

# Developing people

03

## Key concepts and terms

- *Action learning*
- *Blended learning*
- *Coaching*
- *E-learning*
- *Experiential learning*
- *Human resource development*
- *Learning culture*
- *Lifelong learning*
- *Management development*
- *Planned experience*
- *Self-directed learning*

## LEARNING OUTCOMES

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

- The meaning of learning and development
- Experiential learning
- Self-directed learning
- Personal development planning
- Coaching
- Mentoring
- Formal training and instruction
- Leadership and management development
- Blended learning

## Introduction

Developing people is the process of providing them with learning opportunities which will enable them to acquire the knowledge and skills needed to carry out their current jobs effectively and prepare them to exercise wider or increased responsibilities. It involves growing and realizing a person's ability and potential by means of learning experiences and self-directed (self-managed) learning.

The aim is to achieve lifelong learning by the provision or use of both formal and informal learning opportunities throughout people's lives in order to foster the continuous development and improvement of the knowledge and skills needed for employment and personal fulfilment. This is achieved through learning and development processes and programmes as described in this chapter.

## Learning and development defined

Learning and development processes aim to ensure that people in the organization acquire and develop the knowledge, skills and competencies they need to carry out their work effectively and advance their careers to their own benefit and that of the organization. Harrison (2009: 8) defined learning and development more broadly as follows:

The primary purpose of learning and development as an organizational process is to aid collective progress through the collaborative, expert and ethical stimulation and facilitation of learning and knowledge that support business goals, develop individual potential, and respect and build on diversity.

The three elements of L&D are learning, training and development as described below.

### *Learning*

Learning is the means by which a person acquires and develops new knowledge, skills, capabilities, behaviours and attitudes. As explained by Honey and Mumford (1996): '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 skills, knowledge and attitudes which prepare people for enlarged or higher-level responsibilities in the future.

## **Development**

Development is concerned with ensuring that a person's ability and potential are grown and realized 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 of instruction and practice 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 is 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 focus is on helping people to learn. There is much more to learning and development than simply laying on training courses.

The learning and development processes and activities described in the rest of this chapter are: experiential learning, self-directed learning, e-learning, personal development planning (together with learning contracts), coaching and mentoring, formal instruction through training interventions and leadership and management development programmes. These may be provided through 'blended learning'.

## **Experiential learning**

Experiential learning is learning by doing and by reflecting on experience so that it can be understood and applied. It is largely an informal process,

although line managers have an important part to play in facilitating it. But it can be planned in some circumstances.

Planned experience involves deciding on a sequence of experience which will enable people to obtain the knowledge and skills required in their jobs and prepare them to take on increased responsibilities. 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 spells out what they are expected to discover for themselves. A suitable person (a mentor, who might well be a line manager) is 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.

## Self-directed learning

Self-directed or self-managed learning involves encouraging individuals to take responsibility for their own learning, 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, which is the kind of learning which involves encouraging individuals to develop new patterns of understanding, thinking and behaving.

Self-directed learning can be based on a process of recording achievement 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 advice on how to learn, where they can get the material or information which will help them to learn and how to make good use of it.

## 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.

## Coaching

Coaching is a personal (usually one-to-one) approach to helping people develop their skills and knowledge and improve their performance. The need for coaching may arise from formal or informal performance reviews but opportunities for coaching will emerge during everyday activities.

Coaching as part of the normal process of management consists of:

- making people aware of how well they are performing by, for example, asking them questions to establish the extent to which they have thought through what they are doing;
- controlled delegation – ensuring that individuals not only know what is expected of them but also understand what they need to know and be able to do to complete the task satisfactorily; this gives managers an opportunity to provide guidance at the outset, since guidance at a later stage may be seen as interference;
- using whatever situations which may arise as opportunities to promote learning;
- encouraging people to look at higher-level problems and how they would tackle them.

## Mentoring

Mentoring is the process of using specially selected and trained individuals to provide guidance, pragmatic advice and continuing support which will help the person or persons allocated to them learn and develop. Mentors prepare individuals to perform better in the future and groom them for higher and greater things, ie career advancement.

Mentoring is a method of helping people to learn and develop as distinct from coaching, which is a relatively directive means of increasing people's competence. Mentoring promotes learning on the job, which is always the best way of acquiring the particular skills and knowledge the job holder needs. Mentoring also complements formal training by providing those who

benefit from it with individual guidance from experienced managers who are 'wise in the ways of the organization'.

## 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 they receive support from the organization and their managers in doing so. The plan can be expressed in the form of a learning contract as described below.

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 part 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 respective 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.

## Formal training and instruction

Formal 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. Instruction follows the sequence of explanation, demonstration, practice and follow-up:

- Explanation should be as simple and direct as possible: the trainer explains briefly the ground to be covered and what to look for.
- Demonstration of a 'doing' skill takes place in three steps: (1) the complete operation is shown at normal speed to show the trainee how the task should be carried out eventually; (2) the operation is demonstrated slowly and in correct sequence, element by element, to indicate clearly what is done and the order in which each task is carried out; and (3) the operation is demonstrated again slowly, at least two or three times, to stress the how, when and why of successive movements.
- Practice consists of the learner imitating the instructor and then repeating the operation under guidance.
- Follow-up continues during the training period for all the time required by the learner to reach a level of performance equal to that of the normal experienced worker in terms of quality, speed and attention to safety.

## Leadership and management development

Leadership development as described in Chapter 1 consists of programmes or processes designed to improve the leadership ability of managers and supervisors.

Management development involves generally improving the performance of managers in their present roles and preparing them to take on greater responsibilities in the future. The following approaches can be used:

- coaching and mentoring;
- 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, which 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.

An important aspect of development programmes for line managers is to provide guidance on how they can enhance the skills and capabilities of their teams and their individual team members by providing them with learning opportunities as well as guidance, coaching and formal instruction.

## 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.

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## KEY LEARNING POINTS

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Learning and development processes aim to ensure that people in the organization acquire and develop the knowledge, skills and competencies they need to carry out their work effectively and advance their careers to their own benefit and that of the organization.

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- Sloman, M (2003) E-learning: Stepping up the learning curve, *Impact*, January, pp 16–17

# Questions

- 1 What is involved in the process of developing people?
- 2 What are learning and development?
- 3 What is learning?

- 4 What is development?
- 5 What is training?
- 6 What is experiential learning?
- 7 What is self-directed learning?
- 8 What is e-learning?
- 9 What is involved in coaching?
- 10 What is involved in mentoring?
- 11 What are the four stages of instruction?
- 12 What is blended learning?