
What Is Training All About?

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This article compares “training” to “education” generally and, specifically, with respect to the question of how this distinction plays a role in teaching negotiation and the possible emergence of a “second generation” of negotiation theory and practice.

Key words: negotiation training, education.

Introduction

This essay is built around a series of related questions. The first, the article’s title, self-evidently concerns the nature of “training” in general. The second question is based on a distinction between “training” and “education” that forms the crux of the essay: are trainers also educators, and should they be? Finally, the last questions focus specifically on training in negotiation. Are there differences between training for negotiation and teaching it? How did so-called “first-generation” negotiation training develop? What does this development tell us about training in the “second generation?”

I end the essay by arguing for the need to *educate* negotiators rather than simply *train* them because in many cases they will have to think critically, listen carefully, and subject their own assumptions to critical examination. I begin with an experience that pointedly raised for me the distinction between training and education.

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In her book *Learning Lessons from Waco, When the Parties Bring Their Gods to the Negotiation Table* (2001) conflict resolution scholar Jayne Docherty examined the 1993 standoff between U.S. agents and members of the Branch Davidian sect in Waco, Texas, drawing on interviews with participants, news accounts, and transcripts from reams of official inquiries undertaken by the U.S. Congress, U.S. Departments of Justice and Treasury, and the Government Accountability Office. At the heart of the book lies a close and critical reading of the more than twelve thousand pages of transcripts of the negotiation between the Branch Davidians and federal law enforcement officers, first from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms (ATF) and later from the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI).

After some initial success negotiating the exit of some Branch Davidian children, negotiators reached an impasse. Concluding that the negotiations had failed and could not be restarted, law enforcement resorted to using overwhelming force that resulted in the deaths of more than seventy people, twenty-three of whom were children. Docherty argued that the failure to negotiate an end to the crisis resulted in large part from the FBI's failure to recognize the ways in which negotiating with the Branch Davidians, a tightly bound, millennial, religious community, was different from their more frequently encountered barricade or hostage situations and that the usual techniques of "critical incident" negotiation — instrumental, manipulative, and goal rational — did not apply.

The FBI and the Branch Davidians faced one another across a chasm of essentially different *world views* (Docherty's central concept) built around crucially different symbols and schemas for action, constituting fundamentally different social and cosmological realities. Time after time, Docherty contends, FBI negotiators misunderstood and misconstrued Branch Davidian positions and principles, resulting in a classic dialogue of the deaf and ensuring the failure of a negotiated end to the crisis. A special model of negotiation, one that recognized the need to communicate *across* world views, was required in these situations, and in her book, Docherty sets out the parameters of what such a transworld view of negotiation would look like.

A few years after the book was published, I attended a discussion by a senior FBI agent who was attached to the Behavioral Sciences Unit at the bureau's headquarters in Quantico, Virginia and involved in crisis negotiation training there. He was, in fact, one of the few members of the unit that Docherty acknowledged interviewing. After the talk I asked him, presumptuously as it turned out, how Docherty's book and findings were used in training crisis negotiators. I did not expect his sharp reply: "I know Jayne's book. I don't use it at all. I disagree with it." I was taken aback, first because the foreword I wrote for the book had closed with a plea: "I hope this book is read and studied and discussed at Quantico and

in other places where law enforcement crisis teams are trained for the next Waco.” (So much for the impact of forewords on the world.) And I was taken aback by something else, the agent’s self-assured conception of *training* as the sort of activity from which “disagreements” were summarily banished.

At that very moment it occurred to me that never once in my three decades of university teaching had I taught entirely from books, articles, or “authorities” with which I fully agreed. Indeed, like most educators, I had learned that sometimes the most flawed book or argument made the best teaching material and that scholars with whom one most strongly disagreed the best critical foils. What would a course of study look like, I wondered, if one only included and taught “agreeable” things? It occurred to me next that such a course would look like *training* and not like *education*. And since then I’ve wondered what can be said about training and education as contrasting social practices?

Training versus Education

First, I must explain that I am using the terms “training” and “education” as ideal types, that they are social practices located on a continuum and that each term refers to a practice that is rarely found in its pure form. Having written that, however, I believe that *training* approaches purity in practice more often than does *education* and is generally far more common — for the reason that, as I will argue, much of what is called education is actually a form of training. Further, I do not mean the distinction to be simply normatively: one form is not necessarily superior to the other; it all depends on the context in which *learning* (a third and mediating term) is supposed to take place and toward what social ends. And finally, while the terms are contrasting ideal types, they also have a dialectical relationship. Education, as I use the word, is essential to the continuing development of effective training because without input from education, training soon rigidifies and becomes hermetic to the changing conditions of the world. In turn, the application of training to education is what keeps education and the educator relevant and socially engaged.

Let me note immediately that the term “application” is slightly misleading. I do not mean the contrast between education and training to imply one between abstract and theoretical knowledge on the one hand and practical skills on the other. The distinction is not a theory — skills distinction. Rather, the distinction refers to different modes of teaching (imparting knowledge, both conceptual *and* skill based) and learning (acquiring that knowledge). In brief, training is about teaching that which is accepted or certified or canonical or otherwise thought to be “proven.” By contrast, education is also about teaching those things that are considered contingent or emergent: things that are subject to critique and thus to revision. In turn, each form welcomes or is amenable to different styles of learning.

Training welcomes and rewards, on the part of learners, exemplary recall and obedience. Education depends on a measure of contentiousness, short of insubordination, from learners, and the effectively critical is rewarded. (Much of the variance here is culturally determined: education in some cultures, especially when the dominant forms are lecture and rote memorization, can be virtually indistinguishable from training.) In what follows, I want to concentrate on the teaching end of the distinction rather than the learning.

As is the case for all so-called ideal types, there is a cultural, socially constructed, dimension to our ideas about what constitutes training and education. Many settings in which education is said to take place in fact emphasize the imparting of unquestionable knowledge by unquestionable authorities — and concurrently where learning is by rote and repetition, emphasizing the skills of memory. This is true of much religious education, where the adjective “canonical” can be applied literally not metaphorically. And this is true of much so-called secular education as well, though on the whole I do not call such instruction education: it is a form of training masquerading as education. According to this typology, training is about teaching with confidence what is *known*.

Because education, according to this ideal type, is about teaching what is arguable and revisable, it necessarily involves instruction in the art of critical inquiry. Thus, the learner adopts a different stance toward authority — even perhaps, the authority of the educator. It is for these reasons, as Brazilian educational theorist Paulo Freire argued, that education is always potentially unsettling, transgressive, and liberating (Freire 2007). And it is for these reasons that control of education (of curricula, of textbooks, of institutions, and of educators) is a prime concern of authority, typically the state and often religious authorities as well.

Training is almost always more hospitable to authority and serves accepted and acceptable social ends with less social friction. Thus, training that is dressed up as education is often authority’s dominant solution of choice, as Paul Willis’s (1977) landmark study of education as training in England, *Learning to Labour: How Working Class Kids Get Working Class Jobs*, so masterfully demonstrates. Following this line of thinking leads one to conclude that education — certainly in its pure ideal typical form — is much rarer than training and far more fragile, as well. (A more hopeful corollary to this is that states, liberal or progressive ones at least, sometimes need to tolerate and even encourage the genuine education of their citizens for the states’ own good.)

But thinking *through* ideal types is seductive and thus carries certain costs: it is better suited for categorical pronouncements and in fact is more at home in training-type thinking than the other sort. Were this essay simply an exercise in well-trodden cultural critique it could end here, ideal types loosely anchored in a vaguely leftist bestiary. I wrote earlier that I wanted

to avoid a simpleminded normative assessment of the two forms. So let me declare at once: there is nothing intrinsically wrong with training, and unfettered and unending pure education would doubtless result in some pretty intolerable outcomes. Besides, as I noted earlier, it is rare to find either sort of teaching/learning in their pure forms. And training and education can certainly take place in the same classroom with the same teacher, for example, the mathematics teacher who *trains* her students to perform arithmetic functions but *educates* them to take a mathematical approach to problem solving.

The more interesting question is the pragmatist's, a question of social usefulness: when is training — instruction in certified and accepted knowledge and skills — called for and appropriate and when is education? In addition, if it is the case that they are dialectically related (and not merely politically opposed), when and how should one *usefully* affect the other? (And, of course: how is all this in the end connected to negotiation, anyway?)

The Case for Training

The case for training is easily made. Training is, first, the appropriate mode of instruction when confidence in the efficacy of certain knowledge and skills is widely accepted or certified in one way or another and such knowledge or skills must be “passed on” to a new cohort of practitioners. Second, training is appropriate when new ways of construing or applying knowledge and skills (a new formula or a new technique) are called for, so that even experienced (previously trained) practitioners need to be *retrained*. These two situations are related through the idea of *confidence*. In the first instance, if confidence in the efficacy of some training regime becomes shaky and is doubted, then a new regime is called for. In the second instance, it is confidence in the greater efficacy of some new approach (a new formula or technique), already known and perhaps tested, that triggers a changed training regime.

The notion of confidence also connects training to education. The politically activist characterization of education presumes an almost intentional attack on the taken-for-granted confidence that people have in their approach to problems and the world. This suspicion of confidence seems to be endogenously or internally generated and, according to this characterization, possessing such skepticism would be a key attribute of the critical educator/thinker.

But this *agent provocateur* conception of education is the exception and not the rule. More typically, it is (the better) practitioners themselves, or their trainers, who begin to doubt the efficacy of a training regime, and they do so in response to a number of confidence-weakening events. They may make mistakes as a result of old ways of training, or they may recognize that the overall context of their training (the *world*, in a sense) has changed.

If training remains unresponsive to a changed context, it guarantees its own demise. If mistakes are ignored, then the costs — financial, political, or ethical — may grow (consider future Wacos), become insurmountable in time, and new, more entrepreneurial or politically activist trainers will enter the market promising better results.

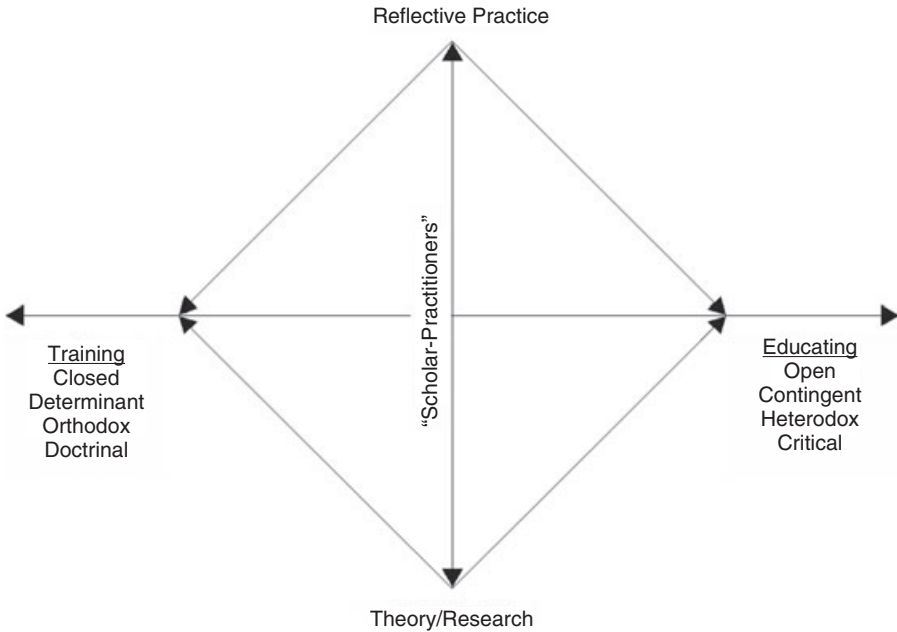
The tension here between training and educating can be expressed along a continuum, with closed and determinant modes of instruction at one end and open and contingent ones at the other. The first mode is best suited to instruction in confidently known and accepted bodies of knowledge and skills, the second mode in dealing with problems of confidence, either generated internally (as critical challenges to the taken for granted) within a field or area of practice or as a result of practice and training failures “out there in the world.” If training is overly rigid and impervious to new information, if it does not adapt, then it guarantees its own eventual obsolescence. (A danger, of course, is if such training is connected to powerful institutions themselves resistant to change, training is then insulated and can continue in use for a long time with deleterious consequences.)

To be open and adaptive, training must be able to process new information, and this means it must be able to “migrate” toward the educating end of the continuum. Training that is not open and adaptive rigidifies and becomes doctrinaire. Such trainers may find themselves ever more defensive in the face of increasingly unconfident and critical audiences, those who face directly the problems resulting from previous training-induced mistakes in a changed world. After awhile, *such trainers are not invited back* — the market has spoken. (Unless this bad training is insulated in powerful institutions; markets, we learn again and again, are easily deformed.)

The Training–Education Continuum

The continuum I have in mind can be represented by Figure One. Because I conceive this system as dependent on messages or information flow — on feedback — it is important to identify the “transducers” in the system, those operators who receive information about training (say, about failures in practice that are training related) and are able to process it into usable suggestions for trainers on how to revise and recast their training. Such an operator may be the negotiation scholar who looks for a conceptual defect in some theory (say, integrative negotiation theory conceived without consideration of gender dynamics) that may predict weakness or gaps in current training regimes. (This is the equivalent of the internally or endogenously generated critique.) Such a researcher may also subject received knowledge or skills to some empirical tests (e.g., “let’s introduce *gender as a variable* by having one of the negotiating parties be female”).

Figure One
Knowledge/Skills



Alternatively, the transducer could be a practitioner (particularly one who also functions as a trainer) who receives messages from the world of professional negotiators (elicits feedback) about the less-than-optimal efficacy of, for example, a hitherto accepted negotiating practice and wonders, *critically*, why? (“Could it be that all previous training had an unrecognized gender bias?”)

A growing literature describes just this sort of practitioner who is also a learner, one who subjects his or her own experience of practice to “double-loop learning” and actively reflects on it. Donald Schon (1983) has written paradigmatically on the “reflective practitioner.” The reflective practitioner is performe also a self-critical one, open to the ever-contingent nature of the practice and its necessity to be adaptive.

When the reflective practitioner-trainer communicates this stance to others, he or she *becomes an educator*, and the line between “training” and “educating” (or practice and research) — at least temporarily — disappears. Schon wrote that such a practitioner is able to “experience surprise, puzzlement or confusion” in unique situations and to subject this confusion to a critical examination of the presuppositions underlying accepted practice.

Such a practitioner, in fact, “carries out an experiment which serves to generate both new understandings of the phenomena and a change in the situation.” This experimentation is not separate from practice, but “is a kind of action” (Schon 1983: 69).

In the field of negotiation, and in conflict resolution more broadly, I would contend that it has been the so-called scholar-practitioners who have functioned most importantly as reflective practitioners of our knowledge and skills, and have revised training and education in negotiation theory and practice most greatly. The movement from a first generation to a second generation in negotiation training and education — should such a conception even prove useful — ultimately depends on the number and quality and tenacity of such individuals.

In passing I have already mentioned gender as a variable whose importance for teaching and practicing negotiation has increased as our field has developed. An equally strong case could be made for the role of culture and cultural differences. Most first-generation negotiation theory and training paid little attention to issues of gender and culture, and mentions of them are largely absent from even the second edition of the canonical *Getting to Yes: Negotiating Agreement without Giving in* (Fisher, Ury, and Patton 1991).

The pressures for change came from several directions, from theorists who had reason to think that culture matters deeply in all sorts of human social action and institutions (e.g., Avruch 1998), from practitioners and scholars with experience in working in other cultural settings (e.g., Lederach 1995) or who themselves came from other cultures (e.g., Abu-Nimer 1996a and 1996b), and, not the least, from the members of an expanded international audience for negotiation training who could often sense the less-than-complete relevance of what they were being taught (by predominantly male, white, middle-class North Americans) to their own experience. Today, culture and gender are included as topics in nearly every negotiation course and even in two-day executive training workshops.

Nevertheless, if it is true that serious attention to culture or gender is one aspect of what distinguishes first- from second-generation negotiation training and education, we now know that (1) such a transformation did not happen overnight but gradually took shape and is ongoing; (2) it stemmed from diverse sources, some more purely critical and educational and others from the worlds of practice and training; and (3) it all depends ultimately on the willingness of at least *some* trainers to reflect on and critique their ideas about practice, that is to *act as educators*.

Unlike our senior FBI agent, acting as educators in this way might in fact mean trying a training or two using something with which one actually *disagrees*, adopting what Schon (1983) referred to as an experimentalist sensibility and displaying an openness to learn (and therefore eventually to teach) new things. When some amount of new things has accumulated, and

(perhaps retrospectively) it is claimed that some tipping point has been reached — when a new widely accepted training regime is confidently in place — some among us may want to claim that a generational change in negotiation education and training has occurred. Others might demur. The point of this essay is not to argue for or against such change but to develop a general argument for how training and education are connected and how one without the other inevitably becomes both lame and blind.

NOTES

Jayne Docherty and Chris Honeyman's comments, many incorporated into the text, greatly improved this work.

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