

Improving the Apprenticeship Experience: Sponsorship for the development of competent and self-directed tradespeople

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The detail...

Investigated how a building and construction apprentices, who were employed by a GTO which operates within the ACT and Southern NSW, developed as competent and self-directed trades people.

Participants included five (5) apprentices, their respective host employers (5), and VET teachers (3).

The study used constructivist grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006) - theory development as opposed to theory testing - concurrent data collection and analysis – saturation of key themes (concepts) informed theory development.

Self-directed learning was used as a sensitising concept - a point of departure - the literature guided data collection through semi-structured interviews – and my interest as a researcher.

Two interrelated aspects of the substantive theory: *decision-making process referenced on the apprentice's experiences as a learner*; and *the sponsorship of a more experienced other who possessed both a professional and personal interest in the apprentice's development*.

Self-directed learning

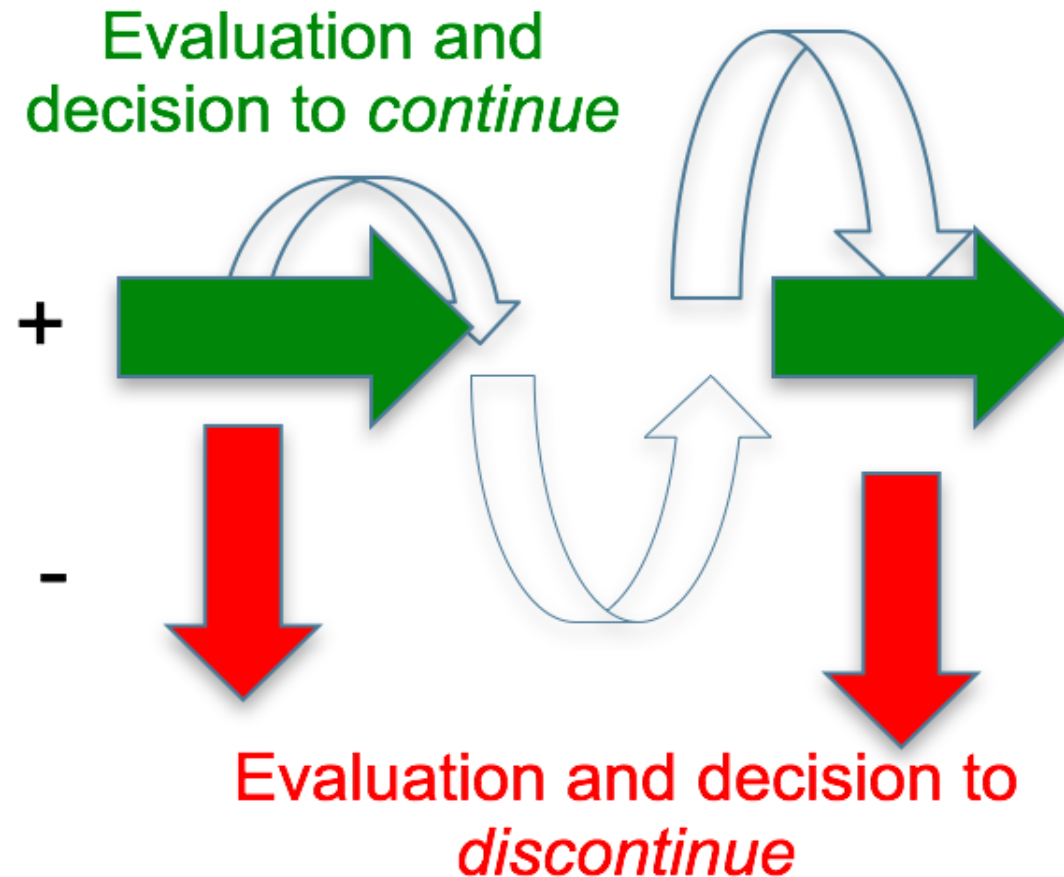
Self-directed learning was considered at a higher level the technical and non-technical notion of competence.

Apprentices that become tradespeople who are self-directed they not only meet the *minimum occupational standards (competence)* but also develop *high-levels of discretion in their learning, greater autonomy and responsibility, and enhanced capacity for reflection (especially critical reflection)* - Demonstrating a broader conceptualisation of expertise - Predisposition to meeting their human potential.

Self-directed learning in adulthood, [therefore], is not merely learning how to apply techniques of resource location or instructional design. It is, rather, a matter of learning how to change our perspectives, shift our paradigms, and replace one way of interpreting the world with another (Brookfield, 1986 p.19).

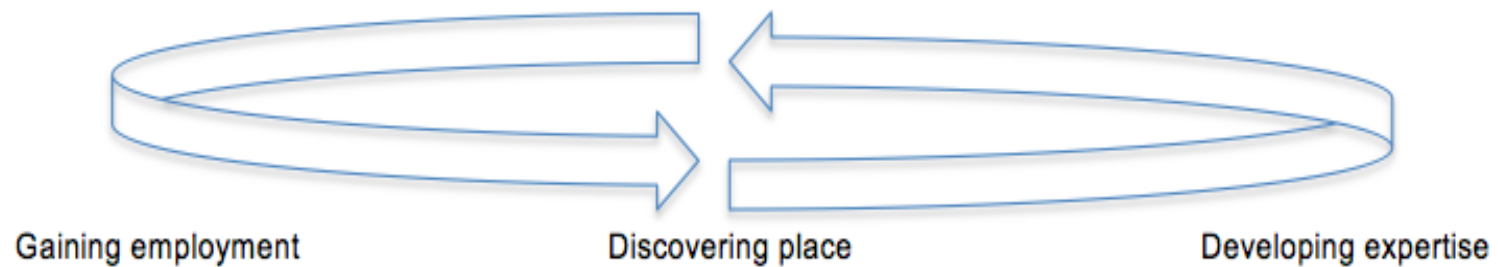
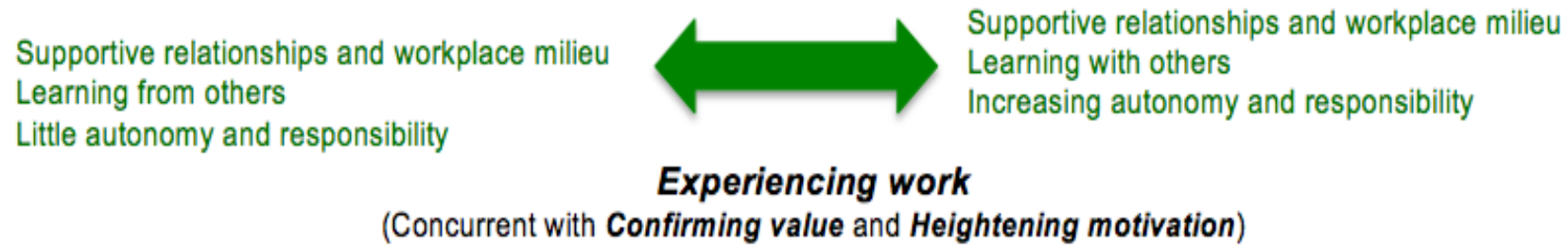
Evaluation and Decision Making

A safe learning environment = positive learning experiences



Sponsorship = Competent and self-directed tradesperson

More experienced other with both a professional and personal interest in the apprentice's development



Committing effort
Influence of others
Experiences with work
Expectancy of completion



Confirming value
Learning by others
Becoming confident
Developing identity



Heightening motivation
Becoming accepted
Learning with others



Self-directed learner

Discussion

VET teacher as a Sponsor

Ideal position to use their influence through using their influence to create a safe learning environment around the apprentice.

Well placed as a conduit with stakeholders to promote the importance of sponsorship and to see an apprenticeship as first and foremost as a learning opportunity and a safe learning environment does not happen by chance.

Apprentices see sponsors as a knowledgeable and creditable resource that assist normalising their experiences throughout their apprenticeship – Apprentices need someone who is prepared to have [respectful] honest and often difficult discussions.

Implications for practice: *Teacher as facilitator; Opportunities for apprentices to compare themselves to their peers; Synergies with workplace; Encourage reflective thinking; opportunities for educational leaders to better support less experienced teachers.*