



Leading education
and social research
Institute of Education
University of London

Work-based Learning in Challenging Times

Professor Lorna Unwin

l.unwin@ioe.ac.uk

LSRN Annual Conference

November 2010

Work-Based Learning as an Expansive Endeavour

- Multi-purpose – skill formation, ‘participation’ and qualification targets, social inclusion, sector specific, occupation-specific – but is it also for general (continuation) education?
- Multi-actors with same/different goals? – Government, sector bodies, individual employers, education and training providers, Group Training Associations, Apprenticeship Training Agencies, professional bodies, inspectorates, awarding bodies

What do we mean by 'learning'?

Learning can be:

- Deliberate
- Unplanned
- Accidental
- Individual or collaborative
- Transformative
- Subversive

Lifelong Learning Environments

- Workplaces
- Classrooms
- Workshops
- Prisons
- Community spaces
- Homes
- Cars, planes, buses, trains, cycles

Learning Spaces

- **Organisation of work and learning**
- **Physical environment**
- **Virtual environment**
- **Mental environment (tacit expertise transformed into explicit – made visible) – use of artefacts**
- **Japanese concept of *ba* – *harmony/integration***

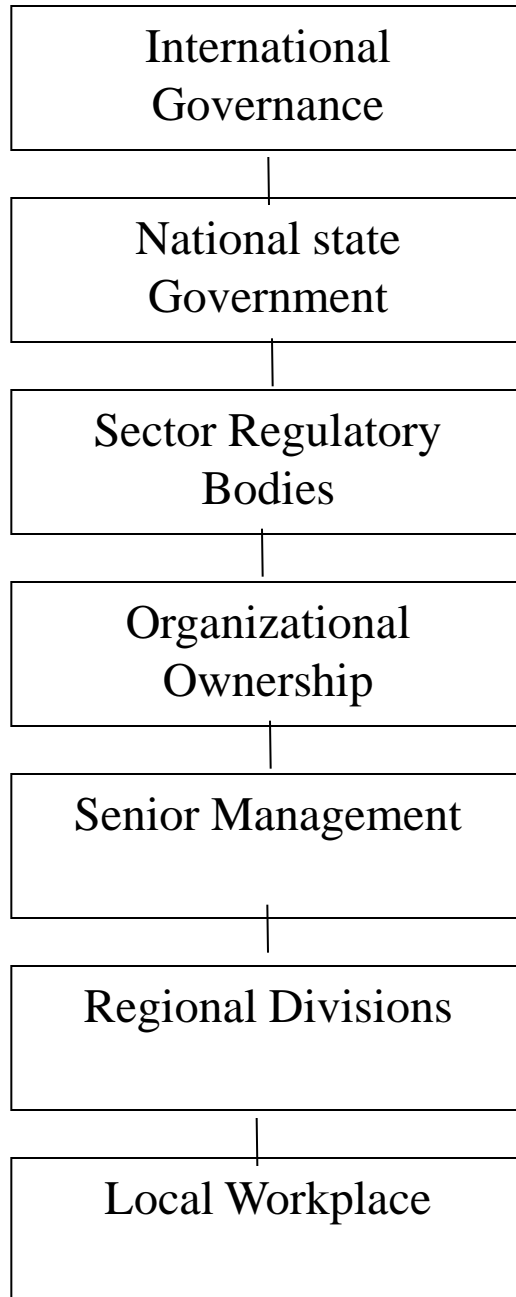


Working as Learning Framework (WALF)

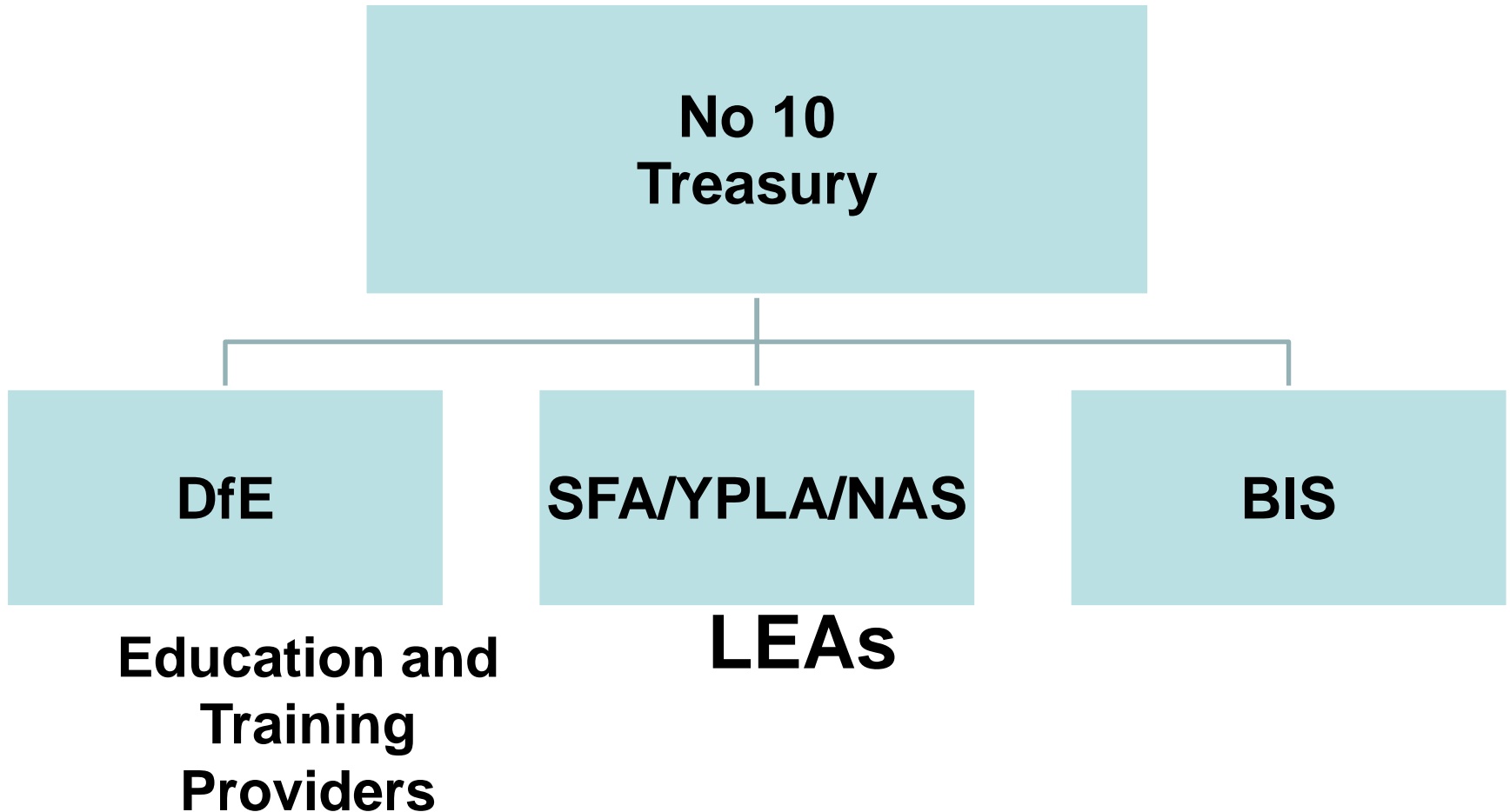
- *Productive systems* – multiple, inter-linked social networks for production of goods and services
- *Work organization* – focus on discretion in conception, execution and evaluation of work
- *Learning environments* – expansive-restrictive continuum – workplace characteristics + individual learning territories



Structures
of Production –
Vertical Interconnections
of Scale

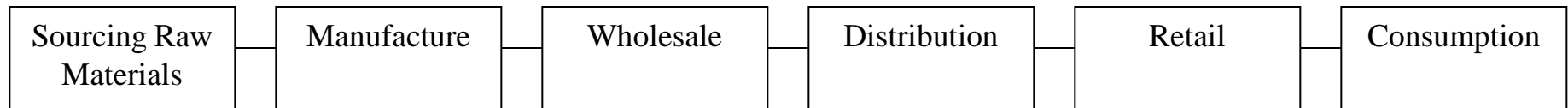


Structures of Production





Stages of Production – Horizontal Interconnections of Transformation

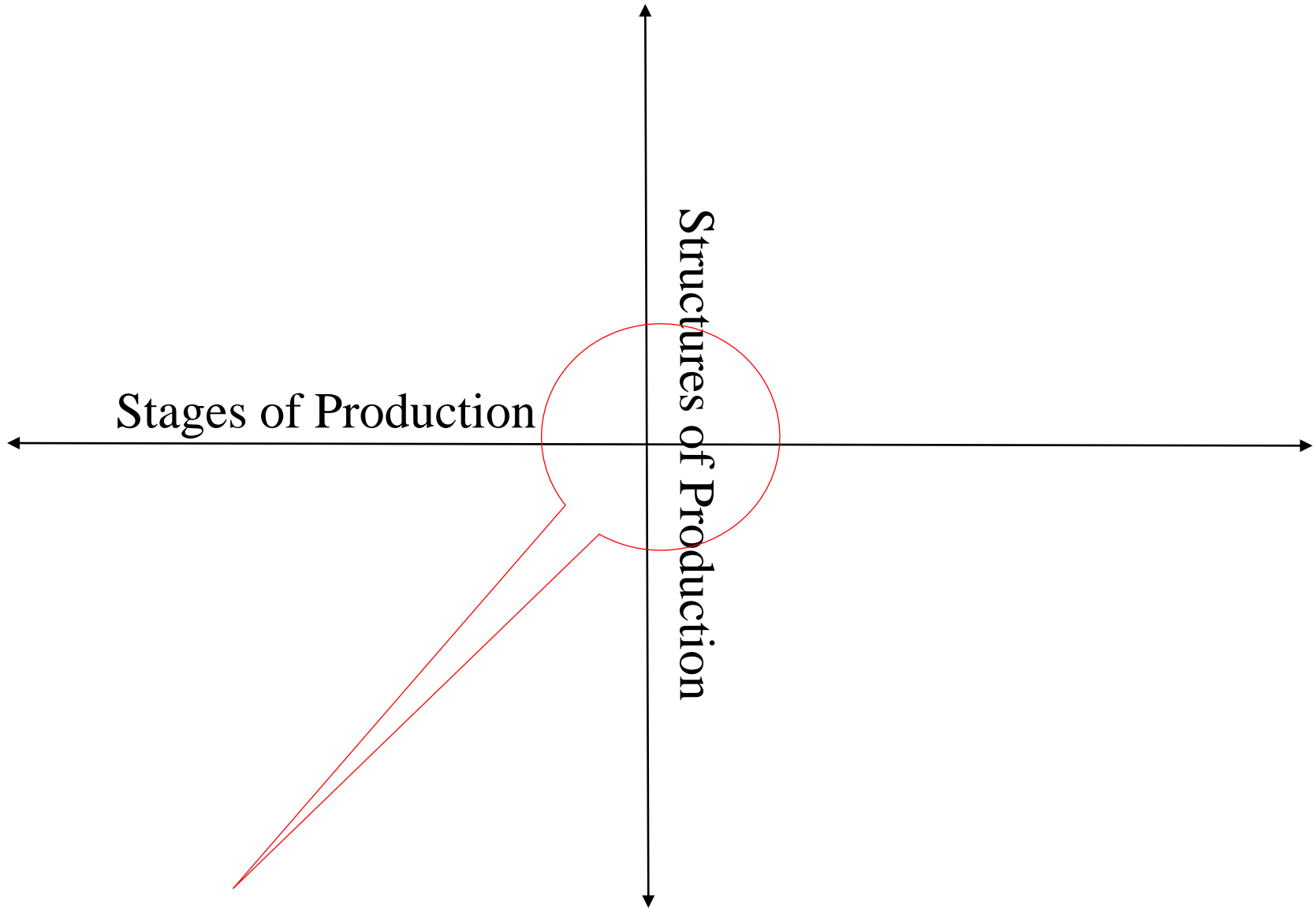


Stages of Production

Learners

Completion

Progression



Work organization & learning under the microscope

Expansive-Restrictive Framework

Workforce development aligns organisational and individual goals	Individual moulded to fit organisational goals – ‘learning’ seen as an ‘event’
Employees have dual identity: worker and learner	Fast track to productive worker
Expertise widely distributed: multi-dimensional concept of expertise	Expertise narrowly defined and confined to top level – ‘need to know basis’
Managers’ key role to support learning – supported by mentors	Managers’ role to meet targets – rhetoric of mentoring

Workers given discretion to make judgements and contribute to decision-making

Discretion limited to key workers – no employee involvement in workplace decisions

Participation in different communities of practice is encouraged – job/team boundaries can be crossed

Participation restricted to immediate work team/area – boundary crossing discouraged – isolated workers

Planned time off-the-job for reflection and deeper learning beyond immediate job requirements

All training/development on-the-job and limited to immediate job requirements

Pivotal Role of Managers

- Key to maintenance and sustainability of learning environment
- Understanding their drivers and pressures
- Feedback key motivator for employees
- Forms of managerial support need building into model of learning - mentors, coaches, appraisers/reviewers

Application of Framework to Supporting Education and Training Programmes

- To what extent do YOU and YOUR LEARNERS participate in ‘expansive’ learning?
- What spaces are there to ‘expand’ your/their experience?
- Are the ‘restrictive’ aspects of your/their experience imposed by the productive system in which YOU work?

Productive Systems and Work-Based Learning

- Where do your work placements sit in relation to their productive systems
- Where does your organisation sit?
- Where do you sit?
- How do these 'positions' have an impact on your work as a professional?
- Can work placements be made more expansive?