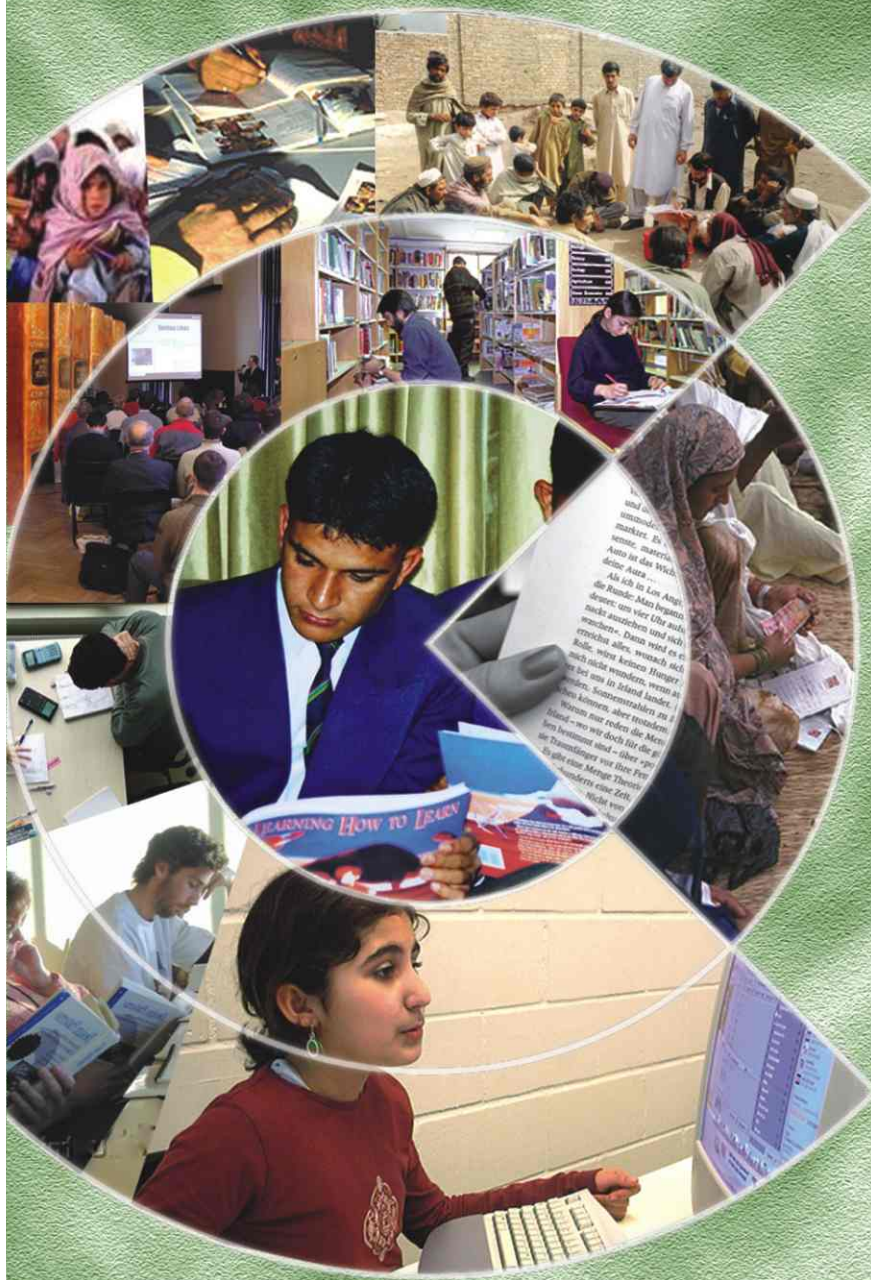


MAY - 2005

ILLUME

Q U A R T E R L Y

CONTINUOUS LEARNING



Commit to Continuous Learning

Self-Directed Learning

Learning Organization



H u m a n R e s o u r c e D e v e l o p m e n t N e t w o r k

HRDN is an association of HRD professionals from Pakistan, Nepal, Bangladesh and other developing Asian countries and organizations from the private and public sectors. HRDN members are brought together by a common interest in elevating the quality of HRD interventions to build human capital and reduce poverty. Operating through its secretariat in Islamabad and local chapters in various cities, the Network is governed by a democratically elected Board of Directors from amongst its members.

Mission of HRDN is to accelerate development through improving Human Resource Management policies, systems and practices.



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Editorial



Simply put, continuous learning is the ability to 'learn to learn'. Learning need not be a linear event where a learner goes to a formal learning program, gains areas of knowledge and skills about a process, and then the learning ceases. If the learner can view life (including work) as a "learning program", then the learner can continue to learn from almost everything in life. As a result, the learner continues to expand his or her capacity for living, including working.

Unfortunately, most people think, "I got my degree, and now I don't have to learn any more". This attitude is out of step with living successfully because the unprecedented speed of change is continuously making our 'knowledge bank' obsolete faster than ever before. Therefore, keeping personal knowledge up-to-date through learning continuously is no more a matter of individual choice; it's a matter of survival!

In this issue of ILLUME we have tried to explain the concept of Continuous Learning, self directed learning and the essentials of Learning Organization, besides other regular features. Hope this will be use ful for our readers, especially those keen to get on to the virtuous learning cycle.

Last but not the least; we look forward to your feedback ... like always. Please do write to us.

Happy reading!!!!

Syeda Mujeeba Batool
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Commit To Continuous Learning

By Kit Harrington Hayes

A crucial element of successful career management is continuous learning. As the pace of change continues to accelerate, the knowledge we acquire during our formative years rapidly becomes obsolete and new learning is needed to thrive in today's workplace.

In technical areas, such as software development and biotechnology, this is most evident. However, no field is immune from the process of change. Innovations, discoveries and improvements provide the challenges that engage our intellect throughout our careers.

In his best seller, "The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People," Stephen R. Covey calls Habit 7, "taking time to sharpen the saw: exercising our mental, physical, emotional and spiritual dimensions regularly and consistently in wise and balanced ways."

Mental renewal comes from activities that continuously hone and expand the mind, such as continuing education -- whether formal or self-directed.

While employers bear some responsibility for providing training to keep their workforce on the cutting edge, it is ultimately up to individuals to keep themselves current. This can be accomplished in many ways.

1. You can update: What are the latest trends in your field? What are the hot issues? If you don't know the answers, you can find out by catching up on your reading in professional journals and trade publications. Read several back issues and

the most current. Find out about new methods, technologies and solutions. Discover the new thought-leaders in your field. Attend professional meetings and conferences to meet industry experts and participate in discussion groups.

2. You can up-skill: Are changes taking place around you that could impact the way you do your job? What skills are required for the positions that might be of interest to you in the future? Look at the three kinds of skills outlined below and determine areas for personal improvement and change.

Functional skills are used in all positions and, therefore are portable from job to job and from one industry to another. Examples include leading, managing, planning, organizing, analyzing and communicating. There are dozens of key functional skills; know the ones most needed and valued in your field. Benchmark your skills to identify where you may need development and make a plan for improving those skills.

Adaptive skills are our personal attributes and are also portable. Examples of adaptive skills include flexibility, self-motivation and enthusiasm. Analyze your adaptive strengths and weaknesses in relation to your career



goals and create a development plan to address any deficits.

Technical or knowledge skills are the specific skills required for an occupation. This may include a particular college degree as well as certain courses, certifications and/or other credentials. The portability of these skills is limited. Examples of work-content skills include: knowledge of C++ or Java/J2EE (software development), grant writing (non-profit) or Series 7 licensure (financial services).

Taking classes or studying a technical manual on your own may increase your ongoing employability in your current position. Check with your manager or human resources department to see if continuing education or development allowances are available to you or what your company's tuition reimbursement policy covers. If funds are not available from your employer, bite the bullet and invest in yourself. If you are in transition, coursework and self-study can give you a competitive edge in a slowly recovering job market.

3. You can retrain: Some people are forced to change careers when the work they do is automated, discontinued or sent abroad. Others change careers because they choose to pursue something new. These circumstances may require a more significant educational investment. It is important that you do research first to make sure you retrain for a career where there is documented need for new talent. In some situations, there may be public funds available for retraining.

Most major cities have a broad selection of colleges, universities and technical schools with well-designed programs reflective of the needs of

the job market. From individual courses and certificate programs to undergraduate and graduate degrees, it's all within easy access. Courses are available day and evening at main campus locations, suburban satellites or your laptop! For self-teachers, investigate libraries, bookstores, organizations and resources to support your educational pursuits.

There are many benefits of continuous learning: success in your current position, increased likelihood for promotion, decreased time out of work, increased marketability and ongoing employability.

Even more important, the very act of returning to active learning will energize and excite you, stimulate your intellect, boost your self-esteem and provide new avenues, contacts and resources.

For job hunters, the educational boost will enliven your networking meetings and job interviews. Employers look very favorably on candidates who have taken the initiative of returning to school to acquire knowledge and skills.

With all these benefits and advantages, isn't it time for you to sharpen your saw?

Source :

[Http://print.jobfind.com/news/career_connection/hays07042004.htm](http://print.jobfind.com/news/career_connection/hays07042004.htm)



Self-Directed Learning: What, Why and How

By Shadab Fariduddin

Of late, there is growing interest in learning and knowledge. Societal, organizational and individual interest in, and pressures for, lifelong learning (LLL) continues to mount. Three major forces act in concert to generate this.

The first of these is the rapidity and constancy of change primarily driven by science and technology and continuous change requires continuous learning. Unfortunately, there exist in society many adults unable or unwilling to change, to learn, or to manage their own lives satisfactorily. A second is the huge employment challenge that has resulted from poor or rather dysfunctional schooling. Immense inadequacies exist in formal schooling programs of our country.

Our normal schooling efforts and patterns are so designed that learners--especially the poor and the disadvantaged--are inadequately prepared to cope with most of the main societal and life challenges they face. The result is a dearth of capable people who are self-directed or self-motivated learners and know how to avail themselves of a variety of resources, both personal and external, to cope with various problems. We now face an unemployed youth bulge. Latest Census.

Finally, there is this continuous march by many of us toward professional obsolescence. One way of describing this is to borrow from physics the concept of half-life. Occupational half-life is based on the assumption that enough new developments, techniques, and/or knowledge evolve in a short period of time, say 5-15 years,

so that a person becomes roughly half as competent to do the job for which his or her initial training was intended. As a result, we must frequently turn to learning activities in and out of the workplace just to maintain or regain competence.

Lifelong learning can take many forms. One can continuously learn by earning education degrees upon degrees; or accumulating training workshops to one's credit could be taken by some as life-long learning. Both notions are flawed. Malcolm Knowles defined self-directed learning (SDL) as:

The process in which individuals take the initiative, with or without the help of others, in diagnosing their learning needs, formulating learning goals, identifying human and material resources for learning, choosing and implementing learning strategies, and evaluating learning outcomes that make one remain competent.

We can see that SDL goes much beyond enhancing one's educational qualifications only and piling up degrees and diplomas. Its essence is a genuine desire to exploit one's own potential of learning, taking charge of the process Thus staying fit to face challenges of life.

SDL experts have described several reasons for advocating this development of 'self-directed' skill. These includes: (a) individuals who take initiative in learning are more likely to retain what is learned than the



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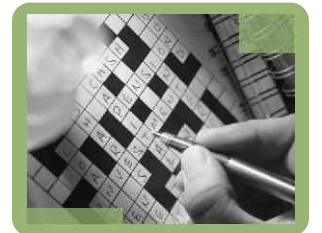
passive learner; (b) taking initiative in learning is more in tune with our natural processes of psychological development; and (c) many recent educational developments actually place the responsibility for learning right on the shoulders of learners. All these reasons actually spell out individual attributes necessary for coping with rapid change.

The field of adult education and training has long embraced such ideas as autonomy, independence, and personal development of adult learners. These ideas are implicit in such terms as lifelong learning, self-directed learning, self-planned learning, independent study, distance education, learning projects, andragogy, and self-directed learning readiness.

All of these in some way stress the role of individual learners in the learning process. At the same time a lack of clear understanding has resulted in many myths about the self-directed learning (SDL).

Myths Associated with Self-Direction In Learning

In order to understand what SDL is, it is important to know what it is not. A leading expert on life-long and self-directed learning, Roger Hiemstra identifies following myths of SDL. These myths often add to the confusion over the meaning of self-direction and its implications for training and adult education practices.



Myth 1: Self-directedness is an all or nothing concept

Here, self-direction is viewed as a characteristic that exists, to a greater or lesser degree, in all persons and in all learning situations.

As people face new learning challenges, they will find differing needs for outside assistance, personal initiative, and individual reflection in terms of their learning activities. Thus, self-directedness is best viewed as a continuum rather than as some dichotomous model.

The fact that learners will be at different places on the continuum has implications for facilitators and for learners, especially as learners plan and carry out their educational efforts or move toward higher levels of personal self-direction.

