

Individual Differences in Learning

Why is it that learners in the same class with the same books and the same teachers show variations in achievement? What causes individual differences in intellectual ability and achievement? The answers lie in the following factors:

1. **Genetics or Heredity** – Heredity fixes the blue print of intellectual abilities. It provides the raw materials and sets the limits. What is inherited is unchangeable. One inherits the potential towards high IQ or low IQ. The inherited potential interacts with environmental conditions and demands to unfold intellectual abilities to optimum levels
2. **The Environment** – The environment can be enriched and therefore promote intellectual growth. On the other hand it can be impoverished and therefore inhibit intellectual growth. Environments include:
 - **Early environment which is the home** – it affects both IQ and achievement. The home has both human and physical resources that is, there are parents, siblings and physical facilities. The home places the child in an environment which can be stimulating or non-stimulating. A child in a stimulating environment may be able to perform intellectual tasks above his mental age. On the other hand a child in an impoverished environment may be brighter than his IQ or achievement scores indicate.
 - **Socio Economic Status (SES)** – Social class can be determined by among other factors the family income, educational level of the parents, residence or neighbourhood and family background. Children from middle class backgrounds will generally perform better in school as compared to those from low class backgrounds. One of the reasons is that those from low class backgrounds may lack learning materials (poverty cycle). Another reason is that middle class people are more ambitious therefore they push their children to succeed in school.
3. **Characteristics of the learner** – These include the psychological attributes