



Adult Apprenticeship and on the Job Learning

Tea Seppälä

tea.seppala@helsinki.fi

Palmenia Centre for Continuing Education (Finland)

Abstract

Lifelong learning is an essential part of Finnish educational policy. Positive impacts of adult education show up in the individual and societal wellbeing by promoting employment and economy. In Finland an apprenticeship targeted to adults has been popular in the field of formal vocational adult education during the past ten years. The model is nowadays in use also in the field of higher education. The significance of it as an educational model will grow up in the future.

An apprenticeship training targeted at adults, deals with learning from the point of view of the individual, workplace and society. From an individual point of view, the aim is to invest in the training of experienced workers to increase the meaningfulness of and motivation at work. Long work experience without updated knowledge is not enough in today's society, for which reason the model emphasises the link between practical work (activity) and conceptual knowledge (thinking). Instead of the old division between theory and practice, we talk rather of experiential knowledge and tacit knowledge, through the integration of which new professional competencies evolve. From the enterprises' point of view, the aim is to keep experienced professionals in the company, to improve competencies and profitability at a reasonable cost and decrease early retirement. Adult apprenticeship allows also new career and employment opportunities if the company is slimming down. At society's level, it is important that experienced professionals remain in employment as long as possible.

This presentation opens up the structure and pedagogical model for adult apprenticeship. Central theme is the contextual learning, which discusses with meaningful ways of combining theory and practice, in other words, how students should integrate on-the-job training and theoretical teaching. The on the job learning requires support systems of tutoring and work place guidance and peer mentoring which will be introduced.