Old and Out?
Aging workers’ learning and employability

Isabel Raemdonck
Louvain4Aging
Context

- Many older employees leave the labour market prematurely...
- How to retain aging workers into the workforce?
- Lack of investment in aging workers as perceived benefits of employers are low.
- In aging society employability and well-being of aging workforce is of importance
In order to be able to continue working, it is of importance that older workers actively shape they working lives and that they are capable and motivated to learn in order to stay healthy, productive and satisfied throughout their careers.

How to deal with change?
Learning and development problem
How to keep older workers employable?

Van Coillie (2012)

Strategies applied to deal with older workers

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<th>Strategies Applied</th>
<th>Employability of Older Workers Is Limited</th>
<th>Employability of Older Workers Is Flexible and Can Be Developed</th>
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<td><strong>Short term strategy (financial)</strong></td>
<td>Refresh strategy: Replace older workers by younger workers</td>
<td>Blocking strategy: push older workers to remain employable</td>
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<td><strong>Long term strategy (guiding)</strong></td>
<td>Care strategy: Reduce work load of older workers</td>
<td>Learning and development strategy: develop older workers in order to stay employable</td>
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Does learning lead to increased employability?

- The ability to acquire and maintain employment (Van der Heijde & Van der Heijden, 2006)

- Employability competences (Van der Heijde & Van der Heijden, 2006)

- Positive effects of formal learning (Groot and van den Brink, 2000; Van der Heijden et al., 2009; Raemdonck et al., 2012) and of informal learning (Van der Hijden et al., 2009; Van der Rijt et al., 2012) on employability.

- Negative relationships between age and employability (e.g. Berntson, Näswall, & Sverke, 2008; Raemdonck et al., 2012; Wittekind et al., 2010; Van der Heijden, 2002)
Age and learning activities

- Participation in formal learning activities are positively related to participation in informal learning activities (Sels et al, 2008): interdependent

- But often older workers prefer informal learning (Raemdonck et al., 2013)

- `Learned helplessness` in formal training contexts (Mackeracher, 2004)
Age and learning activities

- Inconsistent findings on the relationship between age and participation in learning activities (Warr, 2001; Warr & Birdi, 1998; Raemdonck et al., 2014).

- Age differences when time and instructional constraints (Schulz & Stamov Roßnagel, 2010) => Self-control over learning

- Attendance policy: Age differences were more pronounced in studies with participants who attended the training mandatorily (Baldwin, Magjuka & Loher, 1991) => Offering a choice, voluntary participation

- Age differences were found in the novice groups, but performances were equivalent for the experienced users at the end of the training (Charness, 2009) => Importance of experience
Older workers are less motivated to learn
Two perspectives of age-related changes in motivation to learn (Gegenfurtner & Vauras, 2012)

*Decline in motivation to learn*

- Expectancy theory in a life-span context (Kanfer & Ackerman, 2004)
  - Motivation = $f$ (effort, performance, utilité)
  - Lower effort-performance expectations due to cognitive retardation
  - Aging workers often attained the highest possible career level which influences their perception upon the utility of high performance and external rewards
Two perspectives of age-related changes in motivation to learn

**Decline in motivation to learn**

- **Socio-emotional selectivity theory (Carstensen, 2006)**

Role of **future time perspective** = individuals’ perceptions of remaining time

- Limited or open-ended
- If time perceived as constraint → shorter term goals
- Shift in future time perspective when workers age. This causes a reorganisation of goals
- Increased chronological age is positively related to a narrow future time perspective and therefore fewer learning activities will be undertaken (e.g. De Lange et al., 2011; Zacher & Frese, 2009).
Two perspectives of age-related changes in motivation to learn

Motivational maintenance

- Adults are naturally self-directed learners (Knowles, 1984; Tough, 1978)

- Workplace curiosity doesn`t change with increased age (Reio & Choi, 2006)

- The relation between an object and personal interest increases with time (Krabb, 2005)
Theoretical Framework: learning motivation (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002)

- Individual Variables
  - Chronological age
  - Future Time Perspective

- Contextual Variables
  - Learning Climate

- Motivational Variables
  - Learning Value
  - Learning Self-Efficacy

- Engagement in learning activities
  - Formal
  - Informal

- Consequences
  - Employability
  - Well-being
Motivational variables: learning self-efficacy

« Beliefs about one’s capability to perform a specific task » (Bandura, 1977)

- Learning self-efficacy beliefs are opinions that workers hold about their own ability in relation to learning and developing job-related knowledge and skills.

- Effect on engagement and persistence in learning process (Maurer, 2000, 2002, 2003; Sadri & Robertson, 1993); performance (Gist & Mitchel, 1992), adaptabilité (Gist & Mitchel, 1992)

Motivational variables: learning value

- The *value* that learners attribute to the learning task (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002; Schunk & Usher, 2012).

- Engaging in learning and development activities might have a positive value for workers if it fits into their goals.

- Colquitt et al. (2000) showed that the valence, or the perceived importance of training outcomes, is strongly related to the motivation to learn.
Goals older workers strive for in work context

(Zacher et al., 2009)

We all have work-related goals, but we are not striving for the same ones!
Motivational variables: learning Value

(Kochoian, Raemdonck, Frenay, Zacher, 2014)

562 employees from different age groups and professions in Belgium

- Older workers` prioritized goals: organizational citizenship, team work and cooperation, and adjustable work hours.

- Employees who prioritized goals from the areas of training and development, pay/career progression and new challenges were significantly younger

- No age differences were found concerning goals related to employment security and well-being
Chronological age

- Aging worker? Depends on the research domain (range 40-75)

- f.ex. labor market studies: ≥ 50-55; organisational studies: ≥ 40-45

- Chronological age: sufficient?
  -> more heterogeneous while we get older (Carstensen, 2006)
  -> proxy for age-related processes (Kanfer & Ackerman, 2004)
Future time perspective

- **Dimensions**: Zacher & Frese (2006)
  - **Perceived remaining time**: “There is plenty of time left in my occupational life to make new plans”
  - **Focus on opportunities**: “My occupational future is filled with possibilities”
  - **Focus on limitations**: “I have the sense that my occupational time is running out”

- People tend to perceive their future as more constrained with age (Ebner et al., 2006).

- Several empirical studies have demonstrated that increased chronological age is positively related to a narrow future time perspective (e.g. de Lange, Bal, Van der Heijden, Jong, & Schaufeli, 2011; Zacher & Frese, 2009)
Future time perspective

560 employees, 42% ♀, 21-64 years old (M = 40), 77% degree of higher education (Kochoian, Raemdonck, Frenay, Zacher, in press)

χ²/df = 3.23

( NNFI = .97; NFI = .99; CFI = .99; GFI = .99; AGFI = .96; RMSEA = .06)
Work context

Learning climate

« the perceived support from management, work, and the organization for formal and informal training and development activities » (Tracey & Tews, 2005, p. 358)

- Managerial support: expectations towards and acknowledgement of workers’ training and development activities (Schulz & Stamov Roßnagel, 2010)

Older workers receive less social support and encouragement from direct leader and colleagues, less opportunities to exchange, less access to training and development (Maurer, 2008)

- Job support: learning opportunities provided by work tasks are positively related to learning and employability (Raemdonck et al, 2010, 2012, 2014) but often stronger and only significant for younger workers (Van der Heijden et al, 2015)
E-cir project

- Network of researchers from neuroscience, musicology, educational psychology, human resource development

- Partners from UCL, Maastricht University, University of Regensburg, KULeuven, Ugent

- Aim: How can we support older people (to be able and motivated) to work until when they have to retire and stay healthy, productive and satisfied?

- Holistic approach of well-being: social, cognitive, physical

- How? Identify cognitive, motivational, physical actions that are successful in undertaking learning activities in order to maintain/increase well-being.

- Activities of the network: Review studies, research proposal, pilot studies, book
Future research projects

- Professional development: Learning in and outside domain of expertise

- Personal development: Learning in relation to other domains (health for example)

- Learning after working life
LOOKING FORWARD TO FUTURE COLLABORATIONS

CONTACT:
ISABEL.RAEMDONCK@UCLouvain.BE