

Changing patterns of working, learning and career development in Europe

Strategic career and learning biographies

IER workshop

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Changing patterns of working, learning and career development in Europe

- **European project (FAME) on changing work identities**
- **European comparative ten country study: changing patterns of working and learning (for DG Education and Culture): highly skilled**
- **CEDEFOP study on career narratives for intermediate skilled**
- **CEDEFOP study on career narratives for low skilled**

- **Relationship between career development and learning while working**
- **Enhancing skill development at work**
- **progression from low-skilled work;**
- **mid-career change;**
- **making sense of own career development;**
- **Adaptability better driver than employability to facilitate re-engagement with substantive learning and development?**

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Mainly qualitative studies, but also survey:

- **literature review & survey of 1148 people**
- **mainly in full-time permanent employment in their mid-career (aged 30 to 55)**
- **mainly skilled worker or graduate qualifications in engineering, ICT or health.**
- **Ten countries surveyed: France, Germany, Italy, The Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Turkey and the United Kingdom.**

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- **Knowledge society; labour market and technological change; globalisation; diversity within countries: upskilling vital**
- **National / sectoral strategies: but how do people develop their skills and how do their careers evolve over time?**
- **Our focus: learning and development, key transitions (upskilling, reskilling and reframing), life-course**

Three almost universal findings:

- **Major reskilling facilitated by thinking more in terms of skill sets rather than organisational attachment and occupational identities**
- **Life-course: periods of relative stability and periods of substantive learning and development;**
- **Strategic Biographies: sense-making: welcome opportunity to tell their stories (coherent career narratives)**

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Complementary role of different forms of learning in skill development at work:

Acquisition of knowledge and skills to perform current or last job? %

| | |
|---|------|
| ○ your studies or initial training | 71.5 |
| ○ additional training in your current work | 51.6 |
| ○ self-directed learning, inside or outside the workplace | 55.7 |
| ○ learning through work by carrying out challenging tasks | 60.9 |
| ○ learning through life experience | 47.6 |
| ○ learning from others at work | 52.5 |
| ○ learning from networks, working with clients | 32.1 |
| ○ other | 5.1 |

Total number of respondents: 1148

Knowledge, skills and understanding to underpin job performance can be developed in different, but complementary, ways

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Matching of skills and duties in current or last job: %

- I need further training to cope well with my duties 17.0
- My duties correspond well with my present skills 40.9
- I have the skills to cope with more demanding duties 37.0
- I am new to the job so I need some further training 5.1
- Total number of respondents: 1115

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- **Low-skilled work is not necessarily a problem but staying in low-skilled work is: encouragement and support so that people seek more challenging jobs as this is the most effective form of skill development for low-skilled;**
- **Promote a mid-career change if we want more older people to remain in the labour market;**
- **Support development of coherent career narratives (where I have been, what I am doing now and where I am going);**
- **Personal development and key transition points rather than employability as drivers in order to facilitate re-engagement with substantive learning and development for older workers.**

How learning helps people in their career

Successful transitions:

- individuals reframe & refocus - require new perspectives
- support required to move on: problem-solving, decision-making & coping skills
- value of learning and development, including CVT

Support for successful transitions:

- access to specialist labour market information
- new insights, focus, confirmation & confusion reduction
- support to motivate and increase self-confidence
- opportunities for reflection

How learning helps people in their career

Key events and processes in life-course:

- Intensive *episodes of learning* across the life-course
- Many people *actively shape* their personal work biographies (but often value help)
- Reskilling: individual belief in **transferable skill sets**

How learning helps people in their career

Evolving careers and learning:

- coherent career narratives.
- lack of engagement with substantive learning and development linked to downward career drift.
- key to career success of older workers in a new context is a positive disposition towards learning.
- value of a proactive approach to career development links to engagement with CVT and LLL.
- learning-rich work environments.
- Importance of encouragement, time and space to engage in self-directed learning and critical reflection.

How learning helps people in their career

Learning and development:

- Learning to learn and link continuing learning strategically to career development is important.
- Development needs to deliver breadth and depth of learning across the levels: competence alone will be insufficient
- Premium on supporting the learning of others and creativity; changes in ways of thinking and practising
- Transferable skill sets (i.e. ability to switch between different contexts)

How learning helps people in their career

Learning at work: factors facilitating skill development

- engagement with challenging work
- interactions at work
- knowledge at work: ways of thinking and practising; conceptual understanding; valued forms of knowledge
- self-directed learning at work
- identities at work: transferable skill sets – applied in different contexts
- supporting the learning of others: developmental model of expertise.

How learning helps people in their career

European survey:

- **Learning while working** established form of learning in changing work environments.
- Patterns of career development vary according to: national, organisational & sectoral contents & nature of learning environment at work (expansive v. restrictive)
- **Individual access** to learning and development opportunities is constrained by **individual, organisational and contextual factors: opportunity structures**

How learning helps people in their career

Learning from others:

- Learning from others and through networks facilitate a proactive approach to career development
- Aerospace: technical competence, but also ability to support learning of others and change ways of working
- Timely and appropriate feedback and support crucial for learner identities & proactive approach to development.

How learning helps people in their career

Eraut – early career learning

At any stage we might need to enhance our skills, knowledge and understanding in the following areas:

- Task Performance
- Role Performance
- Situational Awareness and Understanding
- Teamwork
- Personal and Group Development
- Decision-Making and Problem-Solving
- Academic Knowledge and Skills
- Judgement.

Learning through challenging work

- ‘My new job involved me in a steep learning curve’.
- ‘My new job technologically challenging, exciting products and I am very good at adapting. It is important to be open and flexible’.
- ‘Learning while working in a project has its benefits; working together towards a concrete goal and with people and groups that are dynamic’.
- ‘The feeling of being good at what you do, to master the job – to be able to work purposefully’.
- ‘My learning while working has been enriched by changing industries. It is healthy to switch jobs. I’m not afraid of change; I look forward to it’.
- ‘Gained all my skills in the film industry on-the-job and through work experience, willing to ask how to do things when I do not know how’.
- ‘Enjoy learning, think it is integral to working in IT, it is important to keep up-to-date – 3D graphics is a field which is moving fast’.
- ‘Really excited about this opportunity and what it could lead to. I learnt most when doing challenging work’.
- ‘I learned through challenging work; lots of interaction; learned about organisational cultures and management of change’.

Knowledge development & sense-making

Individuals were combining processes of sense-making, with re-contextualisation of the development of knowledge and understanding, after intensive periods of knowledge development and application.

Updating formal knowledge was always linked to a range of more informal ways of knowledge development and utilisation.

Search for knowledge could incorporate aspects of technical:

- know-how (how to apply technologies);
 - know-what (where and when technologies and knowledge could be applied);
 - know-who (including an active search for people who would be valuable as members of a personal network); and
 - know-why (a fuller understanding of work processes including, in some cases in health, a deeper scientific understanding)
- (Lundvall, 2002).

How learning helps people in their career

Conclusions:

- need a developmental model of expertise (not a binary view of development of competence)
- need to encourage people to develop skills, knowledge and understanding in a variety of ways
- need to encourage **mid-career change** if want more older people to remain engaged in the labour market
- people need support to develop coherent career narratives
- guidance needs to support outcomes; access; change and experience
- value of formal and informal guidance.