A. ORGANISATIONS, INDIVIDUALS AND DEVELOPMENT

No organisation can function without people; in fact no organisation can function without **developed** people. Appropriately trained and developed human resources can mean the difference between organisational success and failure. Organisations are in a constant state of change: production processes change in order to improve the quality and output of products; systems change in order to improve the flow of inputs and outputs. If skills and knowledge are not also updated, then employees will be unable to adapt to these changes.

Some Introductory Definitions

In considering the subject of employee development, we shall constantly make reference to the terms development, training, learning and education. It is important to be clear about these at the outset.

- **Development**

    The Manpower Services Commission defined development as "the growth or realisation of a person's ability, through conscious or unconscious learning" (1981). Thus, it more concerned with long-term individual, or organisational, development than short-term performance – although it encompasses this. It emphasises continuous learning and growth. For the organisation, it provides a focus to plan its own future through its human resources.

- **Training**

    Training has been defined as "a planned process to modify attitude, knowledge or skill behaviour through learning experience to achieve effective performance in an activity or range of activities". Training is essentially concerned with short term performance – in respect of the job or task in hand. As such, it provides the preparation to undertake specific requirements by, usually, the development of particular skills – so, for example, it may include training to use a new piece of equipment or a new computer application, or to improve letter writing or report writing skills. It may also be linked to development plans, for either the individual and/or the organisation, in which case it may be applied to assist with career growth and the building of skills which may or may not be immediately required, but will be in the future.

- **Education**

    Education has been defined as activities which "aim to develop knowledge, skills, moral values and understanding required in all aspects of life rather than a knowledge and skill relating only to a limited sphere of activity". As such, it encompasses the concept of *why* things happen, rather than simply how they happen (or can be made to happen). This can help to make skills more transferable. Education is also about the wider knowledge underpinning processes and procedures, and their contexts. It is, therefore, a key element of development and closely associated with professional development.

- **Learning**

    Learning is the process by which individuals acquire the knowledge, skills and behaviours/attitudes which they use to deal with all aspects of life. The study of learning is a whole subject in itself, but managers need to understand certain aspects of the process in order that they can enable others to learn and develop. It underpins the way in which effective training and education is provided, and a misunderstanding of the processes involved can easily render such provision ineffective. We shall consider learning later in the unit.

The Organisation and Development

Training and development are key factors in ensuring the effectiveness of an organisation's workforce. They are concerned with ensuring that employees have the necessary knowledge, skills and attitudes to undertake the jobs that they currently hold, and that there is a pool of such attributes in the workforce which will enable the organisation (or, by extension, the whole economy) to meet its future needs.

It is important to be aware that training and development are not, as they are sometimes used, universal panaceas for the ills of an organisation, or even an individual. They can certainly be applied to resolve problems of effective performance, but such problems may need to be addressed by alternative courses of action such as organisational change, the application of new equipment or working practices, or even the redeployment of individuals. The purposes of training and development need to be clearly understood as a basis for their appropriate use. From the organisation's point of view, they have been defined as:

● to maximise productivity or service provision;

● to develop the adaptability of the workforce;

● to develop the organisation as a whole;

● to increase job satisfaction, motivation and morale;

● to improve standards and safety at work;

● to make the best use of existing material, resources and equipment;

● to standardise working practices and procedures.

All organisations are faced with rapid and on-going change. This comes from both internal and external forces:

● **Internal forces:**

   (i)   New products and services

   (ii)   New ways of doing things

   (iii) New people and equipment in carrying out processes

   (iv)   Financial pressures, such as budgetary constraints

● **External forces:**

   (i)   Political changes, including legislation

   (ii)   Changes brought about by the economic cycle

   (iii) Social and demographic changes creating new demands on the organisation, especially as customers become better informed and more demanding

   (iv)   Changes in the external technological environment

Proactive organisations adopt a positive approach to these challenges by seeking to incorporate development in the strategic plan. This should chart not only where the organisation is going in the medium to long term, but should also have constituent plans for each part of the organisation, including human resources. Training and development are inextricably linked to the on-going process of change.

Training originally evolved as one activity within the human resource management function. As a consequence, many organisations have recruited trainers to work directly for the human resources

manager. This link with human resources management continues today, though most accept that training and development are of such importance to an organisation that there may be a fairly high level executive (perhaps even at board level) responsible for these activities.

Some organisations recognise the value of development and are thus more proactive about it. The 1990s heralded an increase in the investment made in training and development, but this has not always been the case. Only 20 years ago training, along with marketing, was often a "Cinderella" activity in UK businesses, extremely vulnerable to cuts in budgets and other resources during times of financial strain. The reasons for this are clear. Most managers would consider both training and marketing to be vital activities, but many of the outcomes are difficult or impossible to quantify in terms of tangible benefits to the enterprise. It is also costly and, in terms of financial constraint, presents an easy target for savings since it does not immediately impact on production.

In 1985 Coopers and Lybrand published a major report on the state of training in organisations. The report, entitled *A Challenge to Complacency* outlined the poor investment that organisations. It further found that organisations were operating in a state of complacency and were failing to recognise the importance of training.

The report:

- Encouraged companies to invest in human resource development.

- Encouraged companies to adopt a more systematic and planned approach, including the organisation of the training function and the utilisation of expert training and development practitioners.

- Encouraged companies to be more rigorous in the way they costed and evaluated training programmes to enable managers to appreciate its benefits and effectiveness to the organisation in relation to its cost.

- Encouraged the use of case studies to highlight best practice – how training can be used to help the company achieve its mission, corporate objectives and strategy and, importantly, how **failure** to train can stunt organisational growth and promote a culture of failure.

Some of the assumptions which underlay the position reported by Coopers and Lybrand may be described as follows:

- **The assumption that only well-off organisations can afford training.**

    This is not correct. Any organisation, large or small, has a wealth of learning and training opportunities at its fingertips. Employers do not have to spend thousands of pounds on a training programme. Valuable learning and training experiences can be gained from:

    (i)   Observing others by job shadowing

    (ii)   *Sitting by Nellie* and watching what a trained person does on a day-to-day basis

    (iii) Mentoring or coaching, etc.

- **The assumption that education, training and development is the responsibility of the human resources department.**

    It is true that training and development have to be someone's responsibility – and it appears natural and logical that it should be the responsibility of the human resource department, as training and development forms part of human resource strategy and the human resource plan. However, laying the responsibility for training and development at human resources' door should not be an excuse to ignore the **whole organisation's** responsibility to ensure that training and development is carried out.

(i) **Top management** has a responsibility to ensure that it allocates sufficient money to support and finance development activity and that it forms part of the overall corporate strategy.

(ii) **Line managers** have a responsibility to ensure that they encourage their staff to develop themselves and that time is allocated for training and development activities.

(iii) **Employees** have a responsibility to ensure that they develop their knowledge, skills and experience and that training and development activities are mentioned in their formal appraisals.

(iv) Finally, the **human resources department** is responsible for ensuring that all training and development activities in the organisation are identified, planned for, implemented and evaluated in a cost effective way, with the organisation's needs in mind and in line with the organisation's objectives and strategy.

- **The assumption that any training is relevant.**

  In some ways **any** training is good – but it must be appropriate for the individual, the organisation and for the strategic direction of the company. Much money has been wasted over the years by companies who feel that they **must** train staff – but do so without any specific planning or focus. As such, training becomes just another chore and line managers and employees do not take it seriously. It is therefore vital that all training carried out is **relevant** and **necessary** and not merely training for training's sake!

The changes in attitude towards training and development have been brought about by many factors:

- **Change** – in a constantly changing environment it is impossible to function without training and developing people – otherwise, how can they cope with new circumstances, issues and problems?

- **People** – as early as the 1930s, theorists such as **Elton Mayo** confirmed the strong identification of workers with their employers' businesses – people generally want to be involved and want work to be a learning experience.

- **Government** – successive governments in the UK have focused on development through a wide range of initiatives in both education and training, within industry and commerce and in the general field of further and higher education.

- **Compliance** – various Acts of Parliament have forced many businesses to take training seriously, including:

  (i) Health and safety and occupiers' liability legislation

  (ii) Minimum standards laid down for financial advisers

- **Quality** – the movement towards a total quality management approach by many organisations has meant that properly structured training programmes have to be in place so that quality cannot be compromised by poor output.

Management Development

Management development as a process is usually considered to be something for senior management in the organisation. Of course, the development of managers is part of the general training and development processes ensuring competence at all levels in the organisation, but the development of senior management is generally a little different. Significantly, it is less about the development of managers than the development of "management". This implies a strong corporate focus and a team approach as well as the concern for individual effectiveness.

Thus, three dimensions may be seen:

- at the personal level – the ongoing acquisition of the skills and abilities necessary for the management of oneself and others, allied at this senior level with effective performance in respect of team working, high level communication skills (both within and outside the organisation) and, importantly, working with boards and committees in both formal and informal structures in the interplay of policy and decision making;

- in respect of the management team – the need to build and consolidate strong, innovative working relationships which provide for mutual respect and allow for individual abilities and aptitudes to be recognised and brought to bear as appropriate in corporate decision making;

- from the organisational perspective – the definition and development of the purposes and ethos of management itself within the organisation, and the structures and processes through which these may be effected.

Management development is concerned, then, with the totality of managing (running) the whole organisation. It is not just about improving the knowledge, skills and attitudes of managers. It is about effective management behaviour – the development of appropriate management styles and practices from the top down in the search for improved performance in respect of the challenges facing the organisation. It is an integral part of the planning and organising to meet corporate goals.

Management development activities focus on:

- Every manager within the company

- Future and present needs

- Self-development and performance – knowledge, experience, attitude and skills

- Team development and team working

Personal Development

Personal development may be seen as a process of preparing oneself to meet the future requirements of one's own career. In the rapidly changing conditions of the modern business environment, personal development can assist progress and flexibility in employment, both within organisations and in the wider labour market. Increasingly, the adaptability of individuals to change in order to meet new needs, and the possession of appropriate skills, is seen as an important personal attribute. This demands that the individual takes responsibility for him/herself.

The context within which a great deal of personal development takes place, is the organisation in which individuals work. The focus for this is often the formal appraisal system with its emphasis on two-way communication and the appraisee raising issues relevant to his/her development. However, the emphasis in modern organisations is also often that individuals should take responsibility for their own development. There is a view that the development process should be individual-led as much as organisational-led. The function of management should be to encourage this self development and channel it for the benefit of the individual and the organisation.

The process of personal development is very much the same as we shall consider below in relation to training and development in general. However, it is essentially based on self audits of skills and gaps.

Career development is an important aspect of personal development in organisations. This involves employees formulating their own personal development plans (PDPs) which outline objectives and timescales for career development activities. Action plans/development plans should be reviewed on a regular basis to see if objectives have been achieved. Many professional institutes require their

members to undertake continuous professional development (CPD) in order to keep their knowledge, skills and experience up-to-date

Personal development also includes elements of employability – knowledge, competencies and skills that enhance an employee's employment portfolio. It also encompasses desirable experience that can be transferred to another job. This very much places an emphasis on the **individual** organising his/her own development activities. It is also a way of improving employee motivation and morale.

B.   IDENTIFYING TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT NEEDS

Misdirected training can not only waste time and resources, but also detract from the credibility of the training and development function. There needs to be effective identification of training needs for the following reasons:

- training can be expensive, and a faulty analysis of what is required can result in a significant waste of the organisation's resources;

- an accurate training analysis enables limited training budgets to be directed towards activities which will achieve optimum benefits for the organisation;

- accurate information about training needs is essential to the specification of learning objectives and the design of appropriate training programmes;

- an organisation's training plan should be based upon the assessment of training needs and their prioritisation.

Thus, training programmes should be implemented under a human resource plan which has identified needs, both present and future, on the **demand** side and matched them to resources on the **supply** side. The result of the match is identification of the **training gap**, which has to be bridged through a mixture of training existing staff and the recruitment of new staff with the necessary skills (see Figure 10.1). The training gap is the difference between what is **actually** happening, and what **should** be happening.
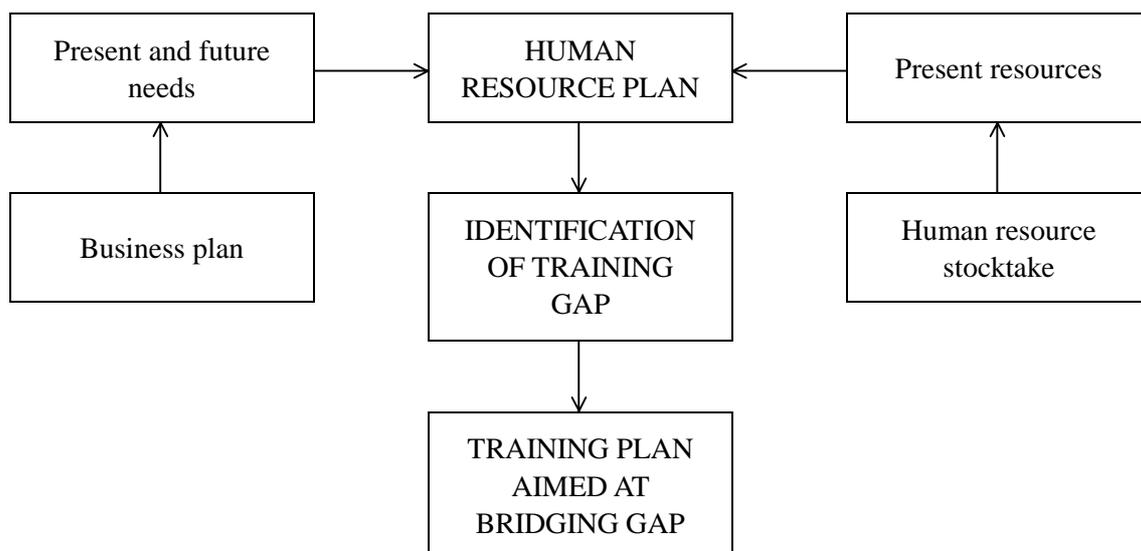
Figure 10.1: Human Resource Development Plan

Assessing Individual and Corporate Needs

There are two approaches towards the identification of training needs:

- assessing the needs of the individual; and/or

- assessing the needs of the organisation.

These are not mutually exclusive and most organisations will have procedures in place to assess the needs from both perspectives.

(a)   Individual needs

Within any group of employees doing the same work, there will be differences in individual needs for training, influenced by differences in aptitude or previous experience. These differences need to be identified if resources are not to be wasted on a "scatter gun" approach to training programmes based solely on generalisations about the whole workforce or particular occupational groups.

The main methods of assessing these needs on an employee-by-employee basis are:

- the performance appraisal process – with each employee's individual on-going training and development requirements being identified and discussed at the annual appraisal interview;

- in the absence of a formal appraisal process, by examining an employee's individual output and quality records;

- by questionnaires, usually with a checklist of training topics, which ask employees individually whether they feel their work would benefit form further training. Supervisors are also usually asked to complete a similar questionnaire for each member of their work group.

In both the initial analyses and in subsequent training plans, it is helpful to distinguish between immediate training needs within the employee's current job and longer-term development needs. Employees' suggestions about their own training often focus on the latter, citing courses and wider experience which might assist them in gaining a promotion or general professional qualifications. Supervisors' views about their staff usually concentrate on training to improve current job performance. An effective training analysis takes both types of need into account and produces a training plan which strikes an acceptable balance.

(b)   Corporate needs

By corporate needs, as opposed to individual needs, we are concerned with training and development designed to meet organisational objectives – at section, departmental and whole organisation levels. The focus is on groups of staff and their common needs as defined by management. There are three particular aspects to this:

- a concern to improve performance, whether derived from problems of effectiveness or not, which may require a corporate response – for example, time management or team building;

- a concern with consolidating or introducing new core values – such as quality management or customer service orientation;

- a concern to ensure the effective introduction of new products/services and/or working practices – such as the introduction of a new line in a shop, a new financial management system or the use of new equipment.

Another way of viewing the corporate/individual distinction is to consider it as the separation of job-centred or occupational needs as opposed to employee-centred needs. The corporate approach focuses purely on the needs of the job irrespective of the individual filling it. The individual is, therefore, viewed collectively with others doing the same job. For example, it may be determined that time management should be an obligatory programme for all staff in the finance department, regardless of their age, experience and actual performance (and whether or not they had attended a similar programme with a previous employer). Some participants might, therefore, consider it money unwisely spent, but the needs of the department as a whole are considered to outweigh that.

Recognition of the corporate dimension to training and development in this way locates it as an integral part of management at all levels in the organisation. It is a process which is central to the achievement of organisational goals and cannot, therefore, be sidelined as the concern of the personnel department or its training section. Both the identification of individual needs and the consideration and identification of corporate needs are the responsibility of those with the responsibility for the performance of employees – as individuals and collectively.

Knowledge, Skills and Behaviour

Once training/development needs have been identified, the particular form of activities which will enable them to be met must be considered. In order to do this, it is important to be clear about exactly what outcomes are expected – i.e. what are the knowledge, skills and behaviours which needs to be developed.

The relevant questions are set out below.

● **What do employees need to know in order to perform their jobs well?**

This may range from background information about the organisation to very detailed technical knowledge abut the individual work tasks;

● **What skills or competences are required, and to what level?**

In many instances, knowledge by itself (for example, the theory of a technical process) is not enough to secure acceptable performance and there is a need to develop the necessary practical skills to be used in the job;

● **What behavioural characteristics are needed?**

Although the general attributes of interest, commitment and enthusiasm are important for all jobs, for a training needs analysis this aspect needs more specific attention. There may, for example, be a need for some employees to develop a particular type or set of attitudes towards customer service, technical standards, work flexibility, cost-consciousness or even working together effectively.

C. THE LEARNING PROCESS

Learning is the acquisition of new skills, knowledge or attributes which can be demonstrated by a relatively permanent change in an individual's capabilities and/or behaviour.

Examples of learning include operating a piece of machinery such as a word processor (manipulative skills), knowing the disciplinary process of the organisation (knowledge) or having the ability to negotiate a change in working practices with staff representatives (interactive skills).

Learning Theory

There have been a number of different approaches to trying to resolve the question of "how do we learn?".

- Behaviourism evolved through experimentation with animals. The **stimulus-response theory** (classical conditioning) was advocated by **Pavlov** (1927). He observed the way dogs salivated at the sight of food and found that the dogs could be conditioned to respond to a ringing bell. **Operant conditioning** was developed by **Skinner** (1953) whose research into rats identified that their behaviour could be altered by using positive and negative reinforcement. Positive reinforcement (or rewards) was given to the rat to promote responses, and negative reinforcement (taking the food away) was applied when the rat displayed non-compliant behaviour.

- **Cognitive theory** (Gestalt theory) revolves around the belief that learning is an holistic process and that it involves the mind, body and spirit. Cognitive theorists or humanists believe that humans have the ability to learn and think, store this learning and thinking, and then apply it to specific situations.

- **Experiential learning** was developed initially by **Carl Rogers** (1967). He believed in learning as an holistic process and advocated the importance of experiential learning (learning by doing) being adopted in the workplace because it is one of the most powerful ways in which individuals learn. **Kolb** (1974) built on the work of Rogers and formulated the experiential learning cycle.

Kolb's experiential learning cycle reflects the fact that learning is an ongoing and continuous process. This approach is now widely used as a means of managing learning. It stresses the need to learn from practice and feedback, so that the process comprises, rather than a sequential series of events, a continual series of circular patterns based on experience.
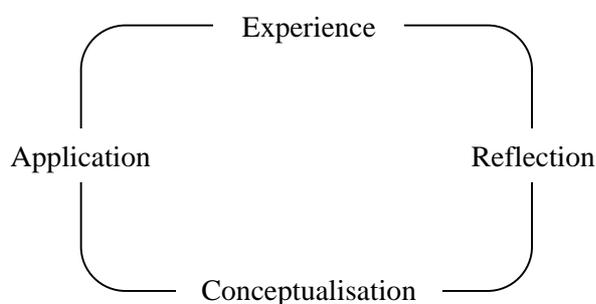
Figure 10.2: Kolb's experiential learning cycle

- **Experience**

    Concrete experience is the basis of the cycle. We use experiences that we have had in the past, or take experiences which are new to us, in order to further our learning. These experiences may be structured and planned, or may be "accidental", in that they happen to us in the course of our work or our everyday living. They may be experiences which happen to us on our own, or involving others.

- **Reflection**

    Having been through an experience, the next stage of the cycle is about examining it in order to be able to identify what actually happened, what we became aware of, and how we felt about it.

It is at this stage, also, that we begin to make an attempt to understand what the experience might mean for us, in terms of its significance, whether good or bad, if the experience seems to be something which tends to happen to us frequently, and what this means in terms of our learning to deal with it.

Sometimes you will be able to go through this stage by thinking things through, consciously or unconsciously, on your own. At other times, you may find it helpful to talk your ideas over with another person.

- **Conceptualisation**

    Having made the experience "coherent" through reflection, we then go into the phase of conceptualisation. Here we generalise from the individual experience to start to look at how it can be used in other ways – in terms, perhaps, of principles and trends. Can any of the ideas which emerge be applied to similar situations? What common behaviour patterns might we begin to see emerging?

- **Application**

    We are now ready to test out our analysis of the experience by applying the ideas and principles identified. Application is active experimentation by modifying our behaviour after making decisions about how this might best be done and, then, in a sense, beginning the learning cycle again, by putting ourselves in the position of experiencing a situation afresh.

This cyclical process needs to be completed in full for effective learning to take place. If, for example, one is tempted to jump from stage two to stage four without fully analysing and conceptualising the experience, it is unlikely that any new behaviour will be effective or helpful – there will be no true understanding of why things happened as they did, and no sense will be made of the data which the experience generated.

A fundamental underlying principle in Kolb model is the responsibility of the person who is learning, to identify what stage of the process he/she is at and, hence, to consider what seems to work best for moving forward. The answer to this is going to be very different for each of us, as our individual personalities, strengths and weaknesses are brought to bear in the learning situation.

Learning Styles

In this section, we will explore the idea that individuals have particular learning styles which they tend to adopt most naturally. Kolb *et. al.* assert that:

> *"As a result of our hereditary equipment, our particular life experience, and the demands of our present environment, most people develop learning styles that emphasise some learning abilities over others."*

Consideration of your own learning styles will provide you with a useful tool for your own personal growth and enable you to set up the best possible learning experiences for yourself. You may also be able to develop strategies which help you to become stronger in styles which are less natural to you.

The work of Kolb *et. al.* has been refined by Honey and Mumford (1986) to develop four categories of learning styles:

- the activist;
- the reflector;
- the theorist;
- the pragmatist.

The four styles are described below in terms of the general characteristics associated with people of each type. Note that these are "ideal types" – generalised statements applying to persons who might fit the style perfectly. Such ideal types can rarely be applied to individuals in their entirety. Rather, you will probably find that different aspects of each apply to you as an individual. The value of this methodology lies in its ability to develop understanding of behaviours (in this case, learning) by classifying them into broad groups.

Honey and Mumford also developed a comprehensive "learning styles questionnaire" which is designed to enable individuals to identify their preferred natural learning style. However, even without completing this, it is possible to give careful consideration to the four styles, and to consider yourself in relation to each one.

- **Activist**

   Activists absorb themselves fully in new experiences and tend to jump in at the deep end. They are open-minded, enthusiastic, gregarious, flexible and thrive on challenge. The down side to this approach is that they act first and consider the consequences afterwards. They have "butterfly" attention spans – they get bored quickly and want to move on to the next activity.

- **Reflector**

   These people like to stand back and take it all in. They may take a minor role in discussions but will assimilate other people's ideas readily. They are likely to be thoughtful and methodical and will demonstrate good listening skills. The weaknesses of this approach are that they are reluctant to participate, may be cautious and are endlessly revisiting the past.

- **Theorist**

   These people are able to integrate their observations into theories or patterns. They will be logical, rational, objective and disciplined. The disadvantages of this style are that theorists will have a low tolerance for chaos. They will probably have a tendency towards perfectionism and an intolerance of intuition and subjectivity.

- **Pragmatist**

   Pragmatists like to apply theories and concepts to practice. They like new ideas and seek them out and test them. These people are likely to be practical and realistic. The weaknesses could be that these types are task-oriented and like to get on with things without always testing the options.

So can you identify your preferred natural learning style, and how can this help you?

The first thing to note is that there is no "best" style. Each has its merits and they relate to different aspects of the learning process. For example, you may have already begun to make some connection between the four learning styles and the four stages of the experiential learning cycle:

- the activist will be most comfortable, and derive most learning, from the experience stage of the cycle;

- the reflector will be effective in the reflection stage (obviously!);

- the theorist will be most able to generalise and draw conclusions in the conceptualisation stage; and

- the pragmatist will be most effective in taking action in the application stage.

People develop by building on their strengths and tackling their weaknesses. Understanding your strengths and weaknesses in how you learn can enable you to identify those situations in which

learning is most naturally effective, and those where you need to work harder at ensuring that learning takes place.

For example, as you work through this course (or any other studies or new experiences), you will encounter knowledge and skills which have to be learned. Appreciating your learning style means that you should be aware of what approach works best for you, and which methods and opportunities best facilitate your learning.

If you are a pragmatist, you may want to think constantly about what things means in terms of their application, whereas if you are a reflector, you need to sit back and analyse the experience you have gone through.

You may also want to reflect on the types of learning opportunity which best suit you. Pragmatists will learn best by actually applying their knowledge and skills at the first opportunity, so on-the-job training may be most appropriate, whereas reflectors may gain more from courses where there is time to take in and reflect on new experiences.

You also need to be aware of the learning styles with which you are not so comfortable, but which may, nevertheless, be necessary from time to time. For example, as part of this course, there is obviously going to be a need to understand theoretical approaches to particular topics – in this module as much as in others. If you are not naturally a theorist, you need to consider how you can accommodate that style of learning when necessary – perhaps by setting yourself clear and manageable targets which enable you to absorb theoretical concepts in digestible pieces.

In addition, you may now, or at some time in the future, be involved in facilitating learning for others. This may be in the formal role of a trainer, but it can also be an almost unconscious part of management. It is important, therefore, that you are able to identify the way in which others learn most comfortably so that you can provide the best learning opportunities for them.

For example, you may be in the position of advising someone on the kind of training or further study he/she could undertake. There are a range of options about the types of programme available, and a key question will be about how the programme is delivered – the bias towards theory or practice, the degree of research necessary, the amount of interaction involved, etc. Awareness of learning styles can help in considering the most appropriate approach.

Skills Development

A skill is the ability to do something at a high level of performance.

It is invariably used to describe specialist movements or techniques – for example, dancing, operating machinery, or horse riding. However, it is not confined to practical activities such as these. It can also mean mental reasoning skills, skills with the senses (and we will be looking at listening in particular later in the course), or interpersonal skills such as social interaction, working in groups, presenting information, asking questions, etc.

Skills are initially learned by following a set of instructions. These instructions may be written down or spoken, or they may be learned themselves by watching others perform the same activity (as a demonstration, deliberately or otherwise). Going back to young children again, they acquire skills constantly by watching, mostly, their parents – sometimes deliberately as in the case of learning to tie shoelaces, or sometimes just from general observation, as in learning to use a knife and fork.

However, there are two important elements which lead to the improvement in performance necessary to develop a skill.

- **Practice**

  We need to try and re-try in order to become proficient at most skills. It can take a lot of practice over a long time to master some skills. Some we may never learn completely, no matter how hard we try (such as playing the piano), so whilst we may be able to do it to some level of performance, we might not claim it as one of our skills. It is also invariably the case that, if we don't do something – practise the skill – for a while, our technical proficiency decreases.

- **Feedback**

  We have to have feedback to know whether we're getting things right. We need to check our performance. Sometimes this is quite obvious – if the thing you are trying to do doesn't work, or is not working in the way in which it should, then there is negative feedback. You have to try again. Sometimes, though, we need help from others to tell or show us where we are going wrong. Without this, we can incorporate mistakes into our performance, which can then be very difficult to unlearn.

  Note that feedback does not have to be, and indeed should not solely be, negative. Positive feedback helps us to know when we are getting things right, even if we haven't totally mastered the whole skill at the time.

Motivation to Learn

Apart from the question "how do we learn?", we also need to ask "why do people learn?".

If you ask yourself why you are studying this course, I expect you may use terms such as "want", "wish" or "need". In other words, you see it as a means to an end. We each want things which provide us with satisfaction or pleasure, and we turn away from things which are offensive and cause us displeasure or pain. We can see then that **motivation** is a key factor in the learning process.

What this means for a teacher is that it is necessary to provide conditions that will lead people to want to direct their efforts towards the objectives which have been set. For a learner it means looking for a good reason to learn.

Motivation to learn can take two forms:

(a) **Intrinsic** – where the motivation does not depend on a reward outside the activity, but just the successful completion of the activity itself. Examples of intrinsic motivation include:

   - The satisfaction of our curiosity over something that is unclear or unfinished, such as the completion of a crossword puzzle.

   - The achievement of competence – in general we become good at those things which interest us, for example we set ourselves targets to achieve, such as a "personal best" time for a race or other sporting event.

   - A means of knowing how well we are doing – watch the players around a pinball machine.

(b) **Extrinsic** – where a reward is supplied from outside the activity. Examples of extrinsic rewards include:

   - Praise or criticism.

   - Financial rewards at work – although this type of reward is not easy to assess, many surveys on why people stay with a particular organisation and work hard while they are

there have found the pay factor is commonly placed 6th or 7th, after such rewards as security, interesting work, welfare and co-workers.

Individual and Group Learning

(a)   Individual Learning

In developing individuals, the teaching role is rather that of coach or counsellor. One-to-one training is usually carried out on-the-job by someone who is expert at a task instructing someone else who is trying to learn it – often referred to as "sitting next to Nellie".

In order to carry this out successfully we need to consider what this involves. Coaching is essentially the process of setting tasks, monitoring performance, reviewing and learning from performance:

●   Setting tasks involves having a learning target, or objective, which is appropriate to the learner's current ability and needs.

●   Monitoring progress entails having regular meetings to discuss progress being made towards achieving the target.

●   Reviewing and learning from performance includes reviewing when tasks have been completed and carrying out a post-mortem to decide:

(i)   Why things went well

(ii)   How it might be possible to improve on this in the future

(iii)   How anything that did not go well might be avoided in the future

(b)   Group Learning

In group learning, the process is generally controlled by a professional teacher or trainer. It invariably takes place "off the job".

Methods which encourage learning in the group situation include:

●   **Discussions** – it is vital that people should learn to express themselves orally in a controlled manner within a working group. In a discussion group the experience of members is regarded as important. The group functions to encourage members in speaking, listening and clarifying thinking. The role of the group leader is to inspire, guide, involve and summarise.

●   **Syndicate work** – for this the group is divided into small sub-groups, each of which is given a definite task or topic to explore and to report back on later to the whole group. This can involve reading, discussing, interviewing, role-playing and the provision of a written report.

●   An extension of this method is **project work**, where a project is undertaken by the group, with each member performing some specific task(s), their respective findings being co-ordinated before the completed project is presented.

●   **Case history methods** – a situation or incident is described up to the point where a key person or persons is about to take some action. At this point the group is asked to decide what they would do in this situation.

●   **Role-playing** – group members are given particular roles to play and are then required to act out their parts, behaving in the way they think these characters would. Following

this, points arising are discussed. This type of activity is particularly useful in the field of human relations training.

- **Tutorials** – where small groups are allowed a good interchange of questions and answers in an informal setting.

The Importance of Feedback

We have mentioned that we all need to know how well we are performing, and this is especially true in any learning situation. Indeed, one of the potential disadvantages of group learning can be the lack of feedback to individuals in the group. It is essential that all learners know a channel of communication is available should they require help or advice.

Feedback on progress is itself a powerful motivator to continuing learning. When you submit a report, for example, you expect to get a quick and useful response, giving you an assessment of your efforts and encouragement.

- **Extrinsic feedback** is information that the teacher gives to the learner about the effectiveness of their performance. If, for example, you were teaching someone oral presentation skills, it might be necessary to tell them to speak more slowly, or to restrict the movement of their hands, in order to be more effective.

- **Intrinsic feedback**, on the other hand, is that which the learner obtains through their own actions, as for instance if you carry out a cross-total check on a table of figures and find that it is correct. Here you do not need someone else to tell you it is right.

In skills learning, as we move, say, from the stage where a typist knows the positions of the keys and which fingers to use on which parts of the keyboard, to where they reduce their errors to less than 1% and begin to increase their typing speed rapidly, they need to rely less on extrinsic feedback and more on intrinsic. At this point the skill learning becomes self-evaluative.

D. TRAINING METHODS

The choice of various methods of training is a key feature of effective employee development. Some skill is required in identifying which method, or combination of methods, is suited to a particular situation.

The basic distinction is between on-the-job methods and off-the-job methods.

On-the-job Methods

Learning on the job provides trainees with experience which is a combination of work-based knowledge and the development of skills. As the trainee gains experience, the range and complexity of tasks which he or she can undertake without detailed guidance increases. This process of learning can be improved by several means.

(a)   Demonstration

A preliminary to much learning by experience is for an experienced instructor to demonstrate to trainees how to carry out a particular task. Demonstration is an essential preliminary to operating most machines and equipment.

Such training is sometimes referred to as "*sitting by Nelly*" and the attachment of trainee managers to a more senior manager – observing negotiations or interviews, etc. – is a similar approach.

This approach has the disadvantage of not always providing the "learner" with an understanding of **why** something is done. "*Nelly*" often has no skills as a trainer and so is often unable to facilitate the learning process very effectively. In addition, the "learner" is likely to pick up bad habits as well as good ones.

(b)   **Coaching**

Understanding and speed of learning can be improved substantially with effective coaching by an experienced instructor. "*Coaching*" is a term used to define the process by which a trainee learns by carrying out tasks under guidance from an experienced person. The instructor gives guidance and feedback to the trainee, and provides encouragement and assistance in overcoming difficulties.

A great deal of coaching is provided on the job and, as such, is hard to distinguish from routine supervision. An ability to coach subordinates is a basic supervisory skill, and staff who have supervisory responsibilities have a training need to acquire coaching skills. Learning to drive is usually done through "coaching".

(c)   **Projects**

Assigning to trainees the task of investigating a problem and analysing potential solutions to that problem is a popular method of learning in the office. Considerable knowledge of work practices and procedures can be gained; analytical and problem-solving skills can be developed; and, in some cases, the opportunity to apply knowledge gained at college is available.

Management training programmes frequently entail such project work. There is the advantage of this activity being distinct from routine work – performance is more easily monitored and relevant, specific feedback is provided.

(d)   **Job rotation**

This can take the form of a series of relatively short-term training periods in a number of predetermined positions in different parts of a company. It is more likely as part of a programme for staff in junior positions who have been recruited recently.

An alternative form is to transfer experienced staff to positions in functions or departments with which they may not be familiar, in order to widen the scope of their experience at later rather than earlier stages in their careers.

This can provide a useful introduction into other functional areas of the business, e.g. operational staff working with marketing staff. Head office staff often benefit from an understanding of operational-level activities and vice versa. International companies often use this system to develop a cultural awareness which can be generated by working in different parts of the organisation. Job rotation can also offer staff the opportunity to develop management skills by running a smaller profit centre or strategic business unit. These activities are often vital to succession planning.

(e)   **Attachments/secondments**

An alternative method of broadening the experience of staff is to provide for attachment or secondment to other divisions of the same business or, in some cases, to other organisations, of staff who are undergoing development programmes. One advantage of this method is that it should go some way towards overcoming one of the drawbacks of relying on "home-grown" talent, which is that the organisation may lack an influx of new ideas brought in by staff who are recruited externally.

Secondment to charities, other sectors, or work with suppliers or intermediaries can provide similar advantages.

(f)   Mentoring

This involves a young manager taking guidance from an experienced manager, and it should be a two-way process. The junior gains from the experience of the more experienced manager, who in turn gains from having an enthusiastic helper with fresh ideas.

(g)   Assistants

An individual may be developed by appointing him/her as assistant to a more senior person. Skills and aptitudes may be called forth in an assistant role.

(h)   Committees/quality circles

Membership of these formal groups enables individuals to interact with more experienced or more senior staff. Individuals can be encouraged to contribute, make reports, etc.

Off-the-job Methods

(a)   Short courses

These courses are generally concerned with the development of specific skills.

They may be:

- **Open** – made up of course members from a variety of organisations. Whilst the content may not be tailored to the needs of your organisation or industry there is the advantage of exposure to other ideas and experiences, which helps to stimulate creativity and new approaches.

- **Closed** – courses which are developed for a specific organisation. The quality and inputs are controlled, so that the content of the course and the approach are tailored to the needs of the business. Company culture and team building can be valuable indirect benefits.

Particular techniques associated with short courses are:

- **Case studies** – Here, trainees are presented with the task of solving simulated business problems described as case studies. Case studies can help to illustrate points which are difficult to explain by other means, and they contribute to the development of problem-solving and analytical skills.

- **In-tray exercises** – Here students are provided with such things as letters from customers, memos from staff, requests for information, etc., and they are observed working out how best to deal with this workload.

- **Management games** – The students are presented with business situations and data which they are required to analyse before making decisions. Their decisions are fed into a computer that gives a report which forms the basis for a new situation, which must then be analysed.

- **Role-playing** – Here trainees act out business situations from prepared briefs. This is the technique most suited to developing skills in dealing with people. Feedback can be provided by means of video recording and replay of CCTV. These exercises are time-consuming, but there is an increasing use of the method since the importance of social contact skills has been recognised.

(b)   Longer education-based courses

Courses like the ABE Diploma, MBAs and other education courses are popular ways of developing either professional skills and understanding or management skills. Usually open in nature, such courses are increasingly available in a variety of modes:

- Distance learning

- Evening classes

- Intensive blocks

- Full time

(c)   Conferences, seminars and workshops

Usually short, sharp inputs based on current topics, latest developments and updating sessions, conferences and seminars can be very valuable, though not always directly relevant to the organisation. They usually have the added advantage of offering the opportunity to network with others in the same industry or profession.

(d)   Programmed instruction

Under this form of training, there is no direct involvement of an instructor, but programmed instruction is provided through a combination of the following:

- Books (or binders or prepared notes)

- Audio cassettes or discs

- Video cassettes or discs

- Television programmes

- Computers

Trainees can use these courses when they have free time, whereas other methods require attendance at specific times. However, there is no feedback with the flexibility of a human instructor unless the instruction is provided at an Open Learning Centre where a facilitator may be available to give some assistance and answer queries.

Developments in computer technology are extending the range of training materials available – for example, the use of multimedia, interactive CD-based programmes, and the development of centrally controlled broad training programmes delivered over company "intranets".

(e)   Outdoor/outward bound programmes

Some organisations have included outward bound schemes to assist individual and group development. The essence of these programmes is to place individuals in unfamiliar situations, e.g. rock climbing or facing the rigours of outdoor living. In these new situations people face unfamiliar tasks, e.g. navigating over rough country, crossing rivers, building shelters, finding food, etc.

In order that development may take place, expert "enablers" guide the employees on these courses. Individuals and groups develop as they meet new challenges; confidence grows as problems are faced and overcome.

Supporters of outward bound courses argue that team building, leadership qualities and problem-solving skills developed "in the field" can assist development in the work situation.