

Developing a self-evaluation approach within the context of work-related learning



People Involved

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Personal competences, tacit skills, self-evaluation, work-related learning, adult learning

Description

The study draws on the part played by tacit forms of personal competences in the education, training and work re-entry of adults with particular reference to self-evaluation of such competences. The Dynamic Concept Analysis (DCA) approach enables researchers to analyse complex phenomena using conceptual models.

The project draws on the framework of concepts and issues published in Evans (2002), that has demonstrated how approaches to 'tacit skills' have multiple roots in the literatures of epistemology (Molander 1992), work process knowledge (Leplat 1990) and situated modes of cognition (Eraut 2000).

DCA is a method for integrating information into conceptual models that was first developed by Kontiainen when considering concepts of interaction between students and supervisors. In the team's previous research conducted on tacit skills and work re-entry, the method has assisted in clarifying the

interrelationships between learning and skill recognition in different environments (see Evans et al, 2004 for more discussion and examples).

The interpretation of the conceptual DCA models has (1) given an insight into the circumstances in which learning took place, (2) enabled researchers to simulate possible changes in learners' skills development and (3) contributed to a better understanding of how interventions could be made in learners' programmes.

The models have provided researchers with tools for both individual case and general case description and explanation and were further simplified for practitioner use.

Self-evaluation approach

As well as providing a research tool, the DCA framework can be used with practitioners (programme designers, tutors, trainers, mentors, human resource developers and learners themselves) in ways that may enable them to reflect upon their own approaches, including the creation of learning environments.

The practical application of the DCA method that has been undertaken in collaboration with a college of adult education, has demonstrated that a simplified version of the DCA tool can be used for the self-evaluation of learners' personal skills and

competences in a wide range of settings and contexts (e.g. in the context of classroom activities).

Learners are asked to self-evaluate their skills and competences in the context of a specific activity in an evaluation questionnaire. Then, the DCA software assists in building a model based on learners' responses (see Evans et al, 2004, for examples of models).

The models provide an illustration of the learners' level of deployment, recognition and development of skills, indicating links between various skills and suggesting how (through what activities/via what contexts) learners potentially may develop their skills.

The practical application of the DCA method that has been undertaken in collaboration with a college of adult education, has demonstrated that a simplified version of the DCA tool can be used for the self-evaluation of learners' personal skills and competences in a wide range of settings and contexts (e.g. in the context of classroom activities).

As a follow-up step of our pilot fieldwork, the team is employing this



approach in developing 'in-depth' cases studies of self-evaluation of learners' skills and competences, which involves in the first instance semi-structured interviews with selected learners.

Furthermore, the learners complete the self-evaluation questionnaire and, then, on the basis of their responses, individual models are being produced for each learner.

The modelling process enables learners not only to self-evaluate their own skills competences but also to simulate potential positive change in their own skills' development.

Learners use their individual DCA models as a basis that suggests (1) the level (e.g. high, medium or low) of their skills and competences and (2) how/through which activities or contexts they may develop/acquire specific skills. Taking the leading role in analysing and assessing their own DCA models allows the learners to uncover potential benefits and outcomes of their self-evaluation process.

As well as providing a self-evaluation tool, the DCA method has good potential to be developed as an approach to be employed by trainers/supervisors for the purposes of learners' evaluation of courses and training programmes. The method potentially could be adapted to the purposes of programme evaluation.

Methodology

To develop appropriate methods of self-evaluation the project's team is collaborating with a college of further education in London. Adults' learning/workplace experiences have been researched through interviews, questionnaires and

observation. The DCA software assisted in building conceptual models based on learners' responses. The DCA models provide an illustration of the learners' level of deployment, recognition and development of skills, indicating links between various skills and competences.

In summary: stages of the self-evaluation process:

1. A semi-structured interview of the learner;
2. Self-evaluation by the learner (using the evaluation questionnaire/DCA software);
3. Model building and interpretation of the individual model;
4. Learner's assessment of his/her model;
5. Simulation with different models to identify potential changes if needed.

Outcomes

- Development of self-evaluation/evaluation tools in collaboration with practitioners;
- Dissemination of findings (e.g. publications, conference presentations)

References

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