

Kansas State University Libraries

New Prairie Press

Adult Education Research Conference

2006 Conference Proceedings (Minneapolis,
MN)

Towards a New Model of Work Based Learning in Health and Social Care

Pamela M. Irwin

Greater Manchester Lifelong Learning Network

Follow this and additional works at: <https://newprairiepress.org/aerc>



Part of the [Adult and Continuing Education Administration Commons](#)



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial 4.0 License](#)

Recommended Citation

Irwin, Pamela M. (2006). "Towards a New Model of Work Based Learning in Health and Social Care," *Adult Education Research Conference*. <https://newprairiepress.org/aerc/2006/papers/33>

This is brought to you for free and open access by the Conferences at New Prairie Press. It has been accepted for inclusion in Adult Education Research Conference by an authorized administrator of New Prairie Press. For more information, please contact cads@k-state.edu.

Towards a New Model of Work Based Learning in Health and Social Care

Pamela M. Irwin
Greater Manchester Lifelong Learning Network

Keywords: work based learning, health and social care, innovative models of adult education, lifelong learning, practice knowledge

Abstract: Wenger's (1998) conception of social participation as a process of learning is the most difficult, yet essential, characteristic of health related work based learning programmes to capture. Informed by a socio-cultural perspective, this integrative model of work based learning applies to any participant at any level in any work context.

Background

The resurgence of vocational and work based learning in the United Kingdom (U.K.) is underscored by recent Government policy directives such as Success for All (Learning and Skills Council, 2004, 2006), Learning from review of Foundation Degrees in England carried out in 2004-5 (Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, 2005), Apprenticeships: Policy and Strategy (Learning and Skills Council, 2005).

This has been mirrored by an increased recognition of the role of academia in workplace learning, leading to the recalibration of traditional apprenticeship education into cognitive apprenticeships (Berryman, 1991) and situated learning (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

Parallel developments that promote a socio-cultural perspective on learning, thinking and action are captured by Giddens' (1982) analysis of working practice culture and Wenger's (1998) concept of communities of practice. Similarly, in their discussion of an apprenticeship perspective on teaching, Johnson and Pratt (2005) underline the importance of 'communities' where "the process of enculturation results from intensive, diversified, and prolonged participation in the work and social relations of the community" (p. 43). They also tease out the tension between 'knowing' and 'doing' (Ryle, 1978) - the ubiquitous theory-practice gap (Argyris & Schon, 1974) that resonates with many healthcare programmes. In the UK, this is increasingly bridged with clinically oriented programmes centred on learning evidenced from the workplace (Portwood & Garnett, 2000; Rounce & Workman, 2005).

Conceptual model

This paper will present a new work based learning programme designed to respond to U.K. Government initiatives to widen access and participation in higher education, and apply to any health and/or social care professional at any stage of their career in any work context. It provides practicing health and/or social care professionals with an opportunity to learn at and through work to gain academic credits and develop a solution or improvement for a professional practice or workplace priority.

The new programme also respects current research relating to Wenger's (1998) proposition that social participation is a process of learning. The assumptions embedded in this conception of learning are that knowledge is socially and culturally constructed, that professional knowledge is contextually grounded, and that professional health and social care knowledge is bounded to a specific socio-cultural practice (Dahlgren, Richardson & Sjostrom, 2004). Consequently, a socio-cultural perspective of academic learning in health and social care forms the template of an alternative model of work-based learning that is predicated on three theories –

frames of learning (Rogoff, 1995), evidence-based practice (Sackett, 2000) and task analysis framework (Hughes & Moore, 1999). As an extension of Wenger's (1998) socio-cultural concepts, (meaning, practice, community and identity), Rogoff's (1995) frames of learning (personal, interpersonal and community) provide "analytical tools for the description and enhancement of the professional knowledge base in the health care professions" (Dahlgren, Richardson & Sjostrom, 2004, p.77). These frames of learning are intertwined with current approaches to ground theory in practice, such as evidence-based practice (Sackett, 2000) and other paradigmatic positions advocated by Buetow and Kenealy (2000) and Stiwnne and Dahlgren (2004).

Finally, Hughes and Moore's (1999) task analysis framework allows deconstruction of the workplace with respect to factors that shape learning opportunities, including socio-cognitive demands, access characteristics, classification, frame, workplace culture and production processes.

Depending on individual learning needs and requirements of the workplace, the model allows selective foregrounding and cross-matching of different elements and perspectives, as outlined in the following vignettes:

(Note: the italic typeface indicates elements taken from the respective theoretical frames)

Vignette 1

A unit manager responsible for developing a new best practice protocol in a large general operating department, is concerned about ongoing relations with her multi-disciplinary colleagues in terms of power/leadership issues. Using the work-based learning model to inform her analysis and reflection, she could integrate:

Rogoff's *personal* frame of learning foregrounds participatory appropriation – the process by which individuals transform their understanding of, and responsibility for, activities through their own participation. This is a process of 'becoming' rather than acquisition (Rogoff, 1995, pp.150-1), with Hughes and Moore's work task analysis to identify workplace factors that potentially affect this scenario, such as *social-cognitive demands* – the task requires specialised knowledge and skill; *pragmatics* – the tasks are important to the organisation; *access characteristics and frame* – access to knowledge of the workplace is 'freely' available; *'production' process* – high or low division of labour and teamwork versus individualism, and evidence-based practice (Sackett) – selected from national clinical guidelines, clinical governance, benchmarking, patient and public involvement in service delivery, critical pathways, best practice, scope of practice (as applicable).

Vignette 2

A unit manager in a large general operating department is concerned about territorialism between scrub nurses and operating department practitioners, related to overlapping roles/responsibilities. She plans to examine the theatre environment to derive strategies/recommendations to change this challenging situation. Using the work-based learning model to inform her analysis and reflection, she could integrate:

Rogoff's *interpersonal* frame of learning foregrounds guided participation – the system of interpersonal engagements and arrangements that inform participation in activities, for example, by selectively promoting and restricting different types of activity with Hughes and Moore's work task analysis to identify workplace factors that potentially affect this scenario, such as *social-interactive demands* – heavy or light contact with others of varying statuses and roles; *social organisation* – workplace roles are/not highly segmented or hierarchical; *workplace*

culture – workers believe in collaboration and learning versus workers are status oriented and competitive; *'production' process* and evidence-based practice (as above).

Processes

The model is predicated on a sequential, cumulative process that reflects classic work project phases – Scope, Investigation, Analysis and Report (Freeman, 2004), and demands authentic and integrated assessment strategies, such as a needs assessment or feasibility study; a critical appraisal of research literature/evidence; a cost benefit/effectiveness analysis; and finally, recommendations for change in care delivery, development of best practice protocols or an educational tool.

A capstone portfolio becomes the final work based learning component and is the overarching educational product. It also serves as a curricula feedback loop and toolkit for continuing personal and professional development. Formal, focused reflection also contributes to and enhances the quality of the learning experience (Moon, 2004). This reflective process is guided by curricula-driven outcomes, and channeled through an appropriate model of reflection with reference to Rogoff's frames of learning and Hughes and Moore's task analysis framework.

As the pathway is designed to accommodate 'customised' academic learning in different work-based environments, a variety of learning and teaching methods and strategies are proposed, such as lectures, group discussions, action learning sets, web-based/e-learning.

Learning support may also encompass individual mentoring in the workplace, group tutorials and discussions, e-learning 'chat rooms', and action learning sets. These are reinforced by study, library and information management skills days, and orientation sessions introducing portfolios, action learning sets and group based tutorials/discussions, and complemented by for workplace mentors.

A mandatory three-way pre-selection discussion involving the student, seconding manager and programme leader performs a dual purpose: firstly to clarify any issues regarding programme structure, aims and expectations; and secondly, to facilitate the student's learning goals via a learning contract (if appropriate) and adequate support mechanisms.

This tripartite motif is duplicated through the programme evaluation and quality assurance and enhancement processes. Formative and summative information is collected from students using an evaluation prototype adapted from Pratt (2005, pp. 273-275). Consisting of four parts, the feedback form incorporates questions related to achievement of individual goals, additional learning (beyond programme outcomes), overall value of the programme and effectiveness of the instructor. Evaluative data oriented to the workplace include an estimation of the student's progression along the novice to expert practitioner continuum (Benner, 1984; Jensen, Gwyer, Hack & Shepherd, 1999), coupled with their contribution to the practice environment. The third facet of evaluation focuses on the instrumental aspects of programme, such as the quality of the student experience, and covers learning support, communication processes and teaching strategies. Selected methods to gather data are utilised throughout, ranging from group and individual techniques (Cunningham, Dawes & Bennett, 2004) to formal programme evaluation tools.

The Future

Developments

While the advantages and disadvantages of work based learning in health and social care are widely acknowledged (Wiles & Foster-Turner, 2003), as yet, there is no definitive

theoretically grounded model of work based learning (Boud, 2001, p.40). However, these authors refer to the following broad rubrics to inform their respective work based learning models and programmes: Cole (2004), knowledge management; Eruat (2000), and Moore (1999), experiential learning; McDonough & Chapman (2005), motivation; and Gustavsson (2004), forms of knowledge. Additionally, some concepts that are congruent with the principles of work based learning are activity theory (Engestrom, 2001), knowledge frameworks (Habermas, 1972); modes of knowledge production (Gibbons, Limoges, Nowotny, Schwartzman, Scott & Trow, 1994), reflexivity (Schon, 1987), and professional knowledge (Higgs & Titchen, 1995). A synthesis (Raelin, 2000) of the essence of work-based learning indicates that a comprehensive model will be centred around reflection, authentic projects, the creation of knowledge as a shared and collective activity, and the acquisition of both new knowledge and meta-learning (Biggs, 1985).

Although the conceptual model advanced in this paper is specifically directed towards health and social care, it is proposed that the 'plait/braid' framework demonstrates these broad qualities within a more contemporary understanding of work based and lifelong learning. For example, from a theoretical perspective, the three intertwined 'skeins' may enable linkages between Habermas' (1972) technical, practical and emancipatory knowledge framework, and Higgs and Titchen's (2000) prepositional, personal and professional craft knowledge model of practice based learning. Analogously, practical applications, such as promoting shared and interprofessional learning, enhancing connections across the theory, practice, research 'divide' associated with typical academic curricula (Portwood, 2000), as well as the underpinning knowledge, craft and technical skills, and key skills associated with vocational learning (Connexions, 2005), are more evident. The model also supports a repertoire of curricula typologies ('coiled', spiral, linear), and educational taxonomies (Krathwohl, 2002; May, Morgan, Lemke, Karst & Stone, 1995). As each skein is composed of numerous 'threads', the model represents a progressive development of sub-skills and tasks as appropriate. Flexible entry and exit points and 'assessment' nodes are similarly accommodated, as is innovation in teaching and learning and assessment strategies, such as reflective journals and e-portfolios.

Challenges

At an individual and organizational level, the widespread acceptance and educational value of work based learning is still highly contentious, especially in terms of legitimacy and equivalence (Boud & Solomon, 2001). In fact, some participants view work based learning as an inferior or 'cheaper option', when compared with conventional academically oriented programmes (Wiles & Foster-Turner, 2003). This resistance may be manifested as competition for scarce resources, demanding in turn, a high degree of motivation and commitment from all participants, and a concomitant culture change within higher education institutions and the workplace (Ramage, 2005). Finally, to substitute work based learning for interprofessional education in Gilbert's (2005) rejoinder "... Without a theory and accompanying research, [work based learning] remains at the mercy of fashion and expediency. A suitable theory must therefore recognize and include some fundamental concepts" (p. 8). Although work based learning is not a 'one size fits all' panacea for the current educational agenda (Higher Education Funding Council for England, 2005), it is suggested that this generic model, coupled with Higgs, Richardson and Dahlgren's (2004) advocacy of practice knowledge, is a worthy step forward.

References

- Argyris, C., & Schon, D. (1974). *Theory in practice: Increasing professional effectiveness*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Berryman, S. (1991). *Designing effective learning environments: Cognitive apprenticeship model*. Brief No. 1. NY: Institute on Education and the Economy.
- Benner, P. (1984). *From novice to expert: Excellence and power in clinical nursing practice*. London: Addison-Wesley.
- Biggs, J. (1985). The role of metalearning in study processes. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 55, 185-212.
- Boud, D. (2001). Knowledge at work: Issues of learning. In D. Boud & N. Solomon (Eds.), *Work-based learning: A new higher education?* (pp. 34-43). Buckingham, UK: Society for Research into Higher Education and Open University Press.
- Boud, D., & Solomon, N. (2001). Repositioning universities and work. In D. Boud & N. Solomon (Eds.), *Work-based learning: A new higher education?* (pp. 18-33). Buckingham, UK: Society for Research into Higher Education and Open University Press.
- Buetow, S., & Kenealy, T. (2000). Evidence-based medicine: The need for a new definition. *Journal of Evaluation of Clinical Practice*, 6, 85-92.
- Cole, M. (2004). Capture and measurement of work based and informal learning: A discussion of the issues in relation to contemporary healthcare practice. *Work based learning in Primary Care*, 2, 118-25.
- Connexions. (2005). *Work based training*. Retrieved February, 10, 2006 from <http://www.oldhamconnexions.org/faqs/#work>
- Cunningham, I., Dawes, G., & Bennett, B. (2004). *The handbook of work based learning*. Aldershot, UK: Gower.
- Dahlgren, M.A., Richardson, B., & Sjoström, B. (2004). Professions as communities of practice. In J. Higgs, B. Richardson & M.A. Dahlgren (Eds.), *Developing practice knowledge for health professionals* (pp. 71-88). Edinburgh: Butterworth Heinemann.
- Engeström, Y. (2001). Expansive learning at work: Toward an activity theoretical reconceptualisation. *Journal of Education and Work*, 14(1), 133-157.
- Eraut, M. (2000). Non-formal learning and tacit knowledge in professional work. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 70, 113-136.
- Freeman, M. (2004). *Work based learning project*. Retrieved June 23, 2004 from <http://www.business.uts.edu.au/wbl/>
- Gibbons, M., Limoges, C., Nowotny, H., Schwartzman, S., Scott, P., & Trow, M. (1994). *The new production of knowledge: The dynamics of science and research in contemporary societies*. London: Sage
- Giddens, A. (1982). *Profiles and critiques in social theory*. London: Macmillan
- Gilbert, J. (2005). Foreword. In H. Colyer, M. Helme & I. Jones (Eds.), *The theory-practice relationship in interprofessional education Occasional Paper 4*. (pp. 8-9). London: Higher Education Academy Centre for Health Sciences Practice.
- Gustavsson, B. (2004). Revisiting the philosophical roots of practical knowledge. In J. Higgs, B. Richardson & M.A. Dahlgren (Eds.), *Developing practice knowledge for health professionals* (pp. 35-50). Edinburgh: Butterworth Heinemann.
- Habermas, J. (1972). *Knowledge and human interest*. London: Heinemann.
- Higgs, J., Richardson, B., & Dahlgren, M.A. (Eds.) (2004). *Developing practice knowledge for health professionals*. Edinburgh: Butterworth Heinemann.
- Higgs, J., & Titchen, A. (1995). The nature, generation and verification of knowledge. *Physiotherapy*, 81(9), 521-30.
- Higgs, J., & Titchen, A. (2000). Knowledge and reasoning. In J. Higgs and M. Jones (Eds.), *Clinical reasoning in the health professions* 2nd Ed. (pp. 23-32). Oxford: Butterworth Heinemann.
- Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE). (2005). *Strategic plan 2006-11: Consultation*. Bristol: HEFCE
- Hughes, K., & Moore, D. (1999). *Pedagogical strategies for work-based learning*. Working Paper No. 12. NY: Institute of Education and the Economy (IEE)
- Jensen, G.M., Gwyer, J., Hack, L.M. & Shepherd, K.F. (1999). *Expertise in physical therapy practice*. Boston: Butterworth Heinemann.
- Johnson, J., & Pratt, D.D. (2005). The apprenticeship perspective: Modeling ways of being. In D.D. Pratt & Associates, *Five perspectives on teaching in adult and higher education* (pp. 83-103). Malabar FL: Krieger.
- Krathwohl, D.R. (2002). A revision of Bloom's taxonomy: An overview. *Theory into Practice*, 41(4), 212-18.

- Lave, J., & Wenger, E. (1991). *Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation*. Cambridge MA: Cambridge University.
- Learning & Skills Council (LSC). (2004). *Success for all*. Retrieved February 08, 2006, from www.lsc.gov.uk
- Learning & Skills Council [LSC]. (2005). *Apprenticeships: Policy and strategy*. Retrieved February 08, 2006 from <http://senet.lsc.gov.uk>
- Learning & Skills Council. (2006). *New measures for success*. Coventry UK: LSC.
- May, W.W., Morgan, B.J., Lemke, J.C., Karst, G.M. & Stone, H.L. (1995). Model for ability based assessment in physical therapy education. *Journal of Physical Therapy Education*, 9(1), 3-6.
- McDonough, R., & Chapman, T. (2005). Undertaking a work based degree whilst working on the national primary care collaborative (NPCC) improvement programme. In K. Rounce & B. Workman (Eds.), *Work-based learning in health care: Applications and innovations* (pp. 87-98). Chichester: Kingsham.
- Moon, J. (2004). *Reflection in learning and professional development: Theory and practice*. Abingdon, UK: Routledge Falmer.
- Moore, D. (1999). *Toward a theory of work-based learning*. Brief. No. 23. NY: IEE.
- Portwood, D. (2000). An intellectual case for work based learning as a subject. In D. Portwood & C. Costley (Eds.), *Work based learning and the university: New perspectives and practices*. Paper 109 (pp. 17-22). Birmingham UK: Staff Educational Development Association (SEDA).
- Portwood, D., & Garnett, J. (2000). The construction and validation of an institutional work based learning programme. In D. Portwood & C. Costley (Eds.), *Work based learning and the university: New perspectives and practices*. Paper 109 (pp. 45-50). Birmingham UK: SEDA.
- Pratt, D.D. (2005). Evaluating teaching: Approaches that are equitable and rigorous. In D.D. Pratt & Associates, *Five perspectives on teaching in adult and higher education* (pp.257-282). Malabar FL: Krieger.
- Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) for Higher Education. (2005). *Learning from reviews of foundation degrees in England carried out in 2004-5: Sharing good practice*. Mansfield UK: QAA for Higher Education.
- Ramage, C. (2005). It's hard work: An analysis of the concept of 'hard work' as an experience of engaging in work based learning. In K. Rounce & B. Workman (Eds.), *Work-based learning in health care: Applications and innovations* (pp. 99-111). Chichester UK: Kingsham.
- Raelin, J.A. (2000). *Work-based learning: The new frontier of management development*. New Jersey: Prentice Hall.
- Rogoff, B. (1995). Observing socio-cultural activity on three planes: Participatory appropriation, guided participation and apprenticeship. In J.V. Wertsch, P. Del Rio & A. Alvarez (Eds.), *Socio-cultural studies of mind* (pp. 139-64). Cambridge: Cambridge University.
- Rounce, K., & Workman, B. (Eds.) (2005). *Work-based learning in health care: Applications and innovations*. Chichester: Kingsham.
- Ryle, G. (1978). *Concept of mind*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- Sackett, D.L. (2000). *Evidence based medicine: How to practice and teach evidence based medicine*. 2nd Ed. Edinburgh: Churchill Livingstone.
- Schon, D. (1987). *Educating the reflective practitioner*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Stiwne, D., & Dahlgren, M.A. (2004). Challenging evidence in evidence-based practice. In J. Higgs, B. Richardson & M.A. Dahlgren (Eds.), *Developing practice knowledge for health professionals* (pp. 147-164). Edinburgh: Butterworth Heinemann.
- Wenger, E. (1998). *Communities of practice: Learning, meaning and identity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University.
- Wiles, A., & Foster-Turner, J. (2003). Work based learning and higher education. In I. Bowler, *Report on work based learning in primary care conference* (pp. 51-53). London: Work based learning in primary care conference proceedings.