



Sustainable Learning in a knowledge productive workplace

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Keynote abstract

An emerging knowledge economy requires new ways of thinking about human development and organising learning. As soon as employees offer an input to the organization, in terms of contributing ideas and proposals to improve and radically innovate, the conditions for their professional development change. This is already happening in consultancy businesses and knowledge intensive networks. The need for the development of knowledge productive workplaces is spreading to other sectors, such as industry, health care, education, and public service. Such developments have impact on our way of thinking about leadership, autonomy, teamwork and performance management. Leading questions that direct our research on corporate learning then include: how to initiate and support formal and informal learning processes on the job, aimed at promoting individual competence, internal cooperation, mutual knowledge development, improvement and innovation. Sustainable learning and knowledge productivity are probably two sides of the same coin.

Promising advancements have already been made in this domain and include the studies on self-determination, intrinsic motivation, professional space, distributed leadership, and appreciative inquiry. Meanwhile, conventional believes that work quality needs to be improved by setting goals, providing clear managerial direction, monitoring, assessing achievements, controlling and adjusting deviations, arranging training, accreditation and registering craftsmanship, still prevail and may act counterproductive.

The keynote will explore how this tension may lead to a clash of two worlds that are difficult to reconcile: the talent of inspired ownership and having to perform under pressure imposed by others. Here, a classical Human Resource Development theme surfaces, known as the performance and development paradigms. We will address promising design principles for sustainable learning in a knowledge productive workplace and include a relational approach to learning interventions as well as distributed leadership as a basis for professional development.

Biography

Prof. dr. Joseph Kessels is professor-emeritus at the Open University and the University of Twente in the Netherlands. His research interest is in the characteristics of learning environments that support knowledge productivity and that facilitate innovation. Among the many academic as well as practice oriented texts, he co-authored, with Rosemary Harrison, Human Resource

Development in a Knowledge Economy (Palgrave Macmillan, 2004).

As a consultant, he conducts projects involving distributed leadership, specifically related to professional development. Recent assignments include Lifelong Learning and the Human Capital Agenda for the Netherlands, Smart Cities, and the professional development of the judiciary.

In 1977, as a student, he founded Kessels & Smit the Learning Company, nowadays an internationally renowned consultancy firm.