



UNIVERSITY OF
CAMBRIDGE

Institute of Continuing Education

RESEARCH
SEMINAR
SERIES

Professor Karen Evans

'Improving Workplace Learning: Towards an Integrated, Cultural Approach'



Professor Karen Evans joined the Institute of Education, University of London, in January 2001 as Chair in Education (Lifelong Learning). She is currently Co-Director of HEFCE Centre for Excellence in Work-Based Learning for Education Professionals. Her main fields of research are learning in life and work transitions, and learning in, for and through the workplace. Karen Evans is a member of the Management Board for the National Research and Development Centre for Adult Literacy and Numeracy. She is Joint Editor of COMPARE, the international comparative education journal. She has held visiting Fellowships/Professorships at the University of Ottawa, University of Melbourne, Australia, The Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology and the Commonwealth of Learning in Vancouver.

There is an understandable tendency of policy makers and of workplace managers to see workplace learning as the controlled acquisition of predetermined skills, knowledge and working practices. A manager, or government policy maker decides what learning should be done, how the success of such learning can be measured, and how it will be developed. The risk with such approaches is the assumption of predictability about the impact of pedagogical interventions, across all relevant workers, in any targeted context. Based on ESRC Teaching and Learning Research Programme Research (Evans, Hodgkinson, Rainbird, Unwin, 2006) it is argued that a different approach is needed – one in which employees'/workers' positions and dispositions' should be taken seriously. Engagement in learning activities is more likely when their significance for the learner, whether in terms of using their prior learning or in terms of 'readiness' to take up new opportunities, is taken into consideration, for example by providing some of the learning opportunities which they value, rather than those which managers assume they either need or should want. This means that much planning and activity should be responsive to the micro-conditions of specific working groups or contexts, as well as more macro influences. To be successful, it will need to pay attention to power differentials and workplace inequalities, as well as individual wants or needs. In short, the approach should be to encourage and facilitate learning through work, not directly impose it. The session will show how the authors arrived at these conclusions through rich, empirical studies undertaken in a wide range of private and public sector organisations.

Wolfson College Barton Road Cambridge CB3 9BB

6th February 2008 at 5.30pm

with light refreshments afterwards

For further information and/or if you would like to reserve a free place,
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