

INVESTIGATING THE ROLE OF A MANAGER AS A
FACILITATOR OF ONGOING INFORMAL WORK
RELATED LEARNING

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Certificate of Original Authorship

I certify that the work in this thesis has not been previously submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of requirements for a degree except as fully acknowledged within the text.

I also certify that the thesis has been written by me. Any help that I have received in my research work and the preparation of the thesis itself has been acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

AQTF	Australian Quality Training Framework
DEC	Department of Education and Communities
DET	Department of Education and Training
TAFE NSW	Technical and Further Education in New South Wales
HRD	Human Resource Development
RTO	Registered Training Organisation

Abstract

Contemporary organisations need, and increasingly expect, managers to manage, and develop competent teams and to contribute to the capability development of their organisations. Line managers are required to actively develop the skills, experience and knowledge of workers so that they can maintain productive and sustainable practices. Such roles are widely considered valuable and integral to investing in, and building, individual and organisational capabilities. Despite these expectations, responsibilities and values, the actual roles that line managers play in facilitating on-the-job worker learning have attracted little attention in work related learning literature and limited consideration in the development of informal learning practices in organisations.

Although previous studies have identified the types of learning conditions which support worker learning, there is still a general lack of understanding about how, and in what ways, line managers facilitate informal, ongoing, worker learning and what influences their ability to carry out this role. The present research project draws on concepts of situated learning, human resource development, workplace learning and organisational learning, to explore and highlight key elements of the role so as to give some clarity and identity to the role of managers in how they actually facilitate ongoing, on-the-job work related learning. The research project is informed by four cases within a holistic case study located in a large vocational education and training organisation in New South Wales. Data was collected from semi-structured interviews with Operations Managers and Staff Development Managers and from reviews of a range of organisational documents.

The cases indicate that the fostering of collaborative social relationships and sharing roles of facilitating learning with co-workers are key strategies deployed

by Operations Managers. Managers are also highly committed to creating opportunities for worker learning, encouraging and guiding participation in learning related activities, and managing the context of work to foster ongoing learning. At an organisational level, however, the manager's facilitative learning role tends to lack any significant acknowledgement, support or guidance from within the organisation. The cases have enabled the facilitative learning role of managers to be identified, differentiated from other management roles and given legitimacy as a practice. The research has provided a rationale for raising awareness of the importance and need for acknowledgement of the manager's role in facilitating context based worker learning.

Outcomes of the research project include a framework and an ideal model for manager facilitation of informal, ongoing work related learning. The research also proposes that, in recognition of the need for continuous facilitation of on-the-job worker learning, a new way for managers and organisations to refer to a manager's role in facilitating worker learning is as a 'facilitator of ongoing work related learning and developer of working knowledges'. The research project proposes a number of recommendations for TAFE NSW to contribute to improving the ways in which the non-teaching manager's role in facilitating informal worker learning is recognised, acknowledged, and supported by the organisation.