

**Proposer:**

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**Statement of topic: Enhancing the capacity for workplace learning and innovation in Scotland**

**Significance and relevance of the topic**

This research is concerned with the development of a framework for workplace and organisational learning that focuses on the growth of innovative capacity within the labour force. Here workplace learning is conceived as new skills gained formally and informally through engagement in activities at work. These include training, coaching and mentoring (Ramage, 2014, p.489). The expectation of employing organisations is that workforces that have undergone such activities experience enhanced performance: for example they are more innovative (De Saá-Pérez, Díaz-Díaz, & Ballesteros-Rodríguez, 2012, p.218). It is also important to recognise that workplace learning is achieved within organisational contexts (Naranjo-Valencia, Jiménez- Jiménez & Sanz-Valle, 2011, p.56; Ramírez, Roodhart & Manders, 2011, p.250-251). Therefore culture and strategy are also important to this study, particularly with relation to informal workplace learning and how individuals create and share information and knowledge in communities (De Saá-Pérez et al., 2012, p.218). In this respect the study draws on prior work on information behaviour and use within workplace settings, and it is expected that this study will make further contributions to this particular field.

Although the extant literature reveals a body of research on workplace learning and its determinants, prior studies are specific to individual organisations rather than consider the requirements of the general labour force. In addition, the roles that organisational contexts and strategy play in the development of workplace learning remain under-explored. The study therefore addresses three broad questions: (1) Which skills are important to the development of a capacity to innovate? (2) How can successful workplace learning be identified within organisations? (3) What are the determinants of successful workplace learning?

A multi-methods approach for the empirical work will be deployed in three phases to answer these questions. A preliminary investigation will focus on a comparison of UK and European training data. The main study will provide insight into current practice in a range of employer organisations. Practitioner perspectives on workplace learning and innovation will also be explored. Both quantitative and qualitative analyses will be undertaken.

The work will address a number gaps in knowledge that have been identified through a review of a wide body of literature that is situated within the domains of workplace learning, organisational learning, human resource management, information and knowledge management, management, organisational studies, psychology and sociology. The main output of the research will be a framework that presents individual and contextual determinants of successful workplace learning, showing the relationship between workplace learning and the development of innovation skills. It is anticipated that as well as developing theoretical perspectives this work will have practical value in policy development for Skills Development Scotland (SDS), the body which is co-sponsor of the study.

**Content of poster**

The expected content of the poster will be organised under the following headings:

***Aims and research questions:*** The section will explain the aim of the poster, including the provision of a framework on how workplace learning can lead to the development of innovation skills.

***Anticipated outputs:*** The section will include the two main outputs of the research. The first is a framework that presents individual and contextual determinants of successful workplace learning,

showing its relationship with the development of innovation skills. The second is a framework for skills agencies for the delivery of policy to support a more innovative workforce.

**Literature and context:** Important literature will be detailed to prompt discussion amongst conference delegates of the value and relevance of the research questions posed. The future work section will give details of what the research will achieve in terms of its contribution to knowledge. This will focus on exploring the skills necessary to become innovative, as well as the link between workplace learning and the development of innovation skills.

**Methods:** The methods section will discuss the methodological approach to be used during the empirical stages of the study. A multi-methods focus will include exploring trends in training and skills by quantitative analysis of data. Organisational contextual influences will be explored using a quantitative survey that will highlight relationships between learning, training and innovation. The relationships will be explored further by using case studies of organisations through the interview method. Practitioner perspectives on workplace learning and innovation will be explored during focus groups.

**Additional information:** Information on supporters and funders of the research will be detailed alongside details of how to contact the main researcher (email, website, PhD blog and twitter feed). The supervisor names – Professor Hazel Hall and Professor Robert Raeside – will also be given.

The draft poster layout can be seen below:



## Abstract

**Introduction.** The research is about the enhancement of workplace learning and innovation. Its particular focus is the development of skills that enable individuals to innovate. The research will answer the following questions:

- 1) Which skills are important to the development of a capacity to innovate?
- 2) How can successful workplace learning be identified within organisations?
- 3) What are the determinants of successful workplace learning?

**Methods.** A multi-methods approach will be used to incorporate quantitative surveys, in-depth interviews, case studies and focus groups.

**Anticipated contributions to practice and knowledge.** Skills Development Scotland has identified a need for enhancing the skills of the Scottish labour market. The output of this PhD will provide a framework to explain how employee-led workforce learning can be encouraged to deliver innovation that leads to employment growth, competitive advantage, and increased productivity within the organisational context. In addition, the PhD will contribute to knowledge of workplace learning by exploring the relationship between workplace learning and the development of innovation skills. The relationship will explore organisational and individual factors that lead to workplace learning success.

## References

Poster proposals presented at ISIC 2016 Conference

- De Saá-Pérez, P., Díaz-Díaz, N.L., & Ballesteros-Rodríguez, J.L. (2012). The role of training to innovate in SMEs. *Innovation: Management, policy & practice*, 14(2), 218-230.
- Naranjo-Valencia, J.C., Jiménez- Jiménez, D., & Sanz-Valle. (2011). Innovation or imitation? The role of organizational culture. *Management Decision*, 49(1), 55-72.
- Ramage, C. (2014). Learning to learn through university accredited work-based learning: a threshold conception. *Journal of Workplace Learning*, 26(8), 488-510.
- Ramírez, R., Roodhart, L., & Mandles, W. (2011). How Shell's domains link innovation and strategy. *Long Term Planning*, 44, 250-270.