

Learning in Production - IAA Notes for Speech, Peter Scherrer 20 September

Demographic and economic changes pose new challenges, both for enterprises and employees in our information-based society. The requirements of enterprises towards their employees as well as those that employees have of their jobs are changing.

Work is growing more and more knowledge-based, knowledge becomes outdated increasingly quickly. Consequently, initial vocational education is not a sufficient pool of knowledge for the entire professional life - lifelong learning becomes increasingly important. Demographic change and increased risk of unemployment give a new meaning to further training.

Vocational education and training impacts upon access to and continuation in employment, levels of income, quality of work places and conditions as well as safeguarding competitiveness. Further training and access thereto is therefore a central facet of professional life.

Not all employees enjoy the same level of access to training. Especially those employees that are at high risk from unemployment are disadvantaged in the participation in training measures. Again, also in the context of education, the rich-get-richer phenomenon applies. Access to training becomes a social issue.

Hence it is more important than ever to create conditions that allow a possibly large share of employees to participate in training and thus broaden access to qualification measures. Work process-oriented learning opens up new possibilities for broadly inclusive training.

Opportunities and access to learning directly at the work place mean not only more relevant content and better integration of new knowledge but also a higher level of access to learning. Exclusion from further training opportunities impedes equal participation of individuals in society.

The development of entitlements and parameters which stimulate learning do not only benefit employees but secure competitiveness of enterprises in an increasingly information-based economy.

Enterprises demand employability of their workers, however, employability can only be achieved reciprocally. Employers have to develop conditions that enable access to further training. Works councils have to commit to promoting training for workers, political instruments ought to be developed to facilitate initiatives.

Innovative enterprises depend on training. Economic dynamics require employees to be creative and ready for change, capable of taking up responsibility and working independently. Learning and change, professional development and the promotion of competencies are central facets of innovative work processes. Training does not only increase motivation and innovative ability, it contributes to securing and improving jobs and the emancipation of working individuals.