

IAL HOSTS FIRST INTERNATIONAL EXPERT ROUNDTABLE ON WORKPLACE LEARNING

17 October to 25 November 2011

Singapore, 10 October 2011: The Institute for Adult Learning (IAL) is initiating a major undertaking to help improve adoption and effectiveness of workplace learning as part of national efforts to raise Continuous Education and Training (CET) capabilities and effectiveness. In recognition that companies and workers can make the most of skills development while at work, IAL is developing a practical framework of workplace learning drawing on extensive research worldwide, with the aim to address diverse needs and organisation settings.

Workplace learning can be summed up in one simple slogan: Learn while you work, work while you learn. It is a process that occurs naturally because learning is integrated into the workflow and the work environment. Knowledge and skills can be developed through better utilisation of learning opportunities that are entrenched in work activities and the work environment. As formal, structured training becomes inadequate by itself, deliberate leveraging of workplace learning tailored for today's fast-paced environment can add considerably to employees' skills, confidence to do the job and sense of belonging.

Following the completion of its research (*Workplace Learning and the WSQ* and *Generic Skills Case Studies*) and release of its *Practitioner Notes* on workplace learning, *Beyond Corporate Training: Learning Beyond Boundaries* ([hyperlink to article](#)), the IAL's Centre for Research in Learning will be hosting an international group of experts to look into integrating workplace learning with classroom delivery, under the Singapore Workforce Skills Qualifications System (WSQ).

As WSQ is a relatively young competency-based training system compared to its counterparts in countries like Australia and Germany, IAL is keen to strengthen WSQ into an integrated work-and-learning framework and one that develops workers with relevant competence and professional disposition.

Led by Dr Helen Bound, Principal Research Fellow at IAL, the notable experts of the Roundtable will look at the critical challenge that context, broadly defined as environmental factors of work, industry developments, economic conditions and government policies, poses to workplace learning effectiveness. As an example, work settings, like work environment and how work is organised, can impact workplace learning and encourage skills application at the workplace depending on whether they facilitate or impede individuals' ability to share experiences or have access to in-house expertise. Their discussion and exchange of insights will lead the way to:

- a. a better understanding of how workplace learning could be embedded in WSQ and support the capability development of Professionals, Managers, Executives and Technicians (PMET) development;
- b. suggestions to improve teaching and learning at workplaces;
- c. contributions to the development of a conceptual framework for comparative analysis of workplace learning in different socio-political economies and cultural contexts; and
- d. greater awareness of the latest international research on pedagogies for workplace learning.

Members of the International Expert Roundtable, who will meet from 17 October to 25 November 2011, includes:

- **Professor Stephen Billett (Griffith University, Australia)** whose contributions to the field include the concept of workplace affordances for workplace learning, that the work, the structure and culture of the workplace establish the WPL curriculum. His work includes contributions to the pedagogies of the workplace and ways of developing a workplace curriculum. He has written extensively about vocational education and training.
- **Professor Harry Daniels (University of Bath, UK)** who contribute an activity theoretical perspective, having undertaken major work in the UK on interventions in working with professionals and their collaborative work across institutions. He works across international boundaries as a Visiting Professor in Moscow Department of Education, Adjunct Professor Centre for Learning Research, Griffith University Australia, and Research Professor Kansai University, Japan.
- **Professor Anneli Eteläpelto (University of Jyväskylä, Finland)** whose main area of research and teaching includes promoting

professional agency in education and health care work, professional agency and collaborative creativity in work-related learning

communities, professional identity in working life communities, social aspects of learning and theorising and conceptualising the subject-centred socio-cultural approach.

- **Professor Karen Evans (University of London, UK)** who promotes an interdisciplinary understanding of the context of WPL, pedagogies of the workplace, the past experience and disposition of individuals in their take up or perception of opportunities for WPL. Her work, in association with others such as Helen Rainbird, Lorna Unwin, Phil Hodgkinson, has pulled together a number of different perspectives to give an integrated understanding of workplace learning.
- **Associate Professor Yew-Jin Lee (NTU, NIE, Singapore)** whose interest in Activity Theory will provide a different perspective from the other experts. He has written, amongst other topics, about learning, identity and work, developmental interventions in work to foster learning, educational policy and adapting curriculum. He will also provide a critical perspective on research design and methodology, having written about dilemmas and conflicts during research.
- **Professor Päivi Tynjälä (University of Jyväskylä, Finland)** has interests in a number of fields related to learning, including work-based learning and development of expertise in higher education plus project-based learning. She has undertaken work on integration of work and learning, collaboration between vocational education and working life, working life skills, and HRD professionals' perception of workplace learning.

Establishing expert groups with representation from key institutions locally and internationally is part of IAL's approach to undertake research through partnerships and, that can be translated into direct and practical inputs to enhance learning and practice, as well as strengthen evaluation and shape policies relating to continuous education and learning.

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Enclosed:

Annex A: Fact Sheet on IAL

Annex B: International Expert Seminar

For further information and media interviews, please contact:

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About Singapore Workforce Development Agency

The Singapore Workforce Development Agency (WDA) enhances the competitiveness of our workforce by encouraging workers to learn for life and advance with skills. In today's economy, most jobs require not just knowledge, but also skills. WDA collaborates with employers, industry associations, the Union and training organisations, to develop and strengthen the Continuing Education and Training system that is skills-based, open and accessible, as a mainstream pathway for all workers - young and older, from rank and file to professionals and executives - to upgrade and advance in their careers and lives.

For more information, please visit <http://www.wda.gov.sg>

About Institute for Adult Learning

The Institute for Adult Learning (IAL) is at the forefront of building capabilities and continuing professional development for an effective, innovative and responsive Continuing Education and Training (CET) sector. We work closely and support adult educators, businesses, human resource developers and policy makers through our comprehensive suite of programmes and services on raising capabilities and catalysing innovations in CET. IAL also champions research in the key areas of sustaining economic performance through skills, shaping employment and CET decisions, as well as developing innovations through learning technology and pedagogy for informed policies and practices.

For more information, please visit www.ial.edu.sg .

About Centre for Research in Learning at IAL

The Centre for Research in Learning undertakes research that seeks to understand better the processes and enactment of learning design, teaching and learning in multiple settings. Apart from the enhancement of learning, curriculum design, training and assessment in the CET sector, this centre seeks to engage practitioners in the research process and develop a community of practitioner-researchers.



The Institute for Adult Learning (IAL) aims to contribute to the competitiveness of Singapore by developing an effective, innovative and responsive Continuing Education and Training (CET) sector that is able to meet the needs of industries and the workforce. It achieves this by raising capabilities, catalysing innovation, and leading research in workforce learning.

Since its establishment in 2008, IAL has been working to enhance the capabilities and professionalism of adult educators by establishing clear professional standards for CET design and delivery, and inculcating skill sets to broaden and deepen their expertise.

To further enable their learning, IAL seeks to nurture a community of adult educators through offering them formal and informal learning platforms, networking and collaboration opportunities, as well as sharing of knowledge and expertise. It also creates opportunities for local adult educators and organisations to work with best-in-class practitioners and institutions. In conjunction with its developmental role, IAL provides advisory services to training providers and in-company trainers.

To foster a culture of innovation that will enhance the capabilities of adult educators, IAL leads innovative practice by undertaking new, experimental approaches to CET design and delivery, and encouraging their adoption within the larger CET sector.

To build thought leadership, IAL undertakes research through partnerships with local and international researchers and institutions. Its key areas of research include learning, skills and innovation. IAL is committed to translate the research conducted into direct and practical inputs to enhance learning and practice, as well as to strengthen evaluation and shape policies relating to CET.

Funded by the Singapore Workforce Development Agency, IAL works with key stakeholders, including adult educators, business leaders, managers, and policy makers, to shape and develop the CET sector. By working to support Singapore's national CET system, IAL is en route to realising its vision as the national centre of excellence in learning, practice and research for CET.

International Expert Seminar at IAL

Friday, 21 October: 12 noon – 3 pm, IAL

Putting Knowledge to Work & Learning through Practice

Professor Karen Evans & Harry Daniels

The aim of the seminar is to explore fresh thinking about pedagogical challenges of developing qualifications that bridge college and workplace contexts and promote learner progression.

Previous approaches to these challenges have typically focused on questions of how learning can be ‘transferred’ from one setting to another, usually from theory into practice. What has continually dogged attempts at transfer is how to overcome the assumed ‘abstract’ nature of theory in relation to the assumed ‘real’ nature of practice. In best cases, this is normally seen as a single movement as encapsulated in the term ‘from theory to practice’.

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

More information is available at this [online link](#)