

# Frequently Asked Questions

in Human Resources Development

*For Trainers, Presenters, and Managers*



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## ABOUT SMR





**L**earning is fundamental to progress. HRD sees organisations as productive enterprises whose development is based on the acquisition and application of training by its people. The questions in this section examine various concepts related to learning like:

- Adult learning
- Multiple intelligences
- Memory
- Experimental learning
- Learning organisations

# 1 Why is learning emphasised so much today?

To understand the emphasis on learning, we need to understand first what learning is all about and the current context.

## **Learning**

Learning may be defined as the process by which people acquire new knowledge and skills. The term also refers to any durable change which results from such process. Learning has always been emphasised as societies focused on creating a set of knowledge and skills essential for progress.

## **The current context**

The current context is marked by issues such as intense competition and constant change. Change has always been there; but the pace of change is what differentiates the current situation from the one about 50 years ago. This, coupled with the influence of technology and competition necessitates learning, so that we remain relevant in the business and organisational contexts of today.

## **Human Resource Development**

This is all about preparing people for the challenges by equipping them with the knowledge and skills needed to be competitive in a tough world.

The global economy today is knowledge based. Knowledge and human capital are factors that drive success. Learning is the key to success—for each of us as individuals, as well as for the society as a whole.

## **Lifelong learning**

Learning throughout life will build human capital by encouraging innovation, creativity, and imagination. Lifelong learning is an absolute requirement for each of us to be relevant in today's world.

## **Learning and change**

Beckhard and Pritchard consider learning and change processes as part of each other. Change is a learning process and learning, a change process.

For example, learning to use the internet has changed the opportunities open to thousands of senior citizens. They work from home and feel connected to their community by being in touch with their children and friends over e-mail. In Australia, even eighty year olds have begun to learn how to use the personal computer.

In an organisational context, learning is driven through on-the-job processes, organisation development activities, and training and development programmes.

## **Website reference**

<http://www.lifelonglearning.co.uk>

## **Book reference**

Beckhard, R. & Pritchard, W. (1992). *Changing the Essence: The Art of Creating and Leading Fundamental Change in Organizations*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

## 2 What are the major learning theories?

The five major theories of learning that have had considerable influence on Human Resource Development are:

1. Behaviourism
2. Cognitivism
3. Humanism
4. Social Learning
5. Constructivism

### **Five different ways of learning**

Rather than state which one of the theories is better than the others, most practitioners have chosen to apply the best of all of the theories. The theories apply to learning in all settings, for all age groups and for all types of learning events. Each approach, however, defines learning differently, seeks different outcomes from learning, and prescribes different roles for the teacher or trainer. They are not either/or choices but five different ways to learning.

### **Matching theories to needs**

The challenge is to choose the appropriate approach to satisfy our needs. The following chart is adapted from Merriam and Caffarella's *Learning in Adulthood: A Comprehensive Guide*. It describes the significant characteristics of each theory, along various aspects as follows:

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