

Older workers and learning through work: the need for agency and critical reflection

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The distinctive feature of this book is that it addresses the issue of older workers from a lifelong learning perspective. This is novel as traditionally studies on older workers and ageing have been strongly influenced by a medical view, defining ageing in terms of physical and mental decline. This book challenges traditional mind-sets about older workers and learning. The central argument is that society, work organisations and individuals must think of ageing as a lifelong learning and developmental process in which one continuously takes on new life challenges, in line with one's interests, opportunities and limitations. In the context of work, this means understanding learning as a broad, holistic concept encompassing individual education and training, but equally, and perhaps more importantly, also entailing participative collective workplace learning that is actively supported by employers. This book has a general introductory purpose as research on this theme has only begun to emerge. Although some research has been carried out on older workers and lifelong learning in Europe and beyond, it is rather scattered and, in several countries, hardly exists. The purpose of this book is to address this gap by providing an overview of discussions at the crossroads of the two topics – older workers and lifelong learning – that, so far, have been the subject of separate discourses. The main focus of this book is on European approaches and experiences. However, with contributions from scholars in other continents, Australia, Japan and the US, the European perspective can be reviewed in a broader international context.

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