



COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE, JOINT KNOWLEDGE DEVELOPMENT AND THE ROLE OF VIRTUAL SUPPORT – THE CASE OF THE NATIONAL GUIDANCE RESEARCH FORUM IN THE UK

Aim:

To share ideas about knowledge sharing drawn from the experiences of users on the NGRF website.



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NGRF (WEBSITE)

- **community of practice or**
- **community of interest**
- **joint knowledge development at all stages of building structure and content of the website**
- **reflections on potential uses of the website**
- **topical issues for online discussions**



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NGRF (WEBSITE)

Context:

- 1. background and development of the NGRF website**
- 2. demonstration of the NGRF website (if we are lucky!)**
- 3. discussion and feedback**



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NGRF (WEBSITE)

Intially DfES funded project

(Access to Learning for Adults Division)

October 2002 – March 2005

Subsequently seeking multiple sources of funding



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NGRF (WEBSITE)

Purposes of the website are to:

- **create and support an on-line community of interest concerned with guidance, vocational learning and qualifications**
- **bring practice, research and policy closer together**
- **focus upon the core problems of guidance practice**



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NGRF (WEBSITE)

Target audience includes:

- **practitioners**
- **managers**
- **policy makers**
- **trainers**
- **researchers**



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NGRF (WEBSITE)

Key features:

- the construction of a *shared knowledge base*
- developed from *contextualised problems*



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NGRF (WEBSITE)

Structure:

- **Making Guidance More Effective**
- **LMI Future Trends – Labour Market Information**
- **National Learning Resource for Guidance**



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NGRF (WEBSITE)

Making Guidance More Effective:

- **Equal Opportunities**
- **Improving Practice**
- **Using Research in Practice**
- **Impact Analysis**
- **International Perspectives**
- **Lifelong Learning**



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NGRF (WEBSITE)

Development process :

- **groups convened to identify gaps – produced scaffolding to structure website content and learning activities**
- **given us a platform, grounded in the realities of guidance practice**



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NGRF (WEBSITE)

LMI Future Trends – Labour Market Information:

- **30 occupational sectors**
- **structure and content developed in consultation with practitioners and employer organisations**
- **negotiations underway re: future developments**



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NGRF (WEBSITE)

LMI Future Trends structure:

- **key points**
- **sector information**
- **data and charts**
- **regional dimension**
- **occupations**
- **equal opportunity issues**
- **education and training**
- **research**
- **discussion points**
- **summary**
- **link and sources**



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NGRF (WEBSITE)

- **Work-related learning**
- **Comparisons across qualifications frameworks**
- **Project support**

**Importance of virtual support:
selection; highlighting; mediation**



NATIONAL GUIDANCE RESEARCH FORUM (WEBSITE)

<http://www.guidance-research.org>

Workplace Learning

The UK's success in the global market depends on the skills of its workforce but despite ongoing Government support of the workplace, there remains a significant gulf between policy and practice. What are the issues causing this divide and how can they be addressed?

Workplace learning should give employers a more efficient workforce plus an edge in the market and employees additional qualifications through which to develop their career. Why then has it been so difficult to establish a learning culture in the UK workplace?

The reasons are complex and this section aims to give insight into the current issues and conflicting interests surrounding workplace learning and suggestions for ways forward. It sets the context with an outline of recent Government activity to increase investment in skills and, through summaries of recent research and discussion, offers an overview of current theory and practice.

► Policies promoting learning at work

This section sets out the way some key policies to support workplace learning are now developing, starting with key extracts from the Skills White Paper (2005), the Skills Strategy white paper (2003) and comment on the Cabinet Office Performance and Innovation Unit's project on workforce development (2002). Two significant Government interventions in support for workplace learning have involved giving legal rights to Union Learning Representatives (2003) and support for integrating the Skills for Life programme, for adults needing to improve their literacy, language and numeracy skills, into workplace vocational programmes. The European policy context for skill development is also examined.

► Skill development in the workplace

In 2003 the DTI commissioned a series of seminars to investigate issues relating to workforce development. These research led seminars were attended mainly by policy makers from DTI, DfES, LSC and Sector Skills Councils. The outcomes of these seminars are reported here, together with other reviews of future directions for research on workplace learning.

► Identities at work

The factors influencing the effectiveness of workplace learning are not always obvious. This section investigates issues relating to how individuals see themselves and their role, how they want others to see them and how 'skills' equate with the attributes most valued by employers.

► Towards a 'high skills' society?

National and European policy documents abound with visions of 'high skills' societies, but how likely is it that we could build such a society in the near future?

► Employer collaboration in skills development

Employers have a key role to play in skills development and this section looks at examples of employer collaboration through supply chains, industrial clusters and sectoral bodies.

Researching workplace learning

Workplace learning: findings from the Teaching and Learning Research Programme (TLRP) and related research learning will be presented here. Content will continue to be added to this part of the site as TLRP projects co

The Teaching and Learning Research Programme (TLRP) has a major programme of research on workplace learning and the findings from TLRP and related research will be presented here. This part of the site is currently under development. The group working on structuring resources on 'research on work-related learning' is principally drawn from researchers working in the Teaching and Learning Research Programme, with support from researchers from IER and SKOPE. This is an inclusive activity and we would welcome contributions and ideas from others too.

The current developments on the site demonstrated the potential to cluster issues related to work-related learning. From a TLRP perspective the group felt that it would be important to produce some narratives that through hyper-linking allowed users to go in different directions and also allowed for different perspectives. It was felt that the initial clustering was important as this needed to support investigation of theoretical and methodological issues as well learning processes and to allow switching between different levels of analysis.

In order to allow for different lenses with which it would be possible to view research on work-related learning the group felt that 10 branches might be about the right number for ease of organisation. After discussions in small groups the researchers agreed over a series of meetings to think about workplace learning in the following way, organised around the following ten categories:

► [Research Methodologies / Strategies](#)

Consideration of methods, methodologies and strategies used to study learning at work.

► [Theoretical bases](#)

Theoretical bases predispose people to look at research on learning in and through work in particular ways.

► [Learning contexts and settings](#)

Interaction of learning and contextual factors

► [Organisational learning and work design](#)

Relationships between organisational learning, design of work, workplace learning and organisational performance.

► [Factors affecting learning](#)

Factors affecting learning emphasises the relational aspects of learning at all levels.

► [Learning processes](#)

The processes by which people learn at work

Informal Learning in the Workplace

The processes by which people learn in their workplaces outside the realms formal education and training. deconstructed and central ques

Adult education acquired outside of the realm of formal learning or training at work is described as having been “informally learnt”; it is learning that takes place in the spaces surrounding activities and events which are overtly geared toward the acquisition of a specific education. Consequently, such learning is found both to occur in a wider variety of settings, and to afford its “students” greater flexibility and freedom than formal training and education. Furthermore, whilst this informal education still recognises the social significance of learning from other people, it does not go so far as socialisation; there is great scope for individual agency. Finally, a useful conception of this informal learning is as a complementary, but distinct, partner to learning from experience; the distinction lies in the emphasis that learning from experience places in personal over inter-personal learning.

One paper which pays great attention to the under-researched topic of informal learning is [Ertaut's \(2005\) 'Informal Learning in the Workplace'](#) (Ertaut, 2005) The paper is based on several funded research projects focused on the workplace learning of professionals, technicians and managers; some focussed on learning during their first years of employment, some on mid-career learning. In all cases the majority of the learning in the workplace itself was informal, and involved a combination of learning from other people and learning from personal experience, often both together. The paper utilises two different theoretical frameworks to understand and investigate informal learning in the workplace researched in these projects. One facilitates the deconstruction of the “key concepts” of *informal learning*, *learning from experience*, *tacit knowledge*, *transfer of learning* and *intuitive practice* which in turn discloses the range of different phenomena that are embraced by these popular terms. The second allows three questions central to learning research to be addressed; *what is being learned*, *how is it being learned*, and *what are the factors that influence the level and directions of the learning effort*.

Deconstruction of key concepts:

- ▶ **Informal Learning**

Ertaut's (2005) deconstruction of the concept of informal learning

- ▶ **Learning from Experience**

Ertaut's deconstruction of Learning from Experience

- ▶ **Tacit Knowledge**

Derived from Ertaut's deconstruction of Tacit Knowledge

Informal Learning

Eraut's (2005) deconstruction of the concept of

The formality of learning is a continuum "informal learning is simply learning that comes closer to the informal end...Characteristics of the informal continuum of formality include implicit, unintended, opportunistic and unstructured learning and the absence of a teacher. In the middle come mentoring, while coaching is rather more formal in most settings." A typology of Informal Learning (Eraut, 2005), slightly modified from Eraut is reproduced in Figure 1 below.

Time of Focus	Implicit Learning	Reactive Learning	Deliberative Learning
Past Episode(s)	Implicit linkage of past memories with current experience	Brief near-spontaneous reflection on past episodes, events, incidents, experiences	Discussion and review of past actions, communications, events, experiences
Current Experience	A selection from experience enters episodic memory	Noting facts, ideas, opinions, impressions Asking questions Observing effects of actions	Engagement in decision-making, problem-solving, planned informal learning
Future Behaviour	Unconscious expectations	Recognition of possible future learning opportunities	Planning learning opportunities Rehearsing for future events

"The columns distinguish between three levels of intention. Implicit learning was defined by Reber (1993) as "the acquisition of knowledge in the absence of conscious attempts to learn and in the absence of explicit knowledge about what was learned". Eraut later argues that awareness of explicit learning does not necessarily exclude the possibility of implicit learning occurring simultaneously, and consequently most learning from experience has some degree of awareness. "Moreover, outside formal education and training settings, explicit learning is often unplanned." Hence Eraut divides explicit learning into two types: reactive or opportunistic learning that is near-spontaneous; and deliberative learning that is more considered. Eraut "uses the term "reactive learning" because, although it is intentional, it occurs in the middle of the action, when there is little time to think. In contrast, deliberative learning is "deliberate" learning (Tough, 1979), where there is a definite learning goal and time is set aside for acquiring new knowledge, and engaged in deliberate activities such as planning and problem solving, for which there is a clear work-based goal with learning as a probable by-product. Of these latter activities as a normal part of working life, they are rarely regarded as learning activities, even though important learning often occurs. "The three rows indicate the possible temporal relationships between a learning episode and the experiences that gave rise to it. Schon (1983) distinguished between reflection during an action and reflection after an action, but tended to confuse the context of reflection with its focus (see Eraut, 1995). The context in which learning occurs is always the present, but the focus of the learning can be in the past, present or future. While the planning of learning opportunities is often informal, the opportunities themselves could be either formal or informal." Eraut acknowledges that aspects of learning are open to challenge because he focused on finding appropriate terms to describe reactive learning as a consequence of its previous absence in the literature. For example, he concedes where 'discussion' and 'review' are used to describe deliberation on the past, the term 'reflection' could have been employed in the form advocated by Dewey (1933).

Organisational learning and work design

Relationships between organisational learning, design of work, workplace learning and organisational learning

This category will include materials which examine how organisations learn and for example respond through the design of work. Topics including task design are orientated towards workplace learning, how organisations and systems accommodate new tools, how organisations are making environments for learning by enhancing productivity through knowledge development. Some key issues for organisational learning and work design are:

- relationships/ culture
- flows of people and work
- experiences and engagement (of individuals and groups)
- organisational policies and influences
- couplings between learning and work
- 360 degree learning
- learning as an organisation
- roles and influence of tools and technology

One problem may be that many of the key issues inter-relate, so while we are able to put forward a commentary around these, for the purposes of aligning with existing resources we may have to use different levels of aggregation. What we really need is some exemplar material against which to test this.

One key issue for organisational learning concerns how this contributes to organisational performance. From this perspective a discussion of what constitutes high performance management may be apposite. Peter Butler and colleagues (2004) from the TLRP project on 'Learning as Work: Teaching and Learning Processes in the Contemporary Work Organisation' conducted a literature review looking at how ideas of [High Performance Management](#) may influence learning at work.

One way we thought might be helpful for those using this site is to try to ground some of these issues by showing some organisational contexts in the following video clips so as give some insight into some manufacturing processes. The following examples are drawn from the ACORN project, a European EQUAL project:

 [Pressures for organisational change following market decline](#) [[Download](#)] (Clip 1 - Hodgsons Sealant.wmv - 5.08 Mb)

This is a video clip of a production manager from an SME explaining how pressures for organisational change follow market decline of a traditional product (as they move from largely manufacturing putty to producing a wider range of sealants).

A case study of a Dutch Bakery undergoing the process of computerising their 'bun line'

This case study of a Dutch bakery demonstrates different aspects of the organisation of work before and after the computerised control of one of the company's bread lines.

Before computerisation:

1. This clip discusses the relationship between bakery suppliers and the bakery retailers; transport, location, timing, network and power issues are all considered. [Click here.](#)
2. This clip discusses the response of the Small-Medium-Sized Enterprise (SMEs) bakery suppliers to the power of the large retail chains: strength in numbers. Also considered is how the response is in fact a symbiotic one, and what other benefits there are to the formation of this network, such as improved purchasing and marketing for the suppliers. [Click here.](#)
3. This clip provides a detailed description and demonstration of the first phase of the bread manufacturing process: dough making. Particular reference is made to the variety of dough, the necessarily small scale and the automation of aspects of the process. [Click here.](#)
4. This clip provides a detailed description and demonstration of the second phase of the bread manufacturing process: bread making. Particular reference is made to the humidity and temperature, the repeated raising and knocking down of the dough, the holing of the bread and the size of the bread. [Click here.](#)
5. This clip provides a detailed description and demonstration of the third phase of the bread manufacturing process: the baking. Particular reference is made to the time and temperature of the baking, the unavoidable length of cooling, the removal of the loaves, the packaging, the labelling, the slicing, the crating, the order picking, the scale of customer assortment, the specialisation to individual customers, the loading, the transport, and the total time and scale of the whole production. [Click here.](#)

After computerisation:

1. This clip hopefully provides a relatively interesting and entertaining interlude; showing robots from the bakery in action set to stirring music. [Click here.](#)
2. This clip provides an overview of the computerisation of the bakery's bunline. Particular reference is made to the increased capacity and reduced workforce, the same basic principles of bread-making being utilised, its rarity in Holland, and its limitations (usually works below capacity because need to change the variety of bread being produced). A worker is then interviewed who expresses his contentment at the changes because it has made his work easier: in principle he no longer has to touch the trays and has fewer jams with which to deal. [Click here.](#)



This Video

Computeris bunline in a

mathMedia Ltd
32 sec - Feb 13,

Download fo

Send link -

More from this us



A clip of a compu
bunline in action.

Main stages of education / employment

Qualifications can be taken at any age in order to continue or return to education or training

Secondary education
Initial entry into employment or further education

Continuation of secondary education

Progression to skilled employment

Completion of secondary education

Entry to higher education

Qualified/Skilled worker

Specialised education and training

Entry to professional graduate employment

Intermediate / higher education
Advanced skills training

Professional or postgraduate education or employment

England, Wales & Northern Ireland National Qualifications Framework

www.qca.org.uk/qualifications
www.accac.org.uk
www.qca.org.uk/openquals
www.ccea.org.uk

Entry level

Entry Level Certificate (NQF)

Level 1

NVQ Level 1, Level 1 Certificate, GCSEs at grade D-G

Level 2

NVQ Level 2, Level 2 Certificate, Level 2 Diploma, GCSEs at grade A*- C

Level 3

NVQ Level 3, A' Levels, Level 3 Certificate, Level 3 Diploma

Level 4

NVQs, Level 4 Certificate, Level 4 Diploma

Level 5

NVQs, Level 5 Certificate, Level 5 Diploma, Higher National Diploma

Level 6

NVQs, Level 6 Certificate, Level 6 Diploma

Level 7

NVQs, Level 7 Diploma, Level 7 Fellowship, Level 7 Advanced Professional Certificate

Level 8

Highly specialist Diploma from a professional body

National Framework of Qualifications for Ireland

www.nfq.ie/nfq/en/TheFramework

Level 1

Level 1 Certificate

Level 2

Level 2 Certificate

Level 3

Level 3 Certificate, Junior Certificate

Level 4

Level 4 Certificate, Leaving Certificate

Level 5

Level 5 Certificate, Leaving Certificate

Level 6

Advanced Certificate, Higher Certificate

Level 7

Ordinary Bachelor Degree

Level 8

Honours Bachelor Degree, Higher Diploma

Level 9

Masters Degree, Post-graduate Diploma

Level 10

Doctoral Degree

The Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework

www.scfq.org.uk

Access level 1

Access level 2

Access level 3

Foundation Standard Grade

Level 4

Intermediate 1, General Standard Grade, SVQ 1

Level 5

Intermediate 2, Credit Standard Grade, SVQ 2

Level 6

Higher, SVQ 3

Level 7

Advanced Higher, Higher National Certificate, Certificate of Higher Education

Level 8

Higher National Diploma, Diploma in Higher Education, SVQ 4

Levels 9

Ordinary Degree, Graduate Diploma/Certificate

Level 10

Honours degree, Graduate Diploma/Certificate

Level 11

Masters, SVQ 5

Level 12

Doctorates



Qualifications can cross boundaries - a rough guide to comparing qualifications in the UK and Ireland

March 2005

England, Wales and Northern Ireland framework for higher education qualifications: FHEQ

www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/fheq

Level C

Certificates of Higher Education

Level I

Ordinary bachelor's degree, Foundation Degrees, Diplomas of higher education and other higher diplomas

Level H

Bachelor's degrees with honours, Graduate certificates and diplomas

Level M

Master's degree, postgraduate diplomas, postgraduate certificates

Level D

Doctoral degree