

ELEMENTS OF CHANGE

4. PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

4.1. What is Personal Development?

Personal development includes activities that improve awareness and identity, develop talents and potential, build human capital and facilitate employability, enhance quality of life and contribute to the realization of dreams and aspirations. The concept is not limited to self-help but includes formal and informal activities for developing others in roles such as teacher, guide, counselor, manager, life coach or mentor. When personal development takes place in the context of institutions, it refers to the methods, programs, tools, techniques, and assessment systems that support human development at the individual level in organizations.

The concept of personal development includes the following activities:

- **improving self-awareness**
- **improving self-knowledge**
- **improving or learning new skills**
- **becoming a self-leader**
- **building or renewing identity/self-esteem**
- **developing strengths or talents**
- **improving wealth**
- **spiritual development**
- **identifying or improving potential**
- **building employability or human capital**
- **enhancing lifestyle or the quality of life**
- **improving health**
- **fulfilling aspirations**
- **initiating a life enterprise or personal autonomy**
- **defining and executing personal development plans**
- **improving social abilities**

Personal development can also include developing other people. This may take place through roles such as those of a teacher or mentor, either through a personal competency, such as the skill of certain managers in developing the potential of

employees or a professional service, such as providing training, assessment or coaching.

Beyond improving oneself and developing others, personal development is a field of practice and research. As a field of practice it includes personal development methods, learning programs, assessment systems, tools and techniques. As a field of research, personal development topics increasingly appear in scientific journals, higher education reviews, management journals and business books. Any sort of development whether economic, political, biological, organizational or personal requires a framework if one wishes to know whether change has actually occurred. In the case of personal development, an individual often functions as the primary judge of improvement, but validation of objective improvement requires assessment using standard criteria. Personal development frameworks may include goals or benchmarks that define the end-points, strategies or plans for reaching goals, measurement and assessment of progress, levels or stages that define milestones along a development path, and a feedback system to provide information on changes.

4.2. The Marketing of Personal Development

The field of personal development has developed into a major business force. The business-to-consumer market involves selling books, courses and techniques to individuals, such as:

- **Newly invented offerings such as:**
 - fitness
 - beauty enhancement
 - weight loss
- **Traditional practices such as:**
 - yoga
 - martial arts
 - meditation

Some programs are delivered online and many include tools sold with a program, such as motivational books for self-help, recipes for weight-loss or technical manuals for yoga and martial-arts programs. A partial list of personal development offerings on the business-to-individual market might include:

- **books**
- **motivational speaking**

- **e-Learning programs**
- **workshops**
- **individual counseling**
- **life coaching**
- **time Management**

The business-to-business market also involves programs, in this case ones sold to companies and to governments, to assess potential, to improve effectiveness, to manage work-life balance or to prepare some entity for a new role in an organization. The goals of these programs are defined with the institution or by the institution and the results are assessed. With the acceptance of personal development as a legitimate field in higher education, universities and business schools also contract programs to external specialist firms or to individuals. Some consulting firms specialize in personal development, but as of 2009 generalist firms operating in the fields of human resources, recruitment and organizational strategy have entered what they perceive as a growing market, not to mention smaller firms and self-employed professionals who provide consulting, training and coaching.

4.3. Personal Development in Psychology

Psychology became linked to personal development starting with Alfred Adler and Carl Jung. Adler refused to limit psychology to analysis, making the important point that aspirations look forward and do not limit themselves to unconscious drives or to childhood experiences. He also originated the concepts of lifestyle and self-image. He defined lifestyle as an individual's characteristic approach to life, in facing problems and self-image as a concept that influenced management under the heading of work-life balance.

Carl Gustav Jung made contributions to personal development with his concept of individuation, which he saw as the drive of the individual to achieve the wholeness and balance of the Self. Daniel Levinson developed Jung's early concept of life stages and included a sociological perspective. Levinson proposed that personal development come under the influence, throughout life, of aspirations, which he called "the Dream".

Levinson's model of seven life-stages has been considerably modified due to sociological changes in the lifecycle. Research on success in reaching goals, as undertaken by Albert Bandura, suggested that self-efficacy best explains why

people with the same level of knowledge and skills get very different results. According to Bandura self-confidence functions as a powerful predictor of success because:

1. it makes you expect to succeed
2. it allows you take risks and set challenging goals
3. it helps you keep trying if at first you don't succeed
4. it helps you control emotions and fears when the going gets rough

4.4. Personal Development in the Workplace

Abraham Maslow, proposed a hierarchy of needs with self-actualization at the top, defined as the desire to become more and more what one is, to become everything that one is capable of becoming.

Since Maslow himself believed that only a small minority of people self-actualize, he estimated one percent, his hierarchy of needs had the consequence that organizations came to regard self-actualization or personal development as occurring at the top of the organizational pyramid, while job security and good working conditions would fulfill the needs of the mass of employees. As organizations and labor markets became more global, responsibility for development shifted from the company to the individual. Personal development programs in companies fall into two categories: the provision of employee benefits and the fostering of development strategies. Employee benefits have the purpose of improving satisfaction, motivation and loyalty. Employee surveys may help organizations find out personal-development needs, preferences and problems, and they use the results to design benefits programs. Typical programs in this category include:

- **work-life balance**
- **time management**
- **stress management**
- **health programs**
- **counseling**

Many such programs resemble programs that some employees might conceivably pay for themselves outside work: yoga, sports, martial arts, money-management, positive psychology, NLP, etc. As an investment, personal development programs have the goal of increasing human capital or improving productivity, innovation or

quality. Proponents actually see such programs not as a cost but as an investment with results linked to an organization's strategic development goals. Employees gain access to these investment-oriented programs by selection according to the value and future potential of the employee, usually defined in a talent management architecture including populations such as new hires, perceived high-potential employees, perceived key employees, sales staff, research staff and perceived future leaders. Organizations may also offer other (non-investment-oriented) programs to many or even all employees. Typical programs focus on career-development, personal effectiveness, teamwork, and competency-development. Personal development also forms an element in management tools such as personal development planning, assessing one's level of ability using a competency grid, or getting feedback from questionnaires filled in by colleagues at different levels in the organization.