

"How learning centres adapt to work with the technologies around e-learning"

Will Pollard

'Learning centres' can include any organisation concerned with learning. Leadership is one aspect of this, in the context of organisations and technology change.

The question is how leadership recognises the issues and influences the development of learning resources. These resources could take different forms over time. I would like there to be a workshop on this so these notes could be one contribution. There will be material online as background. e-learning can contribute to leadership training but probably as part of a blend.

My own experience is through working on quality so I tend to look at organisations as systems.

At previous conferences on 'Management Theory in Action' I contributed papers on ISO 9000 and on Deming. The work context has been in the printing industry and in web design, mostly with PDF. There has been rapid technical change in both areas.. There will be related changes for libraries and educational organisations.

For most of the first 'Management Theory in Action' conference it was possible to talk about a 'learning organisation'. This is now mentioned less, but is still useful. Ideas such as 'followership' and 'distributed leadership' indicate that the wider context is still relevant.. Burgoyne and Jackson (1997) link 'the learning organisation' with 'total quality management' and 'business process re-engineering' as part of a 'rapid succession of...'fads', 'magic bullets'. The same sort of thing might happen in universities with 'critique' or 'leadership' as topics with their own timeline. The 'learning organisation' has been recently mentioned by Prolearn, an EU project looking at e-learning.

I think Deming emphasised the need for management involvement in a quality project because he did not want projects to be blocked once momentum had started.

The research that is most relevant for me is the area of Networked Management Learning

"Networked Management Learning takes a somewhat more circumspect view of learning than currently popular ideas of communities of practice. It is a view of learning in which dialogical construction of meaning is a basic characteristic within all communication. Collaboration and interaction supported by communications technology is probably the key-defining feature of networked management learning as a management learning and development approach."

Arguably 'dialogical construction of meaning' is only one part of management learning on the web. 'Networked Management Learning' seems to have been defined to limit it to a particular 'subjective' area. Exetreme has developed websites for the Centre for Evidence Based Social Services. Mostly this is fast access to advice documents with summaries of research. The forum aspect is little used, with almost no questioning of the advice offered.

However, it is the 'collaboration' features of software that are developing most quickly. Acrobat 7 makes some functions available for certain PDFs within the free Reader. I find 'critique' more interesting as a way of thinking about how learning happens when these sort of tools are used.

471 words

References

Hodgson, V & Watland, P “Researching Networked Management Learning”
Management Learning Vol 35 Issue 2 June 04

Burgoyne, J. and Jackson B., (1997)
Management development as a pluralistic meeting point
In *Management Learning*, Sage

Websites

Prolearn

<http://www.prolearn-project.org/>

Centre for Evidence Based Social Services / Be Evidence Based

<http://www.cebss.org>

<http://www.be-evidence-based.com/>

More on this at my website

Learning with ISO 9000

<http://www.learn9.net>

links to my previous papers

Is ISO 9000 worth another look? (2001)

<http://www.learn9.net/look9-a4.pdf>

Management, Values and Dr Deming (2003)

<http://www.learn9.net/Deming-val.pdf>

Will Pollard

Will.pollard@gmail.com

01392 660639

5 Park Place
Homefield Road
Exeter