

Maturation of Optimization of Skills

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Abstract:

The development of skills is reinforced by the efforts of the adult socialisers of the young, and, as the individual grows, by the environment¹. Enhancement of such skills, however, rests on two foundational bases: the maturational base and will or the motivation to attain such skills, dependent upon the innate potentials. Maturation also forms the foundation of the ability to learn and coupled with the will or the motivation to want to learn, development of these skills continues through the lifespan. The process of learning takes place throughout the lifespan, initiated in infancy and attritioning in old age. They are encultured, and the group for whom they are reinforced derives such reinforcement through the environment which is conducive to such development².

They can be reinforced or otherwise by the conscious effort at a stimulating environment; human or ecological, to attain such skills along certain socially approved channels. It may be admittedly argued that there are a myriad of such skills, this paper will limit itself to major skills which are essential for the individual to develop towards selected goals in the individual's life and to develop coping mechanisms to attain them.

Keywords: Maturation, Optimization Skills

Instruction

Perhaps the most important skills are based on primary/secondary needs, which impel or motivate the individual to gain the means to survive. These are the primary and secondary needs described by Maslow and detailed by Murray. If motivational levels are low or unstimulated, the basic foundation for attainment of developmental goals is adversely affected³. The first and foremost skill that has the potential to be optimized is motivation and its levels. Once the individual is self-directed to achieve, other skills are more easily enhanced. A second major force or drive is the ability to optimize communication, which takes the individual along an accumulation of developmental experiences through exchange and interchange of ideas through language skills. By and large, communication through language is the major force when developed in the human is the highest form of interaction.

Communication is essential for all forms of development: moral, spiritual, scientific and artistic. In the days of cave living, symbols on stone were the first initiated means of communication; today communication has advanced through microchip technology and cryptic codes. Thus, the development of language and skill to use it is fundamental to the realization of the goals of development. By itself language is not as effective as when it is impelled by man to find solutions to problems. Additively, unless there is interest and motivation to do so in all spheres of his life, the development of this skill will be less than optimum. Language is the expression of the individual's cognitive and is necessary for the

growth of the individual in society. However, neither motivation nor language abilities would be effective if man did not possess the acumen to utilize the potentials of understanding the ideas communicated. The ability to understand is based on levels of intelligence. An understanding of intelligence, its origin, its many functions, and its relation to environment and development are also essential for cognitive competence⁴.

Finally, we have added another skill, which in developing country such as India is also critical for the attainment of goals. This skill is the skill for adaptive resilience, for we have pointed out how quickly the Indian has to traditionally in one situation, then change to modernity in another, and this back and forth goes on in quick succession: Given the fluctuations in availability of resources where the country has at least one-third of its population under the so-called poverty line, and where it is known that deprivation has its own dire consequences, the Indian through his unique development processes matures in coping with his meagre environment. He does so by developing resilience to contradictions and confrontations.

He learns through experience that he has to make do with what he has, and to wrest the best out of his environment. He also learns to tolerate differences in caste, creed and ethnicity and because of his deep-seated faith in fate or karma to accept what comes as destined. Critical traits, which form the fulcrum of behavior, are those which are important in directing behavior. The traits selected here are:

- Motivation to achieve;
- Intelligence levels and their functioning;
- Language development and its relationship to communication;
- Adjustment or resilience.

Maturation for Optimization of Skills for Development:

The term maturation was popularized mainly by Gessell to connote the organic germination of brain cells to give the brain the necessary competence required at every chronological stage⁶. Maturation is any change with age in the conditions of learning (formal or informal) which depend upon organic growths, rather than prior practice or experience. In other words, age-related behaviour occurs spontaneously under normal conditions of growth. Maturation, as defined in all textbooks in psychology, is an unfolding of what is inherent. It also implies the capacity of the human (or for that matter many of the primates and animal species) to imbibe what is perceived, and retain, store and to recapitulate the learning when evoked by similar stimuli. Gestalt theorists in viewing the development process referred to the interaction of several mechanisms and downplayed the effect of biological development as triggered off by the thinking processes in the brain. Piaget however deliberately used biological and physical development to explain the maturational processes through his development schemes which moved from the concrete to the abstract in explaining development.

Adaptive resilience in skill performance:

Adjustment implies adjusting to a particular set of behaviour and related values. These values differ from one culture to another. One culture tolerates competition, another lauds it and yet another downplays it⁷. In the India culture, assertive and aggressive competition is deplored; while completing oneself, namely doing better than the last time, is extolled. There is also much debated concept of dependency.

In the western culture, dependency is considered self-abnegation and in others, it is considered sharing of oneself and being altruistic. Therefore, cultural relativity which identifies whether behaviour is well adjusted or maladjusted is evaluated against a set of cultural norms. Again, bias in perception distorts judgment. A family member is usually forgiven a violation. If the individual is a child, the usual response is 'he is young and immature'. However, if the individual is older, he is expected to be knowledgeable as to what is wrong. But if the person happens to be a different caste or class, he is valued and judged as an outsider. If he consciously and deliberately opposes the existing norms, he is judged as maladjusted.

The development process, besides having other effects, also promotes resilience and flexibility in adapting to the circumstances, and may even foster the change process. An Indian lives in an environment where behaviour has a relation to the ethics and the ethos of the dominant culture. Abiding by the norms of the scoring transmitted by the family is said to be normal, violation is considered abnormal. While we have different stages of development delineated by the *samskaras* we have little large-scale homogenous data regarding the other culturally approved attributes of the Indian psyche, except in discursive terms of sharing, cooperation, putting the other before self, moral values, respect, obedience and working towards righteous living enjoyed by the scriptures. It is difficult to say whether these are indeed validated, as only small scale studies are available relating to these attributes.

There are six principles of adjustment which we offer here. These are

1. A complex process of the self's maturation through the ability to learn right and wrong values in family, kinship and society;
2. The ability to satisfy needs from the environment or to obtain fulfillment from the environment;
3. The support given to the individual to be secure with his identify within his group;
4. The tendency to abide or not to abide by civic rights an the law and order mandates of the country;
5. Society's acceptance of an individual as a member of society.
6. The capacity to accept differences be tolerant of differences, in other words to be non- judgemental.

These principles of adjustment are crucial given the fact that the world is becoming competitive an individuals are expected to have the motivation to succeed; exercise intellectual functions to the fullest, academically and professionally; develop language proficiency and finally, posses interpersonal competence. These acquisitions are besides the acquisition of manual and cognitive skills. No doubt there are other traits in the Indian context which are considered crucial. We have detailed some for discussion. In Indian context, the child from birth is exposed to multiple mothering and to his kin group members. In his environment, the child interacts with other children at annual festivals, marriages, pujas and other social events. The child has several authority figures, his father, grandfathers and uncles from both sides, all of whom freely and automatically guide, and praise him.

Emotional dependence is a strong bond in Indian families. It does not however preclude in the individuals from exhibiting individual, independent

initiative when required. Most Indian children live in harsh ecologies (urban slums, rural areas, tribal jungles and hills) they experience material deprivation of one kind or another, while also perceiving that the rich have plenty and to spare. This makes them adaptive to their situation.

Adjustment is the process of finding compatibility between the needs of the self and the needs of others⁸. The self composed of the id, the ego and the superego has energy, a drive towards the fulfillment of such needs. There is a constant push and pull among the three identities. The ego tries to act as a policeman, aware of the pros and cons of the situation, while the id is a rash and impulsive libidinal energy espousing the cause of self-pleasure and avoidance of pain. The superego is the voice of conscience that is constantly telling the ego what is moral and just.

Suggestions:

It is necessary to state that skills intertwine dynamically with each other, either in pairs or in multiples. For instance, to use to use

intelligence as an essential skill. However without the motivation, the drive of need fulfillment is stymied. On the other hand, if the level of motivation is low there is indifference and lack of will to hone these skills. Language is an essential vehicle to communicate one's needs, to be successful in the direction of one's motivation. On the other hand, even with the honing of skills in the language and the use of one's intelligence, if there is little effort to adapt to the needs of the situation there is a low level of performance and achievement.

Conclusion:

Underlying all these skills is the essential inner drive to want to experience and to be successful in each situation, whether it is in relationships, or the accomplishment of a task or even in experiencing a level of equilibrium. Therefore, skills are interlinked so that the lower level of skills is related to the higher levels. It is obvious; therefore, that competence is the key word in the maximum utilization of these skills, to attain one's goal.

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