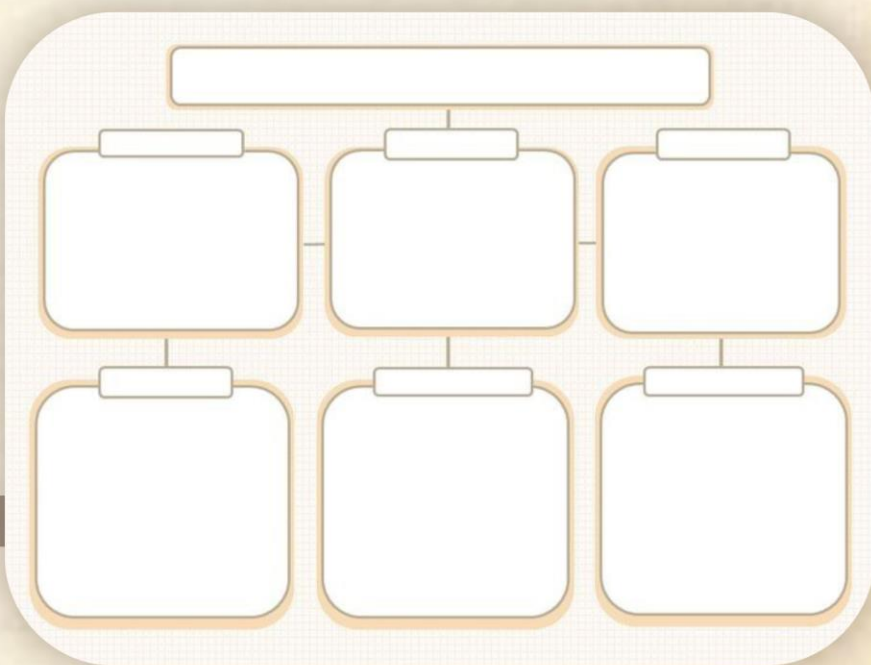




Graphic Organizers

The Learning Theories
in Education



GRAPHIC ORGANIZERS
THE LEARNING THEORIES IN EDUCATION

Dr. Livianni Lambe



Tahta Media Group

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GRAPHIC ORGANIZERS
THE LEARNING THEORIES IN EDUCATION

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PREFACE

The effectiveness of teaching and learning is closely related to how information is structured, presented, and integrated into the learner's existing cognitive framework. In contemporary educational practice, there is increasing recognition that meaningful learning does not occur through rote memorization alone, but through the active construction of knowledge based on prior understanding. In this context, graphic organizers have emerged as significant pedagogical tools that facilitate the organization, representation, and integration of knowledge.

It is hoped that this work will contribute to a deeper understanding of the theoretical foundations and practical applications of graphic organizers, and will serve as a useful reference for educators, students, and researchers who seek to enhance the quality of teaching and learning processes.

The completion of this work would not have been possible without the support, guidance, and encouragement of many individuals.

First and foremost, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my colleagues for their valuable guidance, constructive feedback, and continuous support throughout the development of this book. Their insights and expertise have greatly contributed to the completion of this work.

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CHAPTER 1

GRAPHIC ORGANIZERS

Graphic organizers are visual aids designed to arrange information, ideas, and their relationships in a clear and systematic manner (Colliot & Jamet, 2019). By illustrating how different pieces of information connect, they help learners transform abstract or complicated material into something more structured and understandable. Instead of relying on lengthy text, graphic organizers present information through shapes, lines, and spatial arrangements, making concepts and their connections easier to grasp and remember. They often take the form of diagrams, charts, or maps that highlight how ideas relate to one another (Colliot & Jamet, 2018).

The concept of graphic organizers originates from the idea of the Advance Organizer, an instructional strategy introduced by Ausubel (1968) to support students in understanding expository texts . This approach functions as a bridge that links learners' prior knowledge with new information. Because it is typically presented in a visual format, it is also known as a graphic advance organizer or simply a graphic organizer (Mochizuki et al., 2019) (Ponce et al., 2018) (Ayverdi et al., 2014) .

There are many types of graphic organizers, such as mind maps, Venn diagrams, flowcharts, concept maps, timelines, KWL charts, fishbone and herringbone diagrams, Y diagrams, storyboard notes, Six Frames, SQ4R, science fair organizers, math factor charts, pie

charts, story maps, story pyramids, and T-charts. Although these tools come in various forms and names, they generally fall into four main categories: conceptual, hierarchical, cyclical, and sequential (Lambe et al., 2023).

PURPOSE OF GRAPHIC ORGANIZERS

Graphic organizers are visual tools designed to help learners and teachers organize information, see relationships among ideas, and make complex content easier to understand. They typically use shapes, lines, and spatial layout (e.g., concept maps, Venn diagrams, flowcharts, timelines) to represent key concepts and how they are connected (Ponce et al., 2020).

One main purpose of graphic organizers is to support comprehension by structuring information before, during, and after learning activities. They help students break down large amounts of information into manageable “chunks,” categorize ideas, and make explicit the relationships such as cause–effect, part–whole, sequence, or compare–contrast. This structure reduces cognitive load, so learners can focus more on understanding concepts rather than trying to hold everything in working memory (Colliot & Jamet, 2018).

Graphic organizers also serve as tools for activating and building on prior knowledge. When used at the beginning of a lesson (e.g., KWL charts, brainstorming webs), they prompt students to recall what they already know, surface misconceptions, and connect new material to existing knowledge. During or after instruction, organizers can be used to update and refine these initial ideas, supporting meaningful integration of new information into students’ cognitive structures (Kwon et al., 2018).

Another important purpose is to enhance retention, critical thinking, and communication. Because graphic organizers provide a clear visual summary of a topic, they help students review and remember key points over time. At the same time, constructing an organizer requires students to analyze information, identify main ideas, determine relationships, and make decisions about what is important, which promotes higher-order thinking. Finally, organizers support writing, speaking, and collaborative work by giving a shared visual reference that students can use to plan essays, explain their understanding, or discuss a text or problem together (Regan et al., 2018).

Graphic organizers are used to: (López & López, 2022) (Baxendell, 2003)(Intstitute, 2001)

1. Organize thoughts before writing or speaking
2. Understand complex information
3. Compare and contrast ideas
4. Improve comprehension and memory
5. Support critical and creative thinking
6. Plan, summarize, and review lessons
7. Clarify and simplify complex ideas or texts.
8. Show relationships such as cause–effect, comparison, or sequence.
9. Help with brainstorming, planning writing, and organizing projects or problem-solving steps.

Support memory and understanding, especially for visual learners and students with learning difficulties.

Examples of Graphic Organizers

1. Mind Map (Munisaxon, 2021)
 - a. Shows a main idea in the center with related ideas branching out
 - b. Helps with brainstorming and idea generation

Example use: Planning an essay or exploring a topic

2. Concept Map (Tseng, 2020)

- a. Shows relationships between concepts using connecting words
- b. More structured than a mind map

Example use: Explaining scientific or theoretical relationships

3. Venn Diagram (Irwin-DeVitis et al., 1999)

- a. Uses overlapping circles to compare similarities and differences

Example use: Comparing two or three ideas, objects, or theories

4. Flow Chart (Irwin-DeVitis et al., 1999)

- a. Shows steps in a process or sequence
- b. Uses arrows to show direction

Example use: Explaining procedures, cycles, or decision-making steps

5. Cause-and-Effect Diagram

- a. Shows reasons (causes) and results (effects)

Example use: Analyzing events, problems, or outcomes

6. T-Chart (Irwin-DeVitis et al., 1999)

- a. Two-column chart used to compare ideas or list pros and cons

Example use: Evaluating arguments or decisions

7. Story Map (Kurnia et al., 2018)

- a. Organizes elements of a story (characters, setting, plot, conflict, resolution)

Example use: Literature comprehension

8. KWL Chart (Fitriani et al., 2025)

- a. K: What I Know
- b. W: What I Want to Know
- c. L: What I Learned

Example use: Activating prior knowledge and reflection

BENEFITS OF APPLYING GRAPHIC ORGANIZERS

1. Improve Understanding

Graphic organizers improve comprehension and retention. By breaking information into smaller “chunks” and showing how concepts connect, they reduce cognitive load and help move information from short-term into long-term memory. Students can more easily identify main ideas, supporting details, patterns, and relationships such as cause–effect or compare–contrast, which leads to deeper understanding and better recall (Bahadori & Bahman, 2016)

2. Support Critical Thinking

Graphic organizers support critical thinking and problem solving. Constructing an organizer forces learners to analyze information, decide what is important, group related ideas, and make inferences about relationships. This process strengthens higher-order skills like classifying, evaluating, and synthesizing, rather than just copying or memorizing facts. In subjects like math and science, organizers help students map out multi-step problems or complex processes, improving their ability to plan and monitor solutions. (Mohaidat, 2018)

3. Enhance Memory

Visual structure makes information easier to remember. Remember information better because it is organized visually, not just in sentences. Interactive or self-generated organizers can lead to even deeper processing and better comprehension than pre-filled ones, because they demand more active cognitive work. Students who learn with graphic organizers often show higher scores on retention and comprehension tests than those with text-only materials. (Guo et al., 2020)

4. Encourage Active Learning

Graphic organizers enhance engagement, collaboration, and communication. Many students enjoy working with visual tools and are more motivated and focused when using them. Organizers give a shared reference point for group discussion, help students plan their writing or presentations, and provide teachers with a quick way to assess understanding and misconceptions. Because they summarize learning in a compact, visual form, they also serve as efficient review tools before tests or projects. : (Intstitute, 2001)

5. Help All Learners

They are highly beneficial for diverse learners, including students with learning difficulties and English language learners. Because organizers present information visually as well as verbally, they provide an accessible scaffold for students who struggle with dense text or long verbal explanations. They can be easily adapted (more or fewer prompts, pictures vs. words, color-coding) to match different ability levels and support differentiated instruction in inclusive classrooms.(Ewoldt & Morgan, 2017) (Squire & Clark, 2020)

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CHAPTER 2

SCHEMA THEORY

Schema Theory explains how knowledge in the mind is organized into structured frameworks called *schemas*, and how frameworks shape perception, memory, and learning. In simple terms, a schema is a mental “blueprint” or “file” that contains everything a person knows about a concept, event, or type of situation (for example, “classroom,” “exam,” “hospital,” “democracy”). When we these encounter new information, we do not process it in a vacuum; we interpret it through these existing schemas, matching, filtering, and fitting it into what we already know. This makes thinking more efficient, but it also means that prior knowledge and expectations strongly influence what we notice, how we interpret it, and what we remember. (Bonyadi & Branch, 2014)

Historically, the idea of schema comes from Frederic Bartlett and was later elaborated by Jean Piaget and others in cognitive psychology and education. In this view, schemas are not static; they are dynamic structures that change with experience. When new information fits well with what we already know, we *assimilate* it into existing schemas (for example, adding a new example of “mammal” into the existing “mammal” schema). When new information conflicts with our current schemas (for example, learning that whales are mammals, not fish), we may need to *accommodate* by modifying or reorganizing our schemas.

This ongoing process of assimilation and accommodation is central to cognitive development and to how understanding deepens over time. (Bonyadi & Branch, 2014)

In learning and instruction, Schema Theory emphasizes the crucial role of prior knowledge. Comprehension is seen as the interaction between the text or new material and the reader's existing schemas. Learners who have rich, well-organized schemas in a domain (for example, background knowledge in science, or familiarity with a genre of text) can understand and remember new information more easily, because they have appropriate "slots" to connect it to. Conversely, when schemas are weak, absent, or culturally mismatched with the material, learners may misunderstand or fail to retain information. This is why activating prior knowledge, providing advance organizers, and building background knowledge are key instructional strategies derived from Schema Theory. (Bonyadi & Branch, 2014) (Wilson, 2016)

Schema Theory also explains individual differences in perception and memory. Because people hold different schemas based on their experiences, two individuals can interpret the same event, story, or problem quite differently and remember different aspects of it. Schemas guide attention (what we focus on), interpretation (how we make sense of it), and recall (what we can retrieve later). They can support efficient processing, but they can also lead to biases and misconceptions when existing schemas are oversimplified, stereotyped, or resistant to change. For educators and researchers, this implies that effective teaching must not only present new information but also diagnose and, when necessary, reshape learners' underlying schemas to support more accurate and sophisticated understanding. (Roozbeh et al., 2016)

Schema Theory explains how knowledge is stored and used in the mind as organized structures called *schemas*, and how learning

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The author has been a lecturer in the English Language Education Study Program at Manado State University since 2003. Fully dedicated to the role of a lecturer, the author has—in addition to completing formal education—participated in various training programs to enhance professional performance, particularly in the areas of teaching, research, and community service. Publications authored or co-authored by the author include *Research Seminar Unveiled: Navigating Quantitative, Qualitative, and Classroom Action Research*. Furthermore, the author actively conducts research published in various national and international journals, and frequently serves as a presenter at academic events as well as a resource person for workshops and seminars.

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Graphic Organizers

The Learning Theories in Education

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The completion of this work would not have been possible without the support, guidance, and encouragement of many individuals.



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