ABSTRACT

Learning, innovation and ‘tacit pedagogy’ in workplace practice: a comparison of two high-performing organisations in different sectors

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This thesis uses a comparative analysis of two ‘high-performing’ organisations to identify aspects of workplace culture, work processes, and strategic orientations which are associated with innovation. The study investigates informal features of organisational culture, work processes and strategic orientation that support innovation; how these features interrelate with formal structures, policies and procedures; and how learning, innovation and practice are interrelated conceptually and practically. Interviews and focus groups with teams of practitioners within each organisation (n = 24) were analysed to develop an understanding of practice, learning and innovation which extends previous research on organisational development, capacity-building, work process design and culture. Its findings suggest that ‘expansive’ rather than ‘restrictive’ organisations (Fuller and Unwin 2004) are more likely to be innovative; cultures, work processes and arrangements particularly supporting learning within and between teams, provide productive conditions for innovation; embedding ‘innovativeness’ across organisations, rather than treating innovation as a matter for specialists, supports innovation in contexts of rapid change; and organisational orientation towards partnership working and mutuality, together with corporate commitment to expansive notions of ‘public value’ are associated with innovation. The thesis refines the relationship between learning, innovation and practice, and introduces the concepts of ‘tacit pedagogy’ and ‘entanglement’.