

LEARNABILITY AS THE KEY SKILL OF THE FUTURE

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Abstract

The paper addresses learnability or ability to learn as the key skill needed for the future due to changes brought about by the fourth industrial revolution. Learnability is seen as one of the skills that need to be developed continuously by individuals to remain attractive for the labour market. The authors draw attention to the distinction between knowledge and learnability. Learnability, as opposed to knowledge, is a process having three levels. In addition, the learnability quotient and its attributes are dealt with. Last but not least, ten key qualities of learning under Industry 4.0 are provided.

Key words

Learnability, knowledge, learnability quotient, learning 4.0

JEL Classification: J 24

Introduction

We are witnessing a revolution in the world of work. Technology is rewriting the rule book: 65% of roles which will be filled in a few years do not exist yet; 45% of current tasks could be automated. Therefore, a person's employability – that is their ability to secure or keep their desired job – no longer depends on what they already know but what they will be able to learn. This is what we are calling the Skills Revolution (McKinsey 2015). Today's learning challenges, at work, at home, in society are vastly different from the past. The new responsibilities occurred. Many changes around the world can be seen daily. It is said that the information will double every 72 days by 2020. How to deal with it? How to ensure the skills and personal growth necessary to keep pace with one's own needs and those of the world around? The ability to expand one's mind and strive for lifelong learning is critical to the success. By dedicating themselves to learning, people can get ahead in every aspect of their life. All it takes is a commitment. The most successful people read an average of 2-3 hours per day. They belong to organizations that encourage learning the most current information and share ideas. For individuals dedicated to continuous learning, it means that they use every opportunity that can help them to be more effective in getting the results for which they are responsible. Many research outcomes suggest that learning intelligence shows how we manage our learning environment to meet our learning needs.

1. LEARNABILITY

In a dynamic market environment, it's important for individuals to seek out continuous skills development in order to remain attractive to employers, and for companies to enable their workforce to learn new skills and to adapt to new processes and technologies. Learnability can be an indicator of career mobility (as it indicates how agile an individual is). "Employers need to recognize and reward learnability. They need to nurture it to avoid losing out or lacking critical skills on their workforce." (ManpowerGroup 2016). Learnability is not exactly a new concept in information technology, nor in cognitive science. Learnability has been a key concept of usability (Folmer & Bosch, 2004, in Duchastel 2009) in the area of software system design.

There is a clear difference between 'knowledge' and 'learnability' according to Vikas Gupta, MD, Wiley India (2019). Learnability refers to the 'ability to acquire knowledge efficiently and effectively'. In this rapidly changing world, what defines our success is not the things we know, but our ability to learn the new (which is learnability).

Learnability is "a degree of effort employed to achieve a level of competence in completing a task. A system is considered easy to learn if competencies required to use it are acquired after only a few repetitions of the task" (<https://Igi-Global.com>) In another words, it is the desire and ability to quickly grow and adapt such skill

set to remain employable throughout working life. It is the ability to learn. At the same time it is the ability to adapt to new situations and the ability to understand the rules of a changing game and excel at them.

Learnability is defined as the ease and speed with which the users get familiar with the use of a new product. With high learnability, users can intuitively learn to use a product without training or manuals. However, in the context of e-learning, the definition of learnability includes the ability of users to effectively learn and retain the skills and knowledge. Learnability is measured by the learning effort of using a new system.

(<https://www.igi-global.com/dictionary/evaluating-usability-improve-efficiency-learning/16765>).

Understanding an individual's learnability potential is a key indicator of the support they'll need to succeed. Operators recognize and reward learnability because they do not want to lack critical skills in their workforce. Learnability matters because it shows that a person is employable. Specifically it indicates (<https://safety4sea.com/cm-learnability-a-three-stage-process>):

- agility or resilience to adapt to the consequence of change,
- critical thinking skills,
- decision making,
- creativity and innovation,
- emotional intelligence.

At this point it is important to differentiate 'knowledge' and 'learnability'. As said above, learnability refers to the 'ability of acquiring knowledge efficiently and effectively'. Knowledge can refer to a theoretical or practical understanding of a subject. However, being knowledgeable does not imply learnability. For example, someone may not know to acquire new knowledge independently by himself. One thing is sure, knowledge does not provide skills and courage, only practicing does (<https://safety4sea.com/cm-learnability-a-three-stage-process>).

Learnability is the single most important factor that determines the pace at which an individual grows. As technological innovation accelerates the pace of change, there is growing awareness that individuals who seek learning opportunities will be better positioned for career growth.

Today, professional success is determined both by an individual's ability to adapt to change and their willingness to own the progression of their career.

Learnability is playing even more critical role in the development of future-ready leaders. For leaders, changes are even faster and they are supposed to acquire a significant understanding of these new skills with more precision to compete with competition and avoid any mistake.

There are three levels of learnability (<https://safety4sea.com/cm-learnability-a-three-stage-process>):

- High Learners: People who are eager to learn, positive about their prospects and take responsibility for their own training and development.
- Potential Learners: People who believe that education and personal development will lead to further career success, however they're not High Learners yet.
- Low Learners: People who, although were born with an intense desire to learn, somewhere along the line lost passion for learning.

2. LEARNABILITY QUOTIENT

Learning is the minimum requirement for success in many areas. Information and knowledge of anything are growing every day. This means that your knowledge must also increase to keep up. Although people like animals have built-in physiological processes that do not require learning, most of what we do or think is gained and changed by our experience. That means our behaviour is learned. Learning is defined as a relatively constant change in our behaviour as a result of practice or experience. Research psychologists dealing with these changes want to know exactly what happens during this experience (Wingfield, 1997).

Companies are facing a diversity of learning challenges nowadays. In an attempt to align learning practices with today's learning challenges, they use emerging discoveries from brain science and psychology to help them to survive the boom of knowledge and ever-

accelerating technology. This calls for a significant upgrade in everybody's learning mindset and practices.

The Learnability Quotient represents a new way for users to assess their learning styles and receive recommendations for how to develop and engage, while providing validated, data driven insights to our clients. We define Learnability Quotient as "...ability and willingness to learn new knowledge, skills and personal characteristics effectively and efficiently and apply these learned characteristics, knowledge and skills for self and others' including organization's growth" (Daftuar,2011). In the organizational and particularly managerial context, a person can be said to have high Learnability Quotients (LQ) if s/he has, among others, the following attributes (<https://slideplayer.com/slide/12991937>):

- knows how to learn,
- willing to learn,
- willing to change,
- following high quality learning,
- following sound learning Methods,
- willingness to apply learned material to successfully solve personal and management Problems.

Daniel Coyle author of *The Talent Code* refers to learning quotient. In evaluating learning quotient, measurable skills such as diligence, relationship-building, going outside one's comfort zone, enthusiasm, and metacognition (thinking about thinking) are rated. Most importantly, these are not fixed qualities: they can be increased, grown, and as Coyle writes, "profoundly affected by environment and group culture." (<https://www.learnabilityquotient.com/en>). With results expressed via three dimensions:

- Adventurous: The intrinsic desire to explore;
- Intellectual: Motivated to learn;
- Unconventional: Questions the status quo), the Learnability Assessment empowers organizations and individuals to succeed.

Here's how it might work: rate yourself from 0 to 5 on the following questions according to the usual scale: 0 for strongly disagree; 5 for strongly agree.

1 You work on your skills for an hour or more every day

2 You are focused on process, not the immediate outcomes

3 You have strong relationships with mentors/coaches, and use them as models and guidance

4 You are keenly aware of how much you do not know, and the gap between your present abilities and your long-term goals

5 You can accurately and precisely describe the skills you want to build

6 You think about improving your skills all the time

7 You approach your daily work with enthusiasm

8 You are balanced between building with repetition and seeking innovations

9 You are comfortable going outside of your comfort zone

10 You are constantly adapting and refining your learning process

By this yardstick, a perfect LQ would be 50. Most of us would fall in the 25-30 range or so, which, among other things, speaks to the inherent challenges of creating a daily routine and sticking to it (<http://danielcoyle.com/2013/07/01/whats-your-lq-learning-quotient>).

The following statements describe behaviours related to 10 key qualities of Learning 4.0 — the approach to learning for today's fast changing and "smart" age (McLagan International, Inc., 2017). Think of it as the fourth version of your internal learning "software." P. McLagan (2017) says if you were born with version 1.0 – you learned by trial and error and imitation. Then, when you went to school, you upgraded to 2.0 with new study and socialization skills. As an adult, you launched 3.0 – the learning approaches that helped you deal with the new challenges of family, work, and citizenship. But these approaches to learning are not enough today. Advances in media, technology, artificial intelligence, and all the other challenges of modern life require everyone to upgrade to a smarter, more confident, more skilled approach for managing information and personal learning and change.

Table 1. Ten key qualities of Learning 4.0

		Doesn't describe me	Somewhat describes me	Often describes me	Almost always describes me	Always describes me
1	At any time, I can close my eyes and imagine myself – in detail – as I would like to be and feel at the end of this year					
2	At any point, I can tell you, with precision what is happening in me on several levels: what I am thinking, what I am feeling emotionally, where there is tension or stress in my body					
3	People around me would describe me as someone who is open to learning and change — a person who is always improving myself, takes risks, accepts new challenges, and questions my approaches and opinions in the face of new information or challenges to my point of view					
4	When I am reading or listening to something — or in any experience, I am like a chess master who looks for patterns on the board: I search for the deeper lessons and key points and ideas					
5	I see my life filled with learning opportunities — e.g., in a chance meeting, when I am working alone or with others, when something catches my interest, when I have a problem, when things don't go my way, and more... My curiosity and desire to explore new ideas and insights is aroused many times every day — whether I choose to follow them or not, I recognize them					
6	I'm a shrewd and perceptive user of information. When I hear or read about something important, I question where it came from, what the motives of people producing it may be, and whether I can trust it. I recognize when people are trying to persuade or manipulate me. And, I catch my own biases when they are affecting my judgment					
7	I know how and where I prefer to learn, and the kinds of learning resources and tools I like to use. But I am confident about my ability to learn in any situation, whether it is my preferred way or not.					
8	When I want to change a habit or start behaving in a different way, I manage myself and influence the people and things around me so that the changes I want to make become a reality					
9	I readily adopt new technologies or methods that will help me be more efficient and effective in my life — even when it means giving up old habits and stepping outside my comfort zone.					
10	My fellow team members and people I coach/develop would say that I stimulate a climate where others grow, learn from mistakes, try new things, and innovate.					

McLagan International, Inc., (2017) Retrieved from: <https://learning4dot0.com/assess>

3 Conclusion

Hogan Assessments, ManpowerGroup has developed a web-based visual assessment to identify each individual's LQ (Learnability

Quotient) - providing insight into their motivation and style of learning. Benefits to the Individual:

- Enables you to understand your Learnability profile

- Provides resources to help you improve your learnability

Benefits to the Organization:

- Enables decision making around development
- Indicates employee agility/mobility

How can managers do a better job of fostering learnability in the workplace? A recent Harvard Business Review (<https://www.rightmanagement.de/wps/wcm/connect/right-de-en>) article, "It's the Company's Job to Help Employees Learn," suggests starting with three things:

- Select for it. Focus on employees with higher learnability—curious and inquisitive individuals who are genuinely interested in acquiring new knowledge.
- Nurture it. Managers who want their employees to learn new things will encourage that behaviour by doing it themselves. Be a catalyst not a blocker of employee learning- career long.
- Reward it. If you want to change people's behaviour, you should show them that you mean it. It is not enough to hire curious people and hope they display as much learnability as you do.

Gauges motivation for self-development. Learnability helps individuals cross over, regardless their learning style; their different personality types. The question is, how do we make the second enhance their learnability level and the last ones to be potential learners though? Training has always been a key component of businesses. According to Training Magazine, organizations spend between \$1,075 to \$1,886 for training on each employee annually. However, training tended to be focused on company processes, product or service information, operational issues, etc. Companies are now shifting from a training mindset to a learning mindset.

According to the ManpowerGroup report (2018), "with talent shortages at a 12-year high and new skills appearing as quickly as old ones disappear, more companies are planning to build talent than ever before, and this is projected to increase by 2020. Companies are realizing they can no

longer expect to find just-in-time talent, on tap. Eighty-four percent of organizations expect to be upskilling their workforce by 2020."

Though learnability is an individual skill, companies need to take an active role in their employees' learnability. There is an ongoing war for talent; providing employees with the necessary tools and resources to reinvent and upskill themselves will help foster loyalty and it can also create a clearer career growth path for an individual within a company. Just as it has become crucial for people to embrace learnability, it's also important that companies promote a culture of learning. People need to know how to prepare for high growth roles of the future and that their employer supports their learning. The return on investment for upskilling is clear: in North America the cost of turnover and replacement can exceed 30% of wages, while the cost of training remains less than 10% of wages.

As said above, learnability has nothing to do with qualifications or job titles an individual already has. Once we gain experience we have to be able to sharpen our practicality. Learnability is a way to expand experience. Anyone can become a constant and deliberate learner by:

1. Getting membership in communities
2. Reading, observing, measuring and listening critically
3. Writing, organizing knowledge and sharing your ideas
4. Interacting with technology
5. Exposing yourself to demanding situations
6. Participating in and organizing social and knowledge events
7. Building wide networks

The labour market acts as a living entity in constant evolution. Hence that many theorists, researchers and experts in emerging professional skills have come lately to one of the most innovative concepts in the field of HR, which is a result of the advent of the fourth industrial revolution: learnability.

In 2018, the very own World Economic Forum reflected the concept of learnability, defining it as "the curiosity and the capability of learning new skills in order to remain employed in the long term". For this international body, the characteristics that define "a good learner" are the following: easy learner of new concepts

or procedures, willingness to research and acquire knowledge in new fields (“thirst for knowledge”), and a positive attitude before new challenges.

Today’s learning challenges, at work, at home, in society are vastly different than when you were a kid. You’ve grown and have different responsibilities. And the world around you looks and is different almost every day. Information will double every 72 days by 2020. How do you deal with it? How do you ensure your skills and your own personal growth keeps pace with your own needs and those of the world around you? It’s time to align your learning practices with today’s learning challenges — and for you to use emerging discoveries from brain science and psychology to help you survive and thrive in this age of knowledge and accelerating technology. This calls for a significant upgrade in everybody’s learning mindset and practices — an upgrade to Learning 4.0.

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