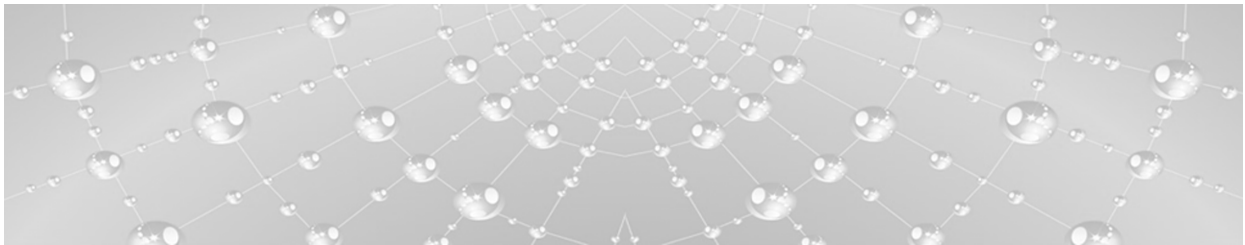


SECTION I

Theories and Theoretical Frameworks



INTRODUCTION

This section of the SAGE Handbook of Workplace Learning presents a set of eleven chapters which address a wide range of theoretical positions, models, theories and their implications for the field under consideration in the Handbook.

The influences of psychological theories, sociological, situated, and postmodern thinking on the possible theories of how people learn and respond in and through workplace activity is dealt with in detail. There is a range of frameworks and positions adopted by the set of authors who show a variety of international backgrounds and orientations.

Initially, Malloch and Cairns explore new ideas and directions for the concept of Workplace Learning arguing for a broader conceptualisation in this, the beginning of a new century. Work is defined as more than employment for remuneration, and the considerations of place as more than a physical location for learning and work open a set of possibilities for much broader concerns and issues to be examined. A set of future prospects is also considered as a way to look forward to what might be pressing challenges for work, place and learning in the twenty-first century.

Hager, in Chapter 2, provides an historical overview of major theories relevant to workplace learning in order to take the reader to the present and future. The discussion covers the many views of workplace learning theories and their underlying philosophical positions to show how theories of workplace learning have evolved and emerged to their significant place in current research and practice across the field.

Illeris offers a chapter that examines changes and development in learning and workplace learning and he presents a model of workplace learning and 'working life as a space for learning'. Illeris sees workplace learning as a matter of what takes place in the interaction of the learner's work identity with workplace practices. A key focus for Illeris in this chapter is on learning as competence development, which he elaborates and positions as a central idea.

Fuller and Unwin take on the aspect of organisations and their place in a consideration of workplace learning. In this chapter they discuss, amongst other aspects, the various forms of work organisations (including high performance work and management of high performance organisations). The chapter also offers a detailed discussion of the workplace as a site for learning and presents an interesting exemplar of the 'expansive' and 'restrictive' ends of their earlier developed idea of the 'expansive restrictive continuum'.

Billett suggests strongly that it is time for the significance of personal agency and self to figure more prominently in theories of Workplace Learning and he presents his theoretical stance on the interactions and 'affordances' that operate between individual 'cognitive experience' and social experience and how these are negotiated in the workplace. Central to Billett's case are the elements of learning *through* and *for* work and how individual engagement is based on what he calls 'relational interdependence with social agency' in workplaces. His conclusion relates to individuals being active participants in 'remaking cultural practices' which arise and are involved in work and workplaces.

Cairns suggests that the influential model of *communities of practice*, as developed and popularised by Lave and Wenger, may have, to some extent, outlived its relevance as an explanatory model of learning in the workplace, even though its impact and significance has been immense. Cairns surveys a range of critiques of the idea and its application over the past twenty years and offers some additional thoughts on ways to think differently about the intersections that individual learners face in workplace learning situations and how societal elements may be included in the way workplace learning takes place. There is also a link to the following chapter by Engestrom amongst the suggestions for different thinking about ensembles and self in learning in the workplace.

Engestrom offers a clear and very useful update on his Activity theory and its relationship to studying workplaces and workplace learning. By presenting his 'expansive theory' and the concept of 'knotworks' within the context of broad-based professionals in medical treatment groups with collaborative work and learning to better offer treatment, Engestrom shows some very insightful and different views as he moves towards a co-configuration model.

Ellstrom, in Chapter 8 discusses Informal Learning at Work and takes on the points made elsewhere by critics who see the informal-formal dichotomy to be unhelpful as he argues that informal learning is a significant and pervasive learning mode in a range of contexts, including schools. Ellstrom also discusses the differences between adaptive and developmental learning as he examines what he calls 'enabling' and 'constraining' learning environments. Ellstrom's journey through his theoretical paper, which also covers a four-level model of action and reflection, suggests that while structural conditions are important in learning at work, so too are subjective factors; he also reminds readers that micro, macro and meso levels of analysis are necessary elements in any consideration of learning in the workplace.

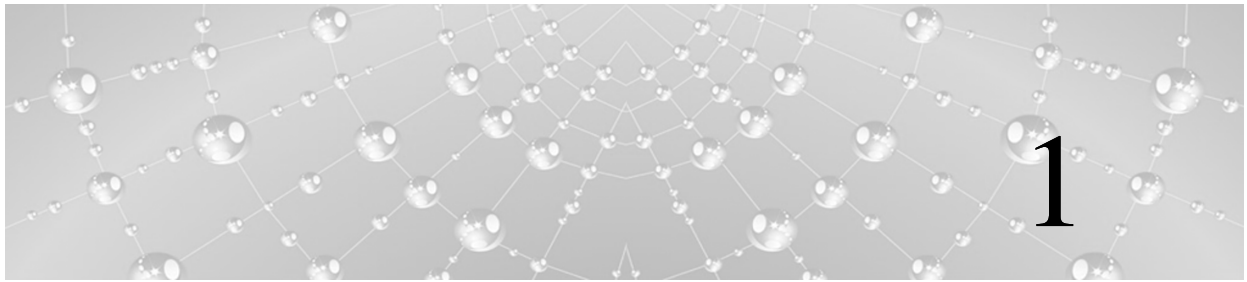
Russ-Eft sets out to identify, through various theories and considerations, what she calls a 'meta theory,' which is her constructed theoretical

framework based on implications from the range of theories and views she has charted. This review of various theories and their underlying conceptualisation locates a range of views and will assist the reader to reconsider what learning theories suit application and development in the arena of workplace learning.

Allix, in Chapter 10 addresses the significant area of Knowledge with a detailed tour of the various theoretical areas and influences including work on mind and cognition that have arisen from more recent brain sciences and how learning relates to these views. Again, Allix comes down to a conclusion that learning is *both* 'a profoundly individual *and* social phenomenon' which resonates with the positions of a number of the authors in this section (albeit in slightly differing forms and with different bases and emphases).

Finally, in this first section, Evans, Guile and Harris present a case for rethinking work-based learning and start with some points about workplace and work-based differences and similarities and how work-based learning has, in the UK, been 'appropriated' as a different concept akin to basing qualifications in higher education on work assignment and other 'learning opportunities'. They continue to argue for a more inclusive stand and understanding of work-based learning to enhance learning *for* and *through* work, aspects that resonate throughout this Handbook. The suggestions for a model of recontextualisation of content, workplace, pedagogy and learner as the four 'modes' offers a cogent case for this to be a core aspect of any rethinking of work-based learning and they add that it also avoids transfer issues in other models.

This first section of *The SAGE Handbook of Workplace Learning* sets the theoretical scene and presents the reader with a range of views, models and theories and yet with some elements of convergence amongst the very broad church of the international group of authors. There are issues, challenges and positions suggested that should, in turn, challenge the field to rethink and reconsider a number of positions and theoretical orientations to better develop the study of Workplace Learning.



Theories of Work, Place and Learning: New Directions

Margaret Malloch and Len Cairns

INTRODUCTION

The first decade of the twenty-first century may or may not be the harbinger of incredible change and global difference among the many peoples and nations that saw such advances that were achieved in the twentieth century. Globalization, that late twentieth century spectre of either connected intercultural and cross-cultural development, or the single greatest threat to harmony and autonomy, for example, may in fact be a non-event by the mid twenty-first century. To some, this last statement may be heretical, yet early in this century we have seen the financial markets melt down in late 2008 and various other effects of too great an interconnectedness, as the world notes that 'thinking global' is not always an advantage to all.

Other current trends and directions may be, as was the case in previous generations, just perceptions that this era is one of great change like never before seen, rather than some normal progression stage. As Sir John Adams wrote in the introduction to his 1922 volume on *Modern Developments in Educational Practice*:

It seems inherent in human beings to regard their own period as one of notable change. We are continually telling each other that this is a critical time, that we are at the parting of the ways, that vital issues lie in our hands at the present moment (p. 2).

This chapter sets out to explore new ideas and directions for the concept of Workplace Learning. It suggests that the three terms included in the

composite, that is, Work, Place and Learning, each need to be considered more broadly than has been the case in the last 50 years and that the combination of the three should invoke some new thinking in this 'ultramodern' age of the twenty-first century. In addition, the chapter presents a number of suggested challenges which could necessitate different approaches to a wide range of workplace learning thinking and activities as this twenty-first century unfolds.

We are suggesting, contrary to Sir John Adams' rather dismissive rebuff, that this era *is* one of critical importance and change, not just a possible misperception of normality.

This chapter explores, from a theoretical perspective, the three terms that together constitute Workplace Learning; Work, Place and Learning, and how there should be broader consideration given to these terms in the twenty-first century. In addition, the chapter offers some insights and ideas for new directions in the area of Workplace Learning.

Beginning with the term Work, the chapter suggests that a much broadened understanding of this word is needed to include the many areas of civic service (Beck, 2000) and household activities (including child rearing) that have previously been discounted as actual work in most Western societies (Chisholm and Davis, 2005). We argue that work is a more generalized notion than employment or an activity taking place in a specific site that involves production for remuneration.

We were recently reminded that John Dewey, in his seminal work *Democracy and Education* (1916), wrote about the differences and similarities among

children with regard to work and play. That play and work could be further extended more broadly is summed up by the following:

It is important not to confuse the psychological distinction between play and work with the economic distinction. Psychologically, the defining characteristic of play is not amusement nor aimlessness. It is the fact that the aim is thought of as more activity in the same line, without defining continuity of action in reference to results produced. Activities as they grow more complicated gain added meaning by greater attention to specific results achieved. Thus they pass gradually into work. Both are equally free and intrinsically motivated, apart from false economic conditions which tend to make play into idle excitement for the well to do, and work into uncongenial labor for the poor. Work is psychologically simply an activity which consciously includes regard for consequences as a part of itself; it becomes constrained labor when the consequences are outside of the activity as an end to which activity is merely a means. Work which remains permeated with the play attitude is art – in quality if not in conventional designation (p. 205–206).

The discussion of the nature of work also embraces the concept of place, in relation to situated theories of learning and issues of transferability and generalizability of capable learners. There is also a need to consider, with regard to learning places in this definitional and conceptualization debate, where it may be that one learns in the individual sense and in the psychological examination of the learning process. The *Workplace*, in our discussion, then becomes a more potentially personal and negotiated location than where one is employed by a third party or organization. The central role personal agency can play in this conceptualization is then emphasized as significant. Consideration of the socio-cultural theories of the learning place and more sophisticated models of adult learner-managed learning as evidenced in the PAM model (Cairns, 2003) will be included in this discussion.

The third term in the Workplace Learning descriptor, which is the major reason and core of what this volume is about, *Learning*, evokes a wide range of theories and ideas which lead to a range of contested and often contradictory positions amongst theorists and researchers (Illeris, 2009). In this chapter we shall argue that learning, as an activity that involves change and development in individuals and organizations, is a process that impinges on all humans at all times. Engagement in learning, however, is an aspect that requires individuals to take some agency and decisions about how, when, where and why they engage.

WORK

There is no doubt that the word work and what it stands for across the world seems to raise considerable interest, and the notion of what work constitutes in an individual's life (whether this is conceived as a lifecourse, lifeplace or lifespace) has been a historically significant definer of who and what people do in society.

This trend to define or identify one's self through what we work at has emerged over many years to be a singularly significant aspect of life in the late twentieth century.

Identifying self through work

Work is an activity where individuals alone and together participate in productive endeavours to complete tasks or to achieve outcomes which are either self set or set by others and which may or may not be remunerated. Work is also a process whereby individuals engage in activity from which they gain some satisfaction on completion which may or may not be recognized by others. (Cairns and Malloch, 2006).

We frequently identify ourselves through our work. In social settings we introduce ourselves by name and when the question comes 'and what do you do?' the response is an identification, primarily in terms of what we do for paid employment (almost 'I work therefore I am'). If no longer in paid work, then 'I work as a volunteer', or 'I am retired', or 'I was a 'specific occupation' is proffered. This has occurred throughout history: for example, in English, with names of occupations identifying individuals, such as fletcher, farmer, fisher, butcher, baker, knight, smith, and so on. We are identified officially by occupations, by our work in travel, social security, health, insurance, and financial documents. This century the notion of what people do, associated with the term 'work', is how people tend to define themselves. Later, as one of the Challenges for the Future and how societies will respond, this aspect will be raised as a serious potential shift in the twenty-first century.

Exploring the concept of work

In definitional terms, the word, 'work', can have many meanings, ranging from the traditional meaning (and we would suggest in the twenty-first century a simplistic definition) as an activity carried out to produce a product or outcome remunerated by an employer. It can also be the place where individuals are employed. 'Work' is therefore utilized as a term for the place and the activity carried out in that place. Work and workplace

are seen as distinct from home and places for recreation. Work has become a place where one goes to carry out labour distinct from one's home. (Cairns and Malloch, 2008, p. 4). We wish to suggest that for the twenty-first century, this conceptualization of work is too narrow and we shall offer some broadening ideas and draw together some critical thinking as to why such a broadening is necessary.

Birch and Paul (2003), tell us that in ancient Greece, work was seen as 'interfering with the duties of citizens, distracting them from the important pursuits of politics, art, philosophy and what they called leisure' (p. 21). Interestingly, leisure was 'skhole' from which we derive the word school. Birch and Paul also tell us that the republican Romans had a similar view.

The Romans of the Republic period adopted a similar attitude. The Latin for 'work', *labor*, means 'extreme effort associated with pain' (p. 21).

It is apparent that in history, 'work' was not seen as a positive element of social need and activity. How work was subsequently defined may have been part of this perceived attitude.

Existing theories of work are strongly influenced by historical and economic developments. Class and status linked to work roles are influential in the development of theories of work, place and learning. Historians have written of work from the perspective of a shift from agrarian to industrial to post-industrial societies. In analyses of the division of labour, employers and workers have been identified as separate entities, separate in role and class and power status (Braverman, 1974). Within most Western societies, the statistical data on employment as percentages of persons in paid work has become a key measure of national economic success (Cairns and Malloch, 2008, p. 4). Unemployment is seen as a measure for economic difficulties and a weakened economy in any nation where the figures are high.

Babbage (1835; in Davis and Taylor, 1972, p. 23) writing in the time of the Industrial Revolution, argued that '(p)erhaps the most important principle upon which the economy of a manufacture depends, is the *division of labour* amongst the persons who perform the work'. Work in the Industrial Revolution had brought about a shift from the agrarian, more 'home' based work to the development of separate places of employment, such as mills and, eventually, factories, which by the twentieth century featured assembly lines and mass production, referred to as the Fordist and Post Ford eras. In the longer-term consideration of history, this view of 'work' is relatively recent and somewhat out of place with the traditions of work

as what each person and family completed at home, be it their workshop shed, farm or cottage.

Workers' rights and needs were fought over in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries with unionism supporting workers in what in many cases was a struggle between capitalism and socialism, characterized as money versus the people. In the twenty-first century, with unionism somewhat disempowered, workers have again been subjected to diminished rights and conditions. Western economies have moved manufacturing, in particular, offshore to cheaper, more populous, less protected workforces in the east and south east of the European centric global mapping terms.

Beck (1999; 2000; 2004) challenged prevailing ideas and theories in the field of work and its place in society, suggesting that Western societies were heading to become 'risk societies' where only one out of two people will be employed in the current sense. Beck presents an alternative view for the defining of work, bringing in formal recognition for the unpaid, voluntary work carried out by citizens.

For me, the antithesis of the work society is boosting the political society of individuals, the active citizen's society on the spot. This society can find and develop in miniature, local answers to the challenges of the Second Modernity. However, this is tied up with a few preconditions. Work time would have to be shortened for all on the full-employment labour market. Everyone – women and men – should be able to have one leg in gainful employment. Parent's work, i.e. work with children, would have to be equally recognized by society as would be artistic, cultural and political civic work by, for example, claims for pensions and health care being granted to both categories – parental and civic. In the final analysis, simultaneous commitment to gainful employment and civic work will therefore presuppose family obligations being redistributed between men and women as well (2004, p. 2).

The study of work (or more specifically 'the world of work') and what it involves has a history that Statt (2004) claims only goes back to the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries (p. 5).

As he later examines the trends in work and what he calls 'non-work' he comes to an interesting conclusion:

Paid work in the form of a job is one of the central aspects of our identity, though the relationship between work and employment is not always clear-cut. A great many activities that would normally be described as work may not be paid and a lot of employed time may not be spent working (p. 156).

In another detailed examination of the idea and definition of work, Noon and Blyton (2002) also suggest that the differences in this new era between work and non-work may be blurred and somewhat confused. After opting for a definition taken from Thomas (1999) which focuses on three elements: 1 work achieves something, 2 work involves a degree of obligation or challenge, and 3 work involves effort and persistence, Noon and Blyton suggest that many leisure activities fit these three points as well as paid employment (p. 4). They conclude, significantly we believe:

What is needed is to strike a balance that gives greater recognition to the different activities that constitute people's work. Further, such a balance is necessary not only because of the scale of the different spheres of work but also because of the key links that exist between the different aspects of paid and unpaid, visible and hidden work (p. 4).

There are now a number of ways of viewing work and its meanings across society. Some may see it as labour, others as a job, and many as employment. Our point is that work needs, in this twenty-first century period of what we describe as ultramodernity (Beck also uses this and 'second modernity'), to be conceived of as a broader-based activity across a very wide range of ambits of social interaction and self-motivated action. This is necessary because the ways and means of action people take in order to exist, play, and earn is currently shifting in a paradigmatic manner from paid actions by an employer to a broader range of activities that may lead to some remuneration amidst other activities (often by direct choice) where pay is not a factor, and where work is still carried out in significant ways. In addition, the modes of action, be they direct physical exertion, knowledge development and application or virtual actions in a cyberspace, all have differing work connotations.

Elsewhere we have defined this new conception of work as:

We see work more as an enabled purposive effort by an individual to initiate activity or respond to an issue or problem in a range of situations for some perceived (by them) productive end. This emphasises that the action is intentional engagement by an individual (Cairns and Malloch, 2008).

Work is intentional engagement. Work is an application of effort. Work has a purpose and is an intentional or purposive act and finally, work may or may not be a matter of employment or remunerated activity.

PLACE

We now turn to the second element in the composite term Workplace Learning, that of Place.

The term *place* also has a range of meanings and connotations. These range across the obvious physical location, through the more esoteric spiritual location and to the more recent virtual location. Place, we are told, in a serious and scholarly examination of the intersection of place and education by Hutchison (2004), has many reference points:

The term "place" conjures up visions of locality, spatial representations of those places with which we are familiar, and those places the unfamiliarity of which intrigues us. We reside in places, go to work and recreate in places, travel daily through places that are sometimes meaningful to us and other times ignored or taken for granted. We identify with those places that played some formative (if still illusive) role in our childhood years, those places that are associated with good times or bad. The term 'place' is imbued with emotion, defined by the boundaries it imposes on space, and informed by the utility to which space is put in our lives. Place can be understood as an individually constructed reality – a reality informed by the unique experiences, histories, motives, and goals that each of us brings to the spaces with which we identify (p. 11).

When we discuss place and places in this chapter we are seeking to open up many of the areas Hutchison has cited and more. We seek to enable a broader consideration of place in the sense of the composite term Workplace Learning. There are two aspects of the relationship between place and the other two terms in this expression. There are places of work and there are places of learning.

The simple and most common connotation for workplace, is that of a physical location. Be it a factory, an office or a bench space at home or at some other location, it is a space where one works. This first order concept of place as related to work is the most frequently utilized aspect of workplace in common language about the idea, but the idea of places as a range of different orders of location and being have emerged more recently.

Places can also be heavily spiritually significant, as it is argued it is with indigenous Australians. The identification with the land is clearly summed up by Hardy in her book *Lament for the Barkindji*, about the tribes along the great Darling River in Australia:

They were spiritually akin to every natural feature and to every growing thing that clothed the

hillsides or roamed the plains or drank deeply from the waterholes. They and the land were one, and it was a wholeness designed to endure in the natural order of things (p. 1).

Place has effects and is an affective link between humans and their origins as well as something of significance in relation to where they live, work and play. People will ask for their ashes to be spread over their old school grounds, the place where they had enjoyable holidays or where they played football in a local park. The reference to locations (places) as where one's 'roots' are, abounds in everyday talk and in literature.

In addition to both physical and spiritual places of significance in life, there are aspects of psychological place which are important, particularly in the context of workplace learning. Psychological place may be a consideration of identification as well as some concern with 'mind' as a place where we think, dream and consider ourselves. This is not the Cartesian mind/body dichotomy but rather the cognitive psychology consideration of where learning might take place. How human experience and cognition come together is the basis of much of the work of Varela and his colleagues (Varela, Thompson and Rosch, 1993).

In their examination of the contributions of Educational Psychology to Adult Learning and Development, Smith and Pourchot (1998) concluded that a new field of Adult Educational Psychology was needed and that the way lifelong learning and development for adults proceeded was a major necessary study area for advancement. Their book dealt with a wide range of ideas and approaches, including Bonk and Kim's case for the extension of socio-cultural theory (especially the concepts of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) and scaffolding) to adult learning. Whilst we have resonance with the ideas of socio-cultural theory and the important foundations of Vygotskian thinking, we believe a it should be remembered that Vygotsky was working with and theorizing about children and their learning. We have also argued elsewhere (Cairns and Malloch, 2008) that sophisticated adult learners may operate as self-scaffolders or even without any necessary scaffolding as it is currently conceptualized. We also contend that whilst the idea of the ZPD may have some relevance as a place of learning activity, the notions of more capable others (be they peers or teachers) in the adult worker situation may be quite different from the research-base work with children. Aspects of the Japanese thinking on **Ba** and **Basho** (see Nishida, 1987a, 1987b, and Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995; Von Krogh, Nonaka and Nishiguchi, 2000) where Ba is a 'shared mental

place for emerging relationships' (Nonaka, Reinmoeller and Senoo, 2000), are also worthy of consideration in this debate area. Western ideas of place and space and their relationship to thinking and mind may need a considerable shake-up for better clarity to emerge.

Place, in relation to learning and cognition, can cover a very wide range of ideas and situations. It can refer to physical or spiritual locations and also relate to spaces in which we see ourselves as people and learners. Place can also refer to where it is that we think we operate cognitively as we think and learn (Intra-Personal Place). There is no doubt that the social interaction aspect of learning in a multitude of (Inter-Personal Place) offers some useful thought for the consideration of how and where workplace learning occurs (see Figure 1.1).

LEARNING

Of all the areas involved in this discussion, the field described by the term 'Learning' has the most definitional and research-based models and theories (Jarvis, 2001; Jarvis, Holford and Griffin, 1998; Smith and Pourchot, 1998; Vaill, 1996; Illeris, 2009). We all 'know' what we mean when we use the term 'learning', but there are variations and aspects that require comment and debate.

Among the more contentious aspects of dealing with Learning and Learning theories is the commonsense equation of the *learning* idea with *schooling* or the broad term *education*.

There has developed a binary of education and training, where education is seen as more comprehensive and extending and training more specific and bounded. Wenger, 1998 p. 263) provides a definition of these two aspects of learning:

Education, in its deepest sense and at whatever age it takes place, concerns the opening of identities – exploring new ways of being that lie beyond our current state. Whereas training aims to create an inbound trajectory targeted at competence in a specific practice, education must strive to open new dimensions for the negotiation of the self. It places students on an outbound trajectory toward a broad field of possible identities. Education is not merely formative – it is transformative.

As Wenger also suggests, education can be a process of lifelong renewal.

Vocational learning can also be more community oriented. Writing in 2000 about 'non-western' educational traditions and cultural elements,

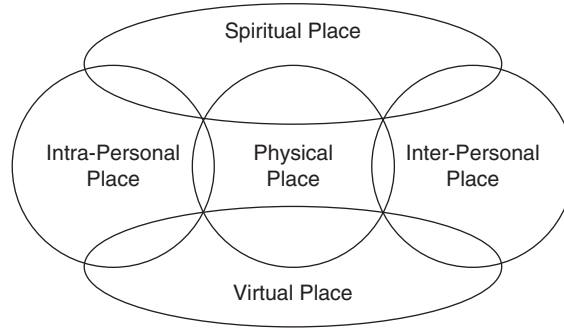


Figure 1.1 Concepts of place

Reagan presents an examination of learning for vocational purposes positioned within traditions as part of normal life and ‘civic education’. The community is the centre for learning preparing young learners to be effective members of society. Reagan points to the significant differences between the patterns and approaches to vocational learning in the West and non-Western societies.

In modern capitalist societies in general, and in American society in particular, educational institutions are often expected to serve the needs of the economy (or, more accurately, of employers) rather than the needs of individual workers. To be sure, one could suggest that these two sets of needs ought to be, at least in the ideal, very similar, but they are by no means the same. In the cases examined in this book, the emphasis placed on vocational preparation is largely an empowering one, with greater emphasis placed on the needs and aptitudes of the individual rather than the needs of the employer (p. 207–208).

Learning is an interaction between an agentic individual’s mind and a socially constructed community of practice. There does not need to be an ‘either or’ approach to being situated within a social context and process versus being an individual’s construction of meaning (Cairns and Malloch, 2008, p. 10). Learning is therefore viewed as the outcome of an enabled active intentional interactional engagement in experience and thinking. In their book on facilitating learning organizations, Marsick and Watkins (1999, p. 64) refer to people learning all the time, everywhere and as self-managed learners:

People often have, want and are expected to take more control of their learning. Learning infrastructures have grown up around these new needs. Learning takes place around the clock. Learning is frequently integrated with work. People learn

what they need to do their job just-in-time as they face challenges that require new knowledge or skills. Knowledge is often created in action rather than before action. Classroom activities are still part of a learning infrastructure. But learners often choose the courses that they want with less direction from the organization. They might even choose how they want to learn. Learning could still be delivered through a workshop, but it might also arise through on-the-job training, personal reading and study, interaction with peers or coaches, or through internet-based activities.

Whilst this is in many ways an ‘ideal’ situation, it does point to possibilities of a broader and deeper view of adult learning and learning in the workplace. Marsick and Watkins envisage this as a ‘continuous learning system’ with ‘structured educational practices, informal work and learning practices, rewards, and technology to support formal and informal learning’ (1999, p. 69). Their model of continuous learning consists of an inner cycle of learning without changing assumptions and values and an outer cycle of learning considering the context from a range of perspectives and to operate more critically and differently (1999, p. 75). They take the position that ‘(W)ork can be designed so that learning takes place as and when it is needed: in order to better understand and frame problems, to generate alternative solutions to each problem or challenge, to gain skills needed to implement solutions, and to understand the results so that adjustments can be made in the cycle’ (1999, p. 74–75).

Wenger provides a more organic view of learning proclaiming that ‘Learning cannot be designed. Ultimately it belongs to the realm of experience and practice. It follows the negotiation of meaning; it moves on its own terms. It slips through the cracks; it creates its own cracks. Learning happens, design or no design’. He adds the proviso though that we do however need ‘to design

social infrastructures that foster learning' (1998, p. 225).

Learning, as the essence of change in people, can largely be a matter of individual or personal change, or can also be a matter of 'ensemble' or group change and development. Argyris and Schon (1978, 1996) posed the question with regard to their proposition that organizations may learn as 'What is An Organization That it May Learn?' In their discussion the argument emerged that 'evidence of change in organizational theory-in-use' was the basis for their case that an organization can and does 'learn'. Today, after 30 plus years, the idea that an organization might 'learn' is definitely seen as less dramatic than it did when Argyris and Schon first postulated the concept.

Learning has become a concept that has reached into new realms, as Jarvis (2001) has stated:

Learning has come to the forefront of the educational agenda in many countries of the world – the knowledge society, the learning society, the learning organization and so forth are now all common terms. The terms appear in policy and strategy papers of the European Union and of many countries in and beyond the European community. Traditional views about education appear to be threatened as it becomes a commodity in the learning market. Learning has itself become a contested concept and the discourse about it is being captured by the world of work (p. vii).

We would not be as concerned as Jarvis was at this stage of the term Learning being 'captured' by the world of work. We believe and argue that learning in the workplace is a significant and inspiring element of the whole dimension of learning.

We take the view that Learning is a process of change in an individual or group through activity. It is temporal as well as mindful and generally follows some agentic intent by the individual or group. With this in mind we now turn to the specifics of workplace learning.

LEARNING IN THE WORKPLACE

As a response to the late twentieth century globalized influence, there has been an emphasis in the developed West over the past two decades in particular on the need for a multiskilled, flexible workforce able to work anywhere, at any time on a range of tasks. Western countries have strongly linked in policy rhetoric the need for a well-trained, skilled populace for economic prosperity and high productivity, a goal only partially achieved. The idea of work has been seen as a means

to an end in socio-economic terms. Preparation for work, predominantly through vocational education and training, has been conducted mostly through formal institutional systems and apprenticeship models.

Earlier studies of workplace learning situate the learner very narrowly in specified settings, for example, in Stevenson's (2002) study of motel front desk operations in which he concluded that the knowledge construction was not generic. The learning in motel reception work is described as being related to the specific context and not transferable. Much research on vocational learning (which tended to be the predominant model of workplace learning) focused on skills and knowledge acquisition and these aspects were fairly tightly defined and delineated for training. In fact the whole set of contested theories and ideas surrounding workplaces and the learning that took place there became part of the dualistic debate about models of acquisition versus models of participation and related concepts of cognition versus socio-cultural situativity.

Australia, for example, still delivers vocational education and training through a competency based system whereby specified job skills are narrowly defined and developed as behavioural, demonstrable actions that can be seen and assessed. Whilst the views and definitions of what 'competence', 'competences', 'competencies' and 'competency' might mean vary across different nations and systems there is healthy debate (Mulder et al., 2009; Hughes and Cairns, 2009).

Vocational training programmes are designed to be, wherever possible, delivered in the workplace. Delivery elsewhere, such as in a classroom, is a support, or an alternative, if required. The importance of the workplace as a site for learning is constantly reiterated in such approaches, not so much as the learning process element but more as the demonstration site.

Place, in this argument, is important for the learning of skills for specific work. Salary levels, status, roles, all are impacted upon by the qualifications gained. If additional learning is required for a job, then the workplace is the preferred site of delivery. Place therefore has become interpreted as the employment workplace and this is perceived as providing relevance, authenticity and validation as a preferred site for learning; learning relevant for specific tasks in their paid work.

Policies support the workplace as the site for training through the funding to employers to conduct training and assessments, the de-regulation and privatization of organizations able to deliver vocational education and training, the cutting back of apprenticeship time and the focus on assessment rather than training.

The strong reiteration of the workplace as the site for learning means that ‘workers’ can be locked into specific strands of learning and into a narrowing of learning opportunities. There is a focus on the immediate requirements of the specified job and the workplace in the here and now, and not on future possibilities for the individual or the organization. The concepts of lifelong and lifewide learning, in these interpretations, have not been registered.

The situated theorists of the 1990s (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998) saw learning as socially located, with people learning in communities of learners. More recently, the argument has developed that agency and the social are interactive, with the individual learner having more control as an agentic being in interaction with the social environment and with others to ‘learn’ (Bandura, 2001).

A number of unfortunate binaries that frequently dominate discussions and explanations surrounding workplace learning have emerged in the field. These ‘binaries that bind’ as we characterize them, have the effect of locking in debate and possible thinking about the whole field of workplace learning. These dichotomous approaches that have been raised in writing, thinking and research across the broad field of workplace learning and associated areas (be it work-based, work located or just work research and writing) have, we suggest, influenced thinking in a manner that has been singularly unhelpful over the decades (see Table 1.1).

The binaries listed in Table 1.1 offer a reference point for the many debates that can be seen across the workplace learning field. We do not intend to flesh out each binary and the implications of each as to the impact on discussions about workplace learning they might have. What we suggest is that a discarding of many of these positions might assist the field to develop in a less bounded manner. We would also suggest that reading the chapters in this Handbook, with an eye to discounting the binaries might be a useful way to proceed.

Table 1.1 Binaries that bind (and should be discounted)

| | | |
|--------------|--------|--------------|
| Informal | versus | Formal |
| Experiential | versus | Theoretical |
| Education | versus | Training |
| Physical | versus | Intellectual |
| Explicit | versus | Implicit |
| Tacit | versus | Explicit |
| Pure | versus | Applied |
| Action | versus | Theory |
| The Academy | versus | The Factory |
| Lived | versus | Studied |
| Classroom | versus | Workplace |

WORKPLACE LEARNING – THE FUTURE

Workplace learning should no longer be viewed and implemented through the binaries of formal and informal learning. McCormack (2000, 398) supports the notion of the concept of workplace learning being able to provide a ‘common currency’ and means to ‘navigate the set of orthodoxies that permeate education, training, and development’.

Raelin (2008, 65) argues that in workplace learning we need a model integrating ‘the many traditions underlying its construction’, and need to incorporate the theory and practice modes of learning and explicit and tacit forms of knowledge.

With such suggestions in mind, and following our own quest in this chapter to broaden and suggest a re-consideration of the terms *Work, Place and Learning* as they come together in *Workplace Learning*, we now move to the future. What might be some of the effects of trends over the remaining years of the twenty-first century in and on workplaces and workplace learning?

CHALLENGES FOR THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

The twenty-first century, like many eras that have come before, appears to us as we are living through its early years to be an era of immense change and rapid development. Within this context, very much in the arena of unfamiliar situations where we also face unfamiliar problems (see Capability ‘Z’ Zone in Cairns and Stephenson, 2009). There are a number of specific potential challenges that we will need to consider and face in a range of ways if we are to sustain learning in the lifespace, sustain the planet and develop the children and have a future viable world.

These challenges may not eventuate the way we are suggesting. Of course that will depend on how and in what ways we operate in the new ‘Spaceship Culture’ that the Australian futurist, David Ellyard claims will be the dominant ideology by 2020 (Ellyard, 2001). In this scenario, we will need to thrive, not just drive change and reactions to it.

Ellyard sets up an interesting contrast between what he says was the Cowboy Culture of Modernism of the 1960s with the necessary Spaceship Culture/Planetism of 2020 in Table 1.2.

In this comparison, The Cowboy Culture of the past is very much an unsustainable culture and the coming Spaceship Culture as a sustainable society. Ellyard used the Spaceship metaphor as a way to suggest that we are all aboard the Spaceship Earth and we need to be conscious of our roots in the

Table 1.2 The Cowboy Culture /Modernism (1960) The Spaceship Culture/Planetism (2020)

| | |
|---|---|
| Individualism | Communitarianism |
| Independence | Interdependence |
| Autocracy | Democracy |
| Humanity against nature | Humanity part of nature |
| Unsustainable production and consumption | Sustainable production and consumption |
| Patriarchy | Gender equality |
| Intercultural and inter-religious intolerance | Intercultural and inter-religious tolerance |
| Conflict resolution thru confrontation | Conflict resolution thru negotiation |
| Reliance on Defence | Reliance on Security |

Source: Ellyard, 2001, pp. 6–7

total planet, not just part of it if the spaceship is to be able to continue along its journey and not fail.

We have taken this metaphor as a starting point and we now postulate a few ‘trends’ that we predict might impact on the world during this new century.

Challenge 1: Work and workplace change in the lifespace

If Beck and others are correct (and there appears to be some reasonable likelihood that we are heading in those directions) then the ‘brazilianization’ of the world of work and workplaces, jobs, and employment as we know it, happening rapidly. No longer will people have a career for life, nor will we continue to define ourselves by what we do as the shifts and changes in occupations, and work opportunities move to be less significant in our lives. Who we are and where we live will become, once again, defining characteristics of people. Work, as an employment, will be but one aspect of our activity in the lifespace, and periods of so-called ‘unemployment’ will be the norm, not the stigma as is current.

Humanity working together for some common goals with support for civic participation and a recognition that the previous 200 years of industrial work were something of an aberration as the world developed, will become more recognizable.

Challenge 2: Technological sustainability

There is no doubt that the whole nature of the so-called Technological Revolution has a rapidity and rate of change built into the industry and its manifold applications that suggest that we are yet to see many of the major advances. It seems to many of us that the Internet, with all its joys, uses and vices, is a new and recent development. Think back to how people thought of a similar world-changing

technological development at the start of the last century, the automobile, and look where it has taken us! We are almost certainly at the very early stages of the ‘T Model Ford’ in the way we employ and develop the World Wide Web and associated technological aspects in these early years of the new century. We already have people advocating in 2008-2009 that a Web 2 has emerged.

The challenge for all of us in this new era will be flexible and adaptable enough to not only try keeping up with the rapid changes, but also to see the potential and to prepare and work with the future generations in our care to enable them to both drive and then thrive amidst such magical developments. Ellyard, in the paper mentioned earlier, claims that ‘70% of the job categories, products and services for the year 2020 have yet to be invented’ (p. 9). It is hard to estimate with any real basis other than trend projections and a whole range of fantastic assumptions how such changes might affect us. However, many people in the past would never have predicted the Internet, the WWW, and the idea of cloning and many other biotechnological advances that are currently happening. The whole issue of *Sustainability* (in its many manifestations and areas, and not just environmentally) will continue to dominate late twenty-first century thinking and, hopefully, action by governments and individuals.

The impact of these ideas and ‘advances’ (for they may not be such) on what constitutes work and workplaces and, of course workplace learning, will be both fascinating and challenging to much of what we know and believe.

Challenge 3: Globalization dominance and loss of cultural relevance

There is no doubt that the rapidity of information exchanges, the effects of some of the media developments internationally and the way globalized products and organizations have developed over

the past 50 or so years, that we are facing major cultural and national challenges to both preserve and maintain traditional differences and values. The so-called McDonaldization of the world, the corporatization of many universities and other social institutions, the way certain products and lifestyles have pervaded the far corners of the globe does alarm many people. All of these 'influences' have been leading towards a more homogenized world order. There are, in many places, movements to stem this development, as if it is a tide that can be stopped or at least turned in its impact in some areas. As we mentioned above, the financial consequences in the early years of this new century have shown some of the explicit dangers of this trend. Whatever the response in some nations and cultures, there is a strong challenge to work, sustainability and social order in this trend and influence.

Challenge 4: Travel restriction due to fuel and environmental issues

We are all acutely aware that fossil fuels and our carbon-based world are under increasing pressure and that the lifestyles associated with this history are changing and need to change for global sustainability. There may be a number of consequences of this necessary change scenario that may restrict travel as we know it. Unless we can change the way we move around the globe in terms of what vehicles we utilize, we will see travel and tourism as historical anachronisms. We simply will not be permitted to travel just for the fun and change of scenery ideals. This potential constraint on freedom of movement and international interaction could have grave consequences for social order and the style and scope of much 'work' that we currently assume and take somewhat for granted.

This is a potential challenge that many will reject as fanciful, but it already appears to be emerging. In 50 years will we be travelling internationally at the rate and for the purposes we currently do?

Challenge 5: Loss of personal autonomy in the new work order

Associated with the previous challenge and partially influenced by the second on technology, the rapidity and complexity of change and development across the world may see some case being built for increases in the loss of personal autonomy as societies move to more complex work orders. Ulrich Beck (2000), the German sociologist, has written about the 'Risk Society' and how

there is emerging a 'Brave New World of Work' where modern Western societies are finding work is not just a career for life and that not all people can be employed in the traditional earning sense and two out of three people may be unemployed in the traditional sense with many people becoming 'work nomads' seeking small jobs here and there.

There is no doubt, as we have presented earlier in this chapter, that we need to re-define what we mean by the word 'work' and as this rapidly changing society that is the total world moves on through this century, we will find that we need to be much more flexible and adaptable than we have needed to be in past centuries.

Challenge 6: New World Order in world power relationships

There is also an evident shift underway in the world as to power relationships. The former centuries of some dominance in commerce and industry by Europe and the Americas is shifting at an ever-increasing rate towards an Asian centric global influence. This is not about ethnic or religious elements, but rather about where economic and social power will reside in an international sense. The huge population base across the Indian, Chinese and South East Asian part of the world, the so called former 'Tiger' economies and the adoption and mastery of modern technologies, bio technologies and communications in this part of the world has seen significant rates of growth and development which are shifting the hubs of many industries and thinking towards this sector of the globe. The changing relationship between the USA as the world's largest economy and former loan granting state to one of the world's largest borrower states (mainly from China) is one evident base for this shift.

The rise of power-bases in the past rested often on military might. This now seems to be changing and economic power, social activity and communication, rather than military power is showing up as a new order. There is no doubt that some of the military might remaining may influence which direction this power shift will take. Friedman (2009) argues, again as a 'futurist' that there will be major conflict as these shifts begin to 'bite' in the next 100 years.

These challenges for the future all have implications for the way workplace learning is seen, defined and might operate in the future. That there are new directions and deep and meaningful challenges in these broad scenarios is self-evident. Whether our theories and practices of workplace learning can accommodate or even keep up with the rapidity and breadth of such change and

challenge is, in itself, the main game as to where and how we progress this field of work, study and learning. We are optimistic about the way work and workplace learning is developing as a field and a site for study, theorizing, development and future sustainability.

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