

Insight Learning Theory



Kohler insight learning theory

This theory is also called Gestalt Theory of Learning. The word Gestalt in German language means 'whole', 'total pattern' or 'configuration'. This school believes that the whole is more important than the parts. So, learning also takes place as a whole'. In this respect Koehler performed a number of experiments on monkeys and arrived at the result that highest types of learning are through insight.

Learning by insight means sudden grasping of the solution, a flash of understanding, without any process of trial and error. All discoveries have taken place through insight. The Gestalt psychologists terminate the theory of 'trial and error', hit and miss strive and succeed'.

Insight learning refers to the sudden understanding of the solution of any problem without repeated trials or continuous practices. Insight is an awareness of key relationships between cause and effect, which comes after assembling the appropriate information and either overt or covert testing of possibilities. Learning through such insight is called insight learning.

Experimenting Theory of Learning by Insight:

Kohler kept a chimpanzee named Sultan inside a cage hungry for some time and some bananas were placed just outside the cage. Sultan was provided with one long and another short bamboo stick. None of the sticks could reach the banana alone and the only possible way to reach the banana was to join the two sticks.

Firstly, Sultan showed all expected reactions that a chimpanzee shows inside a cage, and slowly tried to draw the banana towards him with the sticks. After countless unproductive efforts, Sultan nearly gave up, but as he was playing with the sticks, he was able to touch the banana by pushing a stick with another stick. Sultan accidentally managed to join the two sticks and with its help, pulled the banana inside the cage. Sultan immediately grabbed the banana when faced with the same problem next day.

Characteristics of Insight learning:

- Comprehension as a whole: Learning by insight requires full comprehension of the situation as a whole.
- Clear goal: The goal must be quite clear to begin with.
- Transfer: Transfer of learning occurs as a result of insight. The principles learnt in one situation are applied to the other situation.
- Suddenness of solution: Suddenness of the solution is the hall mark of learning by insight i.e., the solution flashes suddenly to the learner. No lengthy reasoning is involved.

- Change in behaviour: Insight changes our behaviour to the extent which we have learnt through insight.

Difference between Gestalt's & Behaviourism

- Behaviourism studies human behaviour in relation to stimuli in the environment. They believe that all behaviour is learned and can be changed. The behaviour that is perceived as negative are the ones that are worked on in order to change them.
- Behaviourism refused to acknowledge the presence of consciousness.
- Gestalt school is more general approach to a human being. They believe a human being is more than just sum of its elements (thinking, feeling, perceiving, biology, etc..). The human being is a whole with self-organizing inclinations.
- Gestalt psychology accepted the studies about the consciousness but do not analyse it into elements.

Educational Implications of Learning by Insight (Role of Teacher in Insight Learning):

Based on this theory, teachers are required to pay attention to the following aspects.

- **Subject matter:** Learning material should be presented in Gestalt form. For Example: While teaching the topic, parts of a flower, it should not be started by presenting the different parts. Initially the plant or flower as a whole should be presented before them and later on the parts should be highlighted.
- **Integrated curriculum:** The curriculum of the class should be an integrated whole i.e., there should be correlation among various subjects.
- **Child as a whole:** Parents and teachers should see the child as a whole and in total situation. It is not wise to reach to any conclusion on the basis of single act about the child's behaviour.
- **Importance of motivation:** The theory emphasizes on the importance of motivation in learning. Therefore, the teacher should motivate the students properly for insightful learning.
- **Problem solving approach:** Insight helps in solving problems through one's own efforts. This approach trains the child to solve his problems in life. Therefore, the teacher should make use of problems solving approach for better learning. He should prepare children emotionally and intellectually to solve the problem.