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Improving Working as Learning: A Conceptual Framework in Action

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Language for Work Network
Meeting 2
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www.llakes.org.uk

Everywhere is Somebody's Workplace

- What is **YOUR WORKPLACE** like as a learning environment?
- Why are some workplaces more conducive to learning?
- How do context and individual agency interact?
- Can workplaces become more 'expansive'?

Research in 12 Sectors

1. Automotive manufacturing
2. Commercial sandwich making
3. Contract research in higher education
4. Exercise to music instruction in health & fitness
5. Hairdressing
6. Health visiting
7. Local authority call centres
8. Project management in construction
9. Sales in the leisure industry
10. Software engineering
11. Supermarket retailing
12. Themed restaurants

Methodology

Macro-level: sector bodies, regulators, awarding bodies

Meso-level: organizational/enterprise, headquarters

Micro-level: workplaces, managers & workers

Used: surveys of employees, interviews, 'logs', visual methods and participant & non-participant observation (e.g. 'shadowing')

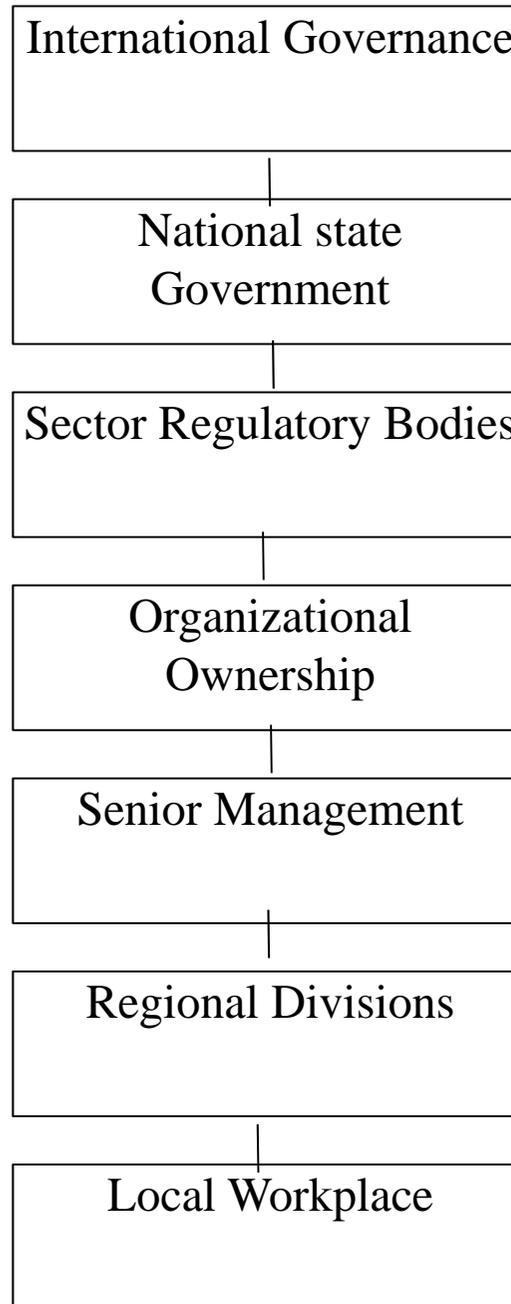
Working as Learning Framework (WALF)

- *Productive systems* – multiple, inter-linked social networks for production of goods and services
- *Work organization* – focus on discretion in conception, execution and evaluation of work
- *Learning environments* – **expansive-restrictive** continuum – workplace characteristics + individual learning territories

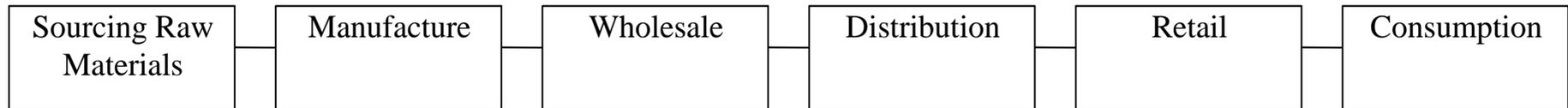
Expansive Characteristics

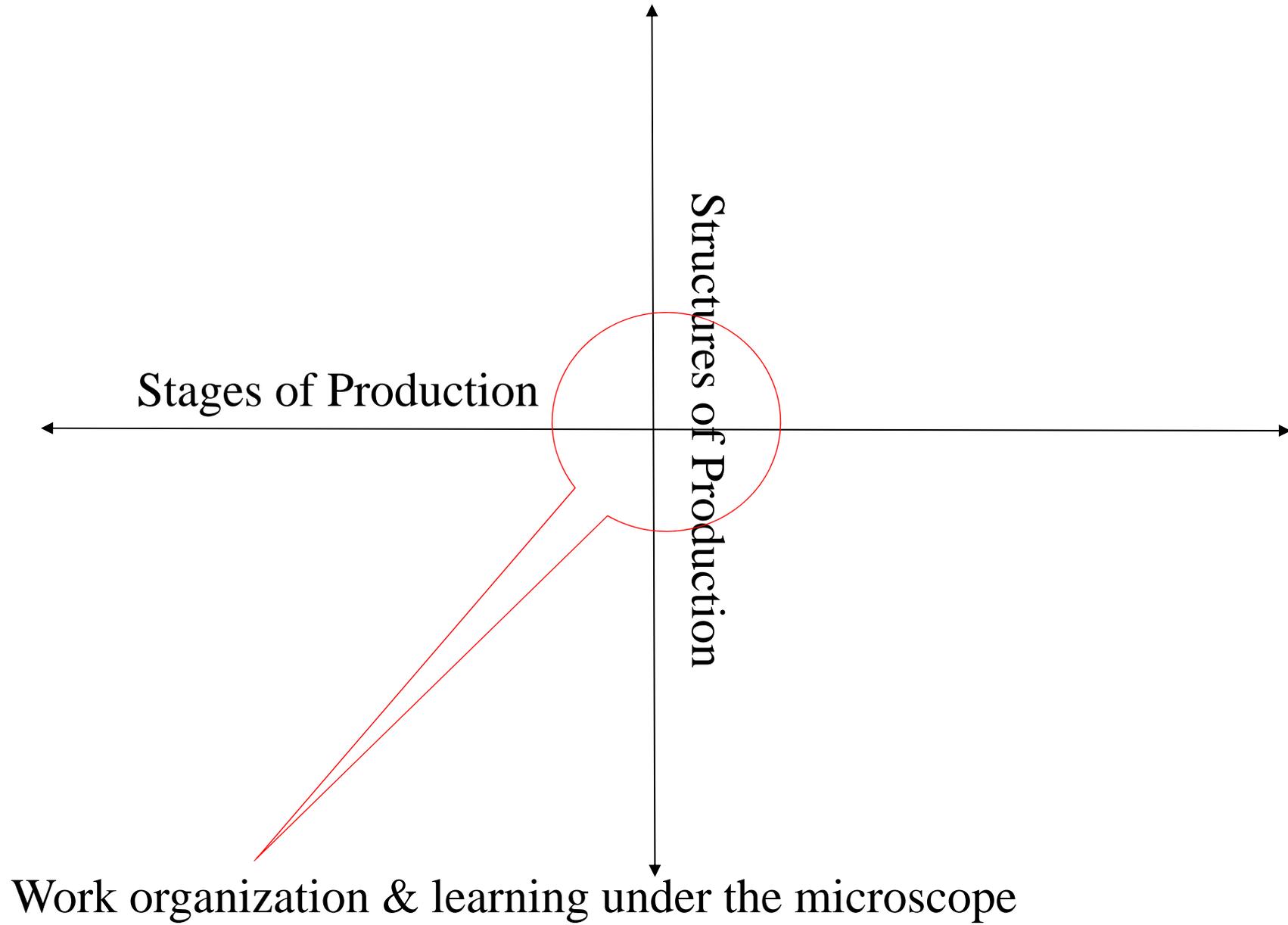
- Learning/training part of everyday work activity - not 'events'
- Individual development seen as a key business goal
- Employees given 'voice' and afforded discretion - concept of distributed expertise
- Work organised (physically, virtually) to enhance sharing of expertise

Structures
of Production –
Vertical Interconnections
of Scale



Stages of Production – Horizontal Interconnections of Transformation







Learning to Control the Stock in Supermarket Retailing



Computerisation of Stock Ordering: Extension of Head Office Control

- Innovations in new electronic technology allow integration of ordering and replenishment
- This 'begs for and facilitates more centralised management' (Kinsey & Ashman 2000: 86)
- Stores increasingly viewed as transmitters of customer demand through the supply chain

Mediating the Productive System

- Electronic devices, texts and people facilitate long distance control over horizontal and vertical relations of production
- Range of initiatives are imposed on stores to increase Head Office control over stock management

Symbol Gun

‘these little guns
are controlling
...we’re putting
all the
Information in
...which takes it
to the computers’
(store manager)



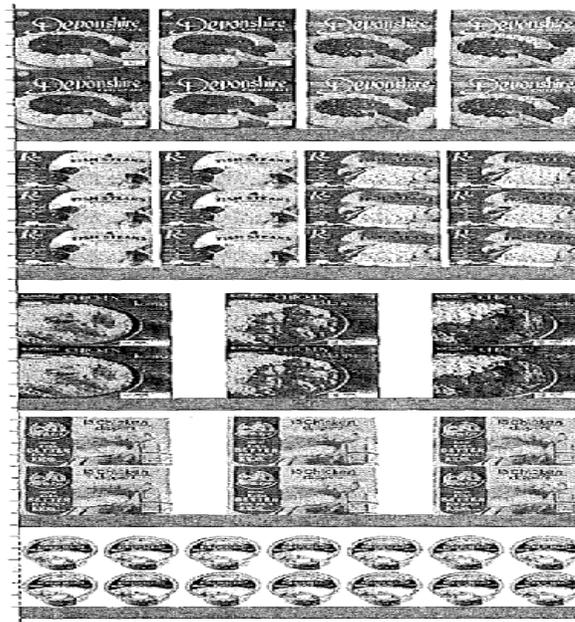
Organising Stock Display

FROZEN DOOR 1 — 31st January — 13th February
Shelf 14th February — 27th February

**BUY 1 GET 1
FREE**

Planogram

‘beforehand we used to be able to juggle it about a bit but they don’t want that anymore’



People

‘They’re telling you what they want in there and that’s what you put in there’

Site	Product Code	Description	Size	OU	Replen	Offer	POS Check
Top	20028954	DEVONSHIRE C. CAKE STRAWBERRY	395 G	12	ESM PROMOTIONAL	Buy any 1 get 1 FREE*	
Top	20028930	DEVONSHIRE C. CAKE BLACKCURRANT	400 G	12	ESM PROMOTIONAL	Buy any 1 get 1 FREE*	
2	20007843	ROSS FISH IN SCE BUT 4'S	600 G	12	ESM PROMOTIONAL	Buy any 1 get 1 FREE*	
2	20007836	ROSS FISH IN SAUCE PARS 4'S	600 G	12	ESM PROMOTIONAL	Buy any 1 get 1 FREE*	
3	21161537	SF CHICKEN KORMA	400 G	12	ESM PROMOTIONAL	Buy any 1 get 1 FREE*	
3	21161520	SF CHICKEN TIKKA MASALA	400 G	12	ESM PROMOTIONAL	Buy any 1 get 1 FREE*	
3	21161551	SF CHICKEN MADRAS	400 G	12	ESM PROMOTIONAL	Buy any 1 get 1 FREE*	
4	22207524	B.EYE 15 100% CHKN DIPPERS	275 G	12	ESM PROMOTIONAL	Buy 1, get 1 FREE*	
Bottom	20245467	B.MATT TURKEY BREAST ROAST	567 G	16	ESM PROMOTIONAL	HALF PRICE	

Scope for Discretion

- Little scope in relation to ‘ambient’ goods (tins, dried products with long shelf life)
- More scope in relation to fresh produce (short shelf/fridge life - risk of high waste)
- Designated staff can adjust ‘fresh’ using symbol gun and use their knowledge and initiative to negotiate changes

Consequences for Learning

- Increasing Head Office control reduces discretion and opportunities for learning, but individuals find ways to counter this.
- Devices are integral features of the workplace environment and resources for teaching and learning.

Practice and Policy Implications

- Improving learning involves re-organising and improving work
- Employers and trainers need frameworks for analysing workplace structures and potential
- Employee involvement crucial
- Language of 'learning' needs to resonate with language of business

Questions

- How can work tasks be organised to generate opportunities for employees to use their language skills?
- Can workplaces provide opportunities away from everyday work activity to foster 'talk'?
- Can workplaces make greater use of everyday artefacts to stimulate language learning (e.g. production charts; team briefing sheets; waste notices; etc)