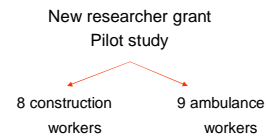


Mature-aged construction male worker identities in turbulent times

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Mature-aged construction & paramedic male worker identities study



Aims: to understand how
vocational identities were articulated in interviews
training was seen to impact on such identities.

Work and Retirement

Instances where mature aged Construction Workers commented about their desire or need to work or retire:

- Continue Status quo 3
- Continue New Role 5
- New job Same Role 0
- New Job & Role 3
- Part Time 3
- Retire 3
- Do Anything 0
- Undecided 1

Training for Older Workers

Instances where mature aged Construction Workers commented about their desire or need to train:

- Train to remain 3
- Train for new job 6
- Training too difficult 0
- Consider training with a mentor 4
- Would not consider training 2
- Train for retirement 0
- Undecided 0

Reasons why training might not be taken up

- Attitudes towards health

Beliefs that people may become more absent-minded, slow, forgetful, fragile, or even senile with age have been documented in the research literature... To the extent that people believe that these characteristics decline with age and they perceive the characteristics as being key capabilities for learning, these beliefs by older workers may contribute to judgments that they are not capable of learning and improving (Maurer, 2001, p. 132)

- Cost – time, effort, money reward (Noonan, 2007)
- Training is unnecessary (Chappell et al, 2003; Noonan, 2007)

Attitude of 242 older construction workers towards training

Lundberg & Marshallsay (2007) found:

- most wanted to continue working beyond retirement age
- 20% considered they would need training



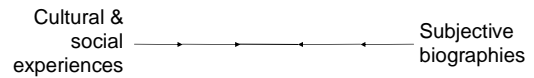
for those who considered training, 'train the trainer' was the preferred form by > 1/3.

Vocational identity as a lens

Vocational identities are developed as a result of the learning processes that unfold in the **borderlands** between 'the collective' and 'the subjective' while the trainees participate in, conduct and reflect upon the work practice and their work experiences.

This is fundamentally based on conceptualising identity as **relational** and which takes place in the interaction between a structured social world that pre-exists the individual and faces her [sic] as a reality and a subjective world that has been structured by the totality of her [sic] biographical experiences and life conditions (Smistrup, 2007, p. 56).

Vocational identity as a lens



Vocational identity

The study participants worked in both active and passive ways to fashion vocational identities for themselves that are constantly re-storied within

- *the evolving structures of individual workplaces and*
- *the broader globalised economy in which those workplaces are situated.*

Vocational identity

Training is conceptualised as:

- a challenge
- a possible means of procuring alternative forms of work
- an irrelevance.

Training as a challenge

"As **we** get older we sort of balk more at, the formal, going back to **school** or something like that. It's **harder**. It's a real **challenge** to go back and do a course when you're older. I'm doing one at the moment. . . . I don't mind it, and it's quite good; it's quite interesting. But I think that we are down to half of the original number."

Training as a possible means for procuring alternative work

"At this time in your life you don't want to be going back to school."

*I did a 5-year apprenticeship when I started with a builder in the UK and that's probably about 40 years ago and it's only just in the last 6 months that I went and did another course [workplace health and safety officer] since I did my apprenticeship. That's a big gap between courses, isn't it? . . . I've done that now but I think that I'll go off with that to **try** and **go off the tools**. I'll see what happens, **I think** that it will get busy again but you know. . . . they'll be screaming for work. . . . **I just want to stay with what I know.**"*

Training as an irrelevance

"Well you have to do courses to develop skills that I haven't got. But why should I develop more skills that I haven't got when I've got enough skills in my trade?"

...

"I wouldn't seek formal training. As you [interviewer] said, this is an over 55 interview so I'm not really keen on starting anything that I don't really have to. Like, as I said, I'm a chippy. I know what I am doing and if I was presented with a job where I need certain skills I would work with someone who had them if I had to. But, as I said, if I could get out of it I would."

Identity definition

As a label, really, for the collection of influences and effects from the immediate context, prior constructs of self, social positioning, and meaning systems (each itself a fluid influence and all together an ever-changing construct) (Olsen, 2008 cited by Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009 p. 177).

This is not to say that interview data are unreliable. Indeed, they are important sources for understanding phenomena such as tensions experienced by mature-aged workers with respect to formal training but it must be recognised that they are situationally-specific and the identities that are made relevant at the time of the interaction are just one of a 'basket of selves which come to the surface' (Cohen, 2004, p. 11) at a particular social moment in response to contingent factors.

Acknowledgements

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