

# Chapter 14

## Learning Theories in Psychology From Philosophical Roots to Educational Measurement

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### **ABSTRACT**

*This chapter explores how learning theories apply to adult education and the measurement of learning outcomes. It begins by examining the philosophical foundations of adult learning, focusing on theories like transformative and experiential learning that explain how adults acquire knowledge differently from children. The chapter discusses how these theories influence the development of assessment methods tailored for adult learners, including self-assessments, competency-based evaluations, and real-world task assessments. It addresses challenges in measuring adult learning, such as diverse backgrounds, informal learning settings, and varying levels of motivation. The need for flexible and inclusive measurement techniques is emphasized to accommodate the unique experiences of adult learners. Future directions include integrating technology through online assessments and digital portfolios and creating culturally sensitive tools. By linking learning theories with measurement strategies, the chapter aims to enhance adult education and provide educators to support adult learners*

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## INTRODUCTION

Understanding how people learn has been a central focus for both philosophers and psychologists throughout history. Philosophers have long asked questions about the nature of knowledge, the workings of the mind, and how we come to understand the world around us (Bunge & Ardila, 1987). These foundational questions set the stage for psychology to emerge as a scientific discipline that studies mental processes and behaviour through observation and experimentation (Brennan, 2013).

Psychologists began to explore questions such as “What is consciousness?” and “How does the mind develop from birth?” (Schultz & Schultz, 2016). These inquiries led to the development of various learning theories that seek to explain how individuals acquire new knowledge and skills. Learning theories provide frameworks that describe the processes involved in learning, memory, and cognition. They help us understand how information is absorbed, processed, and retained.

The relationship between philosophy and psychology is significant because philosophical ideas have greatly influenced psychological theories of learning. For example, empiricism and rationalism are two philosophical perspectives that have shaped our understanding of how knowledge is acquired. Empiricists argue that knowledge comes from sensory experience, while rationalists believe that reason and innate ideas are the primary sources of knowledge (Hume, 2007; Kant, 1998).

These differing views have given rise to various learning theories in psychology. Behaviourism, influenced by empiricism, focuses on observable behaviours and the effects of the environment on learning. Cognitivism and constructivism, which draw from rationalist ideas, emphasize internal mental processes and how learners construct their own understanding.

Learning theories are important because they inform educational practices and how we measure learning. Educational measurement involves assessing how much learners have understood and can apply the knowledge they have gained. By applying learning theories, educators and psychologists can develop effective teaching methods and assessment tools that align with how people naturally learn.

This chapter will explore the philosophical roots of learning theories and their evolution within psychology. It will examine key theories such as behaviourism, cognitivism, and constructivism, and discuss how they relate to educational measurement. By understanding these connections, we can better appreciate how learning theories impact both the theory and practice of education and psychology.

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