

HUMAN LEARNING

What is learning

- Learning is the process of acquiring new understanding, knowledge, behaviors, skills, values, attitudes, and preferences.
- Learning consists of complex information processing, problem-solving, decision making in uncertainty and the urge to transfer knowledge and skills into new, unknown settings.

Learning happens when you observe a phenomena and recognize a pattern. You try to understand this pattern by finding out if there is any relationship between the entities involved in that phenomenon. The example of a simple phenomenon that we observe daily the occurrence of day and night.



We have an observation about a phenomenon and we have a pattern. Can we explain how this pattern occurs? There are 2 entities involved in this observation Sun and Earth. Is there a relationship between the amount of light (and heat) originating from the sun and the surface of earth receiving it? The pattern suggests that the surface of the earth receives the light alternatively gets it during the daytime, does not get it during night-time. How is this possible? There are many possibilities like

1. The sun is, somehow, switching ON and switching OFF at alternate periods of time.
2. The sun keeps changing its position, revolving around the earth and illuminating different surfaces of the earth at different time periods
3. The earth is rotating on its axis continuously, so that at a given time, people living on the

surface which faces the sun, experience day while people living on the surface not facing sun, experience night.

The above 3 conclusions are called “models” that explain the observed phenomena. We can state or express these models as follows:

Model 1: Day/Night is a function of Magical ON/OFF switch of sun

Model 2: Day/Night is a function of the Revolution of Sun around the earth

Model 3: Day/Night is a function of Rotation of Earth on its axis

The question now arises — which model (or function) is more accurate? As per the observations/findings of different philosophers/scientists across the ages, Model 3 is the most accurate model which explains the phenomena of Day and Night. We can say, that this model “fits” best for the observations around these phenomena. The other 2 models can be safely refuted based on many other observations which cannot be explained by them.

Once a model has been built, it can be used to predict future outcomes for those phenomena. e.g in our example, our model can safely predict that occurrence of day/night will continue to happen until, for some reason, the earth stops rotating or sun runs out of its energy (Will the earth stop rotating? When will the sun spent all of its energy? — these questions can be answered by using another model). This is how humans learn.

What is Human Learning?

- All human learning is — observing something, identifying a pattern, building a theory (model) to explain this pattern and testing this theory to check if its fits in most or all observations.
- Every learning, fundamentally, is a model expressing a pattern in a set of observations. If there is no conceivable pattern, there will be no learning.
- No model or learning reflects “true” or “absolute” reality. Every model or learning is an approximation of observed reality.

Human Learning: Meaning, Nature, Types and Theories of Learning

Meaning and Nature:

- Learning is a key process in human behaviour. All living is learning. If we compare the simple, crude ways in which a child feels and behaves, with the complex modes of adult behaviour, his skills, habits, thought, sentiments and the like- we will know what difference learning has made to the individual.

- The individual is constantly interacting with and influenced by the environment. This experience makes him to change or modify his behaviour in order to deal effectively with it. Therefore, learning is a change in behaviour, influenced by previous behaviour. As stated above the skills, knowledge, habits, attitudes, interests and other personality characteristics are all the result of learning.

Learning is defined as “any relatively permanent change in behaviour that occurs as a result of practice and experience”.

This definition has three important elements.

- a. Learning is a change in behaviour—better or worse.
- b. It is a change that takes place through practice or experience, but changes due to growth or maturation are not learning.
- c. This change in behaviour must be relatively permanent, and it must last a fairly long time. All learning involves activities. These activities involve either physical or mental activities. They may be simple mental activities or 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.

What activities are learned by the individual refer to types of learning. For example, habits, skills, facts, etc. There are different types of learning. Some of the important and common learning activities are explained here.

Types of Learning:

1. Motor learning:

Most of our activities in our day-to-days life refer to motor activities. The individual has to learn them in order to maintain his regular life, for example walking, running, skating, driving, climbing, etc. All these activities involve the muscular coordination.

2. Verbal learning:

This type of learning involves the language we speak, the communication devices we use. Signs, pictures, symbols, words, figures, sounds, etc, are the tools used in such activities. We use words for communication.

3. Concept learning:

It is the form of learning which requires higher order mental processes like thinking, reasoning, intelligence, etc. we learn different concepts from childhood. For example, when we see a dog

and attach the term 'dog', we learn that the word dog refers to a particular animal. Concept learning involves two processes, viz. abstraction and generalisation. This learning is very useful in recognizing, identifying things.

4. Discrimination learning:

Learning to differentiate between stimuli and showing an appropriate response to these stimuli is called discrimination learning. Example, sound horns of different vehicles like bus, car, ambulance, etc.

5. Learning of principles:

Individuals learn certain principles related to science, mathematics, grammar, etc. in order to manage their work effectively. These principles always show the relationship between two or more concepts. Example: formulae, laws, associations, correlations, etc.

6. Problem solving:

This is a higher order learning process. This learning requires the use of cognitive abilities-such as thinking, reasoning, observation, imagination, generalization, etc. This is very useful to overcome difficult problems encountered by the people.

7. Attitude learning:

Attitude is a predisposition which determines and directs our behaviour. We develop different attitudes from our childhood about the people, objects and everything we know. Our behaviour may be positive or negative depending upon our attitudes. Example: attitudes of nurse towards her profession, patients, etc.