



MONASH UNIVERSITY - ACER
CENTRE FOR THE ECONOMICS OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Seminar

Monday, 7 May 2007, 12-1.30 pm

**Monash University Conference Centre
Level 7, 30 Collins Street**

Workplace learning in context: How organisations and individuals intersect

Helen Rainbird

University of Birmingham, UK

Recent research on workplace learning provides insights on how learning at work can be promoted. In contrast to conventional training which implies a distinct transfer of a body of knowledge, learning is much more dependent on the context of the workplace as a site of learning. In this context, learning occurs through, often spontaneous, interactions with other workers, through observation, problem-solving, making mistakes and through the action of mentors. Facilitation of such learning depends critically on the characteristics of work organisation, the work group and job design. Some workplaces will provide greater opportunities for learning than others. This raises significant questions about how learning in the workplace is conceptualised, assessed and promoted. In particular, it raises questions about the relationship between educational qualifications and work-related skills, and how work environments themselves may promote learning. This presentation draws on research from a project on improving incentives to learning at work. The findings suggest a more holistic approach to promoting learning that considers not just training interventions but changes to the wider work environment. It has implications not just for the role of trainers and HRM professionals, but also for workers' expectations about access to different sources of learning during their working lives.

Helen is a world-renowned expert on workplace learning and has written widely on the interface of workplace relations and training, employee participation and low paid work. She has researched and written extensively on the intersection between industrial relations structures and processes and workplace learning policies and practices in organisations. Helen has a long-standing interest in training and development practices in the public sector and, in particular, the role of union/employer partnerships on learning in supporting the expression of employee voice and access to learning.

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ALL WELCOME (NO CHARGE)