

Workplaces as key transformative learning spaces for facing socioeconomic crisis in post-Soviet contexts: The case of Latvia

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Question 1

What do people understand to be "voluntary" and "compulsory" with respect to workplace learning?

Question 2

What does the company/organisation offer in terms of formal and non-formal work-related learning?

Question 3

What is "voluntary" and "compulsory" in terms of formal and non-formal work-related learning offered by company/organisation?

Question 4

How do objective opportunities and subjective perceptions influence employees' motivation to learn at work and their satisfaction with the learning they have undertaken?

About the study:

This study addresses the new workplace learning strategies used to face socioeconomic crisis in the Latvian post-Soviet context. After decades of strong centralisation – when employers and employees were not expected to take any initiative regarding their professional work, especially in the public sector – in the last 20 years, with the regaining of the independence of their country, they have been forced to do so in order to adapt to the changing and challenging economic situation. In Latvia, workplaces exist not simply in companies and public services, but equally across a wide range of organisational and social contexts, including in the third sector (non-profit-making non-governmental organisations, voluntary work, etc.) and in diverse forms of self-employment, which sometimes is carried out under irregular and precarious conditions. These contexts offer very different kinds of learning opportunities. Therefore, the "learning continuum" between formal, non-formal and informal learning is a key framework for understanding how opportunities for professional and personal development at work are distributed, structured, experienced and used nowadays in Latvia.

Methodology:

In this study an integrated mix-method was used, combining quantitative and qualitative methods. The design used in this study was a sequential mix-design: the conclusions of the quantitative study, based on the analysis of the questionnaires with SPSS, were confronted with the answers to the open ended questions, searching for similarities within diversity. AQUAD software was used in the qualitative analysis.

For data collection a standardised questionnaire was used, which was jointly developed by ASEM-LLL Research Network 2 members. The aim of this questionnaire was to get a better idea of people's perceptions of workplace learning and the opportunities and restrictions one might experience when integrating learning in everyday working life. The information contained in the questionnaire referred to the following aspects: employee profile: gender, age, education, background, income; basic information about working situation, including type of workplace, period of employment, number of employees, correspondence between education/qualification and job, and an estimation of current work situation; information about workplace learning, including employee's opinion on workplace learning, opportunities to learn new things at work, encouragement for the employee to learn at work; provision and take-up, including opportunities offered by the employer, employee's participation in education and training courses, work-related course required by the employer and chosen by the employee, relevant factors for their decision; and effects on people: own benefits, knowledge and skills, and quality of life.

Two different professions from the public sector were chosen: educators, and employees of information technology services. The first group was selected with consideration to the population of educators in different areas and using the official statistics taken from the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Latvia (2008/09). A total of 365 subjects acted as a representative sample of the higher education sector. The second sample was taken from the population related to information technology services using the statistics provided by the Central Statistical Bureau of the Republic of Latvia (2008/09). The number of subjects in this group was 122. The total number of participants in this sample was 487.

Aspects of understanding	Voluntary WPL is related to ...	Compulsory WPL is connected with ...
Motivations for WPL	Involvement for personal development	Avoiding losing work or leading to promotion
Content of WPL	Learning based on mutual support and exchanges of ideas with colleagues, for example during spontaneous meetings	The acquisition of new (difficult) skills (technological or organisational)
Organisation of WPL	Self-organised learning (for example, independent usage of manuals during or after working hours)	Attending workshops or seminars (preferably short: one or two days)
The view of employees on WPL ...	Supporting their employees in WPL	Seeking improvement in organisational efficiency
The view of employees on WPL ...	Concern about relevance for the organisation if expensive or during working hours	Positive perception

	FORMAL	VOLUNTARY	COMPULSORY
FORMAL	Specialised organized	General education courses related to the job and/or personal growth	Strictly related to the job
	Unimportant whether the participants receive diplomas, certificates, qualifications, or not	Free choice of time and place	During working hours
NON-FORMAL	Not specially organized	Outside working hours	Improving job-related knowledge and basic skills
	Takes place at workplace	Spontaneous meetings	Short workshops or seminars
	Interchange of work experiences and practice	Independent usage of manuals and materials (e-learning)	Not lasting longer than one day

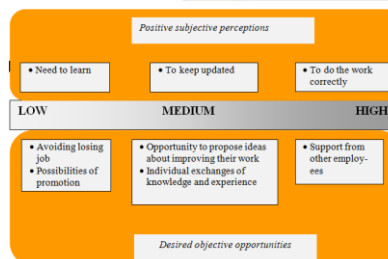


Figure 1: Impact of opportunities and perceptions on employees' motivation

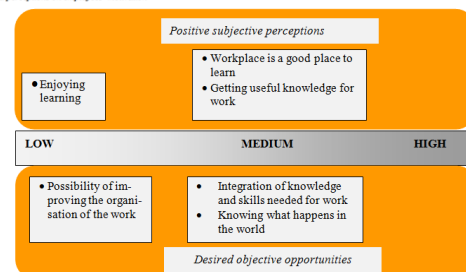


Figure 2: Impact of opportunities and perceptions on employees' satisfaction