# Life Based Learning:

Designing Professional Development for the Knowledge Era

Cultivating "knowledge insights" from an Australian research project

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A wealth of resources are available online

- A large amount of resources related to this research can be found online at the International Center for Vocation Education and Training (ICVET) - Australia

- All of the resources can be reproduced and used for study or training purposes

- Downloads include:
    - The full research report (84 pages)
    - A 52 page report showing practical business usage
    - A compilation of 5 "think pieces"
    - Articles, interviews, and podcasts
    - Case studies

- URL for the research project:
    http://www.icvet.tafensw.edu.au/resources/life_based_learning.htm
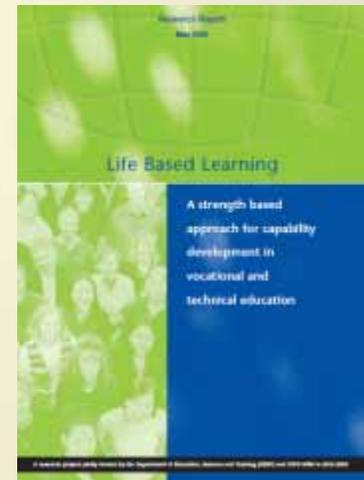
Characteristics of the Knowledge Era

The research project found that the "Knowledge Era" is often characterized by:

- Multiple and competing agendas and priorities
- Diversity in ideologies
- Ambiguity
- Multiple roles
- Uncertainty
- Contradictions
- A great amount of energy and creativity

Competencies for the Knowledge Era

The research found that competencies needed for the "Knowledge Era" were the abilities to:

- Balance life, work, learning and knowing
- Rapidly acquire new skills
- Problem-solve and make sense in new contexts
- Maintain a balance between productivity and creativity
- Collaborate in both face-to-face and virtual environments

Values and the Knowledge Era

The research identified a set of values that are emerging as fundamental to living and working in the Knowledge Era, values that need to be reclaimed in the workplace.
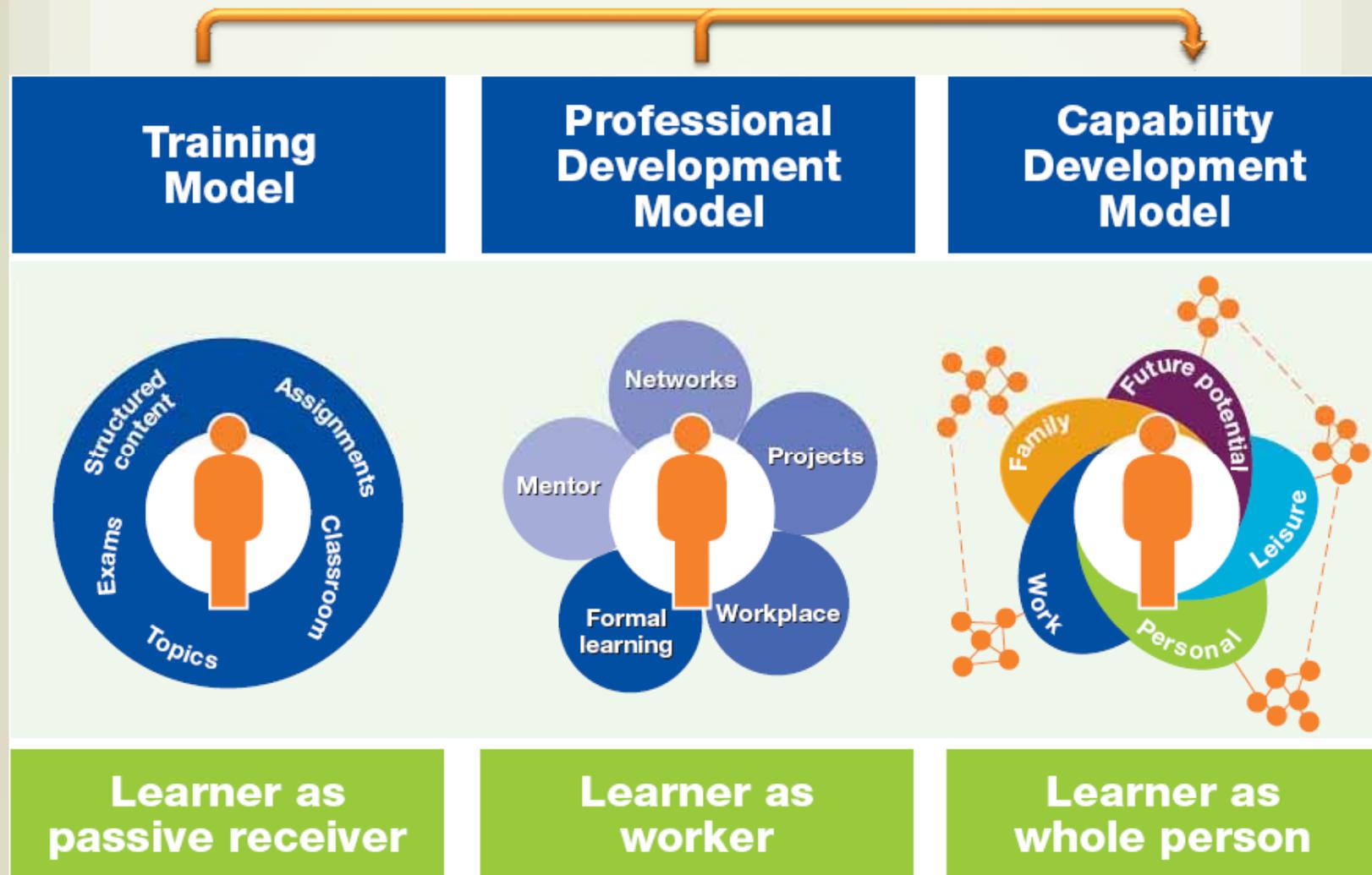
- For the self:
  - trustworthiness, honesty, integrity, engagement, selflessness, equanimity
- With others:
  - generosity, collaboration, humility, openness, tolerance

Four key concepts can be applied to knowledge

Four key concepts emerged that can be applied to building a culture for knowledge, developing knowledge leadership, and evolving knowledge competencies:

1. Move beyond "training" and "professional development" to capability development

2. Evolve to a life based learning model

3. Use a strength based orientation

4. Develop business wisdom

1. Move beyond training and professional development to capability development

Training Model	Professional Development Model	Capability Development Model
Structured content, Assignments, Classroom, Topics, Exams	Networks, Projects, Mentor, Formal learning, Workplace	Family, Future potential, Leisure, Work, Personal
Learner as passive receiver	Learner as worker	Learner as whole person

1. Competencies of capability development

Competencies for capability development were defined in the research as:

- Move away from segmented activities to holistic activities that have more meaning and purpose
- Use positive, appreciative mindsets and approaches
- Create balance and integration between life and work
- Empower people to apply their expertise as people – rather than procedures or information – as the best source of deep expertise
- Have people take responsibility for their own self-directed learning
- Have organizations create environments that support self-directed learning

2. Evolve to a life based learning model

Life based learning acknowledges that what we experience and learn outside a work environment can be as important to our work as what we experience and learn at work.
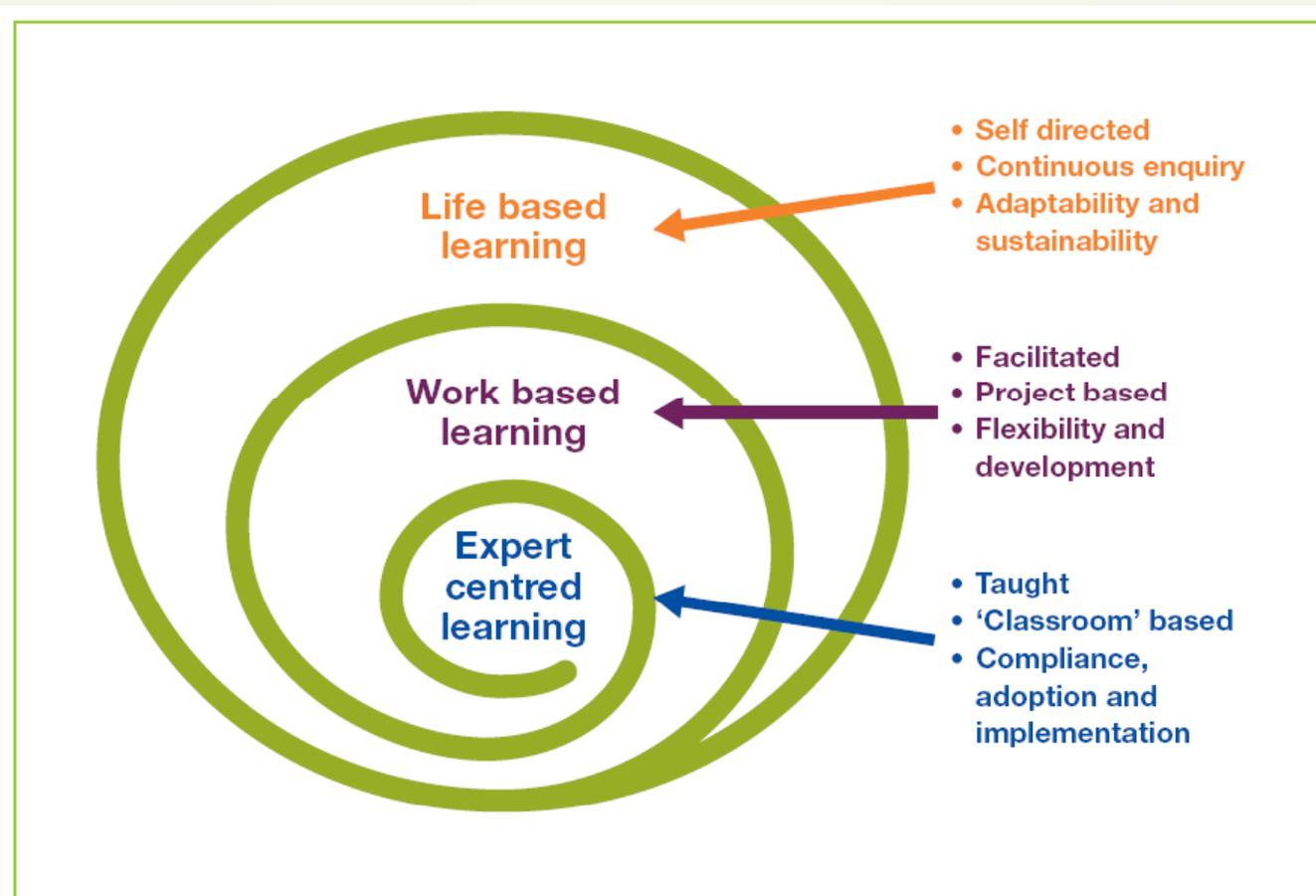

Learning as a separate activity

Learning as an integrated and interconnected activity

2. Evolving to a life based learning framework

"Life based learning" honors the legacy of "Expert centred learning" and "Work based learning," and draws from their potential as it evolves to a capability development framework.

- **Self directed**
- **Continuous enquiry**
- **Adaptability and sustainability**

- **Facilitated**
- **Project based**
- **Flexibility and development**

- **Taught**
- **'Classroom' based**
- **Compliance, adoption and implementation**

Life based learning

Work based learning

Expert centred learning

2. Competencies of a life based learning model

The key competencies of life based learning identified by the research were:

- Recognize multiple sources of learning
- Balance integrity and utility
- Shift responsibility for learning to the individual
- Shift the role of organizations to that of enabler
- Acknowledge that contradictions are strengths
- Invest in developing the whole person
- Acknowledge human dispositions as critical

3. Use a strength based orientation

The research identified strength based philosophies, models and methodologies as participative, integrated, flexible, organic, and based on conversations.

The focus of strength based models is to collaboratively identify what's right and what's working well and then invest in that.

Strength based models of capability development do not disregard or displace existing practices; they take the best of what is working well and integrates it into the new.

3. Competencies for strength based learning

The research found three competencies that could assist an organization in adopting a strength based approach:

- Positive psychology: Psychologist Mart Seligman found that knowing our signature strengths and using them every day in the main realms of our life could bring abundant gratification and authentic happiness

- Appreciative inquiry: Professor David Cooperrider at Case Western University conceived a process for discovering strengths, co-creating new ideas and evaluating results

- Flow theory: Dr. Csikszentmihalyi determined that "flow" occurs when a person's skill level is perfectly matched to the challenge level of a task that has clear goals and provides immediate feedback

4. Develop business wisdom

The researchers felt that the concept of "wisdom" was central to all aspects of the research project. They defined wisdom as having the following characteristics:

- Wisdom is strength based – it contributes to human wellbeing and the common good
- Wisdom contributes to synthesis – wise thinking and actions pull components together into an integrated whole
- Wisdom is achievement-oriented – it has a very practical orientation which serves to guide thinking and action

4. Evolving from knowledge to wisdom

The first level is data – simple facts and figures.

Next we have information. Information is data that's been collected and organized. It is a reference tool, something we turn to when trying to create something else.

The third level is knowledge. This is information that we have digested and now understand. Organized as knowledge, the information we have collected is given a context.

The fourth level is wisdom. Wisdom is the proper use of knowledge. Wisdom is knowledge that has been applied in a way that takes into account all its pertinent relationships and that is consistent with universal laws.

Article: "Where is the wisdom we have lost in knowledge?"

4. Competencies of business wisdom

The research used the work of Baltes, founder of the field of "lifespan psychology," to identify six competencies for business wisdom:

1. The ability to address important and difficult questions and strategies about the conduct and meaning of life
2. Awareness about the limits of knowledge and the uncertainties of the world
3. Knowledge with extraordinary scope, depth and balance
4. A perfect synergy of mind and character
5. Using knowledge for the good or wellbeing of oneself and others
6. Recognizing wisdom when it is manifested

Being a champion for the Knowledge Era

What concepts and language are you willing to be a champion for as we work together to bring the Knowledge Era to its full maturity?

Selflessness	Equinimity
Holistic activities	Appreciative mindsets
Balancing integrity and utility	Whole person learning
Signature strengths	Authentic happiness
Wise thinking and actions	Common good
Synergy of mind and character	Integrated whole