Working to Learn

Insights into the workplace learning of educational practitioners in the UK

Karen Evans & Natasha Kersh
IOE, University of London
ASEM
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LLAKES
CENTRE FOR LEARNING AND LIFE CHANCES IN KNOWLEDGE ECONOMIES AND SOCIETIES

LLAKES is an ESRC-funded research centre led by the Institute of Education, University of London
Types of work-related learning available in respondents’ workplaces:

• Courses that are held in special places on the company/organisation premises to improve workplace learning (55%);

• Courses to make sure that all employees have basic skills: e.g. literacy and numeracy (12 %);

• Courses offered by trade unions or staff associations to improve knowledge in the workplace (9%);
Available workplace provision /continued.

• E-Learning courses that employees can follow at their desk (27%);
• Short workshops/seminars that last for one day or less (57%);
• Spontaneous meetings with colleagues to resolve new and special workplace problems and assignments (23%);
• Manuals and materials that employees can use to learn about new equipment, software, etc. (20%).
What respondents value in WPL

- The respondents have reported that workplace learning is successful when they are:
- Mostly enjoyed by the participants;
- Mostly strategic in nature;
- Focus on knowledge and skills, not on how employees behave;
- Focus on the qualities of individual participants;
- Something emotionally important for the participants.
Voluntary-compulsory (1)

- Those who reported that in their organisations workplace learning is strongly supported by employees (either to a great or a considerable extent) also indicated that they are engaged in workplace learning because:
  - They realised that they needed to develop and update their knowledge and skills;
  - They were motivated to undertake learning;
  - They have been advised (and not pressured) to engage in workplace learning by their employers.
Why did your employer require you to pursue this work-related learning?[2]

- It is a formal requirement
- I did not do so, I cannot expect to get promotion
- It isn’t really an obligation, but my boss strongly advised me to do so
- There’s a lot of pressure on employees to take training, although it’s not really compulsory
- Most of my colleagues took part, so I think I ought to as well
- It isn’t really compulsory, but I know that need to keep my knowledge and skills up to date in case I decide to or need to change roles
- It wasn’t my employer who required me to do so, so I made myself do it because it was important to me
Voluntary –compulsory (2)

• Evidence of increased participation in further training where employees in lower-graded jobs have been enrolled voluntarily in basic skills courses. (n=567; p<0.1)

• Where enrolment is made compulsory, no statistically significant increase in later participation (see Wolf/Evans 2011)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language as First or Second Language</th>
<th>All</th>
<th>Omitting Involuntary Learners</th>
<th>LFS Sample</th>
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<td>English as First Language</td>
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<td>51.9</td>
<td>37.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>English as Second Language</td>
<td>45.8</td>
<td>n/a</td>
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Significance of gender

- The data have indicated that males and females may perceive the benefits of workplace learning differently.
- Females often value the benefits of workplace learning associated with the positive influence on their family and personal lives.
- Males tend to recognise those benefits of workplace learning that are linked to concrete job task/activities, such as using machinery and technology. (see also Evans 2006 article on gender autonomy, JVET)
UK Employers’ surveys for all economic sectors

• data for establishments covered by the UK employers’ survey show that the recent period of recession has also contributed to reductions in the coverage of adult training

• and especially reductions in off-the-job training for skilled and highly-qualified employees.
• This may further narrow the gap in training levels between low-qualified and well-qualified workers,

• But unless training levels can be raised for employees at all levels of qualification, growth in competitiveness may continue to be hindered by gaps in adult skills.

• These patterns are very likely to be reflected in training levels experienced by educational practitioners as public spending cuts take hold in the UK.