

Nordic Research in the field of Workplace learning/ working life learning

The concept of workplace learning/working life learning

In this context we use the two concepts workplace learning and working life learning synonymously, although some researches use the terms in a slightly different way. At the same time it seems really difficult to conceptualize these concepts and the corresponding field of research.

As a point of departure we may define *workplace learning as learning in, for and through the workplace*, referring to Karen Evans. It is evident, that learning take place in educational institutions, but also in different learning arenas. The workplace, the company, the organization are important arenas of learning as well. Sometimes the terms on-the-job-learning are used.

Workplace learning can be unfolded in interaction of individuals, in teams, in the organization, or as inter-organizational processes, e.g. as knowledge sharing and co-construction of knowledge. Workplace learning may be unfolded in interactions between educational institutions and the workplace as well. Both formal and informal learning often are aspects of workplace learning. Learning is conceptualized at individual- and organizational levels, and the interplay of these levels.

Developmental trends

Workplace learning as a perspective and approach seems to expand in two modes:

It seems that the field of workplace learning develops in a way where the field is becoming more comprehensive, more complex and still new problems and areas of interest are included in the fields of research. And workplace learning becomes connected to , - and seems to create a synergi effect by being connected to - concepts and issues as innovation (distributed, employee driven innovation), design, intrapreneurship, organizational learning, intervention, competence development, knowledge, organization culture, identity, professional learning, educational leadership.

The second trend is that Research in workplace learning is now implemented in now all Industries and sectors in society:

Workplace learning is an approach and perspective used in both the private and public sector, in Industrial work Environments, the financial sector, in public care and health institutions, in the service sector, in unions, schools, banks, ICT, experience industry - and in both large and small companies and organizations.

Examples of important themes and issues in the field today are:

- New forms of work and learning
- ICT and learning at work
- Professional learning
- Educational leadership
- Development and circuits of knowledge
- Practice based innovation (employee driven innovation) and workplace learning
- What works, what disturbs: enabling and disabling factors on workplace learning

- Conditions of learning at different levels of the organization
- Promoting learning and transfer between school and workplaces
- Recognition of prior learning within health care work
- Vocational education and its relation to workplaces
- Integration of formal and informal learning at work
- The workplace as learning environment
- Competence development and health promotion
- Strategies and outcomes of competence development

The Nordic countries seems to produce research within clusters of these themes to the benefit of both the research community and the community of practitioners and professionals.

It seems that several research teams and research institutions in the Nordic Countries engage in expand their activities in this field. Often the research is carried out in close collaboration with practitioners and interest groups.

These text summaries the discussion of the researcher groups and is brought together on behalf of the group by Steen Højrup Pedersen, DPU/Århus university, Denmark