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You know it is difficult...

The project focuses on long standing challenges of integrating theory and practice in work-based learning programmes. Practitioners know how difficult this is.

Fresh thinking....

Approaches to these challenges have typically focused on questions of how learning can be 'transferred' from one setting to another, usually from theory into practice. What has continually dogged attempts at transfer is how to overcome the assumed 'abstract' nature of theory in relation to the assumed

'real' nature of practice. In best cases, this is normally seen as a single movement as encapsulated in the term 'from theory to practice'.

We propose another approach, one which concentrates on different forms of knowledge and the ways in which these are contextualised and 'recontextualised' as people move between different sites of learning in college and workplaces. Our approach is responsive both to the nature of the knowledge itself and to the employment contexts and practices which shape and are shaped by it. This also encapsulates the way in which learners mediate between these contexts and as a result personalise their learning, and develop a professional and/or vocational identity.

This new thinking is grounded in an exploration of intermediate level programmes: Foundation Degrees, Higher National Diploma, NVQ Level 5 and non-accredited workforce up-skilling.

Putting Knowledge to Work has four inter-dependent elements:

Work-based Learning

- what do previous studies tell us?
The framework of ideas

Exploring Practices

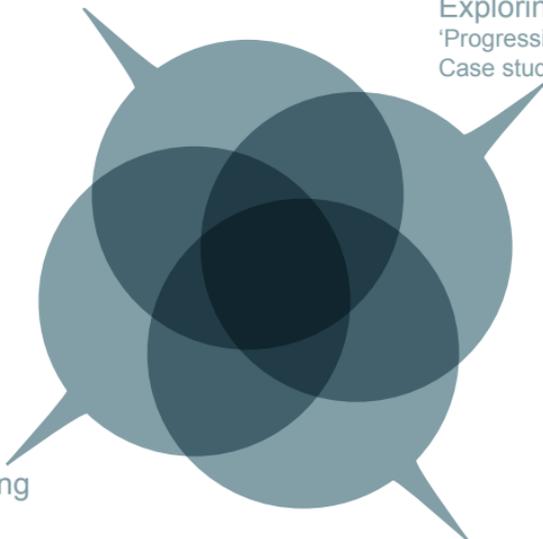
'Progressive focusing'
Case studies

Networking

Feedback
Debates
Providers, employers
Researchers, academics

Publications

Exemplars for curriculum
developers in selected
occupations/subjects



Explaining recontextualisation...

All knowledge has a context in which it was originally generated. Contexts are often thought of as settings or places, but contexts in our use extend to the 'schools of thought', the traditions and norms of practice, the life experiences in which knowledge of different kinds is generated. For knowledge generated and practised in one context to be put to work in new and different contexts, it has to be recontextualised in various ways that simultaneously engage with and change those practices, traditions and experiences.

Chains of recontextualisation can be forged by practitioners, as they seek to improve practice through the integration of subject-based and work-based knowledge.

Four kinds of recontextualisation are significant :



CONTENT RECONTEXTUALISATION
putting knowledge to work (PKtW) in the
programme design environment



PEDAGOGIC RECONTEXTUALISATION
PKtW in the teaching and facilitating
environment



WORKPLACE RECONTEXTUALISATION
PKtW in the workplace environment



LEARNER RECONTEXTUALISATION
what learners make of these processes

PKtW IN THE PROGRAMME DESIGN ENVIRONMENT

Content recontextualisation (CR)

Knowledge viewed as content is knowledge that has been 'codified' in accordance with the rules and procedures of particular (competing) disciplines, schools of thought and practices. Content recontextualisation takes place when knowledge moves from its original context of production (for example in the academic research community or industry R and D programme) into the formal learning programme offered by a learning provider.

This is a process whereby codified knowledge is selected, simplified, recast and made more teachable and learnable for particular learners, as part of the programme design. In professional and vocational education it entails the selection and organisation of work and subject knowledge for the demands of professional and vocational practice.

This process is tricky because types of knowledge differ and they are not always easily related to one another. Distinctions between 'vertical' features (i.e. move towards greater degree of abstraction) and 'horizontal' features (i.e. move towards making a series of practical connections) shed light on the difficulties of relating different forms of knowledge in professional and vocational programmes.

PKtW IN THE TEACHING AND FACILITATING ENVIRONMENT

Pedagogic recontextualisation (PR):

PR refers to the design and organisation of the teaching and learning dimensions of programmes. Disciplinary knowledge is combined with practice-based knowledge that goes beyond specific jobs and with local company knowledge. PR takes place as these are organised, structured and sequenced into learning activities, options, modules, for the purposes of effective learning and teaching.

PR is also tricky. It involves teachers, tutors, trainers making decisions about how much time they devote to and what strategies they use to explain the background to different forms of knowledge. How much time and freedom can they grant to learners to engage with these forms of knowledge and to consider their relation to practice?

These decisions are never technical matters. They are inevitably influenced by teachers', tutors' and trainers' assumptions (often un-articulated) about what constitutes good learning experiences and worthwhile learning outcomes, and also by the specifications set by professional or examination bodies.

PKtW IN THE WORKPLACE ENVIRONMENT

Workplace recontextualisation (WR)

Integration processes often start with PR, but do not end there. Workplace environments fundamentally affect how knowledge is put to work, and they vary in the nature and quality of learning experience that they afford. WR takes place through the workplace practices and activities that support knowledge development, and through the mentorship, coaching and other arrangements through which learners/ employees can engage with and learn through workplace environments.

These practices and activities are fundamental to learners beginning to vary and modify existing workplace activities or to develop the confidence and capability to work with others to significantly change those activities. 'Progressive recontextualisation' of activity conveys the idea that concepts are often an integral part of an activity, (e.g. measurement) and this activity takes many different forms in workplaces . Recontextualisation is thus progressive - and requires a range of supports.

WHAT THE LEARNER/EMPLOYEE MAKES OF IT

Learner recontextualisation (LR)

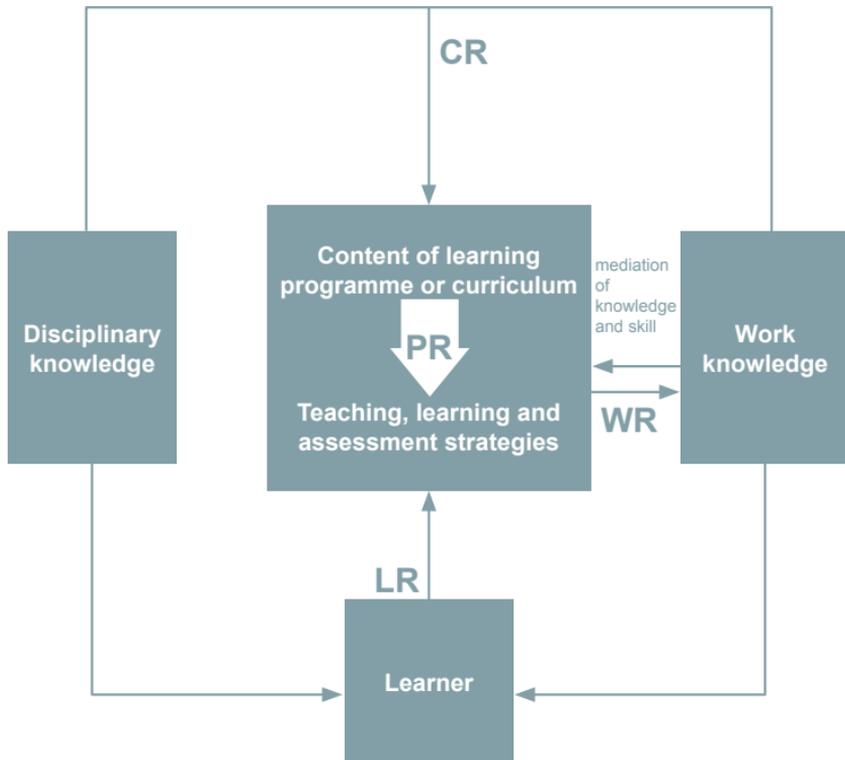
What learners make of these recontextualisation processes varies according to personal characteristics, group/cohort and the scope for action they have in any particular environment. Learner recontextualisation takes place through the strategies learners themselves use to bring together knowledge gained through the programme and gleaned from working with more experienced people in the workplace. Together with their prior learning, tacit knowledge and opportunities for action, these may be unequally distributed and may sometimes involve learners in the creation of new knowledge, insights and activities.

Learner recontextualisation is critical to the development of a professional and/or vocational identity. It entails understanding and articulating the reasons for the constitution of their chosen occupation and their reasons for wanting to join it. It also influences their motivation and engagement with the other processes of recontextualisation.

Theoretical Note:

Recontextualisation is multi-faceted. It refers to the idea that concepts and practice change as we use them in different settings. We have drawn on developments of Bernstein's idea that concepts change as they move from their disciplinary origins and become a part of a curriculum. We have also drawn on van Oers' idea that concepts are an integral part of practice and that practice varies from one workplace to another. We have substantially expanded both of these notions in order to embrace the ways in which learners change as they recontextualise concepts and practices and the extent to which this process may spur innovation in workplaces as much as in educational contexts. Each of our expressions of recontextualisation sheds light on some element of the challenge of relating subject-based and work-based knowledge in real-life programmes. The fresh thinking in *Putting Knowledge to Work* aims to do this.

Putting Knowledge to Work: Framework



THE EXEMPLARS

The six detailed case studies provide exemplars of putting knowledge to work in programmes ranging from Foundation Degrees to non-accredited senior staff development programmes. They are structured and analysed according to the four re-contextualisation processes. In each case commentaries and recommendations discuss the chains of recontextualisation and lessons that can be drawn for programme design and practice. Further guidance notes are provided for practitioners, including guidance on the following cross-cutting themes:

Partnerships with industry

Gradual release

Enacting new knowledge

Utilising company knowledge

Diagnosing company problems and solutions

Industry educators

Relationships with professional bodies: dual accreditation

Foundation Degree in Aircraft Engineering

A programme for career entrants that addresses a skills shortage by meshing a Foundation Degree with professional licensing requirements.

*Faculty of Engineering,
Kingston University
in partnership
with KLM UK
Engineering,
Norwich*

Management Development in the Glass Industry

A programme to accredit and extend senior managers' expertise.

*Glass Training Ltd
in partnership with
companies in the
glass, fenestration
and automotive
glazing industries.*

Foundation Degree in Financial Services

A Foundation Degree with dual accreditation designed by a college and local employers to meet skills shortages in the industry.

*City College
Norwich with
Norwich Union
Insurance and
Marsh UK*

Foundation Degree (FD) in Media Practice

A programme to assist (mainly) mature learners to access a flexible, contract-based employment-labour market.

School of Media, London College of Communication, University of the Arts, London

Company Training Scheme with Higher National Diploma

A programme for new entrants that embeds a higher national diploma in a company training scheme.

Commerzbank, City of London in partnership with the European College of Business and Management, London

Leadership Development

A pilot programme within the Ministry of Defence to develop strategic leadership capability and capacity in highly specialised staff.

International Training Service Ltd with DG Helicopters, Defence Equipment and Support, Ministry of Defence.



T·L·R·P
TEACHING
& LEARNING
RESEARCH
PROGRAMME

E·S·R·C
ECONOMIC
& SOCIAL
RESEARCH
COUNCIL



wle
Work-based learning for
education professionals
A Centre for Excellence
at the Institute of Education