Chapter 103
Zones of Intervention:
Teaching and Learning at all Places and at all Times

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ABSTRACT

This article identifies four distinct zones in which workplace problems can be addressed through education and training. These zones enable educators to address workplace learning more widely and broadly. Very often, problems arising in the workplace are dealt with through training in the classroom, but other options exist. The theoretical framework is drawn from social learning literature (e.g., Wenger, 2000) and is created by examining the intersections of two tensions -- classroom intervention vs. community intervention, and classroom context vs. systemic context. These intersections produce different arenas (zones) through which the problem can be addressed in educationally innovative ways: (1) applying classroom interventions to address the classroom context, (2) applying community interventions to address the classroom context, (3) applying classroom interventions to address the systemic context, and (4) applying community interventions to address the systemic context. A significant implication of this approach is that nearly all actions taken by administrators and supervisors, including policy formation, are "teaching acts" and should be viewed as such. Overall, the strength of this concept is that it significantly broadens the playing field when attempting to mitigate work-related problems through education and training.

INTRODUCTION

The ability to practically apply knowledge, skills, and attitudes from training to the actual job, commonly referred to as *Training Transfer* (Salas, Tannenbaum, Kraiger, & Smith-Jentsch, 2012; Burke & Hutchins, 2008; Pham, Segers, & Gijselaers, 2012) is a fundamental focus for workplace learning literature. Problems with training transfer are widely addressed along with a number of positive and negative constructs that may or may not be antecedents for a lack of such transfer (for a more thorough treatment, see Grossman & Salas, 2011). A full analysis of training transfer is unnecessary

for the points being made here but the strand of scholarship itself is noteworthy because it has brought a number of important points into focus.

First, learning something is not the same thing as doing something. Pham, Segers and Gijselaers (2012) suggest that "learning in training does not automatically result in transfer" (p. 2). The literature, in fact, points to the fact that performance is a more important factor in the workplace than learning (Burke & Hutchins, 2008; Swanson, 1997). Lave and Wenger (1991) similarly claim that "knowing a general rule by itself in no way assures that any generality it may carry is enabled in the specific circumstances in which it is relevant" (p. 34). This is an important issue because it makes clear the disconnect between all of the material that training facilitators hope to actually *teach*, and what learners in the workplace actually end up *doing*.

Second, the discussion on training transfer provides general evidence of the continued concern to improve the level of training in the workplace and by doing so, to improve the overall efficiency of the training effort. This is important because any approach to workplace learning that increases efficiency is a noteworthy approach. The particular ideas addressed in in the following pages fit well with this emphasis because they are aimed at using more of the resources already in the workplace for facilitating training transfer and for facilitating it more naturally and efficiently.

Third, the continued work on training transfer has led to the admission that learning is a situated event and that classroom training and on-the-job learning are not easily disentangled (Burke & Hutchins, 2008; Baldwin-Evans, 2006; Clarke, 2004). Indeed the traditional boundaries have been expanded and, "we must consider training as a system within work organizations" (p. 142). As early as 1995, this realization had led to an examination of factors that had not traditionally been considered in terms of workplace learning and training (Cannon-Bowers, Salas, Tannenbaum, & Matheiu, 1995).

These three points provide the impetus for considering a very broad array of novel ideas, paradigms and approaches for workplace training, and for looking closely for new ways of framing things that have perhaps been at least generally understood for some time. The following pages are an effort toward that end.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Communities of Practice

Lave and Wenger (1991) perhaps more than anyone else, disrupted the idea that learning occurs entirely in an abstract, sterile and unsituated way. They and others (Driscoll, 2005; Illeris, 2007; Wenger, 1998, 2000) have instead posited that learning is entirely embedded in the social milieu and is inseparable from its context. Wenger's conception of learning as a dynamic that is bounded by a community of practice in which the learner experiences learning as *belonging*, learning as *becoming*, learning as *experiencing* and learning as *doing* leads one to fully consider that learning may take place at all times and in all quarters of the workplace learning space. If this is the case – that is, that employees are learning at all times in every facet of the workplace, then it must further be considered that learning is also being *facilitated* at all times and in every facet of the workplace. This is a position that will be addressed at length later in this paper.

The overarching premise of this paper is to give practical flesh to the theoretical bones that have been identified through social learning work such as Wenger's. Such work has called for a significant paradigm shift that has not yet, in the author's experience, been fully and effectively embraced by those involved in workplace and training education. The ideas presented here are intended to provide a partial means toward that particular end.

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