

## Learning, Training and Development Intervention for Adult An Overview

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**Abstract:** *Training makes a man perfect but imparting training is not an easy task. Many interventions are related to training, learning and development, which are very systematic and logical. It is true that learning, training and development are very much inter-related but training may not be effective if the training is not conducted methodically. This paper will help assess the significance and importance of interventions related to training, learning and development for the adult. From this point of view, some theories and methodological aspects have been discussed in this paper.*

### Introduction

Training, learning and development are inter-related. These learning, training and development intervention may be for both child and adult. Process and management of learning and training for children is easier than adult. In terms of adult learning, training and development intervention should be very logical and organized. Most of the training organizations are not immensely aware of this. Therefore, the goal of training is not achieved appropriately. However, learning is work based and self-directed system that assists to increase potentials of a learner. Ensuring adult learning is more difficult than that of child learning. McLean (2006) states that adult learning is a core idea for human resource development concepts such as improvement of quality and performance, knowledge management, changing management as well as organizational learning. But this adult learning may not be ensured without following right method or strategy. It is true that learning can occur naturally through everyday experience but systematic learning is rather volatile. So it is not easy task to ensure adult learning and development. Reid and Barrington (1999) mentioned, "training and development usually involves ways of abandoning random learning routes in favor of more productive, planned routes". Reid and Barrington (1999) also stated that training is a planned procedure to modify knowledge, attitude and skill through learning experience to achieve effective performance. So there is a relationship between learning and performance.

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Successful training intervention depends on few strategies. Reid and Barrington (1999) stated that training intervention is used to include any event that is deliberately used to help learning to take place. According to Reid and Barrington (1999), these strategies are : determination of training objectives, determination of appropriate training strategy, planning and implementation of the training and evaluation of the training program.

### **Management Training and Learning Intervention**

According to Sloman (2001), training is the process of obtaining knowledge and skills related to work needs and it can be both formal and informal. On the other hand learning is physical and mental process involved in changing one's normal behavioral patterns and habits.

Gagne (1965) stated "learning is a change in human disposition or capability, which can be retained and which is not simply ascribable to the process of growth". Bass and Vaughan (1966) gave the most significant definition regarding learning. According to them, learning is quite permanent change in terms of behavior that occurs through practice or experience.

Horsley *et al.* (1996) stated that management training helps the learner to focus on particular issues and identify particular relevant components for planning. It also provides skills, which help to exercise power to motivate performance of staff and help proper development.

### **Theoretical Discussion**

Many theories are used in the field of learning to make it successful. Knowles (1990) stated that a theory is a complete, logical and internally consistent system about the ideas regarding set of phenomena.

There are two dimensions of learning where one is for adult and another is for children. The theory *andragogy* is used in terms of adult learning on the other hand pedagogy, which is from Greek word and used for child learning. According to Knowles *et al.* (2005, p61), "the pedagogical model assigns to the teacher full responsibility for making all decisions about what should be learned, how it would be learned, when it would be learned and if it has been learned". Pedagogical model is basically teacher-directed learning or education. On the other hand andragogy is applicable for adult person and it is more flexible and informal and related to the participants' needs and requirements.

Theories of learning are categorised from different point of views. Hilgard and Bower (1966) classified learning theories into two, one is stimulus- response theories and another is cognitive theories.

Reid and Barrington (1999) mentioned six main types or groups of learning theory. These are:

- o Reinforcement theories.
- o Cybernetic and information theories.
- o Cognitive theories and problem solving.
- o Experiential learning theories.
- o Learning to learn and self development.
- o Mental process.

Cole (1997) classified the theories of learning into 2 broad categories such as (i) early theories of learning by Plato, Aristotle, Rousseau, Pestalozzi, Froebel, Pavlov, Thorndike, Skinner, Wertheimer, Koehler and (ii) modern theories of learning by Robert Gagne, Carl Rogers, David Kolb, Malcolm Knowles, Honey and Mumford.

### **Experiential Learning Theory**

According to Knowles et al. (2005), David Kolb is a leader in advancing the practice of experiential learning. David Kolb was American psychologist who has developed a constructive model of experiential learning, which merges the features of both classroom and problem solving types of learning (Cole, 1997). He believes that learning and doing are separate activities. He also believes that it is important to distinguish classroom learning from problem solving. He has shown his model through a cycle.

Miettinen (2000) states that Kolb's learning model is the process whereby knowledge is formed through the transformation of experience. However, an example may be shown in favour of the cycle that a participant can learn. As per the cycle, participants gather experience, for example, using a computer key board for the first time. Through experience, the participants make some observations, for example about the arrangement or layout of keys and begin to make sense of keyboard, then they formulate abstract concepts. Then they test these concepts in a new situation by using keys. Therefore, a learner can learn through this cyclic process and gained understanding. In the Kolb theory four phenomena are



considered in four stages these are feeling or experiencing, observing, thinking and doing.

Another two aspects of Kolb model are deductive learning and inductive learning. Cole (1997) opined that inductive learning is the process by which the learner experiences an event or stimulus and draws a

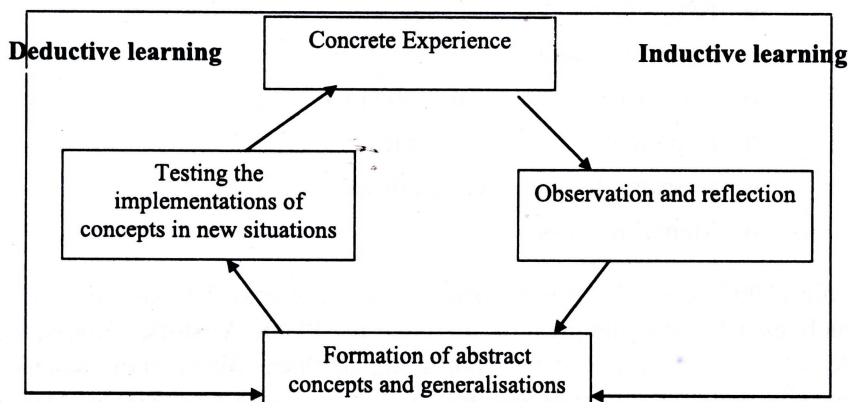


Fig: Experiential learning cycle

(Source: Cole, 1997)

conclusion from it like some rule or guiding principle. Deductive learning is a disparity commences with the rules of principle or theory, which is consequently applied by the learner.

On the other hand, Learning Style Inventory (LSI) is another important feature developed by Kolb, in which he describes a simple self-description on experiential learning theory that is designed to measure participants' or trainees' strengths and weaknesses as a learner in the four stage of the learning process. The main aim of the test is to help individuals to identify their learning style. (Cole, 1997). In other words it can be said that LSI was developed based on self-description. Through using LSI Kolb established norms for different types of professions such as marketing, personal management and finance. (Kenney and Reid, 1986).



Stewart (1999) tended to support the following schemes about Kolb's learning process :

- o Learning is continuous, natural and inevitable;
- o Learning requires engagement in separate but related activities;

**Table-1 : Kolb's Model with Suggested Learning Strategies**

Kolb's Stage	Example Learning/Teaching Strategy
Concrete experience	Simulation, Case study, Field trip, Real experience, Demonstrations.
Observe and reflect	Discussion, Small groups, Buzz groups, Designated observers.
Abstract conceptualization	Sharing content.
Active experimentation	Laboratory experiences, On the job experience, Internships, Practice sessions.

**Source:** (Knowles *et al.* 2005, p198).

- o Individuals an have different learning styles;
- o Learning is an ability, which can be developed and improved.

### Learning Through Simulation

Craig and Bittel (1967) stated that the gap between training and learning program is frequently wide due to media of communication. They stated about many types of media of communication like words (lectures, printed matter), graphic (charts, diagrams, graphs), auditory aid (recordings, tapes), still picture (photo, slide), motion picture (documentaries, animations) live television (visual show), exhibit (display of objects), field trip (familiarizations), demonstration (lab, instruction), simulation (devices, role plays) and direct experience (guided, actual work). They also showed that the least effective media is words (lectures) and high effective is simulation and direct experience.

The simulation exercise provides knowledge of results. Two principal types of simulation exercises are used in training, one is gaming and another is a mock-up. For both cases there are some ground rules, conditions and structure. (Craig and Bittel, 1967). Through simulation a decision maker (player) can take decision easily. On the basis of simulation participants or adult learner can learn and understand a real situation throughout exercise or role-playing.

**Table-2: Simulation method**

What is it	What it can achieve
Dynamic exercises or case studies- usually involving 'coming to terms with' a situation, then managing it via a set of imposed decisions. Computerized models offer complex data and often decisions that interact.	Offers practice in management- observation, analysis, judgment, decision making etc. Interactive element generates enthusiasm, notably when teams are in simulated competition. Can be linked with the team development.

*Source:* Reid and Barrington, 1999, p. 349.

### **Insight in Learning**

Cole (1997) stated that 'insight' is an important issue in learning which is particularly relevant to understanding. Lunzer (1968) stated that 'insight' covers suddenness of solution and smoothness of behaviours, ability to reproduce solution without mistake through successful presentations of original problem and ability to rearrange the solutions.

### **MBTI and Effective Management**

Myers and McCauley developed myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) in 1990. According to Jarlstrom (2000, p145), "Briggs and Myers extended the model in the J/P (Judging and Perceiving) scale by making explicit one aspect of the theory that was implicit but undeveloped in Jung's work". Lindon (1995) stated that MBTI has four progressive phases like; sensing-feeling, intuition-thinking, intuition-feeling, sensing-thinking and each stage being unconnected into an information gathering and a decision-making phase. Myers Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) is another effective strategy/method for learning in terms of management issue. It is effective for participants' psychological development. Case and Phillipson (2004) stated that the MBTI is normally used to help decision making in diverse management training as well as in personnel areas.

### **Application of Experiential Learning Theory in Terms of Adult Learning**

The success of learning depends on appropriate learning theories or style. On the other hand, the success of learning theory/style depends of suitable learning or training strategy/method(s). Therefore, these are inter-related. Many phenomena like learning environment, nature or stage (age) of participants and their needs and requirements etc. might have

considered during selection of learning theory and strategy. Otherwise, the aim of learning and development would be hampered.

Knowles et al. (2005) stated that adults generally prefer a problem solving orientated learning rather than subject related learning. In addition, they learn most when new information is presented in real life context so that the experiential learning approach to learning has become strongly rooted in adult learning implementation.

Cranton (1989) believed that learners involved in learning based on experiential techniques are capable to link their learning with their daily lives. Experiential learning, therefore, promotes the transmission of knowledge and skill.

Cantor (1995) claimed that experiential learning activities are normal motivators and feedback round can be seen easily here. Through experiential learning participants or learners can participate in an activity and it helps to link theory and practice.

There are many learning theories belonging to the cognitive learning but Kolb's experiential learning theory ensures participants' needs and requirements considering their levels and roles. Moreover, it is well-structured and effective for problem-solving learning process.

Experiential learning is an established approach in terms of practicing adult education theory, which is used in Europe, North America and Australia (Miettinen, 2000). Experiential learning theory suggests that learning is continuous and cyclical (Stewart, 1999). In terms of senior management development training it is highly effective. In Bangladesh, it can also be applied to make the training and learning fruitful for senior level managers. Through this style, participants may overcome analytical weaknesses and would be able to solve management problems and it would help enhance their managerial qualities to manage situation in terms of decision making process. In addition to that it will help improve their administrative capabilities and performance. Participants acquire knowledge and skills in terms of management issues like decision making, handling numeric data etc. through experiential learning by the following way:

**Feeling**  $\Rightarrow$  **Watching**  $\Rightarrow$  **Thinking**  $\Rightarrow$  **Doing**



## **Conclusion**

Learning is a complex process of acquiring knowledge, skills, understanding, values etc. Knowles (1990) stated that some psychologists don't believe theories for learning at all. But theory is the key phenomenon, which makes a foundation of a system or a process. To ensure effective training intervention in terms of mid-level or senior level officials or managers the role and functions should be considered then the objectives of the training program should be designed accordingly and finally the learning style and learning strategy/method may be selected appropriately.

Experiential learning is a learner-centered approach that deals with the process and progress of self-sufficient thought. In spite of some limitations of Kolb's experiential learning theory it is very structured and systematic in terms of learning. Experiential learning helps ensure understanding and experience concurrently. From these points of views, Kolb's experiential learning theory may be more appropriate and significant rather than other learning theories of cognitive or situated learning theory or andragogy in the context senior level and mid level officials' training. Adoption of learning theories is a must for any training or learning situation and appropriate tools and strategies related to learning and training intervention should have to be used to make the training program successful and effective.

In conclusion it can be said that appropriate learning theory can play significant role in making a training program successful. The holistic approach related to training and learning is more helpful to make the training program fruitful, especially management related training for the adult learners.

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