

Learning and Development

Key concepts and terms

- Bite-sized training
- Blended learning
- Criterion behaviour
- Development
- Double-loop learning
- Experiential learning
- Just-in-time training
- Learning
- Learning culture
- Learning organization
- Personal development planning
- Reflective learning
- Self-directed learning
- Single-loop learning
- Terminal behaviour
- Training

Learning outcomes

On completing this chapter you should be able to define these key concepts. You should also know about:

- The nature of learning and development
- Learning and development strategy
- The nature and creation of a learning culture
- The learning organization
- The nature of organizational learning
- How people learn
- The planning and operation of learning programmes for individuals
- Management development
- How to evaluate learning and development programmes

Introduction

The resource-based view emphasizes the importance of having a highly qualified workforce which is different from and better than those of competitors. Learning and development programmes and activities, sometimes termed human resource development (HRD), make an important contribution to achieving this. As described in this chapter, these need to be established within the framework of a learning and development strategy and against the background of learning theory. It is necessary to create a learning culture which encourages individual and organizational learning and the associated although over-hyped notion of the learning organization. It is also necessary to understand how to plan, run and evaluate learning and development programmes, including those concerned with management development.

Learning and development defined

Learning and development is the process of acquiring and developing knowledge, skills capabilities, behaviours and attitudes through experience, events and programmes provided by the organization, guidance and coaching provided by line managers and others, and self-directed or self-managed learning activities. It is concerned with ensuring that the organization has the knowledgeable, skilled and engaged workforce it needs.

Learning

Learning is the means by which a person acquires and develops new knowledge, skills, capabilities, behaviours and attitudes. As Honey and Mumford (1996) explained it, 'Learning has happened when people can demonstrate that they know something that they did not know before (insights, realizations as well as facts) and when they can do something they could not do before (skills).'

Learning is a continuous process which not only enhances existing capabilities but also leads to the development of the knowledge and skills that prepare people for enlarged or higher-level responsibilities in the future.

Development

Development is concerned with ensuring that a person's ability and potential grows through the provision of learning experiences or through self-directed (self-managed) learning. It is an unfolding process which enables people to progress from a present state of understanding and capability to a future state in which higher-level skills, knowledge and competencies are required.

Training

Training involves the application of formal processes to impart knowledge and help people to acquire the skills necessary for them to perform their jobs satisfactorily.

Comparison of learning and training

Learning should be distinguished from training. ‘Learning is the process by which a person constructs new knowledge, skills and capabilities, whereas training is one of several responses an organization can undertake to promote learning’ (Reynolds *et al*, 2002).

The encouragement of learning makes use of a process model which is concerned with facilitating the learning activities of individuals and providing learning resources for them to use. Conversely, the provision of training involves the use of a content model, which means deciding in advance the knowledge and skills that need to be enhanced by training, planning the programme, deciding on training methods, and presenting the content in a logical sequence through various forms of instruction.

A distinction was made by Sloman (2003) between learning, which ‘lies within the domain of the individual’, and training, which ‘lies within the domain of the organization’. Today the approach is to focus on individual learning, and ensure that it takes place when required – ‘just-for-you’ and ‘just-in-time’ learning.

Elements of learning and development

The elements of learning and development are shown in Figure 13.1.

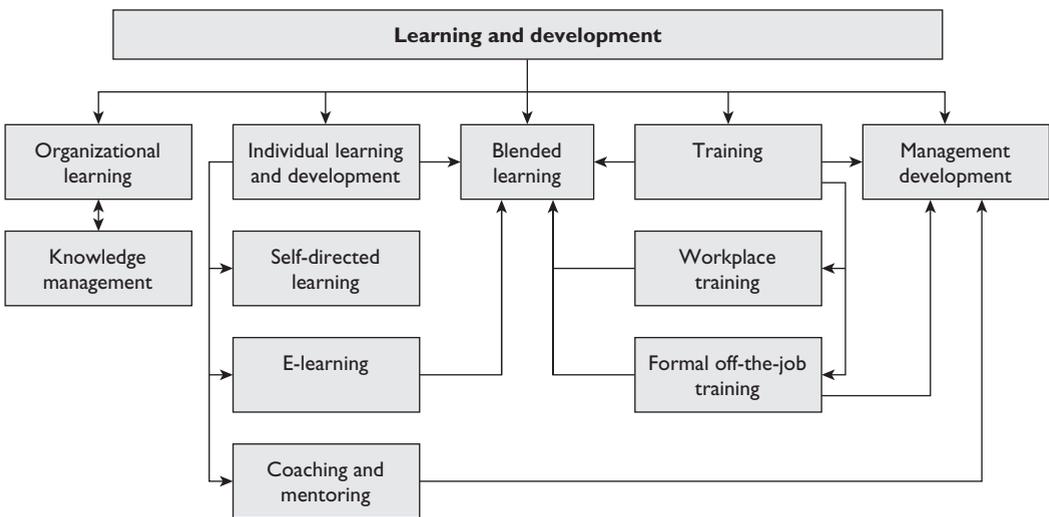


Figure 13.1 Elements of learning and development

Learning and development strategy

A learning and development strategy outlines the approach an organization adopts to ensure that now and in the future, learning and development activities support the achievement of its goals by enhancing the skills and capacities of individuals and teams. It is often called strategic human resource development.

A learning and development strategy should be business-led in the sense that it is designed to support the achievement of business goals by promoting human capital advantage. But it should also be people-led, which means taking into account the needs and aspirations of people to grow and develop. Achieving the latter aim, of course, supports the attainment of the former. The strategy will aim to develop a learning culture.

Learning culture

A learning culture is one that promotes learning because it is recognized by top management, line managers and employees generally as an essential organizational process to which they are committed and in which they engage continuously.

Reynolds (2004) describes a learning culture as a 'growth medium' which will 'encourage employees to commit to a range of positive discretionary behaviours, including learning', and which has the following characteristics: empowerment not supervision, self-managed learning not instruction, long-term capacity building, not short-term fixes. He suggested that to create a learning culture it is necessary to develop organizational practices that raise commitment amongst employees and 'give employees a sense of purpose in the workplace, grant employees opportunities to act upon their commitment, and offer practical support to learning'. The concept of a learning culture is associated with that of the learning organization.

Developing a learning culture

- Develop and share the vision – belief in a desired and emerging future.
- Empower employees – provide 'supported autonomy', freedom for employees to manage their work within certain boundaries (policies and expected behaviours) but with support available as required.
- Adopt a facilitative style of management in which responsibility for decision making is ceded as far as possible to employees.
- Provide employees with a supportive learning environment where learning capabilities can be discovered and applied, for example peer networks, supportive policies and systems, and protected time for learning.

- Use coaching techniques to draw out the talents of others by encouraging employees to identify options and seek their own solutions to problems.
- Guide employees through their work challenges and provide them with time, resources and, crucially, feedback.
- Recognize the importance of managers acting as role models: ‘The new way of thinking and behaving may be so different that you must see what it looks like before you can imagine yourself doing it. You must see the new behaviour and attitudes in others with whom you can identify’ (Schein, 1990).
- Encourage networks – communities of practice.
- Align systems to vision – get rid of bureaucratic systems that produce problems rather than facilitate work.

Source: Reynolds (2004)

The learning organization

The learning organization is defined as one in which provision is made for the continuous learning of its members. This concept has caught the imagination of many people since it was first popularized by Senge (1990), who described the learning organization as one:

where people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free, and where people are continually learning how to learn together.

Pedler *et al* (1991) state that a learning organization is one ‘which facilitates the learning of all its members and continually transforms itself’. Wick and Leon (1995) refer to a learning organization as one that ‘continually improves by rapidly creating and refining the capabilities required for future success’.

Critical evaluation of the learning organization concept

As Harrison (2000) comments, the notion of the learning organization remains persuasive because of its ‘rationality, human attractiveness and presumed potential to aid organizational effectiveness and advancement’. However, Scarborough *et al* (1999) argue that ‘the dominant perspective [of the learning organization concept] is that of organization systems and design’. Little attention seems to be paid to what individuals want to learn or how they learn. The idea

that individuals should be enabled to invest in their own development seems to have escaped learning organization theorists, who are more inclined to focus on the imposition of learning by the organization, rather than creating a climate conducive to learning. This is a learning culture, a concept that has more to offer than that of the learning organization.

Viewing organizations as learning systems is a limited notion. Argyris and Schon (1996) contend that organizations are products of visions, ideas, norms and beliefs, so that their shape is much more fragile than the organization's material structure. People act as learning agents for the organization in ways that cannot easily be systematized. They are not only individual learners but also have the capacity to learn collaboratively. Organization learning theory, as described later, analyses how this happens, and leads to the belief that it is the culture and environment that are important, not the systems approach implied by the concept of the learning organization.

The notion of a learning organization is somewhat nebulous. It incorporates miscellaneous ideas about human resource development, systematic training, action learning, organizational development and knowledge management, with an infusion of the precepts of total quality management. But they do not add up to a convincing whole. Easterby-Smith (1997) contends that attempts to create a single best-practice framework for understanding the learning organization are fundamentally flawed. There are other problems with the concept: it is idealistic, knowledge management models are beginning to supersede it, few organizations can meet the criteria, and there is little evidence of successful learning organizations.

Organizational learning

Organizational learning theory is more relevant. It is concerned with how learning takes place in organizations. It focuses on collective learning, but takes into account the proposition made by Argyris (1992) that organizations do not perform the actions that produce the learning; it is individual members of the organization who behave in ways that lead to it, although organizations can create conditions which facilitate such learning. The concept of organizational learning recognizes that the way in which this takes place is affected by the context of the organization and its culture.

The process of organizational learning

Organizational learning can be characterized as an intricate three-stage process consisting of knowledge acquisition, dissemination and shared implementation (Dale, 1994). Knowledge may be acquired from direct experience, the experience of others or organizational memory.

Argyris (1992) suggests that organizational learning occurs under two conditions: first, when an organization achieves what is intended, and second, when a mismatch between intentions

and outcomes is identified and corrected. He distinguishes between single-loop and double-loop learning. These two types of learning can be described as adaptive or generative learning.

Single-loop or adaptive learning is incremental learning which does no more than correct deviations from the norm by making small changes and improvements without challenging assumptions, beliefs or decisions. Argyris (1992) suggests that organizations where single-loop learning is the norm define the 'governing variables' – that is, what they expect to achieve in terms of targets and standards – and then monitor and review achievements and take corrective action as necessary, thus completing the loop.

Double-loop or generative learning involves challenging assumptions, beliefs, norms and decisions rather than accepting them. On this basis, learning takes place through the examination of the root causes of problems, so that a new learning loop is established which goes far deeper than the traditional learning loop provided by single-loop learning. It occurs when the monitoring process initiates action to redefine the 'governing variables' to meet the new situation, which may be imposed by the external environment. The organization has learnt something new about what has to be achieved in the light of changed circumstances and can then decide how this should be done. This learning is converted into action. The process is illustrated in Figure 13.2.

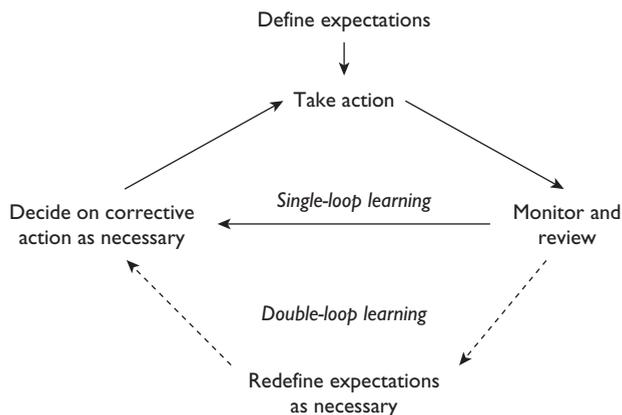


Figure 13.2 Single- and double-loop learning

As Easterby-Smith and Araujo (1999) commented, single-loop learning could be linked to incremental change, 'where an organization tries out new methods and tactics and attempts to get rapid feedback on their consequences in order to be able to make continuous adjustments and adaptations'. In contrast, double-loop learning is associated 'with radical change, which might involve a major change in strategic direction, possibly linked to replacement of senior personnel, and wholesale revision of systems'. It is generally assumed that double-loop learning is superior, but there are situations when single-loop learning may be more appropriate.

Organizational learning and the learning organization

The notion of the learning organization is sometimes confused with the concept of organizational learning. However, as Harrison (2000) points out: ‘Too often... it is assumed that the terms ‘the learning organization’ and ‘organizational learning’ are synonymous. They are not.’

Easterby-Smith and Araujo (1999) explain that the literature on organizational learning focuses on the ‘observation and analysis of the processes of individual and collective learning in organizations’, whereas the learning organization literature is concerned with ‘using specific diagnostic and evaluative tools which can help to identify, promote and evaluate the quality of the learning processes inside organizations’. In other words the learning organization concept is about what organizations should do to facilitate the learning of their members, and organizational learning is about how people learn in organizations, as discussed below.

How people learn

An understanding of how people learn is necessary if learning is to take place effectively. Learning has been defined by Kim (1993) as the process of ‘increasing one’s capacity to take action’. It can be described as the modification of behaviour through experience.

Types of learning

- Instrumental learning – learning how to do the job better once the basic standard of performance has been attained. Helped by learning on the job.
- Cognitive learning – outcomes based on the enhancement of knowledge and understanding.
- Affective learning – outcomes based on the development of attitudes or feelings rather than knowledge.
- Self-reflective learning – developing new patterns of understanding, thinking and behaving and therefore creating new knowledge.

Source: Harrison (2005).

The learning process

Individuals learn for themselves and learn from other people. They learn as members of teams and by interaction with their managers, co-workers and people outside the organization. They

learn by doing and by instruction. The ways in which individuals learn will differ, and the extent to which they learn will depend largely on how well they are motivated or self-motivated. Discretionary learning can take place when individuals of their own volition actively seek to acquire the knowledge and skills they need to carry out their work effectively. It should be encouraged and supported.

Learning theory

Learning theory explains how people learn and provides the foundation for planning and implementing learning and development programmes. The main theories and their practical implications are summarized in Table 13.1.

Table 13.1 The implications of learning theory and concepts

Theory/concept	Content	Practical implications
The process of learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Learning is complex and is achieved in many different ways. ● The context is important. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Different learning needs require different learning methods, often in combination. ● Learning effectiveness depends on the extent to which the organization believes in learning and supports it.
Reinforcement theory	Behaviours can be strengthened by reinforcing them with positive feedback (conditioning).	Reinforcement theory underpins training programmes concerned with developing skills through instruction. In these, the learner is conditioned to make a response and receives immediate feedback. Progress is made in incremental steps each directed to a positive outcome.
Cognitive learning theory	Learners acquire understanding which they internalize by being exposed to learning materials and by solving problems.	The knowledge and understanding of learners can be enriched and internalized by presenting them with learning materials (perhaps via e-learning). Case studies, projects and problem-solving activities can also be used for this purpose. Self-directed learning, personal development planning activities and discovery learning processes with help from facilitators, coaches or mentors are underpinned by cognitive learning theory.

Table 13.1 *continued*

Theory/concept	Content	Practical implications
Experiential learning theory	People learn by constructing meaning and developing their skills through experience.	Learning through experience can be enhanced by encouraging learners to reflect on and make better use of what they learn through their own work and from other people. Self-directed learning and personal development planning activities with help from facilitators, coaches or mentors are also underpinned by experiential learning theory, as is action learning.
Social learning theory	Learning is most effective in a social setting. Individual understanding is shaped by active participation in real situations.	Learning can be encouraged in communities of practice and in project teams and networks.
Learning styles	Every person has their own learning style.	Learning programmes need to be adjusted to cope with different learning styles. Trainers have also to flex their methods. People will learn more effectively if they are helped to 'learn how to learn' by making the best use of their own style but also by experimenting with other styles.
The learning curve	The time required to reach an acceptable standard of skill or competence varies between people. Learning may proceed in steps with plateaus rather than being a continuous process.	Recognize that progress may vary and may not be continuous. Enable learners to consolidate their learning, and introduce reinforcement periods in training programmes to recognize the existence of learning steps and plateaus.
The motivation to learn	People need to be motivated to learn effectively.	Learners should be helped to develop learning goals and to understand the benefits to them of achieving them. Performance management processes leading to personal development plans can provide a means of doing this.

The approaches to learning and development described below need to be based on an understanding of the applications of learning theory.

Approaches to learning and development

Learning and development can be formal or informal, and it can use computer, networked and web-based technology (e-learning). Its effectiveness is increased by joining up different methods of learning and development (blended learning) and by encouraging self-directed learning.

Formal learning

Formal learning is planned and systematic. It makes use of structured training programmes consisting of instruction and practice which may be conducted on the job or off the job. Experience may be planned to provide opportunities for continuous learning and development. Formal learning and developmental activities may be used, such as action learning, coaching, mentoring and outdoor learning. The organization may have its own training centre. Some large companies have corporate universities.

Informal learning

Informal learning is experiential learning. It takes place while people are learning on the job as they go along (workplace learning). Most learning does not take place in formal training programmes.

A study by Eraut *et al* (1998) established that in organizations adopting a learner-centred perspective, formal education and training provided only a small part of what was learnt at work. Most of the learning described to the researchers was non-formal, neither clearly specified nor planned. It arose naturally from the challenges of work. Effective learning was, however, dependent on the employees' confidence, motivation and capability. Some formal training to develop skills (especially induction training) was usually provided, but learning from experience and other people at work predominated. Reynolds (2004) noted that 'The simple act of observing more experienced colleagues can accelerate learning; conversing, swapping stories, co-operating on tasks and offering mutual support deepen and solidify the process... This kind of learning – often very informal in nature – is thought to be vastly more effective in building proficiency than more formalised training methods.'

Advantages and disadvantages of informal learning

Advantages

- Learning efforts are relevant and focused in the immediate environment.
- Understanding can be achieved in incremental steps rather than in indigestible chunks.
- Learners define how they will gain the knowledge they need – formal learning is more packaged.
- Learners can readily put their learning into practice.

Disadvantages

- It may be left to chance – some people will benefit, some will not.
- It can be unplanned and unsystematic, which means that it will not necessarily satisfy individual or organizational learning needs.
- Learners might simply pick up bad habits.

E-learning

E-learning was defined by Pollard and Hillage (2001) as ‘the delivery and administration of learning opportunities and support via computer, networked and web based technology to help individual performance and development’. E-learning enhances learning by extending and supplementing face-to-face learning rather than replacing it. It enables learning to take place when it is most needed (just in time as distinct from just in case) and when it is most convenient. Learning can be provided in short segments or bites which focus on specific learning objectives. It is ‘learner-centric’ in that it can be customized to suit an individual’s learning needs – learners can choose different learning objects within an overall package. The main potential drawbacks are the degree of access to computers, the need for a reasonable degree of literacy, the need for learners to be self-motivated, and the time and effort required to develop and update e-learning programmes.

Self-directed learning

Self-directed or self-managed learning involves encouraging individuals to take responsibility for their own learning needs, either to improve performance in their present job or to develop their potential and satisfy their career aspirations. It can also be described as self-reflective learning (Mezirow, 1985), which is the kind of learning that involves encouraging individuals to develop new patterns of understanding, thinking and behaving.

Self-directed learning can be based on a process of recording achievements and action planning, which involves individuals reviewing what they have learnt, what they have achieved, what their goals are, how they are going to achieve those goals and what new learning they need to acquire. The learning programme can be 'self-paced' in the sense that learners can decide for themselves up to a point the rate at which they work, and are encouraged to measure their own progress and adjust the programme accordingly.

Self-directed learning is based on the principle that people learn and retain more if they find things out for themselves. But they still need to be given guidance on what to look for and help in finding it. Learners have to be encouraged to define, with whatever help they may require, what they need to know to perform their job effectively. They need to be provided with guidance on where they can get the material or information that will help them to learn, and how to make good use of it. Personal development plans, as described later in this chapter, can provide a framework for this process. Learners also need support from their manager and the organization with the provision of coaching, mentoring and learning facilities, including e-learning.

Development

Development takes the form of learning activities that prepare people to exercise wider or increased responsibilities. In development programmes there is an emphasis on self-directed learning, as described above, personal development planning (together with learning contracts) and planned learning from experience.

Personal development planning

Personal development planning is carried out by individuals with guidance, encouragement and help from their managers as required. A personal development plan sets out the actions people propose to take to learn and to develop themselves. They take responsibility for formulating and implementing the plan, but receive support from the organization and their managers in doing so. The purpose is to provide what Tamkin *et al* (1995) call a 'self-organized learning framework'.

Stages of personal development planning

1. Analyse the current situation and development needs. This can be done as part of a performance management process.
2. Set goals. These could include improving performance in the current job, improving or acquiring skills, extending relevant knowledge, developing specified areas of competence, moving across or upwards in the organization, or preparing for changes in the current role.
3. Prepare an action plan. The action plan sets out what needs to be done and how it will be done under headings such as outcomes expected (learning objectives), the development activities, the responsibility for development (what individuals are expected to do and the support they will get from their manager, the HR department or other people), and timing. A variety of activities tuned to individual needs should be included in the plan, for example observing what others do, project work, planned use of e-learning programmes and internal learning resource centres, working with a mentor, coaching by the line manager or team leader, experience in new tasks, guided reading, special assignments and action learning. Formal training to develop knowledge and skills may be part of the plan but it is not the most important part.
4. Implement the plan.

A development plan can be expressed in the form of a learning contract, as described below.

Learning contracts

A learning contract is a formal agreement between the manager and the individual on what learning needs to take place, the objectives of such learning, and what parts the individual, the manager, the learning and development function or a mentor will play in ensuring that learning happens. The partners to the contract agree on how the objectives will be achieved and their roles. It will spell out learning programmes and indicate what coaching, mentoring and formal training activities should be carried out. It is, in effect, a blueprint for learning.

Planned experience

Planned experience is the process of deciding on a sequence of experience that will enable people to obtain the knowledge and skills required in their jobs and prepare them to take on increased responsibilities. This enables experiential learning to take place in order to meet a learning specification. A programme is drawn up which sets down what people are expected to

learn in each department or job in which they are given experience. This should spell out what they are expected to discover for themselves. A suitable person (a mentor) should be available to see that people in a development programme are given the right experience and opportunity to learn, and arrangements should be made to check progress. A good way of stimulating people to find out for themselves is to provide them with a list of questions to answer. It is essential, however, to follow up each segment of experience to check what has been learnt and, if necessary, modify the programme.

Training

Training is the use of systematic and planned instruction activities to promote learning. The approach can be summarized in the phrase ‘learner-based training.’ It is one of several responses an organization can undertake to promote learning.

As Reynolds (2004) points out, training has a complementary role to play in accelerating learning: ‘It should be reserved for situations that justify a more directed, expert-led approach rather than viewing it as a comprehensive and all pervasive people development solution.’ He also commented that the conventional training model has a tendency to ‘emphasize subject-specific knowledge, rather than trying to build core learning abilities.’

The justification for training

Formal training is indeed only one of the ways of ensuring that learning takes place, but it can be justified in the following circumstances.

- The work requires skills that are best developed by formal instruction.
- Different skills are required by a number of people which have to be developed quickly to meet new demands and cannot be acquired by relying on experience.
- The tasks to be carried out are so specialized or complex that people are unlikely to master them on their own initiative at a reasonable speed.
- Critical information must be imparted to employees to ensure they meet their responsibilities.
- A learning need common to a number of people has to be met and can readily be dealt with in a training programme: for example induction, essential IT skills, communication skills.

Systematic training

Training should be systematic in that it is specifically designed, planned and implemented to meet defined needs. It is provided by people who know how to train, and the impact of training

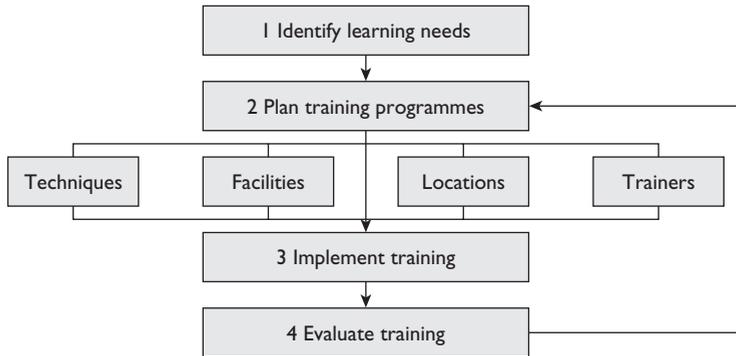


Figure 13.3 Systematic training model

is carefully evaluated. The concept was originally developed for the industrial training boards in the 1960s, and consists of a simple four-stage model as illustrated in Figure 13.3.

Just-in-time training

Just-in-time training is training that is closely linked to the pressing and relevant needs of people by its association with immediate or imminent work activities. It is delivered as close as possible to the time when the activity is taking place. The training is based on an identification of the latest requirements, priorities and plans of the participants, who are briefed on the live situations in which their learning has to be applied. The training programme takes account of any issues concerning the transfer of learning to the job, and aims to ensure that what is taught is seen to be applicable in the current work situation.

Bite-sized training

Bite-sized training involves the provision of opportunities to acquire a specific skill or a particular piece of knowledge in a short training session which is focused on one activity, such as using a particular piece of software, giving feedback or handling an enquiry about a product or service of the company. It is often carried out through e-learning. It can be a useful means of developing a skill or understanding which is readily put to use in the workplace through a concentrated session or learning activity without diversions.

Types of training

Training programmes or events can be concerned with any of the following:

- manual skills, including modern apprenticeships;
- IT skills;

- team leader or supervisory training;
- management training;
- interpersonal skills such as leadership, team building, group dynamics, neurolinguistic programming;
- personal skills such as assertiveness, coaching, communicating, time management;
- training in organizational procedures or practices such as induction, health and safety, performance management, equal opportunity or managing diversity policy and practice.

Blended learning

Blended learning is the use of a combination of learning methods to increase the overall effectiveness of the learning process by providing for different parts of the learning mix to complement and support one another. A blended learning programme might be planned for an individual using a mix of self-directed learning activities defined in a personal development plan, e-learning facilities, group action learning activities, coaching or mentoring, and instruction provided in an in-company course or externally. Generic training for groups of people might include e-learning, planned instruction programmes, planned experience, and selected external courses. Within a training course a complementary mix of different training activities might take place: for example a skills development course for managers or team leaders might include some instruction on basic principles, but much more time would be spent on case studies, simulations, role playing and other exercises.

Planning and delivering learning programmes and events

The actions required are:

1. *Establish learning needs* (methods of doing this are described in the next section of this chapter).
2. *Define learning objectives*. It is essential to be clear about what the programme or event is required to achieve – its learning objectives and outcomes. These are defined by reference to established learning needs, and provide the basis for planning content and evaluating results. Objectives can be defined as criterion behaviour (the performance standards or changes in behaviour on the job to be achieved if a learning process is to be regarded as successful) and terminal behaviour (what actually happened following the learning event). Any gap between criterion and terminal behaviour will indicate deficiencies in the programme. A behavioural objective could be set out as follows.

Example of a behavioural learning objective

At the end of the programme managers will be able to take greater responsibility for the development of their staff. Indicative activities will include:

- the conduct of satisfactory performance and development reviews;
- the agreement of personal development plans;
- enabling team members to carry out self-directed learning activities;
- the ability to use coaching skills to improve performance.

3. *Decide on content.* The content of the programme or event will clearly be governed by whatever those attending need to know or be able to do, as set out in the learning objectives. It is important not to try to achieve too much in any one event. There is a limit to how much people can absorb at any one time, and an even greater limit to how much they can put into effect. The content of the training should be related to the work contexts of the participants. Ideally, their work should be made a central feature of the subject matter. Every opportunity should be taken taking to embed learning at work.
4. *Decide on methods of delivery.* The methods used to deliver learning should be appropriate to the purpose of the course and to the characteristics of participants – their jobs, learning needs, previous experience, level of knowledge and skills, and how receptive they are to being taught (motivated to learn). A blended learning approach should be adopted. Account must be taken of how people learn. Every opportunity should be taken to embed learning at work. It is particularly important in management, supervisory and interpersonal skills training to provide ample time for participation and active learning through discussion, case studies and simulations. Lectures should form a minor part of the course. The design of the programme or event should take account of the principles of learning.

Guidance on the design and delivery of learning events

- Design an appropriate structure and culture – how the event will be shaped and the desirable climate of relationships.
- Stimulate the learners – ensure that learners believe that their needs are being catered for. Get them involved. Focus on key learning points.
- Help understanding – check understanding regularly and vary the learning pace to ensure that it is absorbed.

- Incorporate appropriate learning activities – these should include situations or the use of knowledge and skills which learners perceive to be relevant to their jobs.
- Build on existing learning – find out what people know and do and build on that so that they can incorporate new learning or recognize that they are irrelevant and allow them gradually to fall away.
- Guide the learners – give them regular feedback and guidance on the learning process.
- Ensure that learning is retained – enable learners to practice and consolidate their skills, bearing in mind the phenomenon of the learning curve. Provide feedback and praise as appropriate.
- Ensure transfer of learning – successful transfer of learning from the event to the workplace depends on the extent to which the event has been relevant to the learners' needs, the learners have been able to acquire the knowledge and skills covered in the programme, they have been stimulated throughout the programme and are encouraged and enabled to put their learning into practice.

Source: Harrison (2005), based on the ideas of Gagne (1977).

5. *Decide on the location and facilities required, the budget and who delivers the programme.* The programme could take place on or off the job, in-house or at an external centre. The facilities will be determined by the planned learning methods, and their availability will influence the location. At this stage it is also necessary to cost the programme and prepare a financial budget. The programme could be delivered by the organization's own learning and development staff, or outsourced in whole or in part to outside training providers. Line managers may usefully take part as long as they are reasonably proficient as instructors, trainers or coaches.
6. *Prepare information on the programme or event* – this will set out its objectives, content and methods as a guide to nominating managers and potential participants.
7. *Deliver the learning* – this should not present too many problems if the planning and preparation for the programme or event has been carried out systematically. However, a flexible approach is desirable because all learning events vary according to the characteristics of the learners, whose learning needs and reactions will vary. Fine-tuning will be necessary throughout the programme.
8. *Evaluate the learning* – the criteria for an effective learning programme or event are set out in the box. Systematic methods of evaluation are described later in this chapter.

Criteria for learning programme effectiveness

- The event or programme is based on a thorough evaluation of learning needs.
- Clear objectives have been set for the outcomes of the event or programme.
- Standards are set for the delivery of the event or programme.
- Success criteria and methods of measuring success have been established.
- A blend of learning and development methods are used – informal and formal – which are appropriate for the established needs of those taking part.
- The responsibilities for planning and delivering the programme or event have been clarified.
- Those responsible for the learning activity are well qualified in whatever role they are expected to play.
- Adequate resources have been allocated to the programme or event.
- The programme or event has the support of top management.
- The programme is implemented effectively as planned, within its budget and in accordance with the defined standards.
- The application of the programme or event is regularly monitored to ensure that it meets the defined objectives and standards.
- The achievements of the programme or event are evaluated against the success criteria and swift corrective action is taken to deal with any problems.

Identifying learning needs

All learning activities need to be based on an understanding of what needs to be done and why it needs to be done. The purpose of the activities must be defined, and this is only possible if the learning needs of the organization and the groups and individuals within it have been identified and analysed.

The basis of learning needs analysis

Learning needs analysis is often described as the process of identifying the learning gap – the gap between what is and what should be, as illustrated in Figure 13.4. But this ‘deficiency model’ of training – only putting things right that have gone wrong – is limited. Learning is much more positive than that. It should be concerned with identifying and satisfying

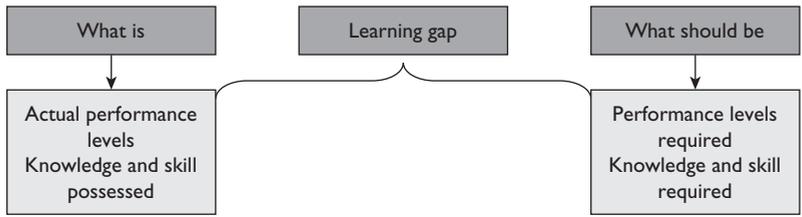


Figure 13.4 The learning gap

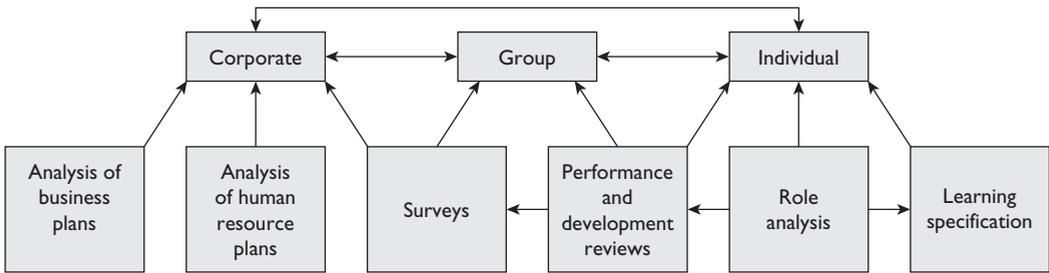


Figure 13.5 Learning needs analysis – areas and methods

development needs – fitting people to take on extra responsibilities, increasing all-round competence, equipping people to deal with new work demands, multi-skilling, and preparing people to take on higher levels of responsibility in the future.

Areas for learning needs analysis

Learning needs should be analysed, first, for the organization as a whole – corporate needs; second, for departments, teams, functions or occupations within the organization – group needs; and third, for individual employees – individual needs. These three areas are interconnected, as shown in Figure 13.5. The analysis of corporate needs will lead to the identification of learning needs in different departments or occupations, while these in turn will indicate what individual employees need to learn. The process operates in reverse. As the needs of individual employees are analysed separately, common needs emerge which can be dealt with on a group basis. The sum of group and individual needs will help to define corporate needs, although there may be some superordinate learning requirements which can be related only to the company as a whole to meet its business development needs. So the whole learning plan may be greater than the sum of its parts. These areas of analysis are discussed below.

Analysis of business and human resource plans

Business and HR plans should indicate in general terms the types of skills and competencies that may be required in the future and the numbers of people with those skills and competencies who will be needed. These broad indicators have to be translated into more specific plans which cover, for example, the outputs from training programmes of people with particular skills or a combination of skills (multi-skilling).

Surveys

Special surveys may be carried out which analyse the information from a number of sources, such as performance reviews, to identify corporate and group learning and training needs. This information can usefully be supplemented by interviewing people to establish their views about what they need to learn. People often find it difficult to articulate learning needs, and it is best to lead with a discussion of the work they do and identify any areas where they believe that their performance and potential could be improved by a learning or training programme.

An analysis should also be made of any areas where future changes in work processes, methods or job responsibilities are planned, and of any common gaps in skills or knowledge, or weaknesses in performance, which indicate a learning need. Further information should be derived from the evaluation of training as described at the end of this chapter.

Performance and development reviews

Performance management processes (described in Chapter 14) should be a prime source of information about individual learning and development needs. The performance management approach to learning concentrates on the preparation of performance improvement programmes, personal development plans and learning contracts which lead to jointly determined action plans. The emphasis is on identifying learning needs for continuous development, which can be met by self-directed learning, or to produce specific improvements in performance.

Role analysis

Role analysis is the basis for preparing role profiles which provide a framework for analysing and identifying learning needs. Role profiles set out the key result areas of the role, and importantly also define the competencies required to perform the role. A good performance management process will ensure that role profiles are updated regularly and the performance review is built round an analysis of the results achieved by reference to the key result areas and agreed objectives.

The competency framework for the role is used to assess the level of competency displayed in achieving, or not achieving, those results. An assessment can then be made of any learning required to develop levels of competency. Ideally, this should be a self-assessment by individuals, who should be given every encouragement to identify learning needs for themselves. These can be discussed with the individual's manager and agreement reached on how the learning needs should be met, by the individuals through self-directed learning and/or with the help and support of their managers.

Learning specification

Role analysis can be the basis of a learning specification which sets out what needs to be learnt and how the learning should be carried out.

Evaluation of learning

It is important to evaluate learning, in order to assess its effectiveness in producing the outcomes specified when the activity was planned, and to indicate where improvements or changes are required to make the learning programme even more effective.

The best-known framework for evaluation was developed by Kirkpatrick (1983). His four levels, which become progressively more demanding and revealing, are as follows.

Level 1: Reaction

At this level, evaluation measures how those who participated in the training have reacted to it. In a sense, it is a measure of immediate customer satisfaction. Kirkpatrick suggests the following guidelines for evaluating reactions:

1. Determine what you want to find out.
2. Design a form that will quantify reactions.
3. Encourage written comments and suggestions.
4. Get 100 per cent immediate response.
5. Get honest responses.
6. Develop acceptable standards.

Level 2: Evaluate learning

This level obtains information on the extent to which learning objectives have been attained. It will aim to find how much knowledge was acquired, what skills were developed or improved,

and the extent to which attitudes have changed in the desired direction. So far as possible, the evaluation of learning should involve the use of tests before and after the programme – paper and pencil, oral or performance tests.

Level 3: Evaluate behaviour

This level evaluates the extent to which behaviour has changed as required when people attending the programme have returned to their jobs. The question to be answered is the extent to which knowledge, skills and attitudes have been transferred from the classroom to the workplace. Ideally, the evaluation should take place both before and after the training. Time should be allowed for the change in behaviour to take place. The evaluation needs to assess the extent to which specific learning objectives relating to changes in behaviour and the application of knowledge and skills have been achieved.

Level 4: Evaluate results

This is the ultimate level of evaluation, and provides the basis for assessing the benefits of the training against its costs. The objective is to determine the added value of learning and development programmes – how they contribute to raising organizational performance above its previous level. The evaluation has to be based on before and after measures. It has to determine the extent to which there has been a satisfactory return on the investment in the learning programme, and how far its fundamental objectives have been achieved in areas such as increasing sales, raising productivity, reducing accidents or increasing customer satisfaction. Evaluating results is obviously easier when they can be quantified. However, it is not always easy to prove the contribution to improved results made by training as distinct from other factors, and as Kirkpatrick says, 'Be satisfied with evidence, because proof is usually impossible to get.'

Management and leadership development

Management development is concerned with improving the performance of managers in their present roles, preparing them to take on greater responsibilities in the future, and, importantly, developing their leadership skills. It has been described by Mumford and Gold (2004) as 'an attempt to improve managerial effectiveness through a learning process'. Management development activities are associated with talent management, described in Chapter 12.

A systematic approach to management and leadership development is necessary because the increasingly onerous demands made on line managers mean that they require a wider range of developed skills than ever before.

Formal approaches to management and leadership development

Management and leadership development should be based on the identification of development needs through performance management or a development centre making use of the following formal approaches:

- Coaching and mentoring.
- The use of performance management processes to provide feedback and satisfy development needs.
- Planned experience, which includes job rotation, job enlargement, taking part in project teams or task groups, 'action learning', and secondment outside the organization.
- Formal training by means of internal or external courses.
- Structured self-development following a self-directed learning programme set out in a personal development plan and agreed as a learning contract with the manager or a management development adviser.
- Competency frameworks can be used as a means of identifying and expressing development needs and pointing the way to self-managed learning programmes or the provision of learning opportunities by the organization.

Informal approaches to management and learning development

Informal approaches to management development make use of the learning experiences that managers meet during the course of their everyday work. Managers are learning every time they are confronted with an unusual problem, an unfamiliar task or a move to a different job. They then have to evolve new ways of dealing with the situation. They will learn if they analyse what they did to determine how and why it contributed to its success or failure. This retrospective or reflective learning will be effective if managers can apply it successfully in the future.

Experiential and reflective learning is potentially the most powerful form of learning. It comes naturally to some managers. They seem to absorb, unconsciously and by some process of osmosis, the lessons from their experience, although in fact they have probably developed a capacity for almost instantaneous analysis, which they store in their mental databank to retrieve when necessary. Ordinary mortals, however, either find it difficult to do this sort of analysis or do not recognize the need. This is where informal or at least semi-formal approaches can be used to encourage and help managers to learn more effectively.

Informal approaches to management development

- Getting managers to understand their own learning styles so that they can make the best use of their experience and increase the effectiveness of their learning activities – the manager’s self-development guide by Pedler *et al* (1994) provides an excellent basis for this important activity.
- Emphasizing self-assessment and the identification of development needs by getting managers to assess their own performance against agreed objectives and analyse the factors that contributed to effective or less-effective performance – this can be provided through performance management.
- Getting managers to produce their own personal development plans – self-directed learning programmes.
- Encouraging managers to discuss their own problems and opportunities with their manager, colleagues or mentors in order to establish for themselves what they need to learn or be able to do.

Development centres

Development centres consist of a concentrated (usually one- or two-day) programme of exercises, tests and interviews designed to identify managers’ development needs and to provide counselling on their careers. They offer participants the opportunity to examine and understand the competencies they require now and in the future. Because ‘behaviour predicts behaviour’, centres offer opportunities for competencies to be observed in practice. Simulations of various kinds are therefore important features – these are a combination of case studies and role playing designed to obtain the maximum amount of realism.

Participants are put into the position of practising behaviour in conditions very similar to those they will meet in the course of their everyday work. Important parts of the centre’s activities are feedback reviews, counselling and coaching sessions conducted by the directing staff.

Criteria for management and leadership development

The effectiveness and value of any approach to management development include the extent to which it:

- links to organizational goals and context – and so has relevance for the organization as well as for individuals;
- builds on and develops the qualities, skills and attitudes of participants;

- is supported by appropriate HR policies to do with recruitment and selection, reward, talent management and succession planning;
- has the full commitment of those responsible for the operation of the process;
- is motivating to those encouraged to participate in it.

Learning and development: key learning points

Learning and development

Learning and development is the process of acquiring and developing knowledge, skills, capabilities, behaviours and attitudes through learning or developmental experiences.

Learning and development strategy

The approach an organization adopts to ensure that now and in the future, learning and development activities support the achievement of its goals by developing the skills and capacities of individuals and teams.

Learning organization

One in which the continuous learning of its members is provided for and encouraged.

Organizational learning

Organizational learning theory is concerned with how learning takes place in organizations.

How people learn

Individuals learn for themselves and learn from other people. They learn as members of teams and by interaction with their managers, co-workers and people outside the organization. They learn by doing and by instruction.

Informal and formal learning

Formal learning is planned and systematic. It makes use of structured training programmes consisting of instruction and practice which may be conducted on the job or off the job. Informal learning is experiential learning. It takes place while people are learning on the job as they go along.

E-learning

E-learning provides for learning via computer technology. It provides a means of satisfying individual learning needs through self-managed learning.

Self-directed learning

Self-directed learning involves encouraging individuals to take responsibility for their own learning needs.

Development

Development takes the form of learning activities such as personal development planning which prepare people to exercise wider or increased responsibilities.

Training

Training is the use of systematic and planned instruction activities to promote learning.

Blended learning

Blended learning is the use of a combination of learning methods to increase the overall effectiveness of the learning process.

Planning learning programmes and events

It is essential to be clear about what the programme or event is required to achieve – its learning objectives and outcomes. These are defined to satisfy established learning needs and to provide the basis for planning content and evaluating results. The methods used to deliver learning should be appropriate to the purpose of the course and to the characteristics of participants.

Identifying learning needs

All learning activities need to be based on an understanding of what needs to be done and why it needs to be done. The purpose of the activities must be defined, and this is only possible if the learning needs of the organization and the groups and individuals within it have been identified and analysed.

Evaluating learning

It is important to evaluate learning in order to assess its effectiveness in producing the outcomes specified when the activity was planned, and to indicate where improvements or changes are required to make the learning programme even more effective.

Management development

Management development is concerned with improving the performance of managers in their present roles and preparing them to take on greater responsibilities in the future.

Questions

1. What are the elements of a learning and development strategy?
2. What is a learning culture and how can it be developed?
3. Critically evaluate the concept of a learning organization.
4. What is the basis of learning needs analysis?
5. What are the potential benefits of learning and development activities?
6. What are the criteria for an effective learning and development programme?
7. Why is learning evaluation important?
8. What are the levels of learning evaluation suggested by Kirkpatrick?

References

- Argyris, C (1992) *On Organizational Learning*, Blackwell, Cambridge
- Argyris, C and Schon, D A (1996) *Organizational Learning: A theory of action perspective*, Addison Wesley, Reading, MA
- Dale, M (1994) Learning organizations, in *Managing Learning*, ed C Mabey and P Iles, Routledge, London
- Easterby-Smith, M (1997) Disciplines of organizational learning: contributions and critiques, *Human Relations*, **50** (9), pp 1085–113
- Easterby-Smith, M and Araujo, L (1999) Organizational learning: current debates and opportunities, in *Organizational Learning and the Learning Organization*, ed M Easterby-Smith, J Burgoyne and L Araujo, Sage, London
- Eraut, M J, Alderton, G, Cole, G and Senker, P (1998) *Development of Knowledge and Skills in Employment*, Economic and Social Research Council, London
- Gagne, R M (1977) *The Conditions of Learning*, 3rd edn, Rinehart & Winston, New York
- Harrison, R (2000) *Employee Development*, 2nd edn, IPM, London
- Harrison, R (2005) *Learning and Development*, 4th edn, CIPD, London
- Honey, P and Mumford, A (1996) *The Manual of Learning Styles*, 3rd edn, Honey Publications, Maidenhead
- Kim, D H (1993) The link between individual and organizational learning, *Sloane Management Review*, **35** (1), pp 37–50
- Kirkpatrick, D L (1983) Four steps to measuring training effectiveness, *Personnel Administrator*, **28** (11), pp 19–25
- Mezirow, J A (1985) A critical theory of self-directed learning, in *Self-directed Learning: From theory to practice*, ed S Brookfield, Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, CA
- Mumford, A and Gold, J (2004) *Management Development: Strategies for action*, CIPD, 2004

- Pedler, M, Burgoyne, J and Boydell, T (1991) *The Learning Company: A strategy for sustainable development*, McGraw-Hill, Maidenhead
- Pedler, M, Burgoyne, J and Boydell, T (1994) *A Manager's Guide to Self Development*, McGraw-Hill, Maidenhead
- Pollard, E and Hillage, J (2001) *Explaining e-Learning*, Report No 376, Institute for Employment Studies, Brighton
- Reynolds, J (2004) *Helping People Learn*, CIPD, London
- Reynolds, J, Caley, L and Mason, R (2002) *How Do People Learn?* CIPD, London
- Scarborough, H, Swan, J and Preston, J (1999) *Knowledge Management: A Literature Review*, Institute of Personnel and Development, London
- Schein, E H (1990) Organizational culture, *American Psychologist*, **45**, pp 109–119
- Senge, P (1990) *The Fifth Discipline: The art and practice of the learning organization*, Doubleday, London.
- Slovan, M (2003) E-learning: stepping up the learning curve, *Impact*, CIPD, January, pp 16–17
- Tamkin, P, Barber, L and Hirsh, W (1995) *Personal Development Plans: Case studies of practice*, Institute for Employment Studies, Brighton
- Tamkin, P, Yarnall, J and Kerrin, M (2002) *Kirkpatrick and Beyond: A review of training evaluation*, Report 392, Institute for Employment Studies, Brighton
- Wick, C W and Leon, L S (1995) Creating a learning organization: from ideas to action, *Human Resource Management*, Summer, pp 299–311