

Strategic Staff Management in SMEs to Support Lifelong Learning: A Literature Review

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This literature review provides a solid entry point into the still under-researched area of staff management in Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs).

This literature review takes stock of existing theories, research and relevant policy initiatives. It analyses research results regarding what is strategic staff management practice in SMEs, which barriers does it face, as well as its main enablers. Particular attention is given to the role of national skills systems and to the development of lifelong learning. Its conclusions provide practical suggestions that will inform future research and the development of practical tools for SMEs. Despite constituting over 90% of businesses and employing over 70% of the global workforce SMEs tend to have a weaker grasp of strategic management of staff and to be less equipped to deal with structural changes and large systemic shocks. Responding to the challenges brought upon by digital innovation, automation and greening of the economy, as well as the effects of Covid-19 will require businesses to make complex choices in terms of staff management. Seizing the economic opportunities that will emerge during

the recovery period will require that smaller businesses adopt forward- looking strategies to plan, develop and manage their workforce.

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