Using Reflection in Workplace Learning …

Dr Anita Walsh, Director, Institute of Professional Studies, Birkbeck, University of London
National Teaching Fellow 2009
Using Reflection in Workplace Learning

- Experiential learning an important aspect of lifelong learning throughout Europe
- Focus often on prior learning (APEL/RPL) but reflection on practice means that concurrent experiential learning can be integrated into academic awards
Using Reflection in Workplace Learning

- Focus usually on individual reflection but Boud et al have developed concept of ‘collective reflection’
- Argued to be of value both to the individual and the organisation
- Could this therefore reconcile ‘three party knowledge interests’ in workplace learning?
Using Reflection in Workplace Learning …

- Pressures on organisations lead to requirement to maximise ‘human resources’
- Pressures on workers increasing and they want recognition for continuing professional development
- Pressures on universities to become actively involved in employer engagement while maintaining standards
Using Reflection in Workplace Learning …

- Does collective reflection allow these different pressures to be reconciled?

- Increasingly recognised that informal processes are important in knowledge production, and individual reflection can capture this.
Using Reflection in Workplace Learning

- Not experience but learning from experience that is assessed in HE
- Productive reflection is not assessed in any formal way
- Clear indications that concept of reflection at odds with action orientation of organisations
Using Reflection in Workplace Learning

- Can use process of collective reflection to support individual learning
- Reflection is fundamental to achieve developmental learning and to avoid supporting ‘learning through exploitation’ in the workplace
Using Reflection in Workplace Learning

- At high levels of learning there is a requirement for a critically evaluative approach
- Does this go against ‘organisational grain’?
- Treating experience ‘objectively’ through reflection can address need to explicitly achieve criticality in workplace
Using Reflection in Workplace Learning …

- There is a distinction between critically evaluative and socially critical, although both elements could emerge.
- Is answer different presentation of information according to audience?
- Reconciling tensions is integral to most professional practice.
Using Reflection in Workplace Learning …

- Emphasis on individual development essential in new pedagogy which ‘demands an ability to address the service needs of employers at the same time as safeguarding ‘HE-ness’ – its objectivity, rigour, creativity and imagination’ (Wedgwood, 2007)