

# WHAT IS LEARNING

by Mads Heising

If you wish to manage your process, you need to understand it.

Learning is the process that leads to acquisition of new competencies. It may be any activity that has that desired outcome.

It can be an activity that is performed by the learner alone as well as being an activity that a learner does together with a trainer.

The process is sometimes referred to as training but it is a bit misleading.

Normally training is considered as an activity that facilitates learning, but since it carries no assurance of outcome, in a management context, it is only of interest in matters of resource allocation and not when managing Learning, particularly because though training may lead to learning, surprisingly often, it does not!

To ensure that learning becomes a managed process, we must focus on *the impact* the learning activities (the training) has on the learner. This distinction is what sets learning management apart from training management.

The competencies that may be achieved by learning, can be defined as the ability to *recall* a particular piece or set of information that has been committed to memory.

To commit something to memory requires a stimulation or creation of memory structure that strengthen particular patterns. By strengthening memory patterns they become contrasted compared to other information stored in the memory and are thereby easier to identify and recall.

This may be an oversimplification of what happens on a physiological level, but for the purpose of this presentation, it is only important to know that structures in the memory can be established and strengthened, by stimulation.

If you want to control the efficiency or effectiveness of the learning process, you can now act to govern the process, since you know what is required to learn.