

The Meaning of Learning

In psychology and education, a common definition of learning is a process that brings together cognitive, emotional, and environmental influences and experiences for acquiring, enhancing, or making changes in one's knowledge, skills, values, and world views (Illeris,2000; Ormorod, 1995). Learning as a process focuses on what happens when the learning takes place. Explanations of what happens constitute learning theories. A learning theory is an attempt to describe how people and animals learn, thereby helping us understand the inherently complex process of learning. Learning theories have two chief values according to Hill (2002). One is in providing us with vocabulary and a conceptual framework for interpreting the examples of learning that we observe. The other is in suggesting where to look for solutions to practical problems. The theories do not give us solutions, but they do direct our attention to those variables that are crucial in finding solutions.

There are three main categories or philosophical frameworks under which learning theories fall: behaviourism, cognitive, and constructivism. Behaviourism focuses only on the objectively observable aspects of learning. Cognitive theories look beyond behaviour to explain brain-based learning. And constructivism views learning as a process in which the learner actively constructs or builds new ideas or concepts.