



The book cover features a large orange circle in the center. Above and below this circle are two concentric rings. The top ring is yellow and the bottom ring is purple. Both rings contain the text 'TUTORS • TRAINERS • FELECTURERS • TEACHERS • FACILITATORS • ORGANIZATION DEVELOPERS' in a sans-serif font, curved to follow the shape of the rings. The top ring's text is yellow, and the bottom ring's text is purple.

Learning, Teaching & Development

Edited by
Lyn Ashmore & Denise Robinson



Learning, Teaching & Development

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Learning, Teaching & Development

Strategies for Action

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Lyn Ashmore & Denise Robinson



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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Lyn Ashmore and Denise Robinson

Learning outcomes

After reading this chapter, the reader should be able to:

- Understand how work-based learning (WBL) and adult and community learning have changed.
- Understand how the current trends in learning and development have shaped our practice.
- Appreciate ways in which the 'what's in it for me?' factor impacts on progress.
- Understand the themes and arguments covered in each chapter.



In this book we tend to use the word practitioner, which includes teacher, trainer, tutor, facilitator, lecturer and organizational developer. Whatever your role within learning and development you will be involved in providing a valuable service to your learners, the organization in which you work and the organizations in which your learners work. We will use the term further education and skills to incorporate

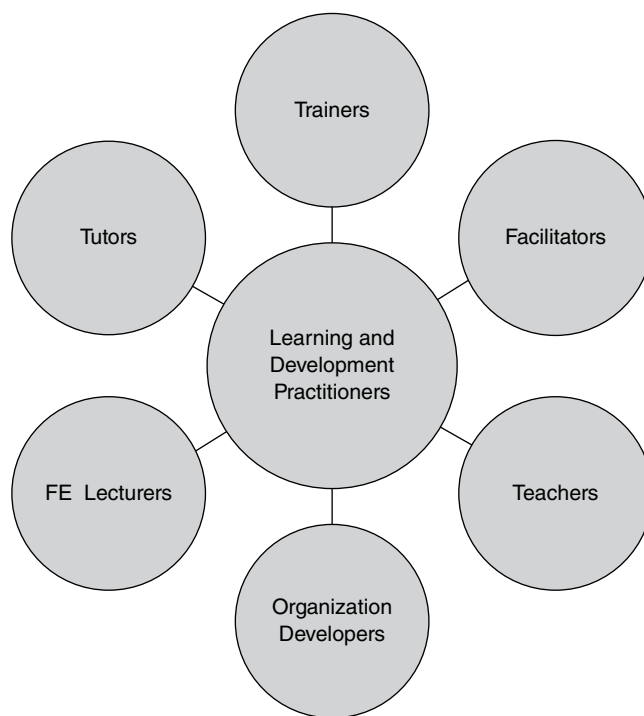


Figure 1.1 Practitioners in further education, skills and organizational learning

providers in the public and private sector (further education colleges, WBL providers, adult and community learning) as well as organizational learning. The terms used to describe this sector have varied over the years. The term further education was regarded as too limited and was replaced by lifelong learning to ensure that it reflected other elements of the sector: vocational, work-based learning and adult education and training. Since the election of the coalition government the term further education and skills has been used to reflect the growing emphasis on the education and training of skills, as well as other aspects of the life-long learning sector. This may apply to private and public sector organizations. We will also use the term learning and development to equate to the array of approaches and institutions in the sector.

1.1 Introduction

This book is uniquely structured, drawing on evolving knowledge and grounded in a problem-based focus, challenging you to find solutions to

real problems in your teaching and training practice. In recent years interest in the application of teaching, training, learning and development has seen unprecedented growth, separately emphasizing theory and practice. For experienced and developing practitioners, this then requires a combination of different models of delivery to enable the development of theory alongside the development of practice. With this in mind, this book is designed to provide the underpinning theory alongside its application to practice. Chapters 2 to 10 will include practical examples, such as case studies and discussion questions, to help stimulate the essential link between theory and practice with 'signposts' or 'scaffolding' to additional references that you can use to explore elements of the work elsewhere. We aim to provide a basis for improving understanding as well as providing employers with the assurance that their staff (as learners) will be striving towards a balance between practice and its underpinning theory.

Methods of organizational learning are continually changing, as organizations continue to look for and employ practitioners who are knowledgeable and inspiring in their approach to developing people. Hence staff development is seen as an essential component to real business as well as professional growth. With this in mind practitioners need to be able to introduce new approaches to support employees as learners and in turn benefit employers as well as the learners themselves. All aspects of this book are important to consider when examining your role as a learning and development practitioner and the organization's role; the concept of learning and development cannot be considered in isolation from other aspects of the practitioner's or learner's role, and requires an all-inclusive and collaborative approach.

It is without doubt that learning and development functions in organizations are fundamental to achieving success, because these functions are central to developing organizational needs and for practitioners to do their jobs well. Evidence shows that true learning organizations rely heavily on their learning and development practitioners to support business strategy and this means practitioners need to develop new ways of designing, delivering and evaluating learning (Harrison, 2009; Noe, 2010). This may be clear in training and educational organizations but is also true in business organizations. Practitioners need to ensure that the learning and development functions are efficient and effective in doing their job well, in addition to making learning delivery lively and energetic; in other words a dynamic and enthusiastic approach is required in order to encourage and engage self-motivated learners with the aim of achieving organizational as well as their own personal or professional goals.

Given its incorporation of organizational teaching and training approaches, this book will be useful in relation to a wide range of development activities. For instance, it will satisfy those involved in WBL and adult and community learning who often complain that courses and their resources are focused too much on staff in further education (FE) colleges, rather than the learning and skills sector as a whole, and will also satisfy those operating in the training industry and commerce, both in the private and public sectors. As a consequence this book aims to keep a distinctive feature of providing a focus and stimulus for action alongside theoretical coverage.

Although this book seeks to demonstrate the importance of a structured approach to learning and development as well as the key elements for delivery and professionalism, it also seeks to highlight the various concepts of learning and development as widely diversified terms used within the sector covering teaching, training and facilitating. Throughout, the various chapters explore what you as a learner practitioner can do to create an environment where you can improve upon what you already know as well as what you can do to increase and enhance learning and practice. Each chapter guides you through the actions you will need to take to develop and enhance your skills. Teacher or trainer practitioners, and anyone presenting or facilitating a training session, for classroom or group activity, can keep up to date by pro-actively learning, understanding and applying theory to a practical situation. Furthermore, you will be able to put to use a range of simple but effective techniques to create a productive and conducive learning environment for all. Chapters incorporate recent interest in the possibilities of learning and development as well as pitfalls in delivering learning and development sessions. We have included a range of suggested activities and case studies for readers to carry out and use, in teaching and training. The intention is to involve readers actively at all stages throughout the book.

Finally, the book is intended to be practical and dynamic and is not intended to be read in the same way as a theoretical textbook from cover to cover, but rather it should be used as a resource that can be tapped into at varying times and at various points in your teaching or training.

1.2 Equality and diversity

Although equality and diversity principles and practicalities are often regarded as challenging, and can be interpreted in different and sometimes contradictory ways according to your understanding or even sensitivity (Ashmore et al., 2009), nonetheless they have long been important

dimensions in teaching, training and development for practitioners, the organization and especially so for learners. Meeting the needs of a diverse group of learners is about ensuring equality of access and learning opportunities for all and, for example, promotional materials should represent a diverse focus. Equally importantly, active equality and diversity practices enable you, the practitioner, to appreciate what effective implementation really looks like, as well as enabling you to provide a rich environment that is conducive to all learners. That is a favourable atmosphere that successfully provides a positive learning experience for all. Even so, one of the most challenging features is promoting a culture of tolerance and understanding and making sure that no learners are prejudicially excluded because of their difference. Although equality and diversity are not included as a separate chapter in this book, they are embedded throughout all chapters through the examples; one of the overarching aims of the book is to ensure that learning develops the best for all individuals (see for example Chapter 7, section 7.5).

1.3 The intended audience for this book

While it continues the coverage of learning and development delivery, this book will be suited to practitioners across a range of organizations and learners on various courses; for instance, Certificate in Education, Training the Trainers and other contexts in the learning and development sector. It will play an important role in further defining the field of learning, teaching, training and development as well as good practice in delivering sessions. Although the book does not have as its primary focus the learning and training cycle, the issues considered in the chapters are relevant and, significantly, the order of the chapters is akin to the aspects of a practitioner's development. Thus the book maintains the practitioner focus, while reflecting a critical coverage so as to appeal to both learners (especially those undertaking courses or modules and learning, teaching, training and development practitioners in FE, WBL, adult and community and training organizations) as well as continuing professional development (CPD) training in public and private institutions.

1.4 What's new about this book and why is it needed?

This book is different in that it presents a number of different perspectives and practices in learning and development. But our purpose is to move beyond current practices and introduce more creative ways of

working in learning and development, consequently offering suggestions for implementation and practice. In the field of teacher and trainer education and training, the range of books extend from those which provide a commentary on theory or practice (or both combined) to those which focus mainly on practice for specific courses or aspects of teaching and training. Increased tuition fees since 2010 and the end to government support (significantly for part-time courses which have typically attracted adult learners), along with learners searching for relevance of their learning to their present and potential employment prospects, have resulted in learners becoming more forthright in asking the question ‘what’s in it for me?’ (WIIFM). As a result, work-based learning in organizations, including educational institutions, has had to change the way learning takes place as well as how practitioners deliver learning.

All contributors to this book are experienced learning and development practitioners from a diverse range of subject specialisms but are deeply concerned with the learning, teaching and development of learners and continuous development for practitioners. Thus given the diverse range of experiences, the different chapters are written in the authors’ own style and perspective, which adds to its uniqueness. We hope this book will be relevant for all those concerned with ongoing learning and development of people in both educational and workplace contexts.

1.5 Current state of learning and development and why it needs to change

A number of writers have argued that education is a vehicle for the reproduction of social and economic structures rather than for social mobility (Fisher and Thompson, 2009). ‘Education and training’ was once used to describe a number of learning and development initiatives, but since the beginning of 2000 the traditional distinction between education and training has become interchangeable with the focus on learning (Armitage et al., 2007). Now ‘learning’ or ‘learning and development’ have become the ‘buzzword’ in place of education and training. This is because we now live in a ‘learning society’ where continuous learning and skills development has become the norm, replacing what was once considered to be a lifelong job or ‘job for life’ with not much learning and development, which was the standard pattern in the middle of the twentieth century. The term learning and skills suggests that learners will become more motivated to learn by knowing more about themselves; for example, their own strengths and weaknesses as learners. For this reason, if practitioners can respond to individual learners’ strengths and weaknesses, it is possible that

learner retention and achievement will improve, hence the skills of 'learning to learn' may possibly provide a firm basis for the term 'learning and skills' (Coffield et al., 2004; Coffield, 2008).

Now the term training may be regarded as somewhat antiquated and not inclusive, though some have argued that by adopting the term 'learning and development' there is a danger that what is gained in scope is lost in generalization (Harrison, 2009). Nonetheless, Harrison notes: 'A very different way of understanding "learning and development" is to perceive it as driven by the individual's curiosity, intelligence and desires and fundamentally shaped by their social interactions in the workplace' (2009: 8). Such a definition focuses on the integration of work and learning as a major route to change, and to learning facilitation rather than training as the key requirement.

As mentioned earlier, most organizations aspire to make the best use of their employees and invest in learning and development through a number of means such as knowledge and talent management, and career management, and need effective, efficient as well as dynamic learning and development functions to achieve that goal (CIPD, 2007; Noe, 2010). The impact of change has been wide-ranging; in 2013, further education colleges, learning providers and other adult and community providers have seen a number of changes governing teaching, training and the initial qualification and CPD of their teachers; for example, the introduction of full-cost fees for adults and the deregulation of the requirement for teaching qualifications. Furthermore, for some time colleges and training providers have found themselves competing with each other because previous and present governments believe that competition is healthy in raising standards for both practitioners and learners. However, as Wallace points out: 'This ideology is the economic equivalent of Darwin's survival of the fittest' (2013: 21); yet, the claim is that those providing the best service and at an affordable cost will continue to exist.

1.6 The benefits of change: the 'what's in it for me?' (WIIFM) factor for learners

For a long time learning has become an important catalyst for change and even more so in the current economic climate. We often fail to accept change because over and over again emotions cloud our perspective and beliefs get overshadowed with doubts, but embracing change is an important part of development; a necessary component in providing the power to frame or alter thoughts, opinions, feelings and behaviours. So how we change as learners and practitioners, especially in turbulent

times where political conditions can change the way things are done, is vital to our continued success in terms of our own development and how we support our learners. There is evidence (Gravells and Wallace, 2013) to suggest that highly engaged practitioners not only work harder, but take the initiative and innovate more often, respond to change better and take less time off work, provide better service, will draw on optimism and generally are much better at coping with complex challenges and ideas. There needs to be preparation for change in an attempt to teach, train or facilitate better, and to support 'best practice'. Even though some have argued that there can be no such thing as 'best practice' which can be universally applied in classrooms, training rooms or in other learning contexts, the cultural approach stresses the complexity of all learning which in turn affects the differing social, ethnic, disability and gender positions of learners and practitioners (Coffield, 2008). Still many have argued that any practitioner dependency (where learners are reliant on practitioners) needs to change in order to provide a logically structured method in which to encourage learners' development, both for knowledge, confidence, self-esteem and employability.

Often we make changes in our professional life that are deliberate, whereas other changes take place as a result of innately occurring development in life. We believe that change is about instilling new attitudes which can have a positive influence on behaviour, beliefs and values (what is desirable or undesirable, good or bad) which help to develop a clearer understanding within yourself, and that support new ways of learning and doing things: for example, the way you work as a practitioner or learner and the way you overcome resistance to change. Another dimension to change is the increased attention paid to feedback from learners, and the ways that quality assurance processes and systems make use of this feedback (Race, 2010). A further dimension to change in learning and development is evaluation, which must be a significant part of the change process as it considers the standards and the moral and social worth of what has taken place. Thus it is argued that effective and critical evaluation is an important dimension of professional practice and the change process (Fisher et al., 2009).

Over time colleges in the further education and skills sector together with organizational learning, including practitioners and learners, have realized the importance of ensuring that learning is connected to the application of work. Learning a subject or skill without being able to apply the new knowledge to practical circumstances, as in work related situations, has very little value and becomes meaningless. Yet learning is having the mindset to change behaviour, thoughts and attitudes, which in turn can have implications for practitioners, learners and for the

organization in which you work. It is argued that the principal outcome of any component of learning and change is that of gradually learning to become a better learner. As a result, improving teaching and training is more than making learning 'happen', it is also about making learners better at learning, learning to change themselves through self-reflection and in turn becoming more self-assured (Race and Pickford, 2007).

1.6.1 The 'what's in it for me?' factor

A considerable amount of learning takes place outside of the classroom or training room without any directed teaching, training, tutoring, mentoring or coaching. But for this learning to have any impact a process of reflective practice needs to take place and which is encouraged so as to enable this learning or indeed any learning to have the desired results. But before practitioners and learners begin to think of 'what's in it for me', there needs to be a certain amount of self-confidence, optimism and positive attitude that the learning taking place is the right one. Therefore it is fundamental for learners to understand what they need and should learn. What is more, learners need to be able to find their own ways of learning, how best they learn and importantly develop a sense of responsibility for their own learning.

It cannot be denied that the WIIFM factor is a question that is uppermost not only in learners' minds but in your mind as practitioners and consequently can drive almost every decision made. Sometime this can be a subconscious tune that plays rather quietly in the back of learners' heads and appears whenever there are new challenges with which to contend. In order to strive to become more knowledgeable about learning and development, it is normal as a practitioner to engage with and deliver your specialist or vocational subject, and at the same time see yourself not just as a teacher, tutor, trainer or facilitator, but also as an educator who systematically works to improve learners' understanding of the subject. Even so, this view is very much debatable as teaching and training are seen more and more as practical activities in which experience (as in practical ability) is valued over theoretical (academic) knowledge (Armitage et al., 2012: 266).

Sometimes it is easier for learners to reject change rather than try to embrace it, especially when they are working full time or even part time in busy and diverse organizations. Yet it is important to stay focused on the value of change, and remember that change forces us to explore new territory, ideas and behaviours, as opposed to experiencing resistance to change, which can make us feel left out and even uncomfortable. However, increasingly many learners may be tactically

positioning themselves by asking how can they do well or how can they do better through their learning journey, while at the same time intentionally asking that one important question – WIIFM. Though many learners see learning as a developmental journey and not just an immediate here and now, the WIIFM factor may encourage them to do so. However, the fact that they are seeking ways of completing their learning satisfactorily and with minimum effort – that is, not wanting to do more than is necessary to fulfill the requirements to be able to get through the learning (Race and Pickford, 2007) – may be a consequence of this approach. However, the WIIFM factor is not always about what we will get from a particular learning or work situation but it is often about how we will feel as a result of having done it.

We are often inspired to learn and develop for the innate feelings of pride, sharing, safety, security, thrill and even excitement. Still, despite the WIIFM syndrome, if individuals are really serious about gaining or retaining skills, it is vital that they continually engage in learning and development. It is often said that for some people, knowledge is synonymous with power and control; on the other hand, it can be regarded as the sharing of knowledge across the entire organization and creating a healthy learning environment. It is increasingly important to be constantly vigilant in looking for opportunities to develop personal and professional growth, by advancing your skills so as to become more effective and persuasive in what you do which, in turn, makes a difference in the lives of your learners. As is often said, one of the most powerful ways we learn is to contrast and compare what we are doing with what we could be doing (Tracy, 2013). Because the WIIFM factor can consist of multiple questions it should help in making available your best possible teaching, training and facilitating skills, within your area of expertise, to achieve maximum benefit.

1.7 Latest developments in learning and development practice

At times it may appear difficult to overcome the constant build-up and publicity that surrounds learning, education and development. However, thanks mainly to technology, the way we learn has changed over the last decade. Time commitments associated with teaching and training are shifting and often changeable. Learners expect that practitioners are available 24 hours a day, particularly through asynchronous electronic communication; demands for better grades or achievement may develop into a continuous round of informal feedback which results in the assignment reflecting more of the tutor's ideas than those of the learner. So