Developing Workplace Learning: Workplace as Learning Spaces

Dr Helen Bound
Head, Centre for Work & Learning (CWL)
• Poem about trainee chefs’ learning in high class hotel kitchens (a positive story about WPL)

• Poem about nursing aides in their first 3 months on the job (The importance of workplace environments and the organisation of work)

Learning – what is it?

Knowledge – how do we think about it?

The workplace environment & beyond – its mediation of learning

Workplace learning strategies
**Purpose**

- Recognise what is learnt in the selected workplaces, and what assessment processes are used.
- Identify ways in which learning and assessment is supported and constrained in the workplace.
- Propose models for recognising workplace learning through the WSQ framework.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Workplace Trainees</th>
<th>Trainees</th>
<th>Supervisors</th>
<th>Observations @ work</th>
<th>Observations @ TC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hotel Co Chefs</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nursing Home Co Healthcare assistants</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Café Co Baristas</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aircraft maintenance Co Aerospace technicians</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>10</strong></td>
<td><strong>8</strong></td>
<td><strong>26</strong></td>
<td><strong>4</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Listen for:
What is being learnt
What mediates learning?

Organisational skills
Stress management
Make decisions confidently

Meta-cognitive skills
Ask questions
Self manage
Notes, photos
What to notice
Importance of practice
Reflection

Long term goal

Committed
Passionate
Pride

Understand whole job
Judgement - knowing standards of performance

Sense of belonging
Trust / ed

Becoming
Organisation of the work
- Working in teams
- Given responsibility
- Discretionary power
- Supportive supervisors

Architecture of the workplace + vision/mission
- Structure of Hotel kitchens used to enhance learning
- Learning written into mission

Workplace pedagogies
- Set challenges
- Demonstrations
- Opportunities for practice

Individual pedagogical tools
- Ask questions
- Observe
- Take notes, photos
- Trial & error
- Practice
Individual worker/learner
• Working towards a whole qualification
• Wants to BE a chef
• Feels trusted
• Made to feel confident
• Has opportunities to make a contribution

Workplace
• Learning is valued, e.g. learning from mistakes
• Shared understanding of standards
• Structured opportunities to learn about whole of food production and impact on guests
• Range of knowledges required recognised
• Diverse tasks within the role
• Learning built into everyday work activities
• Structured opportunities for learning are created
Listen for:
How is this different from the chef’s opportunities for learning?
What were these new nursing aides learning?
What made the experience so different?

Left nursing

- Limited to routine, simple tasks
- To make decisions
- To take responsibility
- Shattered hopes and dreams
- To follow the rules
- No trust
- The rules of the workplace
- Their place, & limits of their role
- The tasks, the smells, the routines, the workflow etc. of aged care

WHAT
Pedagogical tools
- Observation
- Demonstrations
- Buddying for first week

Organisation of work
- Strong hierarchy
- Lot of individual work – limited paired or team work
- SOPs and time driven

Culture of workplace
- Enculturation through-
  - Follow the rules
  - Information given on request
  - Sharing limited, limited feedback
  - No trust

Role
- Very limited discretionary power
- Limited responsibility
• Cannot see a future
• Limited valuing of the work
• Not ‘heard’
• Not trusted
• Confidence eroded

• Industry reliant on foreign labour – limited common language
• Requires medical knowledge but not trained
• Strong hierarchy
• Limited ACCESS to learning e.g. lack of opportunity for interaction and dialogue
• Deliberately structured out of learning affordances
Knowledge of:

- Profession/vocation
- Workplace, workflow
- Standards
- Appropriate behaviours, ethical conduct etc.
- Vocation – identity as a chef

Knowledge is dynamic, enacted holistically and recognised as distributed over people and artefacts.

Hotel

Nursing Home

Knowledge of:

- The limits of their contribution
- Follow the rules
- There is no opportunity
- Medical knowledge is valued

Knowledge is static

Separation between practical skills and know why
Collective & Individual Learning, potential knowledge creation, innovation

Workplace knowledge is stretched / distributed over people, tools, ways of thinking and doing

Being and becoming

Practical knowledge

Theoretical (vocational/professional) knowledge

Knowledge of the work, workplace

Learning, potential knowledge creation, innovation
Stakeholder perspectives

**Hotel**

High end hotel, high standards & customer experience paramount

Integrated system of formal & informal learning. E.g. skills passport
Knowledge dynamic, knowing

**RO**: distributed responsibility for teaching, nurturing high performance, focus on development & potential

**Worker**: strong identity with the organisation and with the vocation
Rises to challenge and contributes

**External provider**: used tools that linked workplace and ‘school’

**Nursing home**

Challenge in getting and retaining staff

Knowledge static, know how and know why separated, knowledge and practice separated

**RO**: limited opportunities to support learning

**Worker**: very limited discretionary power, rostered out of structured learning opportunities

**External provider**: train & place, no ongoing relationship with workplace
Learning Individual, team firm

Vocation/profession

Productive system of organisation

Cultures

Structures

Learning conditions

Where in the value chain is the firm?

Institutional relations & infrastructure

Policy

Market structure

Improved performance

Dr Helen Bound IAL 2014
Workplace Learning

WPL is about the relationships between the human and social processes of learning and working.

We need to understand these processes at individual and organisational levels and in wider societal terms

(Evans, Guile & Harris, 2011, p.150)
Learning

Results from everyday practice (Lave, 1996; 2008)

Is highly contextual and socially constructed (Boreham, 2004; Sense, 2005; Lee & Roth, 2005; Bound 2007)

Is individual and collective (Billett, 2001; Leach & Moon, 2008; Guile & Okumoto, 2008; Evans, Hodkinson, Rainbird, & Unwin, 2006; Bound & Lin, 2013)

Is mediated by workplace artefacts, norms, structures and interactions (Stevenson, 2008; Bound, 2011; Miettinen & Hasu, 2002; Leontyev, 1981; Engeström, 2004)

Takes place in multiple boundary spaces (Fitzpatrick, 2000; Engeström, 2000; Kerosuo, & Engeström, 2003; Bound, 2007)

Is mediated by the social relations of production (Bound, 2007; Jewson, Unwin, Felstead, Fuller & Kakavelakis, 2008)
WPL is about the relationships between the human and social processes of learning and working.

We need to understand these processes at individual and organisational levels and in wider societal terms

(Evans, Guile & Harris, 2011, p.150)
Learning initiatives (individual, team or organisational require):

- Doing (Bound & Lim, 2010; Lee & Roth, 2005;)
- Challenge
- Valuing of the work
- Feedback,
- Trust, support
- Confidence, personal agency, motivation (Eraut & Hirsch, 2010)

- Reflection on experience (DeLong & Fahey, 2000; Eljaer, 2000)
- Theoretical knowing (Lee & Roth, 2005)
- Participation in decision making (Thompson & Kahnweiler, 2002)
Workplace as learning environment

- High degree of exposure to change
- High degree of exposure to demands
- Managerial responsibility
- Lot of external professional contact
- Direct feedback
- Management support for learning
- Rewarding of proficiency

Learning conditions (Skule & Reichborn, 2002)
Workplace as learning environment

- Industry infrastructure and relations
- Systems of production, organisation and flow of the work
- Division of labour
- Workplace structure and culture
- Workplace discourses
- Assumptions about the capabilities of employees
- Individual agency

Access to learning

Affordances for learning

- Affordances for learning
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demonstration</th>
<th>Coaching</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Demonstrate at normal pace (understanding of whole task).</td>
<td>Repeated practice over time with coach providing constructive feedback, demonstrations, supportive comments to enable smooth performance to required standard</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Repeat at slower pace with explanations (understanding of sub tasks).</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Verbalise standards of performance.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Scaffolding and fading (adjustable, temporary support that can be removed when no longer required)</td>
<td>Guided reflection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Assess if learner is ready and able to take more responsibility for the task.</td>
<td>• Encourage reflection on what has been learnt.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Remove support gradually.</td>
<td>• Assist them to understand the breadth of what they have learnt and how and where it can be applied.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Active noticing Guide the learner on what to notice, what is more and less important.</td>
<td>• Facilitate the abstraction of leaning from one situation to another.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Discuss what they see and explore what they are not yet seeing</td>
<td>Gradual release of responsibility</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Sequence the learning, building theory and practice together.</td>
<td>• Sequence tasks to build confidence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Sequence tasks to build confidence. Devolve responsibility gradually.</td>
<td>• Over time sequence responsibility to identify gaps</td>
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### Feedback

- Use the sandwich method (praise is the bread, the filling is what can be improved)
- Praise – what is good about the work
- What can be improved – what is not up to standard, or what is missing, etc.
- Praise – something else that is good about the work or encouragement e.g. keep at it you will get there, you are doing well.

### Asking questions

Use open questions, not closed questions.
- Open questions examples:
  - What do you think is happening here?
  - How would you explain what the problem is?
  - What do you think we should do from here?
- Closed questions require 1 or 2 word answers: e.g.
  - Did you learn the procedures?
  - Can you tell me the name of....

### Using diagrams / models

Draw, make or use a model to explain or show what is happening or going to happen.

### Teaching others

To teach is to learn twice. Assign people with budding expertise to teach newcomers or others who are seeking to develop further.

### Induction

The orientation and training of individuals in the organization culture showing how they are interconnected to (and interdependent on) others in the organization. Ideally, this should be done as much as possible on the job with a well thought through checklist.

### Give workers power to make decisions

People learn when they apply thinking skills such as analysis and evaluation during decision making. Trust them
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<th><strong>Give responsibility to workers</strong></th>
<th><strong>Spaces for sharing</strong></th>
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<td>People rise to responsibility, if supported with clear goals and roles. Delegate tasks and responsibilities to staff but final accountability rests with the leader.</td>
<td>Provide spaces (e.g. tearooms, open spaces, meeting rooms, online spaces) for both formal and informal sharing. The dialogue that takes place is often about work e.g. information sharing, problem solving, identifying resources, issues etc.</td>
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<th><strong>Shadowing</strong></th>
<th><strong>Assign buddies</strong></th>
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<td>Build confidence and awareness by following a competent team member or supervisor for a couple of days to get a better idea of his or her role, as well as understand the particulars of the role without the commitment of the responsibility.</td>
<td>Assign a new person to an experienced worker. The role of the buddy is to show how things are done in the organisation, point out who to go to for what, what resources are available and how to access them.</td>
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<th><strong>Provide opportunities for practice</strong></th>
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| Stretch your team, give each individual and/or the team a challenge.  
  • This should be something that is a little out of their comfort zone but within their ability to achieve it.  
  • Debrief and reflect on the process and on the completion of the challenge | Give staff a series of planned tasks to accomplish or assign staff real life situations of handling customers or performing a task. |
### Teamwork
Working in teams requires dialogue and shared problem solving – important aspects of learning. Understand that team members may possess different strengths and temperaments. Match their skills and talents to the roles and tasks.

### Tricks of the trade
**(Shortcuts / Heuristics)**
Learn methods that help do a job faster or better. Observe a skilled professional and ask questions to undercover “shortcuts” / how to think about the process.

### Mnemonics
Use techniques and memory aids that help information retention. Associate the learning content with ideas, people and things that you are familiar with.

### Goal Setting
Provide a goal setting method such as SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound) to guide staff in setting goals.

### Checking for understanding
Ask open questions that require the person to create their own understanding or come up with something different. E.g.
- How could we /you do this differently?
- How would you suggest we /you improve on this?
- Any thoughts about why this is happening?

### Asking questions
Ask open questions that require the person to create their own understanding or come up with something different. E.g.
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<td>Provide a different perspective and help staff understand various functions in the organisation by rotating them within the organisation. Help them appreciate the organisation as a whole rather than in silos.</td>
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<td>Meetings can be a powerful source of learning, informally and formally. Informally participants learn information about what is happening in the organisation or team. Formally, you can structure part of the meeting for participants’ to share or provide input, or invite individuals from outside the team or organisation to share their expertise.</td>
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<th><strong>Community of Practice</strong></th>
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<td>Gather people who share similar interest in a particular domain or areas to gain knowledge related to your field. Share information and experiences and learn from each other. Collaborate on sharing experiences whether online or in face-to-face settings.</td>
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<th><strong>Sequencing of tasks</strong></th>
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<td>The way tasks are ordered (sequenced) provides a natural structure for a curriculum for learning. Use the way tasks are sequenced in the workplace to gradually introduce the participant to more complex work and greater responsibility.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Conclusion
Workplaces as learning spaces

Creating workplaces as learning spaces and learning that develops us and our work that grow us and the system, requires deliberate attention and planning.

Believing in the capability and potential of individuals, teams, & the organisation is a must.
**Assumptions:**
- Learner is an empty vessel or a ‘bank (Frierre, 1972) where knowledge is deposited
- Learner receives / acquires knowledge over time and combines concepts
- Learner a lone operator
- Knowledge is transferred / transmitted to the learner
- Knowledge is a thing that is owned by individuals, knowledge does not change
Participation metaphor of learning

Participation

You are a part of something
Suggests action ... doing

Assumptions:
• Context is important for learning
• Learning is social, you learn with and through others and the artefacts they create
• Knowing (a verb) as opposed to knowledge (a noun)
• Engagement with others
Learning happens naturally in the workplace:
In, through and for work

- Ask peers, supervisors / ROs
- Observe others
- Undertake own research
- Interaction with customers / internal & external stakeholders
- Networking with those outside the organisation
- “Just doing it”
- Practice - repetition
- Meetings
- Team problem solving
- Demonstration
- Mentoring
- Coaching
- Buddying
Workplace as learning environment

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Learning conditions
(Skule & Reichborn, 2002)
Integration of skills, knowledge, attitude, and values to produce **Performance**
Meet required standards

Career progression
Contribute, find meaning in your work
Improve and develop “it’s just a job”

Certification