

Functionalistic theory



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Functionalistic Theory Functionalistic Theory Functionalistic Theory The role of functionalistic theory in the study of human behavior is not a new concept. It has been employed by most psychologists and other experts in related fields since its introduction. As a result, psychological knowledge has been applied in the fields of psychiatry, industry and education. An individual attempting to analyze and interpret human behavior with the application of functionalistic theory should have knowledge of its principles and the works contributed by the three functionalist theorists with the strength of their learning theory. The basic principles of functionalist theory as applied in psychology reside in the concept that although every part of the organism functions independently, they are still linked together. Each has its own function to perform but all parts have the ultimate goal of determining ways to adapt to the environment to maintain equilibrium. Such function is the primary concern of functionalistic theory rather than the structures. In addition, human functioning and behaviors are understood through the conduction of research and other methods of study employing non-human animals because of their relation to humans making them a suitable substitute for investigation of real-life events. But since not all humans are the same, functionalists stressed that there are individual variations which laid further studies regarding individual differences. The works of the three theorists of functionalism, Thorndike, Dewey and James have contributed much to functionalism's popularity and application. Their work did not only advocate the recognition of functionalism as a school of thought but had influenced American education. Along this line, their significant addition is compared and contrasted. The idea of James had changed how physics was thought from Newtonian operation to pragmatism. Such advancement in

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education was confirmed in Heisenberg Principle of Indeterminacy in the twentieth century (Ivie, 2006). He also established the method of introspection and contributed much in the application of psychology in the teaching field as he focused on the study of the mind, consciousness, attention, habits, memory, and the mind's abilities to adjust to the changes of the environment. On the other hand, both Thorndike and Dewey formulated visions to transform education into the science of art. Nevertheless, it is notable that each of them has their own commanding view to reconstruct the teaching process to become a science. Thorndike introduced genetic psychology to teachers with his work on inherited and acquired behavior of animals which changed their usual method from traditional teaching to practices that are scientifically proven. Furthermore, he provided teachers with scale to standardize and measure learning (Tomlinson, 1997). Dewey who was influenced by the work of James and Darwin on the contrary, advocated that observing behavior of children involves a community where participants are free thus encouraged them to participate in doing real life task. He believed that children do not just act as dictated by the genes but rather respond to the world through their struggle and plan to achieve their goal which refuted some ideas of Thorndike. A distinct contribution of a learning theory by Dewey is his practical use of laboratory school as an experimental station. This proves practical and useful because the result of the observation is impersonal and natural giving reliable interpretation. Thorndike's strength of learning theory is perceived in his trial and error learning. This is considered a great contribution since learning is enhanced and could be easier with repeated experiences that can change behavior (Olson & Hergenbahn, 2009). Individual can learn from

mistakes. James strength of learning theory is his adoption of Darwin's idea of evolution where he believed in the adaptation of humans to his ever changing environment. After all, man can only live a comfortable life if he equips himself with the skill needed to conquer the challenges of environmental switches. Sources Cited Ivie, S., (2006). Legacy of William James. Proquest. Vol. 41, Iss. 4; pg. 117, 21 pgs. Retrieved June 27, 2011. Olson, M., & Hergenhahn, B. R., (2009). Introduction to theories of learning. Upper Saddle River, NJ : Pearson Prentice Hall. Tomlinson, S., (1997). Edward Lee Thorndike and John Dewey on the science education. Oxford Review of Education. 23(3), 365-383. Retrieved June 27, 2011.