

LEARNING

Why study learning?

If we had not been able to learn, we would have died out as a species long ago. Learning is the process that allows us to adapt to the changing conditions of the world around us. We can alter our actions until we find the behavior that leads us to survival and rewards, and we can eliminate actions that have been unsuccessful in the past. Without learning, there would be no buildings, no agriculture, no lifesaving medicines, and no human civilization.

Definition of Learning

What does the term *learning* really mean?

The term *learning* is one of those concepts whose meaning is crystal clear until one has to put it in actual words. “Learning is when you learn something.” “Learning is learning how to do something.” A more useful definition is as follows: *Learning* is any relatively permanent change in behavior brought about by experience or practice. Almost all human behavior is learned. Imagine if you suddenly lost all you had ever learned. What could you do? You would be unable to read, write, or speak. You couldn’t feed yourself, find your way home, and drive a car, play the bassoon, or “party.” Needless to say, you would be totally incapacitated. (Dull, too!).

Learning is the process by which an individual acquires knowledge, attitudes and skills that are necessary to meet the demands of life. While touching a burning candle, a child gets burnt and he withdraws the fingers. When he faces a similar situation again he withdraws his fingers faster. Gradually he learns to avoid not only the burning candle but also other burning things. The behaviour of an individual is thus changed through experiences. This change in behaviour brought about by experiences is commonly known as learning. For example, a child learns how to clap hands by seeing someone else do it. Learning also takes place through direct experiences. For example, a child learns to write by practicing writing. A child normally learns from his parents, teachers and the environment.

What does “relatively permanent” mean? And how does experience change what we do?

The “relatively permanent” part of the definition refers to the fact that when people learn anything, some part of their brain is physically changed to record what they’ve learned (Goldstein, 2005; Loftus & Loftus, 1980). This is actually a process of memory, for without the ability to remember what happens, people cannot learn anything. Although there is no conclusive proof as yet, research suggests that once people learn something, it may be present somewhere in memory in physical form (Barsalou, 1992; Smolen et al., 2008).

Not all change is accomplished through learning. Changes like an increase in height or the size of the brain are another kind of change controlled by a genetic blueprint. This kind of change is called *maturation*, and is due to biology, not experience. For example, children learn to walk *when* they do because their nervous systems, muscle strength, and sense of balance have reached the point where walking is possible for them—all factors controlled by maturation, not by how

much practice those children have had in trying to walk.No amount of experience or practice will help that child walk before maturation makes it possible—in spite of what some eager parents might wish.

1.**Gardener Murphy:** “The term learning covers every modification in behaviour to meet environmental requirements.”

2. **Henry P. Smith:** “Learning is the acquisition of new behaviour or the strengthening or weakening of old behaviour as the result of experience.”

3. **Crow & crow:** “Learning is the acquisition of habits, knowledge & attitudes. It involves new ways of doing things and it operates in individuals attempts to overcome obstacles or to adjust to new situations. It represents progressive changes in behaviour. It enables him to satisfy interests to attain goals.

CHARACTERISTICS OF LEARNING

1. Learning involves change.

It is a reconstruction, combined thinking, skill, information and appropriation in a single unity process. For example, when a child learns to read they can retain this knowledge and behavior for the rest of their lives. It is not always reflected in performance. The change from the learning may not be clear until a situation arises in which the new behavior can occur.

2. All learning involves activities

These activities involve either physical or mental activity. They may be simple mental activities of complex, involving various muscles, bones, etc. So also the mental activities may be very simple involving one or two activities of mind or complex which involve higher mental activities.

3.Learning Requires Interaction

At the time of learning, the individual is constantly interacting with and influenced by the environment. This experience makes him change or modify his behavior to deal effectively with it.

4.Constitute Learning

To constitute learning, the change should be permanent. Temporary changes may be only reflective and fail to represent any learning.

5.Learning is a Lifelong Process

Learning is a lifelong process of gaining and using the information presented to a person. It is not static.A person never stops acquiring new information. It keeps a person’s mind active and aware but also conscious of the world around them.

6.Learning Occurs Randomly Throughout Life

Some learning occurs randomly throughout life, from new experiences, gaining information and from our, perceptions, for example: reading a newspaper or watching a news broadcast, talking with a friend or colleague, chance meetings, and unexpected experiences.

7.Learning Involves Problems Solving

Learning involves problem-solving i.e. understanding and discovering relations between different contents in a situation.

8.Learning is the Process of Acquiring Information

Learning is the process of acquiring information, knowledge, wisdom, and skills. It occurs as a result of interaction with the person's environment.

9.Learning Involves far more than Thinking

Learning involves far more than thinking: it involves the whole personality – senses, feelings, intuition, beliefs, values, and will. If we do not have the will to learn, we cannot learn and if we have learned, we are changed in some way. If the learning makes no difference it can have very little significance.

10.Experience is Necessary for Learning

Some sort of experience is necessary for learning. We can get the experience from direct observation or from formal approaches to learning such as training, mentoring, coaching and teaching. We can get the experience from direct observation or from formal approaches to learning such as **training**, mentoring, coaching and teaching.

Learning is more or less the acquisition of a new discourse, a new way of speaking, acting, interacting, looking at the world, and knowing it.

It will be successful only when the information gained is used and understood.

It is a continuous process followed by an individual that allows for the acquisition of information, attitudes, and practices, through observation, seeking previous knowledge, searching out guides, and looking within as well as without. It is a key process in human behavior.

If we compare the simple ways in which a child feels and behaves, with the complex modes of adult behavior, his skills, habits, though, sentiments and the like we will know what difference learning has made to the individual.

11.Learning is purposive and goal-oriented

Learning is always has a purpose. It is goal-oriented in the sense that the teacher always has learning objectives in mind while teaching. If we don't have any aim and goal, then the process of learning will not show any effect. Through the process of learning, we can move towards pre-determined learning objectives. As the learner learn, he/she move towards a pre-determined goal.

12. Learning is the relationship between stimulus and response

Learning is generally, a relationship between stimulus and response. A person is considered as a learned-person if he reacts according to the task to be learned. Through learning, a person learns reactions according to the stimuli associated with the environment and other aspects of life.

13. Learning is transferable:

The learning acquired in one situation is capable of transfer to some other situation. The knowledge acquired in one situation proves helpful in acquiring knowledge in other situation. This is known as the transfer of learning. The learner should be careful not to let previously gained knowledge interfere in acquiring new knowledge and experiences.

14. Learning helps in achieving teacher-student objectives

Teaching and learning situations have different goals, aims, and objectives. Process of learning helps in achieving the objectives of teaching. With learning, we expect a change in the behavior of the individuals. This change happens with the development of knowledge, insight, interests, skills, and attitudes. So, for achieving teaching-learning objectives, the learning process plays an important role.

15. Learning is a universal process

Learning is a universal process. It can happen everywhere. Learning is a process for all living creatures. Human being across all cultures learn as it is a life long process.