


**Workplace Learning Opportunities**  
**A Comparison of Older and Younger Workers**

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**Outline**





- 1) Modern concepts of business organization
- 2) Workplace learning as issue of research
- 3) Demographic developments: Aging workforces
- 4) Exemplary empirical study
- 5) Conclusions

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**Changes of management concepts**

Market conditions	Management concepts	Characteristics
Supply-driven economy  	Scientific Management (Taylor) Belt production (Ford)  Automatization (Kern/Schumann) Teamwork (Breisig)	Formalization, repetition, exchangeability of labors  
Demand-driven economy	Lean Management (Womack et al) Learning Organization, Knowledge Based Enterprise (Senge, Sattelberger)	Transfer of responsibility, drop of hierarchies  Change, learning community, employees as individuals

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**Educational view on business organization**

Shared core of modern concepts of working organization:  
 Employees' competence to cope with uncertainty and change

**Skill requirements**

- High qualification degree (e.g. special knowledge, problem solving competence)
- High extent on independence and responsibility
- Soft skills (e.g. social competence, emotional intelligence)
- Lifelong learning

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**State of research on workplace learning**

"Rediscovery" of practice-based learning in vocational education and training and educational research

- Workplace learning was main mode of ancient apprentices
- Focus of educational research on vocational learning was on formal learning processes until late 20th century
- Workplaces as learning environments of own quality appeared in educational literature in the 1990ies
- Seminal research on workplace learning since 2000

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**Demographic development: Aging workforces**

Forecasts of (European) labour market developments

- Demographic change: Extended lifetime, decreasing birthrates
- Relation between older workforce and younger workforce changes to majority of older workforce
- Social security systems demand extended working time

➔ Challenge for enterprises: Integrating older workers into efforts of personnel and organizational development

## Specific features of older learning workers

- Rich work experiences, routines, wisdom
- Changed cognitive and communication demands
- Reduced time for return-of-invest considerations

### Two tasks of organizational development

- Integrating older workers in processes of knowledge actualization
- Organizing the dissemination of older workers' knowledge base across successive generations of workers

→ Providing learning opportunities for older workers matters

## Exemplary empirical study

### Method

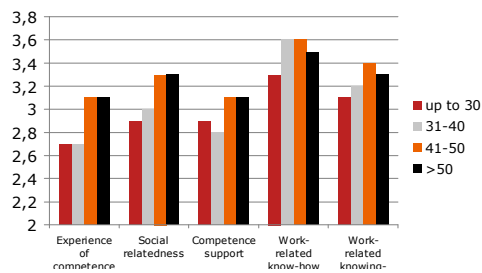
- Quantitative questionnaire study of a German industrial enterprise (automotive supplier)
- Sample: 146 plant operators (89 respondents, 61%)

### Measurements

- Age (up to 30 / 31-40 / 41-50 / >50 years)
- Experience of competence (5 items,  $\alpha=.67$ )
- Social relatedness (5 items,  $\alpha=.87$ )
- Competence support (4 items,  $\alpha=.71$ )
- Work-related know-how (11 items,  $\alpha=.88$ )

## Exemplary empirical study

### Descriptive statistics



## Exemplary empirical study

### Statistical tests (analyses of variances)

Scale	F	Significance	Post-hoc test
Experience of competence	4.75	$p=.004$	-30;31-40<<41-50;51+
Social relatedness	1.97	$p=.125$	---
Competence support	1.52	$p=.216$	---
Work-related know-how	3.04	$p=.034$	-30<31-40;41-50;51+
Work-related knowinn-how	2.34	$p=.080$	---

## Exemplary empirical study

### Conclusions

- Findings indicate plausible patterns – in comparison between younger and older workers, no discrimination of older workers is to be observed.
- Generally, subjects rate quite high – but no ceiling effect.
- In terms of older workers (50+) new questions arise:
  - Do they evaluate their knowledge more critically?
  - Do they perceive to loose the contact to the state of knowledge?
  - Are there organizational influences supporting especially 50+?

Thank you for your attention!