

AN ARTIST'S PERSPECTIVE ON LEARNING THEORY IN PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

A Case study Involved with Music

My musical journey is an allegory of the journey from nothingness to existence.

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The Perspective of a Human Development Learning Theory

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Theories offer significantly different perspectives and explain complex processes of human psychological development. To evaluate and interpret research, it is important to recognize one or more of the theoretical perspectives on which it is based. This article will discuss Piaget's (1936) Social Learning Theory and how it has impacted on my personal thinking and musical development (Diane E. Papalia, Ruth Duskin Feldman, & Gabriela Martorell, 2011, p. 30 Chapter 2).

Classic Social Learning Theory maintains that people learn appropriate social behavior chiefly by observing, heeding and imitating models; that is, by watching or listening to other people, such as teachers, or artists (Diane E. Papalia, Ruth Duskin Feldman, & Gabriela Martorell, 2011, p. 32). This process was exactly the way I learnt cultured music from childhood until I went to college¹.

It was astonishing to me when I realized how humans learn music through auditory processes. By breathing, moving, rhythmic chanting, singing, and playing instruments we develop auditory skills that allow us to give meaning to the combinations of rhythmic and tonal patterns that make music a unique form of human communication. This concept is the psychological theory of Jean Piaget (1936), who was the first psychologist to make a systematic study of cognitive development. Piaget (1936) is also known for his contributions to the theory of cognitive child development (Pavlou, 2014, p. 2).

I was born into an artistic family. My father, Maestro Ali Asghar khan Zanganeh² (Nasirifar, 1993, p. 365 Volume 2), was a famous Persian instrument makers who worked when music was forbidden under the theocratic regime in Iran (1984) (Lynch School of Education Boston College, 2014). The result was that our residence was often crowded with musicians who played covertly at that time. From the time I was eight years

¹ 1998 – 2002 Bachelor Degree, Major in Fine Arts, Science and Culture University, Tehran, Iran

² Ali Asghar Khan Zanganeh was an esteemed Iranian instrument maker and advocate of traditional Iranian music.(Born 1925 - Died 1997)

old and loved to play music. Regrettably, there were not any options to learn music formally at school or institutes. The only avenue to gaining a musical education was via listening and observing - which I did for a long time, until one day I suddenly started to play music with one of the instruments that my father had made. Fortunately, in my youth, the Art University was reopened, as a result of the persistent efforts of artists, and I was able to study Fine arts for my bachelor degree.

It is interesting for me to discover now that the 'method' of my early musical education, shaped by circumstance, exemplifies a key theoretical perspective. According to the Edwin Gordon's Music Learning Theory³ (1950's)

"We are each born with music aptitude. As with other human learning potentials, there is a wide range of music aptitude levels distributed among the human population. Moreover, both music aptitude and music achievement are dependent on audiation. That is, our music learning potentials and our music learning achievements are based on our music thinking." (Valerio, 2014, p. 01)

Both Gordon and Piaget argue that learning comes from one's environment, and this has been my experience.

To summarize, my observational learning or modeling in music was an obvious result of the cognitive perspective which focuses on thought processes and the behavior that reflects those processes. It includes the cognitive-stage theory of Piaget and Edwin Gordon's sociocultural theory of cognitive development. It also includes the data conversion method and neo-Piagetian theories, which combine basics of information-processing theory and Piagetian theory. (Diane E. Papalia, Ruth Duskin Feldman, & Gabriela Martorell, 2011, p. 33)

³ Edwin E. Gordon, Research Professor at the University of South Carolina's Gordon Archive, is an influential researcher, teacher, author, editor, and lecturer in the field of music education. Through extensive research, Gordon has made major contributions to the study of music aptitudes, audiation, Music Learning Theory, rhythm in movement and music, and music development in infants and very young children.

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