

## Talent Development 10 Adult Learning Theory

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One of the important skills in the CPTD Certification program for ATD is a knowledge of the Theories and Models of Adult Learning. In this article, I will discuss the Bloom's Taxonomy and how to use it.

There are three categories that describe types of adult learning. These are: 1) cognitive knowledge, 2) psychomotor skills, and 3) affective attitude (also called KSAs). These three categories were first described by Benjamin Bloom. I will describe the differences between these three categories below.

### **Knowledge (cognitive)**

This involves developing intellectual skills. You might study mathematics, or law, or you might become an expert on ecology and

climate control. There are an infinite number of topic areas to explore, and the cognitive section involves becoming knowledgeable on any of them.

### **Skills (psychomotor)**

This area of the taxonomy includes the use of motor skills and physical movement. For example, you might become a ballet dancer, or a mountain climber, or an artist. The skills required to perform well in the particular subject involve use of motor skills.

### **Attitude (affective)**

In this area, we deal with feelings and emotions. These are generally acquired skills that are experienced differently for each person. The whole area of motivation is part of the

affective. We acquire these skills not only through training, but we also discover them from just experiencing life.

A key point here is that training professionals will use different tools and methods depending on what part of the taxonomy is being developed.

Knowledge is the easiest area to transfer information. It usually involves some reading and lecture to bring out the finer points of the concepts being taught. There is also significant practice time to ensure full transfer of the content.

Workbooks and problem sets give the learner significant variety of ways the tools are used. In most situations there is an identifiable right way to do things.

For skills, there is usually lots of practice time developing the motor skills and muscle control necessary to do the task. There may be more than one right answer to how things are done, so some degree of personal preference needs to be allowed.

Often safety factors are a major part of skill building. For example, if you are learning mountain climbing, you need to know at what altitude you need to put on an oxygen mask.

For Affective training, the methods may involve role playing, group brainstorming, body sculptures, and simulations. These are mostly experiential techniques that instill the proper attitudes by having the person immerse him or herself in the scenario and a professional debriefing to highlight the key learnings involved.

The Affective area has the most variety of outcomes as each individual will take away potentially different information from the training.

Using Blooms Taxonomy involves understanding these three learning situations. For the professional training or designer, it is important to know what area you are working on at any particular point and use the correct tools to obtain an optimal result.

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