

# Uncovering learning at work

A research project  
carried out in collaboration with the  
Department of Education and Training (DET)  
and, the University of Technology, Sydney (UTS)

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While we intended to approach this research collaboratively, we also appreciate that participating TAFE employees might not have always experienced it this way. With that said, we are truly grateful for their input, suggestions and critique, and hope that we have given them justice in this report.

## Summary:

The Australian Research Council project, *Uncovering Learning at Work* explored the extent and nature of informal learning and its contribution and significance to the TAFE workplace and its employees. The research was a qualitative study carried out in partnership between the University of Technology, Sydney and the TAFE Professional Development Network unit. This collaborative arrangement was ideal for this study because TAFE, as an organisation, are interested in the relationship between work and learning.

The research employed the term 'everyday learning' to describe the phenomenon under investigation. This understanding recognises that there are elements of both formality *and* informality in all learning situations.

*Uncovering Learning at Work* was conducted in three stages. The first involved one-to-one interviews and the collection of initial qualitative data. In the second the researchers worked closely with individual workgroups around particular workplace issues. The final stage examined the implications of the project for TAFE and its employees in collaboration with key TAFE stakeholders.

The questions the research focused on were about:

- ideas staff had about learning
- staff perceptions of learning opportunities in TAFE
- how staff constructed learning through their work relationships for their own benefit and for the strategic goals for TAFE
- key strategies for identifying and utilising learning opportunities without undermining existing informal learning processes
- theories of adult learning that took account of the work-related learning of TAFE staff in an organisational context.

This research followed four workgroups over a period of three years. The four workgroups came from two Sydney metropolitan Institutes of TAFE. The workgroups represented a range of organisational areas including a trade teaching unit, an administrative unit, a group of senior managers and a unit responsible for workplace delivery.

Analysis of project data resulted in several important findings. These are presented in four themes, which are briefly discussed in this report: full details are available in the listed publications. The four themes are:

1. **What we learn and who we learn from** - *Three significant areas of learning were evident in analysis of the interviews. Analysis of the project data yielded two interesting findings with regard to who workers learned from. Very few people that were actively sought by staff to help them learn are generally understood as people with an 'official' role in promoting workplace learning.*

2. **Naming learning and naming oneself as a learner** – *The research suggests there is a complex politics involved in the naming of learning and the naming of oneself as a learner in this organisation. This is further complicated given that TAFE has learning as its raison d'être and, as a workplace, there is much more informed discourse about workplace learning and its value compared to most other organisations.*
3. **Spaces of learning** – *this report suggests 'Space' is a helpful concept for thinking about everyday learning in TAFE and at work in general. The research drew on broad understandings of space, identity and learning and found the analysis of everyday learning in spatial terms can open opportunities for investigating workplace learning. The focus drew attention to what was called 'in-between' spaces. These new understandings unsettled the binaries that are commonly accepted by most workplaces: on-the-job / off-the-job, worker / learner etc. It is these 'in-between' spaces that interesting things were happening in regard to everyday learning.*
4. **Researching learning in contemporary workplaces** - *Throughout the project the research team explored the complexities of collaboratively researching workplace learning. This was important because while workplaces are popular sights for contemporary research, and collaborative research is popular catchcry of contemporary researchers, both workplace and collaborative research typically gloss over the complexities and contradictions this type of research often encompasses.*

Arising from its analysis, this report puts forward a number of discussion points for consideration by TAFE. The areas for discussion include:

- relationships between informal and formal
- significance of everyday learning
- imposing formality
- languages of learning
- learning dimensions of change
- local relationships
- role for structured learning
- future research.

These areas for discussion suggest some possible strategies that TAFE may consider in order to enhance the everyday learning of the organisation.

## **About this report**

This report is presented in 3 sections. The first sets out background information and the project details. The second section presents the main project findings in four related themes. The final section cuts across the four themes and presents general discussion followed by suggested strategies for consideration by TAFE.

## **Project Background**

Organisations spend much money and effort providing workplace training, yet for many the significance of everyday learning is overlooked. While it is generally accepted that learning is critical for contemporary organisational effectiveness, most 'learning' is attributed to what happens in structured training. Everyday learning is largely invisible and little is understood about how it contributes to the organisation or its members. *Uncovering Learning at Work* explored the extent and nature of everyday learning and its contribution and significance to the TAFE workplace and its employees.

The research followed four workgroups over a period of three years. The four workgroups came from two Sydney metropolitan Institutes of TAFE. The workgroups represented a range of organisational areas including a trade teaching unit, an administrative unit, a group of senior managers and a unit responsible for workplace delivery.

## **Strategic partnership**

*Uncovering Learning at Work* was a three-year research project funded through the Australian Research Council (ARC) as part of the Strategic Partners in Industry Research and Training (SPIRT) scheme. It was collaborative research carried out between OVAL Research from the University of Technology, Sydney (UTS) and the NSW Department for Education and Training (DET). The TAFE Professional Development Network (PDN) represented DET.

As an organisation deeply interested in the relationship between work and learning, TAFE made an ideal site for this study.

## **Informal learning**

There are several definitions of 'informal learning' available. Most consider 'informal' as a polarisation of 'formal'. Some definitions of informal learning rely on the absence of a recognisable teacher. Sometimes the place where learning takes place classifies it as informal (eg. college or kitchen). And sometimes, *intent* plays part in the definition (eg. to gain a qualification). More recent understandings of learning recognise there are elements of both formal *and* informal learning in all learning situations (Colley, Hodkinson, & Malcom, 2003). This understanding problematises definitive classification of learning. This research took such a view and employs the term 'everyday learning' to describe the phenomenon.

## Research questions

The questions the research set out to answer focused on:

ideas staff had about learning  
staff perceptions of learning  
opportunities in TAFE  
how staff constructed learning  
through their work  
relationships for their own  
benefit and for the strategic  
goals for TAFE  
key strategies for identifying  
and utilising learning  
opportunities without  
undermining existing informal  
learning processes  
theories of adult learning that  
took account of the  
work-related learning of TAFE  
staff in an organisational  
context.

## Approach to research

*Uncovering Learning at Work* was conducted in three stages. The first involved one to one interviews and the collection of initial qualitative data. In the second the researchers worked closely with individual workgroups around particular workplace and learning issues. The final phase examined the implications of the project for TAFE and its employees in collaboration with key stakeholders from TAFE.

The approach to research adopted for the *Uncovering Learning at Work* had three particular characteristics: qualitative, discursive and collaborative.

A *qualitative* approach meant that the researchers explored *understandings* about everyday learning. The project was not about 'measuring' learning in a

quantitative way. Neither was it about comparing workgroups nor making universal generalisations.

The *discursive* approach meant that the researchers were interested in the ways people *talked* about their work and how this *talk* constructed learning in their workplaces. This is evident by the choices of techniques for data collection (ie. interviews and a series of discussions).

Finally, the research approach was also a *collaborative* one. This collaboration was manifest in several ways:

- TAFE and UTS jointly worked on the project proposal
- senior TAFE and UTS personnel consulted on important aspects over the duration of the project.
- The TAFE Professional Development Network (PDN) was actively involved in the research team throughout the project.
- The research team and workers shared meanings of learning.

The partnership arrangement also meant transparent research processes. To this end, the research team provided feedback and invited discussion in participating Institutes of TAFE, and the participating workgroups and their members on several occasions. This resulted in feedback sessions, numerous meetings, a workshop for a wider group of TAFE managers and written project reports presented at various stages throughout the project.

## **Data collection**

Several methods were used in gathering data. The first included open-ended interviews with employees from each of the four workgroups. The interviews were about an hour long during which staff talked freely about their work and their workgroup. Reference to learning was deliberately avoided throughout these discussions except for a final question that explicitly related to workplace learning.

Following initial interviews, participants were asked to keep 'social relationships maps'. The research was interested in the various kinds of communication that employees have in their everyday work. The object of the exercise was to map who workers communicate with on a daily basis, and who they communicate with about work outside of their immediate work environment. The time span for the exercise was one week and made use of all kinds of communication: eg. face to face, telephone and email.

The interviews and mapping exercise generated a large amount of qualitative data. Full transcripts of the interviews were produced which were then subject to in-depth analysis that focused on the ways employees were talking about (what the researchers labelled as) learning. The initial findings were taken back to the workgroups to be used as a catalyst for more focused discussions about work and learning. In contrast to the interviews, learning was more overtly talked

about in these focus group conversations.

Using data from these focus groups, another round of data analysis followed, and again this was taken back to the workgroups. As part of these second round participants were given a written report outlining the overall project to date, as well as examples of academic papers that had been produced as part of the *Uncovering Learning at Work* project. Participants were invited to comment on these texts and discuss the ideas that the papers dealt with. These sessions focused on particular issues that had emerged during the initial interviews and earlier feedback sessions.

A final workshop was held with key TAFE stakeholders. The participants of this workshop came from a broad cross-section of TAFE institutions and generally occupied strategic positions or were interested in workplace learning. The workshop aimed to discuss the key findings with a view to developing implications for the organisation and its employees.

## **Data analysis**

Conversations in the interviews, focus groups and meetings were taped and transcribed. This generated much text-based data that was then subject to discursive analysis. The data analysis looked for common themes in the ways people talked about their work and learning. The data was also analysed to determine how 'talk' constructed workers' understandings of themselves and their learning in the workplace.

Analysis of participants' 'network maps' took note of the people and artefacts that workers engaged with in day-to-day work, and the content of these exchanges.

## **Introduction to findings**

This section presents the research findings in four themes along with some discussion. There are also related questions for TAFE at the end of each theme. Further discussion, that cuts across the four themes, and some suggested strategies for TAFE, are presented in the final section.

Analysis of project data resulted in several important findings. While they are presented as four themes to facilitate understanding, they are not mutually exclusive. Indeed, as the next section will demonstrate, these themes overlap in significant ways.

The four themes are:

1. What we learn and who we learn from
2. Naming learning and naming oneself as a learner
3. Spaces of learning
4. Researching learning in contemporary workplaces

The first three emerged in the order presented above. Each built upon the findings of the preceding theme. The themes also roughly coincided with particular project stages. For example, the initial interview data and mapping exercise were the impetus for the first of the themes, 'what we learn and who we learn from'. This first theme is also relatively concrete and addresses specific questions; the themes become more theoretical as they progress.

The second theme, 'naming learning', surfaced in the feedback sessions where participants were

presented with the ideas that emerged from the first. The third theme, 'space', while present in initial interview data, developed more fully in later project focus groups. The final theme, 'researching learning in contemporary workplaces', was an ongoing thread throughout the duration of the project.

## **What we learn and who we learn from**

While it was never intended that the research would compare or evaluate the participating TAFE workgroups, the project data emphasised the contextual differences between the various sites and its effect on the kind of informal learning that is engaged in by TAFE employees. The research data demonstrated that the experience of learning is strongly influenced by the context and nature of individual's work and the workflow of the units in which workers operate. Nevertheless, the findings from the different groups illustrated some commonalities regarding informal learning (Boud & Middleton, 2003).

Three significant areas of learning were evident in the analysis of the interviews:

*Mastery of organisational processes.* This includes keeping pace with revised administrative requirements and becoming competent in the use of computer-based systems or other packages necessary to undertake work-related tasks.

*Negotiating the political.* This category includes both

negotiating relationships within the everyday workplace, as well as strategic positioning to ensure a successful future career path.

*Dealing with the atypical.*

These are issues for which there is no set procedure. Strategies need to be created for solving problems either as individuals or as a group

Of course these categories overlap. For instance, dealing with the atypical could obviously occur in the mastery of computer use or dealing with student issues.

A common pattern is illustrated by the following. When difficulties arise, workers first sought answers from a documentary source such as the Intranet or recent precedents where they exist. If this source failed, workers sought an expert in the area. The person most likely to have expertise in a similar area to that person was a peer, generally someone physically close to hand. If someone close to hand was unable to answer the query satisfactorily then it was likely that a peer doing a similar job in another geographical location or (in the case of the junior clerks that took place in the study) a person in a slightly more senior role was approached. If this failed, then the supervisor would be approached. Occasionally, if the information sought was specialised, an expert in that area was approached first in preference to the supervisor

Analysis of the project data yielded two interesting findings with regard to *who* workers learned from. The

first one draws attention to the interaction between context and the form of the learning that occurs. The second highlights the significance of informal networks for learning, for example while workplace supervisors were part of the networks of learning, in most instances they were not the first point of contact.

### Questions for TAFE

Considering these findings raises questions for TAFE workgroups, managers, employees and the institution in general. Perhaps most obvious, given the reliance on documented sources in the first instance, is a reaffirmation of a plain English policy regarding procedural documents. *Do all TAFE staff have access to these documentary sources? Do they have the necessary skills to access them?*

Considering *who* employees are learning from poses another set of questions. The research revealed that there is a diverse range of people that workers learn from at work. While it was typically peers that were close in proximity that were sought, many workers also used electronic sources (email for example) to ask questions of others in similar positions in other geographical locations. What is significant is that very few people that were actively sought by staff to help them learn are generally understood as people with an 'official' role in promoting learning. *How might this impact on work functions and/or established mentoring programs? Are all TAFE employees equipped to advise other staff? Is the 'correct' learning taking*

*place, that is, are people learning what is required of them to know?*

While TAFE is in the business of teaching and learning, the uptake of learning as part of everyday practice is not a 'natural' one. The research data also suggests that people are mindful of career progression and there's also mindfulness that asking questions of a person 'this week' might jeopardise a future job opportunity. Within the TAFE workforce there are constant reminders of being positioned in hierarchies, and TAFE workers are aware of being part of a bureaucracy. For many employees there are tensions around asking questions. For example while as *teachers*, workers tend to encourage their students to ask questions, as *workers* there is at times reticence about asking questions themselves. This prompts the questions: *What does the asking of the questions suggest about the people who ask them? What are the hierarchies within the questioning relationships?*

This draws attention to the various relationships people have within TAFE. People must successfully negotiate various relationships in order to learn from each other. A question for TAFE around this is: *How do professional developers and managers within TAFE promote relationships that enable people to learn from each other?*

### **Naming learning and learners**

The terms 'learning' and 'learner' are often used in research on workplace and organisational learning as if they were unproblematic and as if there is a

shared meaning about what they refer to. However this research clearly illustrates that when these words are used in workplaces their meanings are not mutually understood nor are the words 'neutral'. There is a complex politics involved in the naming of learning and the naming of oneself (or another) as a learner (Boud & Solomon, 2003).

A good example of this, and one that became the focus of much discussion, is a story told by a participant in one of the early feedback sessions. This employee likened calling herself a learner to wearing an 'L-plate'. For this worker (and her colleagues agreed) being named as a learner suggested being seen as not knowing one's job, or at least not performing as well was expected. This example was repeated in each of the initial feedback sessions with each of the workgroups. There was a general consensus among TAFE employees that while most agreed they had 'learned', they were also generally hesitant in calling themselves 'learners'. It seems that the politics around naming oneself as a learner is connected to maintaining a position *vis a vis* others, recognising oneself as having a valued place in a work group and being seen as a competent worker.

In later stages of the project the politics around naming of learners was explored in focus groups. In these discussions there appeared to be a resistance by some participants to the idea that it applied to them – although most agreed that applied to 'others'.

This is further complicated given that TAFE has learning as its *raison d'être* and, as a workplace, there is a much more informed discourse about workplace learning and its value compared to most other organisations. At the same time, for many TAFE employees, 'learning' is what *others* do: students, other staff members, etc.

### Questions for TAFE

These findings leave TAFE with some interesting questions around the identification of learners at work: *Under what circumstances can a TAFE employee identify as a learner? How can the foregrounding of learning in work be made less risky for all employees? What difference does it make who is doing the naming?*

### Spaces for learning

'Space' is a helpful theme for thinking about everyday learning in TAFE and at work in general. The research drew on a variety of understandings of space, identity and learning. It found that an analysis of everyday learning in spatial terms can open opportunities for investigating workplace learning.

It is more than simply literal physical spaces being referred to, yet to some extent reference to physical spaces prompted the initial interest in ideas around space. The term 'workplace' learning itself draws attention to physical place or space: 'workplace learning' has particular kinds of meanings and practices because of its location and because that location is not considered

educational. Similarly, understandings of *on-the-job learning* are connected to the place of that kind of learning and this place is not *off-the-job*.

Accompanying this interest in literal meanings of space was a consideration of space in more metaphorical terms. This prompted consideration of what happened in what was called 'in-between' or 'hybrid' spaces (Solomon, Boud, & Rooney, 2003). These spaces included tea room conversations, chats around the photocopier and spoken exchanges that occurred between sessions on professional development days. It is within these spaces that people are both working *and* not working, and that 'normal' hierarchical relationships became less visible. Importantly, for this research, workers often talked about these in-between spaces as times when lots of problem solving and learning had taken place.

These kinds of understandings about 'in-between' spaces contributed to the research's conceptual work. For example, this focus unsettled the binaries that are so commonly accepted in most workplaces: on-the-job/off-the-job, formal/informal, worker/social being, worker/learner, working/playing, productive/non-productive. It is in the in-between space that interesting things were happening and in this sense then the commonly accepted binaries have become no longer useful.

It is not just space that is 'in-between', but also the people who occupy the space. When

people enter these spaces they are neither entirely workers nor social beings, but located in the 'between'. Workers are not productive in the sense that they are performing the tasks of their normal work, yet the presence of significant learning means that they are not un-productive either. This appears to have important consequences for managers' understandings of 'legitimate' work practices, as well as employees' understanding of their own work and learning. The research found these seemingly social spaces had vast potential for learning. Appreciating the learning potential of these spaces may require shifts in understandings about particular types of activity.

### Questions for TAFE

Both the metaphorical and literal 'in-between' spaces have great potential as sites for everyday learning. These can be understood as complex spaces where typical on-the-job and off-the-job interactions blur. They can also be understood as spaces where the identities of participants are subject to shifts. Questions the organisation might ask include: *How do managers and workers understand these spaces? How might different understandings about spaces by managers and workers shift understandings about particular work practices? What might be lost if these spaces were formalised?*

### Researching learning in contemporary workplaces

The fourth and final theme, *researching learning in contemporary workplaces*, was an

ongoing thread of the project. While workplaces provide sites for many contemporary research projects, and collaborative research is also a popular catchcry for contemporary researchers, both workplace and collaborative research typically gloss over the complexities and contradictions that researchers encounter. In doing so, it imagines neat and unproblematic findings and conclusions. By drawing attention to the particular experiences of this project, uncomplicated notions of collaborative research in workplaces were troubled

For example the naming of research as collaborative and its accompanying suggestion of co-construction of knowledge ignore the complexity of power relationships that exist (Solomon, Boud, Leontios, & Staron, 2001 and 2001b). The mere presence of researchers can constitute an invasion of participants' space both metaphorically and literally. These power relationships cannot be neutralised or discounted. Throughout the project the researchers from both TAFE and UTS explored the complexities of collaboratively researching workplace learning. They drew attention to the various and ambivalent outcomes of the project. Coupled with an interest in 'space', it was argued that consideration of the presence of academic researchers as 'space invaders' in organisational sites was a useful way to explain some of the complexities around co-producing knowledge .

The project took a reflexive approach to this end that resulted in

challenging some commonly understood ideas about researching. This reflexiveness was particularly interesting because it foregrounded the investments that TAFE and university based researchers, as well as the participants themselves, have in particular types of research.

### Questions for TAFE

Taking a reflexive approach to research allows for the processes of collaborative research to undergo scrutiny, yielding new understandings about the collaborative production of knowledge. Reflexiveness also allows for the recognition of the investments of various research stakeholders. Some questions for TAFE here are: *What other areas within TAFE would benefit from such a reflexive approach? How might this kind of research be further developed?*

### **Introduction to discussions**

The previous section presented the key findings of the research in four inter-related themes. This section presents a discussion in areas that cut across those themes. It encompasses some strategies for consideration by TAFE. The areas for discussion are:

- relationships between informal and formal
- significance of everyday learning
- imposing formality
- languages of learning
- learning dimensions of change
- local relationships
- role for structured learning
- future research.

### **Relationships between informal and formal**

Informal learning is often thought about in opposition to formal learning but there is difficulty in making such a definition. When thinking about informal learning it is more useful to employ the term 'everyday learning' because *all* learning has elements of informality and formality.

This understanding serves to recognise the potential of supporting everyday learning in structured professional development activities, as well as supporting formality in everyday learning situations. It also serves to highlight the need for further exploration of the relational aspects of formal and informal learning in ways that are mutually beneficial for workers and organisations.

### **Significance of everyday learning**

Everyday learning is paramount in the day-to-day jobs of employees and therefore should be viewed as a central consideration in all discussions of learning and training initiatives. It is the ability of everyday learning to address day-to-day issues of workers that highlights its significance for TAFE. This warrants its consideration alongside structured learning to maximise the greatest overall potential for the TAFE.

### **Imposing formality**

In a sense, the value of the learning 'uncovered' in this research is in its informality. While it may be possible to foster informal learning, the study also suggests that attempts to capture and formalise it may not necessarily promote it and may even work against it.

In the 'naming learning' and 'space' discussions, the effect of formalisation came up time and time again. Employees resist attempts to formalise the informal learning aspects of their work in various ways. This can range from denying that they are learning from each other (even when it appears that they had) to avoiding the label of learner.

An understanding of the paradox of formalising the informal raises some issues for management who might consider engineering learning spaces. Attempts to formalise such spaces can inhibit the positive benefits of them, but the absence of formalisation may not necessarily foster everyday learning either. The

formalisation of everyday learning spaces shifts the nature of the activities.

The realities of learning in the organisation can be disguised through formalisation. It is important to distinguish between formal interventions that are part of an implemented staff development strategy and the everyday learning that goes on in workplaces. It isn't possible (or desirable) to subordinate one over another. It is not possible to simply replace everyday learning with formal activity or vice versa.

A difficulty for TAFE lies in distinguishing between informal learning initiatives that can be formalised and/or fostered and those that can and/or should not.

### **Languages of learning**

Individuals develop their own rich understandings drawing from a range of things including prior experiences, espoused theories, classroom practices as well as organisational policy texts. This has the effect of producing a diversity of understandings as well as differences in the way these understandings are spoken about.

Contemporary workplaces are sites of great diversity. This diversity results in many different ideas in circulation. For example within TAFE there are different ideas about learning that are spoken about in different ways. These 'languages' about learning range from the way the organisation talks about learning in policy, to the many ways teachers speak about what happens in their

classrooms, to clerks speaking about coming to grips with the demands of computer systems. Furthermore in TAFE, there is a strong culture of both organisational *and* educational discourses around learning.

It is important to recognise that policy and organisational texts do not always speak to workers in ways that they understand and that there is potential for misunderstanding. Management should not assume that everyone's understandings are the same. An awareness of the competing discourses, and the implications that these have in terms of learning, is needed. This requires a heightened awareness of the diversity of languages about learning. It also requires recognition that when managers speak to workers about learning, they are generally speaking to people with particular understandings, not necessarily positive, about what 'learning' means.

On recognition of the diversity of understandings about learning, management may decide to revisit policies and other organisational texts with a view to determine how the 'language of learning' used in them might be understood by employees, and how these understandings may support or hinder learning practices.

### **Learning dimensions of change**

There is ongoing attention in management discourses about 'change' and the management of 'change'. In contemporary work life change is generally understood and accepted as part of people's jobs. While management sometimes implements structural changes *other* changes are occurring also. For example change can be triggered by a new staff member; the arrival of new types of students; the onset of new technologies, equipment or curriculum. In short, change is occurring continuously and at a range of levels within TAFE.

While change is often perceived as unsettling it can also be viewed as rich site of learning. For example, on a local scale, 'acting-up' opportunities work well to promote everyday learning. This is because the insertion of a new worker in a workgroup allows for tacit knowledges to be articulated, and both the new group member, as well as established group, benefit from these articulations. The disruption of workgroups creates an energy that can promote everyday learning. Opportunities like these are also particularly valuable for allowing workers to legitimately name themselves as learners.

However, learning is not always on the agenda in times of great change. Many institutional practices associated with implementing and managing change, may inadvertently get in the way of thinking of the learning implications of what is going on. Yet everyday learning is critical for workers at the

coalface during these times. Workers must often learn how to do their jobs smarter, and in new and different ways, they must deal with the atypical, learn from new people and often in new spaces. This indicates a need to further explore possibilities for taking advantage of organisational learning alongside change.

### **Local relationships**

Everyday learning is embedded in relationships. Local relationships are needed to carry broader initiatives into everyday work practices. Our research has demonstrated the importance of local relationships for learning. Talk is facilitated through relationships and it is primarily through talk that everyday learning occurs.

Some good examples can be noted in structured initiatives in TAFE, 'Communities of Practice' for instance, that mobilise local relationships and provide legitimate spaces for people to talk and learn. In a sense, these initiatives provide legitimate spaces for talking and learning through structured relationships. There is scope for making more of these learning relationships, which would benefit from research that explores the discursive practices embedded in relationships manufactured by such initiatives.

### **Role for structured learning**

Structured professional development plays an important role in skilling the organisation. The research suggests that employing initiatives that help workers make the most of everyday learning can extend this role. This requires an understanding of the interplay between structured and everyday learning. It is not about privileging one or the other but importantly utilising both.

Structured learning initiatives address broad issues that cross local settings. On the other hand, mastering organisational processes, negotiating relationships and dealing with atypical situations are some of the things learned informally at work. At times these may be connected with a more broadly experienced concern (like mastering the use of CLAMS) which if extensively experienced, may flag the need for formal professional development intervention. However these everyday 'problems' often present as contextualised issues for workers that immediate work requirements necessitate being addressed as soon as possible. This suggests a need for structured initiatives that help people to make the most of everyday learning to address local issues. Professional development that supports the solving of local problems will promote everyday learning.

Structured professional development needs to consider the people involved in everyday learning exchanges. The research showed that the people involved in everyday learning exchanges are

not generally those who are considered instrumental in the professional development of others. This has profound implications for ongoing professional development if it is to promote and foster everyday learning within the organisation. Structured professional development can make use of these understandings by developing sessions that support *all* workers in their local mentoring and coaching roles.

Providing a brokering role that distributes information, and helps people locate others with particular experiences is another professional development initiative that can support everyday learning. In the study workers frequently went to colleagues who they believed had done similar things. While this is a satisfactory solution for some, it is not always an option for those with less developed networks. A central brokerage would be particularly useful for new members of staff, as well as for people in new roles, who may have a desire to learn, but not have the necessary networks.

### **Future research**

Further research that tracks how initiatives like 'Reframing the Future', 'Communities of Practice' and 'Learnscope' are played out locally, lend themselves to a discursive approach. *Talk* reveals the ways people are thinking and acting, and their understandings. A discursive approach is especially valuable for investigating everyday learning because this learning is not generally visible.

Understandings of everyday learning would benefit from approaches that explore the interplay of micro-relationships and organisational discourse.

## Project Publications:

**Edited chapters in books**

Boud, D. (submitted for publication). Creating the space for reflection at work. In Boud, D., Cressey, P. and Docherty, P. (Eds.). *Productive Reflection and Learning at Work*. London: Routledge Falmer.

**Papers published in international refereed journals**

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