Knowledge Work and Organisational Learning

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“Power in action requires largeness of vision, which can be had only through the use of imagination. Men must at least have enough interest in thinking for the sake of thinking to escape the limitations of routine and custom. Interest in knowledge for the sake of knowledge, in thinking for the sake of the free play of thought, is necessary to the emancipation of practical life – to making it rich and progressive.”
Dewey, 1933, c. 1986: 224, his own emphasis.

Abstract
In this paper it is argued that the terms, knowledge work, knowledge workers, and knowledge intensive firms point to emerging social structures and processes in organisations. This focus allows us to analyse organisations in ways that differ from the notions involving less dynamic forms of organisational configurations. It is further argued that the emphasis on knowledge in organisations raises a fundamental question of learning, i.e. how knowledge workers acquire relevant competencies. However, the answer to this depends on how organisational life and work are understood and conceptualised. Three foci are suggested, organisations viewed through their use of technology, the division of labour, and the social interactions in organisations. These three foci relate to different understandings of learning, namely learning as cognition, as situated, and as the reconstruction of experiences. To illustrate both the emphasis on knowledge and the different perspectives on learning, a case study will be presented.

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