

PSYCHOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS OF EDUCATION

Unit III — Learning and Motivation

Learning

Meaning, Definition, Nature and Factors Affecting Learning

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Foundation for Practice

Underpins every method and strategy you will study in Teaching Approaches and Educational Technology.

Beyond Rote Memorisation

A child learning to tell time can apply this knowledge to many other situations.

Realistic Expectations

Understanding the nature of learning helps you set stage-appropriate expectations for learners of every age.

Diagnosis & Remediation

Awareness of the factors affecting learning helps you identify why a child struggles and plan support.

Examination & Practice

Directly tested in Internals, Sessionals and University exams — and the theory base for Internship.

Why This Topic Matters for B.Ed. Trainees ?

Meaning of Learning



A Wider Meaning

In everyday language, 'learning' often means just studying books or preparing for exams. In psychology it is far wider - the process through which a person acquires new knowledge, skills, habits, attitudes and ways of behaving through experience, practice or training, and through which existing behaviour is modified, strengthened or eliminated.

In Simple Words

A relatively permanent change in behaviour or behavioural potential, resulting from experience - not from mere physical growth, maturation, fatigue, illness or temporary states.

EVERYDAY EXAMPLE

A child who touches a lit candle and feels pain withdraws the hand - and the next time a flame is seen nearby, pulls away without being told. This lasting change, gained purely through experience, is learning.

Definitions of Learning by Eminent Psychologists

Gates

Learning is the modification of behaviour through experience.

Crow & Crow

The acquisition of habits, knowledge and attitudes, involving new ways of overcoming obstacles or adjusting to new situations.

Woodworth

Any activity that develops the individual, for better or worse, making behaviour different from what it would otherwise have been.

Skinner

Learning is a process of progressive behaviour adaptation.

Gardner Murphy

Learning covers every modification in behaviour made to meet environmental requirements.

Nature and Characteristics of Learning

-  **1. A Change in Behaviour**
Cognitive, affective or psychomotor — e.g. a learner who now writes the alphabet has changed.
-  **2. Universal and Continuous**
Every living organism learns, and learning continues throughout life, cradle to grave.
-  **3. Result of Experience**
Arises from direct experience (doing, practising) or indirect experience (observing, reading).
-  **4. Relatively Permanent Change**
Lasting, not a passing reaction — change from fatigue, illness or drugs is not learning.
-  **5. Purposive and Goal-Directed**
Occurs because the learner wants to satisfy a need or achieve a clear goal.

Nature and Characteristics of Learning



6. Multi-Dimensional

Covers knowledge, skills, habits, interests, attitudes and values — not knowledge alone.



8. Adaptive

Helps the individual adjust to new situations and overcome obstacles.



10. Gradual and Cumulative

Builds up in stages through repeated experience, rather than appearing all at once.



7. Individual and Social

Happens within the individual, yet is shaped by interaction with teachers, peers and family.



9. Cannot Be Directly Observed

Only inferred from a change in performance — correct answers, an improved skill.



11. Transferable

What is learnt in one situation can be applied to new, related situations — transfer of learning.

Factors Affecting Learning

No two learners learn in the same way or at the same pace. Effectiveness of learning depends on four broad groups of factors:



A

Learner-Related

Readiness, motivation, intelligence, interest, age, emotion, health



B

Task / Subject-Related

Nature, length and difficulty of material; link with prior learning



C

Teacher & Method-Related

Teaching method, teacher's skill, reinforcement, practice



D

Environmental / Social

Physical setting, home background, society, peer group and school

Learner-Related Factors

Factors residing within the learner that shape how effectively learning takes place.



Readiness

Physical, mental and emotional preparedness to learn — a Class I child is not ready for algebra.



Motivation

The inner drive that energises and directs learning; genuine interest outperforms studying to merely pass.



Intelligence & Aptitude

Higher mental ability speeds and deepens learning, though effort can compensate for average intelligence.



Interest & Attention

Learning is faster and lasts longer when the learner is genuinely attentive and interested.



Age and Maturation

Certain kinds of learning are possible only after the required physical and mental maturity.



Emotional State

Anxiety and fear block learning, while a calm, secure state facilitates it.



Health & Physical Condition

Fatigue, hunger or poor health reduce the capacity to attend to and process new information.

Task / Subject-Matter Related Factors

Factors arising from the nature of what is being learnt.

Nature of the Material



Meaningful, well-organised content is learnt faster than vague or disconnected material.

Length and Difficulty



Shorter, simpler units are easier to learn; content should match the learner's level.

Similarity with Prior Learning



New learning is easier when linked to what is already known — the principle of transfer.

Clarity of Objectives



Clearly stated learning outcomes help the learner focus effort on what truly matters.

Teacher and Method-Related Factors

Factors connected with how, and by whom, learning is facilitated.

Method of Teaching



Activity-based, learner-centred methods outperform rote, lecture-only teaching.

Teacher's Personality & Skill



A warm, competent, encouraging teacher builds the confidence needed to learn.

Reinforcement and Feedback



Timely praise, correction and knowledge of results strengthen correct responses.

Practice and Repetition



Repeated, spaced practice converts new learning into a lasting habit or skill.

Environmental and Social Factors

Factors in the wider setting surrounding the learner.

Physical Environment



A well-lit, ventilated, noise-free classroom with adequate seating supports concentration.

Home and Family Background



A supportive, stimulating home encourages regular study habits and positive attitudes.

Socio-Economic & Cultural Factors



Availability of resources and cultural values shape a learner's opportunities and outlook.

Peer Group & School Climate



A cooperative peer group and positive school climate strongly facilitate learning.

Two Learners, the Same Lesson on Photosynthesis

Learner A

- Well-rested and genuinely curious about plants
- Sits in a quiet, well-lit classroom
- Taught through demonstration with real leaves

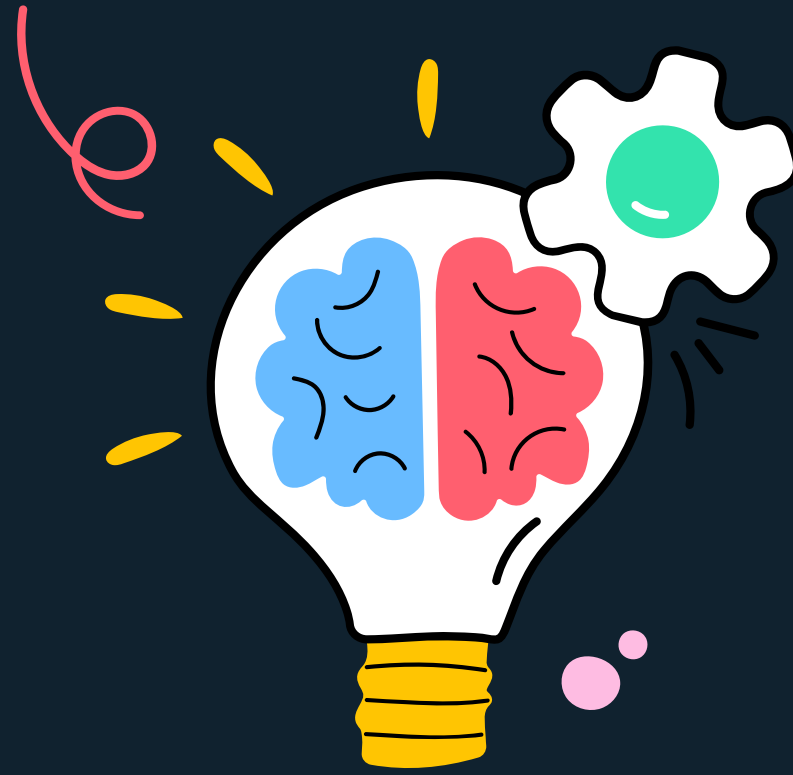
Learns effectively

Learner B

- Tired and uninterested in the topic
- Sits in a noisy back bench
- Only has the textbook read aloud

Learns very little

Same content, same teacher - yet readiness, motivation, method and environment together decide the outcome of learning.



Thank You

Growth and development tell us what a child becomes — learning tells us how.



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Key Takeaways

-  Learning is a relatively permanent change in behaviour, knowledge, skill or attitude resulting from experience, practice or training.
-  Gates, Crow & Crow, Woodworth, Skinner and Gardner Murphy defined learning differently, but all agree it involves lasting behavioural change.
-  Its nature is universal, continuous, experience-based, purposive, multi-dimensional and adaptive — yet it can only be inferred, not observed directly.
-  Learning is shaped by learner-related, task-related, teacher/method-related and environment-related factors together.
-  A teacher's real role is to create the conditions — readiness, motivation, method and environment — for genuine learning to occur.