

# LEARNING IN ORGANISATIONS

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## Introduction

South Africa today is characterised by a rapidly changing socio-political environment, changing technology and severe skills shortages, especially in the technical, professional and managerial categories. The failure of the education system to meet the requirements of commerce and industry for active, responsible and skilled learners is all too evident. It has been recognised by many, and for some time already, that education, training and development are key strategies to meet these challenges. Many companies are investing enormous sums of money in training and development programmes for existing and potential employees. At the same time, the economic environment is forcing organisations to manage costs very tightly. Against this background, it is becoming more and more important to ensure that investment in training and the development of people is maximised.

In this chapter, we will describe two distinct, yet related shifts in thinking which are required to ensure the effective transfer of skills and understanding to meet organisational goals. These shifts are:

Firstly, away from training and towards learning; in other words, away from the means towards the purpose.

Secondly, away from training as a separate activity in companies, and towards learning as an integral process permeating all aspects of company culture.

The key features of a learning culture will be discussed, as well as the conditions that are needed to bring about a learning culture, and the roles of key players in bringing about this change. The work of Knowles (1980) will be drawn upon for its theoretical underpinning of the adult learning process. However, the emphasis will be on describing the practical application of adult learning theory and principles within companies both in the United Kingdom by Sylvia Downs, and more recently in South Africa by the author.

## Key Features of a Learning Culture

The presence of a learning culture in an organisation is not determined by the size of its training budget! It is something that is knitted into the values and belief system of the members of the organisation, and is demonstrated by attitudes where:

- Change is seen not as a threat, but rather as an opportunity for learning and development;
- People at all levels understand the need for, and develop the capability to become, life-long learners;
- People develop the skills and confidence to learn new knowledge and skills without necessarily having to attend a formal training course. For example, by learning from peers
- Any person well-placed to give training does so, for example, the researcher who developed the new process or machine, or the operator who learned how to fix something because he needed to;
- Blockages to learning in the organisation are systematically identified and removed
- Trainers change their roles from 'course-runners' to 'facilitators of learning'; and

- Managers play an active and direct role in on-the-job coaching of their staff, and also become 'facilitators of learning' and change agents in creating a productive 'learning culture'.

In order to understand how to establish a learning culture, it is necessary to understand the nature of the learning process, and the way in which adults tackle this process.

### **The Nature of the Learning Process**

In viewing some principles of adult learning and the nature of the learning process, the work of two major contributors will be described. Firstly, the contribution of Malcolm Knowles is considered. Knowles is an American educationalist who provides a useful theoretical understanding of adult learners and the learning process. The contribution of Sylvia Downs is considered next. Downs is a British occupational psychologist who has developed a range of practical models, tools, instruments and workshops which organisations and individuals have found to be very useful in enhancing the job-learning process.

Knowles (1980), describes four key attributes of proficient adult learners, namely that they:

- Are self-directed
- Accumulate a growing reservoir of experience which becomes an increasingly rich resource for further learning
- Become ready to learn something when they experience a need to learn it in order to cope more effectively with real-life tasks or problems, and
- Shift their time perspective from the childhood context of postponed application of knowledge, to meet the adult need of more immediate application. This implies that their orientation toward learning shifts from being subject-centred to being performance-centred.

The four key attributes of proficient adult learners give rise to seven conditions required for effective learning. These are:

- That learners need to feel an internal need to learn
- The learning environment needs to be characterised by physical comfort, mutual respect and trust, mutual helpfulness, freedom of expression and acceptance of differences
- Learners need to perceive the goals of a learning experience to be their own goals
- Learners need to accept a share of the responsibility for planning and operating a learning experience, and therefore have a feeling of commitment toward it
- Learners need to participate actively in the learning process
- The learning process needs to be related to, and make use of, the existing experience of the learners, and
- Learners need to have a sense of progress towards their goals.

Whereas Knowles deals with identifying the requirements for effective learning, Downs goes further to develop and apply practical methods for cultivating the attitudes needed for proficient learning within organisations (Downs and Perry, 1984;1987). These methods are based on the findings by Downs that learning ability is not an innate individual characteristic which is static, but rather, a collection of skills that can be identified, developed and practised. These practical methods were developed and validated under the auspices of the Manpower Services Commission (MSC) in the UK,

and have been incorporated into a series of workshops, questionnaires and experiential learning exercises for learners, trainers and managers.

Amongst Downs' significant contributions is the 'MUD model'. This model is a simple and practical way of classifying learning according to the material to be learnt, namely facts which have to be Memorised, concepts and principles which have to be Understood, and physical skills which are best learnt by Doing. The model assists learners, managers and trainers to match learning strategy to learning need. For example, rote memorising is not an appropriate method when one is trying to understand something. A large portion of Downs' work has been assisting people to improve their learning strategies and skills, particularly in the area of developing understanding, which is usually the most problematic area for people with poor learning skills.

Appropriate understanding strategies are based on asking questions that stimulate thinking and expand the learners' information-base. To assist learners to formulate these questions for themselves, Downs developed the Keys to understanding where the learner:

- Determines the Purpose of the task/concept/material to be learned
- Makes Comparisons with similar and different tasks/concepts/material
- Considers the task/concept/material from the Viewpoints of other disciplines and people
- Tries to foresee Problems and determine solutions, and
- Envisages Checks which (s)he can implement to check his or her results/ideas

A critical point which emerges from Downs' work is that three key players are important in bringing about a learning culture in an organisation. These players are:

- Learners themselves, most importantly
- Trainers/instructors functionally responsible for designing and delivering formal training sessions, usually off-the-job, and
- Line managers and supervisors who coach and develop staff at all levels on-the-job.

In practice, the three categories-learner/trainer/manager - overlap because any one person may be both a trainer and a manager, and indeed also a learner in different situations, and even in the same situation. For example, a line manager may present training workshops on safety for his or her staff, and also provide on-the-job coaching to staff. He or she can also learn while presenting the safety workshop or coaching staff, both from the technical insights of staff and from the training experience itself.

At other times, a trainer or manager will be a more formally designated learner; for example, when attending a course of undertaking a new assignment under someone else's guidance.

It is vital that members of organisations recognise this overlap between roles. If, for example, trainers and managers, while delivering training, see themselves also as learners, they will be more open and understanding of the needs of learners than if they see themselves as experts whose only job it is to 'transfer knowledge'. They will not then regard the learners as 'empty buckets' which they, as trainers or managers, have to fill. Instead, they will help the learners make explicit what is already available within themselves as existing experience and knowledge, thus facilitating a transfer of this experience to the new work context.

The implications of learners seeing themselves not as passive recipients of someone else's training or coaching, but rather as active and skilled managers of their own

learning, are extremely powerful. This does *not* mean 'learner-paced instruction' or 'programmed instruction' but rather that learners need to understand the nature of the learning process (as distinct from the material learned). This is achieved by assisting learners to become aware of their own specific learning blockages, to overcome these blockages, and then develop and enhance their learning skills and strategies. This theme will be explored in greater depth later on in this chapter.

Practical experience in organisations both in the UK and recently in South Africa has shown that explicit awareness of the overlap or merging of manager/trainer/learner roles, and of the learning process itself by all three parties, has had the following benefits:

- Considerable shortening of learning times
- Increased levels of competency
- Increased levels of confidence and motivation amongst learners
- Reversal of the cycle of negative expectations leading to poor performance which results in further negative expectations
- Greater credibility of trainers within organisations
- More cost-effective formal and informal training, and
- Bridging of the 'gap' between the formal classroom situation and practical application in the actual job situation

Having emphasised the interdependence and overlap of the roles of manager, trainer and learner, it is nonetheless useful for discussion purposes to consider the implications of bringing about a learning culture for each of these three roles in turn.

The manner in which organisations can go about the change-process of developing a learning culture, is firstly by influencing and involving management and trainers. For this reason, the role of managers and trainers will be considered first.

### **The Manager's Role in Developing a Learning Culture**

It has already been suggested that a key management role is that of trainer or coach. It is common cause that most development of staff occurs on-the-job. Thus the immediate manager or supervisor is in a powerful and critical position in terms of the learning process. In addition, the line-manager or supervisor has many significant opportunities to move the culture in the organisation towards a learning culture, simply by the way he or she manages staff. In this section, management behaviour that promotes a learning culture will be discussed first. Thereafter, the specific implementation by managers of an alternative and more effective method of coaching staff which is based on the principles of adult learning, will be described.

#### **Management behaviour that promotes a learning culture**

First and foremost, it is vital that a manager is aware of the myriad of potential learning situations that any person encounters both in and out of work; for example, management-staff discussions (formal and informal), departmental meetings, work assignments, observing/talking with experienced workers and managers. If a manager believes that the only way in which his or her staff can learn and develop is by sending them on a training course, then that manager has not moved 'off first base' to promote a learning culture. That limiting belief must be changed if a learning culture is to be established. Usually, we find that most managers know implicitly where learning actually occurs, but don't know how to promote it in practice.

From this basic belief and orientation towards learning, a range of specific behaviours needs to flow as set out below. Some of these behaviours are common to a generally acknowledged good style of management. Other behaviours are more specific to the manager's role in promoting learning, but all of the behaviour described below flows directly from the four attributes of proficient adult learners and the seven conditions required for effective learning as described previously.

For example, managers can:

- Ensure that staff understand that everyone's role is to help others learn. Many organisations already include 'people development' in the job descriptions and/or key performance areas for all managers. An organisation with a learning culture would go further than this, by considering that 'development of self and others' is part of everyone's job description, and by explicitly rewarding managers for developing people
- Welcome new ideas, assess them objectively and implement if beneficial
- Value people for their contribution and not discriminate on the basis of sex, age or race
- Listen to and learn from people at lower levels in the organisation
- Set and agree clear performance standards
- Give people frequent, honest, constructive and practical feedback (both positive and negative)
- Treat mistakes as opportunities for learning, either for the individual, the organisation, the manager, or all three. (This does not mean that all mistakes should go uncensored, but rather that the question should always be asked, 'what have you/I/we learned from this and how will we deal with it in future?')
- Discuss learning blockages openly with staff, and
- Discuss application of new learning to the work situation

### **On-the-job Coaching**

A coaching model which incorporates the principles of adult learning will be compared with a traditional coaching model and the implications of the new approach will be discussed. Training and on-the-job coaching in many organisations currently occurs by managers conducting sessions more or less in the following manner, where they:

- Describe the overall job and express confidence in the employee's ability to learn the job/task
- Check by asking (but not always!) whether the employee has any prior experience that may assist in learning the task
- Describe/demonstrate each step, emphasising the key points
- Allow the employee to practice, under supervision, and give feedback
- Let the employee operation on his/her own, and
- Follow-up periodically and give the employee further feedback and encouragement.

The above approach may be contrasted with some aspects of the alternative process which would occur in an organisation having a 'learning culture', where the manager:

- Gets the employee to consider reasons, purposes and benefits of the task to be learned; then indicates how thinking about purposes helps the understanding process

- Asks the employee to observe, make notes, consider problems and ask questions while a task is being demonstrated; then indicates how considering problems helps understanding, and identifies misunderstandings at an early stage; and
- Asks the employee to consider the actual ways which he/she used to learn the task, and suggests others to the employee - this makes the learning process overt

The similarities between the two different approaches are that the coach continues to manage and guide the development/learning process. The coach also checks that the performance standards are reached.

However, there are fundamental differences between the two ways of coaching. One difference is the high degree to which the learner is active in the new approach; thus the learner inherently becomes responsible for his/her own learning right from the start. Another difference concerns who is developing the concepts (learner vs. trainer). During the new approach, the emphasis is on understanding and doing while in the traditional approach mainly procedural learning is evident.

These above-mentioned differences are important for a number of reasons. Firstly, the new approach ensures more effective and efficient learning of the task at hand; secondly, it puts the learner in a far better position to cope with deviations from the norm once he or she is actually doing the job; thirdly, the learner's confidence and motivation to do the task are increased.

However, the main difference between the two approaches is that the learning process and skills are covert in the traditional approach, while in the new approach, the learning process and skills are made overt and discussed. This difference is critical because it develops learning skills at the same time as developing the skills needed for the immediate task. The learner thus becomes aware of which learning strategies are appropriate for different material by applying the MUD model and Keys to Understanding overtly. Learning skills are transferable to any task, whereas specific task or product skills are generally not as transferable. This means that a person who is coached in a manner which develops learning skills, will be able to tackle new tasks or challenges in the future with greater confidence and effectiveness.

### **The Trainer's Role in Developing a Learning Culture**

For trainers, the key change lies in improving the design and process of learning situations, eliminating learning blockages in the external environment particularly those caused by the trainer her/himself, and assisting the learner to overcome his or her internal blockages. Much attention in the past few years has been devoted to the use of 'high-tech' training methods such as interactive videos and computer-based training as well as 'high-structure' methods such as competency-based modular training (CBMT). Although these methods are very valuable, they deal mainly with subject matter (content) but do not inherently ensure that the process of learning is effective. Therefore, they will not automatically result in improved learning, and often have been disappointing in practice. All of these methods can be made more effective by implementing a sound fundamental process for learning, in addition to ensuring that relevant content is presented in a format that can be assimilated by the learners.

Training should be seen primarily as a tool for bringing about the required learning and not as an activity which trainees undergo as a separate exercise from the job itself. We know that people do not have to be trained in order to learn; there are many ways in which people learn; usually by involving other people, since learning is a social process.

We also know that people often learn in spite of the training they receive. This does not mean that 'training programmes' as we know them are obsolete, but rather that the focus needs to shift firmly away from the training in these programmes, to the learning that is the aim of the programmes.

This implies ensuring that both the content and process of training programmes must be based on the identified learning requirements of the job. Many training programmes, especially at operational level, but also at management level, are heavily based on procedure and rote-learning. Such focus mainly on the steps involved in carrying out a process, be it a technical, administrative or 'people' process. The element that is absent in many such programmes is the understanding behind the procedure or process, the reason for its existence, when to use it, when to make exceptions, what to do when circumstances change and the procedure may not help. Through exposure at work, discussion with colleagues, and often painful experience, people do develop this understanding in the course of time. The problem is that this is a costly and often dangerous process.

The aim of formal training and coaching should be to shorten this process for the benefit of the individual and the organisation. Ensuring that training programmes do in fact develop real understanding requires that such programmes are deliberately designed to do so, through the use, for example, of the Keys to Understanding. In addition, the actual processes used in training programmes need to be appropriate to the learning requirements. Appropriate training processes are discussed next in greater depth.

### **Active Training/Learning Processes**

Downs and Perry (1986) maintain that learning situations need to be consciously and specifically designed and managed so as to contain the following features:

- Trainers use suitable processes so that learners have to adopt appropriate learning strategies for material that needs to be either Memorised, Understood or Done practically (MUD model), or some combination thereof (e.g., for the understanding of a concept, do not ask learners to memorise a stack of information).
- Trainers also assist learners to consolidate overt awareness of where to use the different strategies and ways of eliminating learning blockages, during the normal training process.
- Trainers do not present the concepts, but rather let learners develop them for themselves.
- Learners are given maximum opportunity to ask questions and to check their own understanding and learning.
- Learners are helped to identify and correct their own errors in a manner appropriate to the material being learned. The role of errors in learning is often misunderstood by trainers and learners alike. On the one hand, the development of Understanding is enhanced by errors. However, making mistakes does not help for accurate Memorising, or for learning a physical Doing Skill (one needs only to think of a first-time error made in remembering someone's name, or trying to 'undo' a poor tennis-stroke).
- Individual differences and past experience to be acknowledged by encouraging learners to link the new material which is being learned with their previous knowledge and experience.

A training process which adopts the principles set out above and which has been found to promote more effective learning, incorporates the following features:

- Learners, mostly working in pairs, develop their ideas and understanding (using worksheets where applicable), then share this understanding with the group. This is less threatening to the individual and the learners discover the benefits of shared learning which includes stimulating each other. They are also exposed to the impressive range of ideas that can be generated within the group as a whole. This is achieved in a manner which does not have the intimidating pressure of, for example, a "brain-storming" session, yet still maintains the pressure on every individual to become involved, to contribute, and to learn.
- 'Ponder sessions' are introduced where learners review the purpose of what they have just learned, and how they might apply this learning to their actual work situation.
- Usually, concepts are developed by the learners after experiential exercises, rather than by the trainer
- Learners are specifically encouraged to ask questions that develop understanding, rather than passively waiting for the trainer to (perhaps) cover a particular point.
- A powerful first step is to expose learners to a learning skills programme, as described in the next section in this chapter on direct interventions applicable to the learners themselves.

Many of these ideas appear to be so basic that one may wonder whether trainers are not doing all these things already. Research which was carried out in the UK (Downs and Perry, 1984), suggests that trainers (and managers) are aware of what helps people to learn for themselves. However, what they do in practice deviates significantly from this understanding.

Trainers are more likely to run training sessions using 'show and tell' methods, create learner dependency on them, and even create learning blockages by consciously or unconsciously belittling learner's efforts and by other blocking behaviour. Possible reason for trainers not doing as they say, include that:

- They do not believe it is their role to develop learning skills and self-reliant behaviour in learners
- The culture of the organisation as whole and/or their own value systems may discourage them
- They may lack the training skills and practical tools for actually implementing what they believe; and
- They may lack self-confidence, and thus need to 'prove' to learners that they are the experts.

It has been shown both in the UK and in this country that trainers and instructors at all levels can be shown that it is part of their role to develop learning skills in learners and to design and deliver learning situations accordingly (Pearn and Downs, 1988; von Hirshfeld, 1990). In South Africa, this method of changing the perspective of trainers has become known as the 'Training for Learning' approach. This approach, in adopting an experiential workshop method, has been effective in introducing trainers both to the concepts of this training process, and to practical ways of implementing it. Adequate follow-up to trainers using these concepts on-the-job has also been found to be important for successful implementation. A number of trainers in major organisations in South Africa have applied this new approach to training in their own work situation during the past year.

The approach was applied to training machine operators in a large manufacturing company. A group of six trainees successfully completed their operator training

programme in 4 days, as compared to the 15 days taken by the previous group. Some of the key factors that contributed to this result were as follows:

- Firstly, learners were not considered 'empty buckets' by instructors, but were specifically encouraged to think of how their existing 'data bank' of knowledge and skills might relate to the task at hand, and also how the new job differed from their previous experience.
- Secondly, an analysis\* of the job to be learnt revealed that Understanding of the variables involved in the manufacturing process, and knowing what to do when things went wrong was critical to successful job performance. The instructor remembered that previous training had focussed on the procedures in the job, knowledge of which was tested by recall/Memorising. Thus there had been a mismatch previously between the learning requirements of the job (understanding), while the learning processes used (rote-memorising) did not develop understanding.
- Finally, in the new approach, the instructor was able to recognise the need for understanding and was able to develop this in the learners through a set of carefully designed questions based on the Keys to Understanding (which probe purpose, make comparisons, and consider viewpoints, problems and checks). The development of understanding was the reason for the significant reduction in time for the training programme. The trainees were virtually able to reach themselves by understanding the concepts and exploring the implications thereof.

Another South African company needed to run workshop sessions on quality for large numbers of shop floor operators. At first, there was concern that the concepts covered in the workshop on quality were above the heads of the target population. Thus, a more directive, 'tell them' training methodology was initially considered necessary, even though it was acknowledged that it might be ineffective in producing real understanding.

The workshop and the material was, however, restructured using the 'Training for Learning' approach. A group of line supervisors was coached to present these workshops using this process. The company was both surprised and pleased to find that 75% to 80% of the course content (quality concepts) typically came from the participants at each workshop. The role of the facilitator was very much to 'top up' the content that was generated by the participants in response to questions and exercises using the Keys to Understanding.

A secondary, but highly significant spin-off from this exercise was improved relationships between workers and supervisors, and a changed perception by supervisors and management further up the line of what the shop floor actually know and are capable of understanding. It was a learning experience for the trainers as well as the participants.

The training/learning approach outlined in this section is suitable for training personnel at any level of an organisation from semi-skilled operators to management. It has been used to train managers and supervisors to understand the management role and function, and also for computer-users in a university environment to understand and apply both software packages and operating systems.

### **Development of Learning Skills and Strategies for Learners**

The way in which the learning process can be improved by trainers and managers has already been discussed, as well as the impact which this can have on learners' motivation, approach and effectiveness in the learning situation. However, in the real

world, learning situations will not always be designed and structured by trainers and managers in the best way.

The kernel of the learning process lies within the learners themselves. It is here that key interventions of major consequence can be made to equip learners directly with improved learning skills and strategies. These skills not only increase the benefit to learners from well-designed training, but also assist them to cope with poor coaching, inappropriate learning methodologies and non-empathetic trainers and coaches.

In this chapter, the words 'learning skills' and 'ways of learning'\* are used. 'Learning skills' are considered to be the more fundamental tools inherent to any particular 'way of learning'/ 'Learning styles', a well-known approach to analysing learning, is not dealt with here. Learning styles are generally considered to refer to the characteristic approach that a person brings to a wide range of situations. A person's learning style also implies the order in which he/she would apply individual learning skills (Belbin, Downs and Perry, 1981). Whatever a person's learning style may be, effective learners tend to have well-developed (and common) fundamental learning skills. Further more, it is useful for a learner to develop the ability to learn from a variety of diverse learning situations; for example, a lecture, a book, an experience or a group discussion. Thus, the learning skills approach aims both to increase the learner's repertoire of learning skills, as well as his/her flexibility and proficiency in their application.

Pearn and Downs (1988) describe skilled learners as people who:

- Take responsibility for their own learning and adopt an active role
- Can distinguish between what they have to Memorise, aspects they need to Understand, and physical skills that are best learnt by Doing
- Use a greater variety of alternative ways of learning, and choose between them, according to the material to be learned
- Do not fall back on trying to memorise things they should be trying to understand
- Make conscious decisions on how they will learn something
- Take actions to ensure that they learn despite poor teaching and coaching
- Asking more questions and ask particular kinds of questions to ensure that they learn properly
- Seek feedback on their own performance
- Realise that difficulties in learning something are not always a lack of their own capacity but frequently lie in inadequacies in the delivery of learning and
- Are confident to take on new learning opportunities.

The development of these behaviours in learners seems to be a tall order, especially when the current education system and the culture in many organisations apparently encourage almost the opposite. However, research and practical application in the United Kingdom has shown that learning skills can be developed and improved amongst groups as diverse as the long-term unemployed and research chemists (Pearn and Downs, 1988). Recent evidence from work done in South Africa suggests that this can be achieved here too (von Hirschfeld, 1990). This evidence is presented by way of examples later on in this chapter.

### **Programme for developing skilled learners**

The aim is to assist learners to become responsible for their own learning process. This can be achieved by specifically and directly assisting learners to improve their learning skills. Learning skills programmes have been run both in the UK and in South Africa.

These programmes have been successful in making a significant impact on Job-learning. The application and further development of learning skills becomes even more effective when it is reinforced by job-related training by instructors, and coaching by supervisors, being conducted in accordance with the 'Training for Learning' approach. Learning skills are developed by

- Firstly, developing learners' awareness of what blocks their own learning; and
- Secondly, developing the means to overcome learning blockages by, inter alia, mastering the learning skills and strategies made explicit in the 'MUD' model and the 'Keys to Understanding'.

### **Learning Processes Used**

These learning skills programmes have been found to work well if they are presented in a highly practical and experiential manner. They cannot be 'read up' in a book with any hope of successful implementation for the target groups of learners. The training method used to teach learning skills necessarily incorporates the same approach as advocated in the 'Training for Learning' method for conducting any training process. This is important because it:

- Is effective for assisting learners to develop understanding of the various concepts relevant to improved learning skills
- Enables learners to gain actual experience of this type of learning process, and
- Develops confidence in this learning process delivered in a manner where the trainers 'practise what they preach'. This confidence in the learning 'tools' gained, enables learners to cope better with future learning situations even when training is poor.

Recently, a South African company implemented this learning-skills programme for a multi-racial group of apprentices. The results of the programme were evaluated by the following measurers: Learner reaction; Learning results; Use of new knowledge and skills on the job; Impact on the organisation in terms of training time (von Hirschfeld, 1990). Key results achieved were as follows:

- There was an average increase in the number of 'ways of learning' of almost 20%. Before training only 7 'ways of learning' were used by more than half the group. After training this figure had virtually doubled to 13 'ways of learning'. The number of understanding strategies had quadrupled from 1 to 4.
- The average training for the group who had been through the learning skills programme was 12% faster than a similar group from the previous intake of apprentices. A further promising and significant result was the absence of any difference in training time for black and white apprentices.
- Reaction from both apprentices and their instructors was very positive. The instructors felt that this group was 'more independent', 'more mature' and 'more cohesive', and generally more positive in attitude than previous intake of apprentices who had not received any training in learning skills.

This learning skills programme has also been run for a group of first line supervisor trainees. Reaction by trainees was very positive. Since the programme, the trainees have proceeded with the initial phase of technical training on-the-job. Although no formal assessment has been made, feedback from plant supervision is that the trainees are 'very pro-active', asking lots of questions' and 'are progressing very well'.

The findings of this South African company showed that the learning skills programme had a measurable impact on the attitudes and behaviour of trainee artisans and supervisors, as well as those of their instructors and managers; further, that this behaviour is manifested in shorter training times. It was also apparent that the learning skills and strategies of both white and black employees can be improved with equal success.

## **Conclusion**

At the beginning of this chapter the need to adopt a new approach to learning in organisations was described. This approach comprises the creation of a productive 'learning culture', in which managers, trainers and learners play significant and responsible roles. These roles may be considerably different from the roles they are currently playing.

The need for support from all people in the organisation to create a learning culture in order to influence the learner's environment is essential to maximise the benefit of training programmes. The development of competence is as much a function of the individual's ability as it is of his or her motivation and the extent to which he or she is allowed to realise and utilise potential in the work situation. People in the learner's environment have a strong influence on the learner's motivation and usage of potential by the way in which they train coach and manage that person.

The strategies outlined in this chapter can enhance the ability of learners as well as their capacity to manage and influence their learning and work environment, thereby loading the dice in favour of effective learning and the development of competence. At the same time, the more support given to the learner in his or her attempt to become a skilled learner, the greater the potential for maximising the company's effort and expenditure on training and development.

In some organisations there may only be the need to make people more conscious of effective learning processes which may already be in place so that these can be reinforced.

However, in most organisations people may well have some awareness of what is required to develop a learning culture, but in practice are unable to implement it. Implementation is unlikely to occur without carefully structured interventions. Practical ways of overcoming the barriers to bring about a productive 'learning culture' have been tested overseas and in this country. These results hold much promise for overcoming many of the problems brought about by the educational backlog and social history in this country. In this way, the critical process of learning in the workplace, which is essential for organisations to be effective and productive, can be implemented in a direct and practical manner.

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\*(1)

The Job Learning Analysis (Downs and Perry, 1984), and its recent variation, the Learning Needs Analysis (LNA), are specially suited for identifying the appropriate "mix" of learning processes required in any job. These processes can then be incorporated in a training programme to facilitate learning of the subject matter in an appropriate manner.

\*(2)

Typical examples of 'ways of learning' are: Watching others show how - passive; Taking something apart - D & U; Comparing with something that is know - U; Asking what could go wrong - U; Practising - D; Making a mnemonic to remember - M; etc