Towards more effective continuing education and training for Australian workers — support document

Stephen Billett
Sarojni Choy
Darryl Dymock
Ray Smith
Amanda Henderson
Mark Tyler
Ann Kelly

Griffith University

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Table 1: Models of continuing education and training provision (Phase 1)

Model	Description
1. Wholly work-based experiences	Learning across working life through wholly work-based (i.e. on-the-job) experiences, in the course of everyday work activities and interactions, directly or indirectly supported by more experienced co-workers
2. Work-based structured experiences (e.g. acting up, rotational)	Individuals' learning across working life supported and promoted by workplace activities that extend the scope of their work roles and experiences, such as opportunities provided by acting in or rotating through different roles
3. Work-based experiences with direct guidance (e.g. shadowing, mentoring)	Individuals' learning at work supported by direct guidance of more experienced partners through joint problem-solving and engagement in activities for learning that cannot be acquired through discovery alone
4. Opportunity-based experiences (i.e. as work commitments permit)	Workplaces providing particularly rich learning experiences and individuals participating in these as work events permit: (e.g. doctors' rounds in hospital wards) or routine events (e.g. daily handovers in hospital wards by nurses)
5. Work-based experiences with educational interventions (e.g. action learning, action research, project work)	A common process associated with work-based professional development is using action learning or action research projects to learn and enhance practice aspects of work
6. Sandwich/block release experiences	Some workers' skills development occurs through engaging in programs in educational institutions which include release from their workplaces, referred to as sandwich programs, during or at the end of the educational program
7. Structured dual experiences (e.g. cadetship, apprenticeships)	A common form of initial occupational preparation is through structured engagement in both workplace and educational settings as in apprenticeship comprising either day release or short block of time release to an education institution
8. Structured experiences in educational programs	Some educational programs have periods of experiences in work settings to assist students understand and be able to practise the particular occupational skills (e.g. practicums, clinicians' experience in health care settings)
9. Wholly educational institution-based experiences	Some programs are wholly based within educational institutions and the experiences provided are those judged best offer the kinds of learning which individuals require for specific activities

Table 2: Practices of engagement and support

Practice	Description
1. Individual learning independently (e.g. engaging in work, individual project, tertiary/higher education studies)	Perhaps the most typical pedagogic model of CET is individuals working and learning alone supported in their learning through engaging in work activities, projects or educational programs.
2. Taught and guided processes in workplace (e.g. expert-novice mentoring, coaching, guided workplace learning)	Individuals securing, sustaining and developing further their occupational capacities through the teaching and guidance by more experienced or expert partners, who provide access to insights and practices, and joint problem solving.
3. Self-managed and directed group processes (e.g. peer learning, coursework provisions, learning circles)	Individuals' engagement with peers to develop further their understanding, procedures and dispositions through processes of sharing, discussion, reconciliation and evaluation of experiences is a common form of work-based learning support.
4. Facilitated/expert guided group processes (e.g. action learning, group facilitated discussion, learning circles)	Group learning processes supported by more experienced workers who can encourage, interact, discuss and assist, reconcile and guide participants' learning experiences in productive ways.
5. Integration of experiences in practice and education settings (i.e. before, during, after)	Enriching learning across education and practice settings can be realised through preparing learners to participate in practice experiences (i.e. establish ways to guide and support their learning), during those experiences through their active and then selective engagement and guiding them in reconciling their experiences in both settings afterwards.
6. Facilitated collaborative processes in educational programs (e.g. group work, projects, inter-professional working)	Within educational programs learners can engage in joint projects supported by teachers or workplace practitioners, for instance, when engaging with learners of different kinds (e.g. inter-professionally) and learning from each other and about related occupations.
7. Tutorial processes (e.g. face-to-face, distance, etc.)	Another process of engaging learners to consider and discuss issues, topics, and content about which they are learning. Such pedagogic practices are traditionally enacted face-to-face with a tutor and/ or a small group of students. Tutors act as both content experts and facilitators of learners' engagements and discussions, and assist with what they may not be able to learn without expert assistance.
8. Didactic teaching (e.g. lecture, webcast, etc.)	The standard means of projecting or imparting knowledge that is best taught through didactic means such as via lecture or web cast. When large amounts of knowledge need to be engaged with and concepts need explaining, teaching can be utilised to support learners' reading. Here, clear presentation is required as is support such as illustrations and modelling; to assist learners comprehend the kinds of ideas which are being presented.

Table 3: Continuing education and training models and ways of supporting learning (from Phase 1)

Preferred models of continuing education and training	Preferred ways of supporting learning in continuing education and training
Work-based experiences with direct guidance (e.g. shadowing, mentoring) Opportunity-based learning experiences (i.e. as work events permit) Work-based experiences with educational interventions (e.g. training + work-based practice)	1. Individuals working alone (e.g., engaging with resources; individual projects; tertiary/higher education studies) 2. Dyads (e.g., expert—novice; peer-sharing; joint project; mentoring; coaching; guided learning in the workplace) 3. Facilitated/expert guided group processes, and as in teaching (e.g., action learning; group facilitated discussion; learning circles) 4. Integration of the experiences delivered in practice and education settings (e.g., support provided before, during, and after educational and practice experiences)

The four models (from Phase 2)

Model 1: Wholly work-based experiences

Learning in work, through the course of everyday work activities and interactions, is and can be a most effective form of responding to and generating the new experiences that underpin successful competence and skills development for work. Authenticity and self reliance are the central features of this form of learning that is about being fully immersed in the enactment of the practices of work. It does not presuppose novice status or expertise development, it does not preclude learning assistance and structured engagement and it does not limit to trial and error. Rather, learning through wholly work-based experiences is about being open to what is necessary and 'doing' what is enabled by the circumstances that define the work being undertaken. Such learning has immediate and 'hands on' qualities that can support enquiry of self, task and conditions and enable the kinds of feedback that support reflection and experimentation – none of which is assured outside the nature of the context and practices enacted. Such learning is based in the intentions of the worker as they 'meet' the changing opportunities and constraints of their practice. Brianna, an aged care worker, stated; "For this particular job, everything changes every day so … unless you're doing it on the job, there's no way of learning this position." This 'meeting' may be of many kinds and qualities but it will take place and it will be the most common of the many activities and transactions that constitute the routine practice of work.

For many of the participants, this form of learning is about application and discovery – of previous learning and training in 'real' work, of previously proven learning and skills in 'new' situations and improvising or problem solving through developing new practices. As Barney, a truck driver, puts it; "you learn something new every day, but yet I have the basic knowledge and knowhow and you learn each day as you're doing it." The confidence to take up these kinds of opportunities is developed through recognising and accepting them. So, learning wholly through practice is a combination of the routine and the novel and is valued in both these senses of its enactment. Additionally, such learning is most often shared (very few work in prolonged isolation). It is a social process that is based working with others. Jack, a mining worker, stated; "probably my most effective way of learning is actually just doing it with other people, watching, asking them questions and even just seeing them, observing them when they work and how they even talk to other people, how they look at things that I look at." In such statements the often underestimated and seeming invisible aspects of learning support utilised in work are illustrated. Wholly work-based learning experiences is about 'doing it' and understanding this doing as learning in action.

Model 2: Work-based with direct guidance

Direct guidance through learning in practice is about coming alongside and supporting people to engage more fully, accurately and confidently in the work and learning being undertaken. Although the level of guidance is important, it is not solely determined by the levels of the expertise of the guide but rather by the levels of need being addressed by the person being guided. So, direct guidance may take the form of a more experienced 'buddy' or it may take the form of a highly specialised and experienced expert. The salient feature of this model of work related learning is that it is simultaneously, jointly, enacted. It is direct and, therefore, highly proximal. It is based in relationship and, therefore, demands care and responsibility by the guide and guided. Roles such as mentor, coach, supervisor and advisor represent formalisations of the relationship and begin to qualify the need of guides being willing, skilled and supportive for effective learning outcomes.

Rachael, an administrative worker in the mining sector, stated; "I've always had a mentor, right from the get-go. I think that works really well and I enjoy taking on that role as well because I think you can learn a lot about the right way and the wrong way to do things. I think that brings in the human element of how to do things, the behavioural side, rather than just learning from the manual or learning from the course. And a mentor, I find, gives you a different insight into the detail of your work."

Significant here is the need to ensure that learning experience is 'guided' sufficient to accomplishing outcomes that could not be achieved alone. Such understandings guard against tendencies to over supervise or instruct where and when unnecessary. Direct guidance is, therefore, most effective when it is sought and welcomed. However, its imposition is not unwarranted when high risk is encountered. Learning through being directly guided in and for work is about understanding and acknowledging the 'need' of learning and so requires being based in accepting such need and accepting of the experience being offered in its support. The intentions of the learner are central to the respect on which successful direct guidance is accomplished.

Model 3: Work-based with educational interventions

The conduct of structured and accredited learning experiences, facilitated by trainers and supported by workplaces, is a familiar and effective method of continuing education and training provision. It brings together workers, their employing enterprises and registered training organisations (RTOs) in client-supplier relationships focussed on accomplishing agreed learning outcomes that address specific goals. Often, these goals are related to addressing licensing and compliance requirements, specific skills development objectives, the awarding of qualifications and securing successful responses to planned changes. They are often predominantly enterprise driven (as workplaces secure the services of RTOs to deliver training for their employees) but can be individually driven by workers, for example, seeking skills assessment and accreditation through official recognition of prior learning (RPL) systems administered by RTOs.

Educational interventions may be conducted on or off site and in or out of normal working times. They may be conducted by internal or external agents, that is, by internal enterprise-based trainers or external service providers (e.g., RTOs). They may be single session events, such as short professional development opportunities, or comprise organised programs of structured learning over longer periods of time. They may engage individuals or groups of learners and be based in narrow and broad ranges of pedagogic practice. The central features of this form of learning are first, that it is directly related to work practice and is based on and develops from the needs to enhance and extend that practice and second, that it is conducted by those from educational institutions who have some specific expertise in the skills of the practice being developed and some experience in shaping and facilitating the learning experiences on which that practice development will proceed. Haley, who works with livestock, stated;

> The lecturers would come out to the sheds and do it all there … and pretty much it was more - not so much the theory side of it; it was more practical. They'd be talking you through the actual skills … because the shearing industry is not one that you can learn from a piece of paper. You actually have to be in there, doing the practical, to learn. And all the lecturers were ex-shearers or ex-wool handlers or wool classers, so they all had heaps of experience from the sheds in there.

Based on these two central features of work-based and expertise, the effectiveness of this form of continuing education and training provision is highly reliant on the instructional qualities of the facilitator and their capacities to align or unite the range of learning intentions (i.e., worker, enterprise, trainer) that come together through the intervention. Additionally, the levels of support workplaces afford workers in training have significant impact on the degree to which learning intentions can be aligned. The greater the levels of support (e.g., time off to attend, costs of attendance, rewards for completion, etc.) - the greater the levels of worker engagement.

Model 4: Wholly educational institution-based experiences

Educational institutions can enable access to a range of learning resources and experiences that cannot, or are not wanted to be, accessed through work. To this extent, they are external sources of learning opportunity that can be utilised by individuals and enterprises as they require and are able. The strength of such learning is in the degree to which it meets and accomplishes the purposes for which it is accessed. Where individuals are seeking to develop knowledge and skills that are not available through work, where they are seeking advanced qualifications to change jobs, seek promotion and/or pursue different vocational pathways, where they are developing personal interests and where they are able to afford the time and financial costs of engaging in study, educational institutions in the forms of universities, RTOs, TAFE and community colleges, on-line providers and professional organisations are common and effective sources of learning opportunity. Many workers and managers are engaged in these forms of learning outside the opportunities and/or requirements of their work.

Similarly, for enterprises, the range of educational institutions available can enable their support of employees through all forms of programs and arrangements. Such arrangements can be compulsory and/or voluntary and reflect the negotiated nature of aligning different personal and organisational purposes and goals and resources with what is institutionally available. The balance of flexibilities, necessities and willingness that underpin these negotiations are significant aspects of realising the benefits that wholly educational institution-based learning can provide. For individuals and organisations alike, the effort and energy required to successfully complete programs of study (long or short) away from, additional too and possibly completely unrelated to work cannot be underestimated. The central features of this form of learning are first, that it is directed by the intentions and priorities of those educational institutions and teachers who design and facilitate the content and learning experiences that comprise the course of study and second (and consequently), that the learner and those seeking to benefit from the program of study need to be fully informed and able to make judgments about its relevance and potential advantages. When these two features align as complementary aspects of the learning opportunity available, effective learning is encouraged.

Roundtable leaflet

Griffith UNIVERSITY

Stephen Billett
Sarojni Choy
Amanda Henderson
Darryl Dymock
Ann Kelly
Ray Smith
Mark Tyler
Fred Beven

School of Education and
Professional Studies
Griffith University

Training and learning in continuing education and training for Australian workers and workplaces

ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION

Background

Over the past two years, a research team from Griffith University in Brisbane has investigated how workers are engaging in continuing education and training (CET) in Australia. Workers and managers across the country were asked about how ongoing learning and training is organised, and how they think those processes might be improved to meet the current and future needs of workers and enterprises, and contribute to national workforce development.

As a result of those investigations, the research team has identified four approaches to CET which the data suggest are most effective and consistently preferred by workers. Implementing such approaches widely across Australia may well have significant implications for tertiary education and training in this country.

Purpose of roundtable

Participants are invited to provide input into discussion about the applicability of those four approaches to CET (introduced overleaf), and to identify roles that workers, managers, trainers, enterprises, training providers (RTOs) and policy makers should play in making such approaches effective.

The focus of this project is on education and training to maintain and develop workers' competence in the changing workplace, not on entry-level training.

Four ways of organising continuing education and training

From interviews conducted across Australia with almost 140 workers and more than 60 managers, the Griffith research team identified four preferred ways of organising continuing education and training for ongoing learning.

Scenario 1

Wholly practice-based experiences

Learning across working life through practice-based experiences, in the course of everyday work activities and interactions, learning on one's own or indirectly supported by more experienced co-workers.

Scenario 2

Practice-based experiences with direct guidance

Individuals' learning at work supported by the direct guidance of more experienced co-workers or supervisors through joint work activities, and engaging in supported activities for learning that cannot be acquired without the assistance of more experienced workers.

Scenario 3

Practice-based experiences with educational interventions

A combination of learning undertaken through workplace activities and interactions supported by expert input from trainers either on- or off-site, or using projects, such as in action learning, to extend and enhance practice aspects of work. The learning is often accredited and leads to certification.

Scenario 4

Wholly educational institution-based experiences

Some continuing education and training is through programs based in educational institutions or offered online by those institutions. The experiences provide the kinds of learning individuals require for specific goals, such as changing occupations or developing new skills that cannot be learnt through work. These experiences do not usually include practice-based experiences in learners' workplaces.

Responses to scenarios

Scenarios	Sustaining employability	Questions for discussion
Scenario 1: Wholly practice-based experiences	Workers like Frank want to engage in wholly practice based experiences. Their main purpose of learning is often to gain credentials for licencing/ registration purposes and to remain employable within the same company or other workplaces.	• In what ways is this an effective and sustainable model of continuing education and training for your industry or discipline (e.g. hospitality, finance, construction)? • What do different stakeholders need to do to make this an effective method of continuing education and training: » workplaces » vocational educators » workers » VET providers • What changes are required to the broader education and training system to more effectively support wholly practice-based learning experiences?
Scenario 2: Practice-based experiences with direct guidance	Workers like Daniella prefer to learn through their own work practices, but with direct guidance, such as by more experienced or expert workers.	• In what ways is this an effective and sustainable model of continuing education and training for your industry or discipline (e.g. hospitality, finance, construction)? • What do different stakeholders need to do to make this an effective method of continuing education and training: » workplaces » vocational educators » workers » VET providers • What changes are required to the broader education and training system to more effectively support direct guidance combined with practice-based learning experiences?
Scenario 3: Practice-based experiences with educational interventions	For accredited training, workers like Jenny prefer to learn through their own work practices, with educational interventions from an RTO.	• In what ways is this an effective and sustainable model of continuing education and training for your industry or discipline (e.g. hospitality, finance, construction)? • What do different stakeholders need to do to make this an effective method of continuing education and training: » workplaces » vocational educators » workers » VET providers • What changes are required to the broader education and training system to more effectively support accredited training through an RTO combined with practice-based learning experiences?
Scenario 4: Wholly educational institution-based experiences	Workers like Greg need to learn through an educational provider off-site for accredited training for future use.	• In what ways is this an effective and sustainable model of continuing education and training for your industry or discipline (e.g. hospitality, finance, construction)? • What do different stakeholders need to do to make this an effective method of continuing education and training: » workplaces » vocational educators » workers » VET providers • What changes are required to the broader education and training system to more effectively support accredited training wholly through an RTO for continuing education and training purposes (and sometimes future positions/careers)?

Roundtable Forum scenario leaflet

Training and learning in continuing education and training for the workplace

SCENARIOS   2013

Scenario 1

My name is Frank and I'm a truck driver in a family-owned trucking business. I never did a course to learn to drive trucks. My learning came from just watching the experienced drivers and asking questions. I was willing to learn, I just asked for advice. And if you're willing to ask for it, you get it. They're the ones who showed me the tricks of the trade, so that's how I learned.

Scenario 2

My name is Daniella and I'm a senior accounts clerk in a finance section in a big organisation. I work closely with my immediate supervisor, Will, who has a wealth of experience and knowledge. He acts as my mentor, and I learn a lot from him while I'm working with him every day. And in terms of professional development, he's able to suggest ways in which I might view things and how to develop pathways for my career. It's that one-to-one training I like.

Scenario 3

Hi, I'm Jenny and I've worked as a carer in aged care for almost twenty years. Recently I enrolled in a Certificate III in Aged Care, my first formal qualification since I left school. Although the qualification is not yet compulsory, my employer is making use of funding from the Federal Government, and strongly encouraged me and the other employees here to do the course. Eight of us enrolled, and we'll be finished in three months, thanks to Helen, the trainer, who comes from a registered training organisation.

Helen took us through a recognition of prior learning process, which means we don't have to study all the units. She comes here once a week, to run a group training session, and we get work time off to go. In between her visits, we're doing our normal work of course, and Julie, the manager here, she keeps an eye on how we're going and tutors us a bit with the course.

Scenario 4

My name is Greg, and I work as an engineer with Willow Creek Mining, which has sites in rural and remote areas in two states. I'm doing a Certificate IV in frontline management, because the company is grooming me for a management role. Since I'm the only one doing the course at this isolated worksite, every month I go to a one-day workshop in Perth, run by the training organisation responsible for the course.

In between workshops, I work through the course on my own, but I have email access to the course trainer if I need to check anything. I like the workshops because of the interaction within the group and having a trainer with specialist expertise.