Challenges for Research and Innovation in Adult and Workplace Learning

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HELIX VINN Excellence Centre

- A ten year research and innovation programme
- Organized as a partnership between the university, companies, public sector and labour market organizations
- Based on a multi-disciplinary and interactive research approach
The HELIX Partnership

Research and Higher Education
- Linköping University, Three Departments: Behavioural Sciences and Learning (IBL), Management and Engineering (IEI), Medicine and Health Sciences (IMH)
- Royal Institute of Technology (KTH), School of Technology and Health

Companies
- SAAB Inc
- Siemens Industrial Turbomachinery Inc
- Toyota/BT Products Inc
- Rimaster Inc
- Industrial Competence Inc
- Industrial Development Centre (IDC) Inc

Public Sector Organizations
- The East Sweden Development Council
- The National Insurance Office
- The County Council
- Five Municipalities: Finspång, Linköping, Mjölby, Motala & Norrköping

Labor Market Organizations
- IF Metall (“Swedish Metal and Industrial Workers’ Union”)
- The Swedish Municipal Workers’ Union
- UNIONEN (“A Swedish White-Collar Union”)
- TRR Outplacement (“Trygghetsrådet”)
The Research Programme

Creating Knowledge for Sustainable Change

- Production & Organization Development
- Learning for Change and Innovation
- Health, Competence and Work Ability
- New Forms of Organization
- Entrepreneurship and Innovation

Mobility

Multi-Disciplinarity  Interactive Research  Partnership
A Model of Interactive Research

Conceptualisation and interpretation of the research object

Theories and concepts

Data collection and analysis

Problems/ issues

Research System

Practice System

Conceptualisation and interpretation of the research object

Problems/ issues

Local Theories

Organizational action
Innovations within adult learning and competence development

- There is a **strong** focus on researching and promoting innovations (e.g. product innovations) in many business sectors.

- There is a **weak** (or almost non-existent) focus on researching and promoting innovations within the adult learning sector (as well as in the educational sector more generally).

- There is a **lack of knowledge** concerning the prevalence and character of innovative practices within the adult learning sector, and also concerning the conditions, policies and processes for promoting innovations in this sector.

- However, there are **plenty of practical challenges and interesting research and innovation issues** that need to be articulated and addressed.
Challenges for Research and Innovation in Adult and Workplace Learning

Understanding and promoting:

• Conditions for a broadening participation in adult learning activities (ALAs)

• The role of workplace learning (WPL) in lifelong learning and as a condition for broadening participation in ALAs – implications for national, Nordic and European visions and agendas for adult learning and workplace learning.

• WPL as a multifaceted issue, with implications for HR, work environment, organization development, profitability and innovation etc.
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Understanding and promoting:

- New strategies and models of WPL that can handle employees' needs for increased employability and sustainable work systems and at the same time fulfil employers need for profitability, innovation and a flexible workforce.

- Conditions for an increasing focus on the demand and utilization of knowledge and competence, and, thereby, issues of work organization and innovative work practices. There is now too strong a focus on enhancing the supply of knowledge and competence.

- Conditions for making WPL a strategic issue within organizations comparable to for example quality issues.
Too Much Confidence in Training as a Magic Bullet

Training (e.g. courses)

Increased individual competence and organizational performance
Towards Integrated Models of Workplace Learning

Training through internal or external courses

Knowledge Skills Attitudes

Learning Environment

Support for learning: management attention and encouragement; internal supervisors

Increased individual/collective competence, i.e. capacity to handle certain situations or tasks

Informal learning through the use of knowledge and skills in daily work

V I N N   E x c e l l e n c e   C e n t r e
Actors in an Integrated System of Workplace Learning

- First-line managers
- Teachers/Educational providers
- Participants (employees)
- Internal Supervisors/Educators
Adult and Workplace Learning: Relevant Research Environments in Sweden

Thematic Network on Workplace Learning and Adjustments to Changes in the Labour Market – A & O

The thematic network is funded by the European Social Fund for the period 2009—2012 (possibly extended) and is based on a collaboration between:

• Luleå University of Technology
• Linköping University – HELIX Excellence Centre
• Gothenburg University
• APeL Research & Development Centre, Örebro
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