a major area of research. In particular, they have studied individual behavior within groups.

The group is characterized by the nature of the relationships that unite its members, relationships that extend both vertically and horizontally, according to a set of communication and interaction mechanisms. This effectively contributes to each individual fulfilling their role within the organization, thus ensuring greater efficiency. The pace of this efficiency is determined by the degree of synergy among its members. This synergy can be developed and optimized through tailored training and development programs. These programs should be characterized by a diversity of activities, methods, and pedagogical approaches, taking into account the nature of each group, its characteristics, those of its members, and even its objectives. The goal is to achieve immediate objectives related to the success of the training and development programs, as well as long-term objectives, primarily related to the success of each individual within the organization, in the harmonious exercise of their role with all members of the group.

3.2 Social Learning Theory This theory emphasizes that learning occurs through the observation of other individuals (models) considered to possess extensive knowledge. It posits that behavior must be repeated and that, according to this type of learning, a new skill or behavior is acquired through

direct experience—that is, through the continuity of a behavior or skill—or through the observation of others and the continuous analysis of their behavior (Al-Khater, 2010, pp. 136–137).

This theory was adopted by the Canadian psychologist Albert Bandura, who emphasizes the principle of reciprocal determinism in the learning process, considering the interaction between three main components: behavior, personal determinants, and environmental determinants. This theory rests on the fundamental assumption that human beings are social beings living within groups of individuals with whom they interact, who influence them, and whom they, in turn, influence. In this context, they primarily observe their own behavior as well as the behaviors, habits, and attitudes of others, and strive to learn them through observation and imitation, considering others as role models. However, this process is neither automatic nor mechanical, and does not depend on specific conditions or circumstances beyond their control. On the contrary, it is selective, geared toward acquiring specific experiences related to the nature of the situation, and influenced by numerous cognitive processes inherent to observation, such as reasoning, anticipation, and perception.

This theory can be applied to the development of training programs by diversifying activities aimed at developing specific experiences or mastering certain professional skills, through the adoption of practical, reproducible models that meet quality standards. Furthermore, the use of role-playing-based training methods can prove effective for implementing the content of certain activities, not to mention the use of modern technological tools for modeling and simulation—powerful methods for learning, teaching, and training.

2.3 Goals Theory

This theory posits that behavior stems from individuals' awareness of their goals and their determination to achieve them. Goals influence behavior by directing energy and attention, thereby providing support and encouraging individuals to develop strategies to reach them. Research has shown that ambitious goals are more effective than vague or unambitious ones. Goals are more likely to be achieved when individuals are highly committed to them,

while less committed or less motivated employees perceive them as difficult to achieve. (Al-Khater, 2010, pp. 139-140)

This theory suggests that training is more effective when learners are placed in learning situations, particularly when faced with clear challenges such as solving professional problems. Designers of training and development programs benefit from this theory by adopting a targeted training or development approach based on setting realistic and achievable goals. This approach also involves learners in defining immediate, sometimes even proactive, objectives to ensure more active participation in training activities. More specifically, goal-orientation theory can be used to support learner efforts and motivate them to learn by focusing on two main objectives: the first aims to link work and training for more effective learning, and the second aims to achieve satisfactory results, taking into account a set of performance criteria.

Al-Khater (2010) argues that goal-oriented training, as defined by the trainee for learning purposes, falls into two categories:

- ✓ **Mastery-oriented:** This aims to increase the trainee's competitiveness in their role. Successful training is considered to depend on improving the work performed. In this type of orientation, trainers focus on the trainee's learning methods and task execution, taking care to avoid errors.
- ✓ **Performance-oriented:** This focuses on job performance relative to that of others. The quality of performance is measured through comparative evaluation.

Conclusion:

Through this theoretical treatment of the subject of training theories, which constitute the frame of reference for all training or learning practice, we have tried to provide an analytical reading based on the theoretical heritage and literature of the specialization that would contribute to the development of a thinking about training based on scientific principles and founded on frameworks of reference that allow planners and designers of training and learning programs to benefit from them to improve the practice of training and learning in terms of design, planning, organization,

implementation and monitoring, as well as to open horizons for researchers and interested people to enrich the subject and approach it from other angles.

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