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Author(s): Collin, Kaija; Lemmetty, Soila; Forsman, Panu; Glăveanu, Vlad Petre; Auvinen, Tommi; Riivari, Elina; Keronen, Sara; Jaakkola, Marianne

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CHAPTER 11

Supporting Creativity and Learning at Work: Practices and Structures from Growth Companies

Kaija Collin, Soila Lemmetty, Panu Forsman, Vlad Glăveanu, Tommi Auvinen, Elina Riivari, Sara Keronen, Marianne Jaakkola

Abstract

The constant change embedded in contemporary working life requires employees and organisations alike to continuously learn and, simultaneously, adapt and be creative. The potential to attract, manage and engage creative people, as well as support learning, has become increasingly important in organisational contexts. It is essential to recognise what the underlying learning theories are and how they connect with the current understanding of creativity. It is also important to study different manifestations of creativity and learning and reactively and proactively discover ways of supporting and developing both aspects in contemporary organisations. In this chapter, we first present our approach to learning and creativity and their connection in the context of working life. Then we introduce and discuss four studies on structural and practical frames supporting creativity and learning in gorwth companies. These studies were carried out as part of a larger research and development project on human resources management (HRM) supporting creativity and learning in Finnish growth companies (HeRMo-project). Both quantitative questionnaire and qualitative interview data were utilised, and a variety of analytical tools were employed. The project examined the impact of organisational structures, supervisory work and climate on collective creativity; revealed challenges for workplace learning posed by a self-directed organisational structure; highlighted human resources development (HRD) practices supporting creativity and; made visible the practices and conflicts experienced by HRM when dealing with employee and team operations. Based on the previous literature and the findings of our research project, we have formed four conclusions that focus on supporting creativity and learning at work: 1) Creativity and learning are collective and informal phenomena at work, 2) A variety of structures and practices enable creativity and learning at work, 3) Both, equality and employee orientation in structures and practices are important, 4) Context-specific examination of creativity, learning and supporting practices is needed.

Keywords: Creativity, Workplace Learning, Mixed Methods, Growth Companies, HRM, HRD

Introduction

The links between creativity and learning have increasingly attracted the interest of organisational and working life scholars. The reason for this is the growing need for continuous learning and creative activity in the workplace, as well as the need to find new ways to support learning and creativity in contemporary working life. Key features such as intensified competition and prevailing and constant change – also seen in the continuous development and implementation of new technologies – create new kinds of learning requirements for organisations and their employees.

When reflecting on key learning theories from behaviourism and cognitivism to constructivist approaches, it becomes clear that the latter have had a huge impact on how knowledge and learning are defined (e.g., Ertmer & Newby, 1993/2013; Loyens & Gijbels, 2008; Tynjälä, 1999) and even how creativity is discovered. For example, as Craft (2005, p. 53) notes, 'It seems that "creativity" and "learning" are not distinguishable if we take a constructivist approach to learning, unless we take a harder line on what counts as "original" and "of value"'. It is important to acknowledge whether learning is addressed through the traditional lens of knowledge transmission or considered to be a more active and subjective knowledge construction process.

To cope with contemporary demands, the best possible practices and structures found in organisations need to be distilled. Recent research has found that creativity and learning are strongly intertwined, especially in the context of everyday work and in problem-solving situations (e.g., Collin, Lemmetty, Herranen, et al., 2017; Lemmetty & Collin, 2020). Obviously, depending on one's standpoint, learning is an essential prerequisite for creativity or vice versa. Creativity produces a new understanding and knowledge of a subject (Anderson et al., 2014; Ford, 1996) and can be reconceptualised as a knowledge construction and reconstruction process required by contemporary professional life (e.g., Tynjälä, 1999). Because both phenomena, creativity and learning, emerge as a part of fast-paced and constantly changing everyday work environments, the availability of individual formal training, courses or qualifications is no longer enough to support employees' daily creative activity and learning. Instead, all activities in the workplace, including leadership and human resource management (HRM) practices, can affect the possibilities for creativity and learning in an organisational context (e.g., Loewemberger, 2013), creating the need for more holistic and overarching understandings.

HRM, as well as human resources development (HRD), could play an important part in supporting and facilitating creativity and learning in the workplace. Human resources (HR) are an asset, and HRM is an integral part of all organisational activities, not a separate unit but rather a holistic aspect of management that is strongly connected to and reflective of an organisation's overall strategy (Ulrich & Dulebohn, 2015). As an activity that involves several actors in the organisation, HRM is linked to structures, management and supervisory practices (Bredin, 2006; Jimenez-Jimenez & Sanz-Valle, 2012; Ulrich & Dulebohn, 2015). Consequently, HRM is also the ideal starting point for supporting employees' creativity and learning at work. Although HRM is now increasingly seen as part of the operation of an entire organisation, there is still a lack of knowledge of its various dimensions, particularly as a promoter of creativity and learning. Its practices and solutions can also be assumed to include and reflect wider theoretical understandings of and connections with learning and creativity.

The Human Resources Management Supporting Creativity and Learning in Finnish Growth Companies (HeRMo) project (2018–2020) explored the relationships between HRM,

creativity and learning in Finnish organisations. The project employed mixed data collection and analysis methods (e.g. Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010; Hall & Howard, 2008) with a wider ethnographic research approach. Both quantitative and qualitative tools and methods were utilised at different stages of data collection. The main data collection tools included surveys, interviews and observations. The aims of this research a) examine how creativity and learning emerge in growth companies, b) identify the types of HRM structures and practices within growth companies, and c) understand which HRM structures and practices support or restrict creativity and learning at work. Here, we will summarise, in a meta-analytical manner, and discuss the findings of the four studies of the HeRMo project (Collin, Keronen, Lemmetty, et al., 2021; Collin, Lemmetty, & Riivari, 2020; Lemmetty et al., 2020; Riivari et al., forthcoming).

In this chapter, we start by briefly describing the theoretical premises behind the research project. Then we present, in more detail, the aims of the project and the research questions of the each sub-study. Furthermore, we describe the project methodology, data and analysis methods and summarise the main findings of the studies. Finally, we present our four main conclusions drawn from the HeRMo project and offer insights for future research and practical interventions aimed at supporting today's working life and the future in the case of individuals, teams and organisations in Finland and beyond.

Creativity and learning in working life

In recent years, creativity research has increasingly moved from an individual perspective to the approach of creativity as a collective and sociocultural phenomenon (e.g., Eteläpelto & Lahti, 2010; Glăveanu, 2015). At the same time, constructivism has been established as the dominant educational theory embraced, one way or another, in almost all educational reforms (Ertmer & Newby, 2013). In the shift within creativity studies, it is essential that creative processes and productions are seen as the outcomes of the actions of several people. Practically, it has been stated that creativity emerges in interaction (Hunter et al., 2008) – that is, creations do not emerge in a vacuum but in a social, situational context where individuals construct their creations from culturally connected entities and properties.

In educational theory, this simultaneous change has led to introducing active subjects and metaphors of knowledge construction and reconstruction, and while cognitivist approaches already included these undertones, there are significant differences. For example, the emphasis placed on metacognitive and self-regulative skills, the stated need to use and transform acquired knowledge and the transformation of education's aim from the presentation of information to guiding and facilitating learning processes (e.g., Tynjälä, 1999).

While individual approaches have addressed, for example, the creative personality and the case of eminent innovators, current lines of enquiry follow, and increasingly acknowledge, the idea that human creativity emerges from the interactions of inherently connected individuals and their surroundings. Even in 'solitude', we are connected to the world through our past, surroundings artefacts and our imagination (e.g., Glăveanu et al., 2019; Hunter et al., 2008; Robinson, 2011; Taylor, 1985). Collective creativity, as we understand it in this study, is more than individual creativity in teams (Kurtzberg & Amabile, 2001); it highlights creative behavior that occurs when people interact and cooperate with each other (Sawyer & DeZutter, 2009).

Common criteria for creativity include at least novelty and value (Runco & Jaeger, 2012). Thus, creativity usually refers to processes or outcomes that contain something new, compared to what exists. This may refer to different solutions to a problem at hand (Kaufman & Sternberg, 2007; John-Steiner, 2000; Sawyer, 2004) or simply a different perspective being taken (Glăveanu, 2020). Thus, novelty and value can be complemented with aspects focusing on usability and/or quality of the outcome when evaluating emerging creativity (Amabile, 1996; Runco & Jaeger, 2012). Additionally, surprise (Boden, 2004) and nonobviousness (Simonton, 2012) have been used to address absurd and silly ideas that broaden the scope of creativity (see, for example, Cropley & Cropley, 2010; Kaufman, 2015). A sociocultural approach includes a point where external evaluators from the field or domain addressing and evaluating creativity as procedures, ideas and products that differ from those developed before act as gatekeepers (Csikszentmihályi, 1996), setting an example of power relations connecting questions of what is and to whom things need to be novel and valuable.

As a process, creativity is often linked to work that connects problem solving and development (Collin, Lemmetty, Herranen, et al., 2017; Lemmetty & Collin, 2020), as well as idea generation (e.g., Mumford et al., 2012). Also, when learning is addressed as active knowledge construction instead of traditional knowledge transmission, both creativity and learning become much more mundane and reflect in ordinary everyday practices and structures. Thus, in the current project, we see creativity manifested in employees' learning and practices, ranging from simple and concrete problem-solving tasks to more abstract developments, adaptations and changes.

The practices of creating can be individual or collective, depending on the situation in which creativity is actualised. These divisions are not dichotomic, as an individual's embodied and embedded existence makes them inherently connected with the surrounding society. This means that individual/personal and social answers to the question 'For whom do things need to be novel and valuable?' are considered practical indicators that affect the perspective individuals take when deciding what is creative. For example, Runco and Beghetto (2019) propose the differentiation of primary to secondary creativity, where novelty and value are considered in a narrow individual perspective or broad social perspectives. While we believe that creativity is an important requirement for the accomplishment of high-quality outcomes and the empowerment of employees, we need to acknowledge the 'lower' everyday levels where creativity appears to connect with basic knowledge construction and reconstruction processes also labelled as learning.

When creativity is accomplished in everyday work, it has been strongly linked with informal learning (see, for example, Marsick & Watkins, 1990). Informal learning can be understood as a part of learning that expands formal learning, training and development and that emerges and results from everyday cognitive activities, such as reflection and metacognitive considerations practised in real-life contexts (e.g., Noe et al., 2014). In addition, while some previous studies have shown that creativity is linked to employees' existing knowledge and competence (Amabile, 1996; Ford, 1996; Runco, 2015) and workplace learning (Lemmetty & Collin, 2019, 2020), the constructivist paradigm would advance the idea that the reference point for the evaluation of novelty is represented by the broader knowledge structures used to construct or reconstruct something new. Conversely, value would be situationally determined. For example, in nonroutine, knowledge-based work requiring continuous problem

solving (Sanders et al., 2017) and knowledge propagation (Beach, 2005), it could be argued that creativity and learning are increasingly embedded in daily work practices and interactions with others (Edwards, 2010). Thus, the disconnect is between both informal and formal learning and between learning as knowledge transmission and learning as knowledge construction. At the same time, to enable flexible and fast-paced work, learning and working is increasingly becoming the responsibility of employees and teams themselves. It is suggested that this kind of work requires new forms of support (Lemmetty, 2020).

Practices and structures supporting creativity and learning – a focus on HRM

The importance of organisational practices, leadership and HRM for fostering both organisational productivity and employee well-being have recently been emphasised within the contexts of working life, organisational functions and employee requirements. Leadership and management can be seen as broad entities, where HRM plays a crucial role in the success of organisations because it is related to employee well-being (Meglich, 2015), organisational productivity (Boselie et al., 2005), and creativity and learning (Jimenes-Jimenes & Sanz-Valle, 2012). HRM's key practices include recruitment, training and development, performance management, performance-based rewards, teamwork, employment continuity and communication (Armstrong & Taylor, 2014; Jimenez-Jimenez & Sanz-Valle, 2012; Pilbeam & Corbridge, 2010; Ulric & Dulebohn, 2015). HRM is linked to organisational strategy and structures, day-to-day leadership and managerial work (Pilbeam & Corbridge, 2010). Nowadays, the role of HRM is more of being a strategic partner than an administrative problem handler (Armstrong & Taylor, 2014; Ulrich & Dulebohn, 2015).

HRD is considered a part of HRM – with a special emphasis on training, development and learning – and supports the development of personnel skills. HRD is a subfunction of leadership and HRM (Lee, 2016) refers to all practices supporting training and learning at and for work, as well as from and through work (Kuchinke, 2017). The ultimate purpose of HRD is to enhance learning in organisations by motivating personnel and developing an organisational culture that promotes the acquisition and sharing of knowledge and expertise (DeLong & Fahey, 2000). Recently, the importance of HRD for the creativity of employees in organisations has become increasingly noted (e.g., Joo et al., 2013), given that creativity is strongly associated with employee competence, previous knowledge and expertise (Amabile, 1996; Runco, 2015), and workplace learning (Lemmetty & Collin, 2020). For this reason, promoting creativity should be one of the key objectives of HRD (Jiang et al., 2012; Loewenberger, 2013).

HRM and HRD should be intertwined with all other activities of an organisation and, therefore, linked to both organisational practices and structures. As mentioned above, HRM focuses on leadership and managerial work in the form of mentoring people, recruitment, job planning, career development and team building (Ulrich & Dulebohn, 2015). HRM plays an important role in promoting employee creativity and learning and developing practices that support learning. However, organisational structures also create frameworks for different practices that are continuously changing. In growth companies in particular, management strives to respond quickly and flexibly to intensifying competition while increasing turnover and the number of employees. One of the trends that has become typical in Finnish companies

is the change from a hierarchical, bureaucratic organisational structure to a low hierarchical, even self-directed, one (Holbeche, 2015; Lee & Edmondson, 2017). At the same time, organisations are increasingly expecting agility in HRM practices (Heilmann et al., 2018). For example, Auvinen et al. (2018) have found that leadership style and HRM practices in high-tech growth companies evolved from hierarchical and managerialist to more self-managed, autonomous and nonmanagerial. So far, however, there is only scant knowledge of such organisations (Lee & Edmondson, 2017). Consequently, it is important to find out what organisational structures and practices support or limit creativity and learning.

In our first sub-study as part of the HeRMo project (see Table 1), we examined the connections between collective creativity, workplace climate, managerial work and organisational hierarchy. Here, we wanted to determine the role of organisational hierarchy in enhancing creativity. We examined these relationships in three different types of organisations: a) organisations that have a high organisational hierarchy (with traditional management and supervisory positions), b) organisations with a low hierarchy (with supervisors and autonomous teams) and c) organisations with no hierarchy (no designated supervisors at all). This is an important theme to examine because previous studies have called for a study of organisations with different hierarchical levels (Collin, Herranen, Auvinen, et al., 2018), particularly for self-organised firms; indeed, there are indications that a low hierarchy would increase innovation (Lee & Edmondson, 2017). In the second sub-study, we focused on examining the effects of organisational structure on learning (see Table 1). Here, like the previous research, research was guided by the need to examine self-organising, and thus low-hierarchy, organisations (Lee & Edmondson, 2017). Thus, through the first two sub-studies, we gained an understanding of the effects of organisational structures on creativity and learning.

HRM and HRD practices were examined in Sub-studies 3 and 4 (see Table 1). We approached HRM in organisations as a human-centred activity that includes humane practices (Ulrich & Dulebohn, 2015), reflects the values and ideologies of the entire organisation (Schwepker, 1999) and enhances the creativity and learning of employees and the entire organisation (Lilova & Poell, 2019; Loewenberger, 2013). Thus, during our research project, we identified different HRD practices within the participating organisations and elaborated on how these practices support employees' possibilities for creativity at work. In Sub-study 3, we utilised Jimenez-Jimenez and Sanz-Valle's (2012) categorisation of HR practices as an analytical framework, where it is possible to divide HRD into seven broad categories: job design, teamwork, staffing, career development, training, performance appraisal and compensation.

However, we also noticed that the positive aspects of HRM have been generally questioned because HRM produces an image of people being managed as resources (Inkson, 2008), that are expensive when it comes to the organisational overhead (Storey, 1989). For this reason, we wanted to examine HRM from a critical perspective – focusing on those HRM practices that do not meet employee expectations and values, hence creating conflicts (see Moser, 1988) that can have negative consequences for the well-being, creativity and learning of individuals (DeTienne et al., 2012; Thorne, 2010). Therefore, in Sub-study 4, we identified different kinds of conflicts in the participating organisations and examined within which HRM practices these conflicts arise. As an analytical tool to locate HRM practices, we used Ulric and Dulebohn's (2015) framework for the categorisation of HR profession characteristics. We

divided HRM goals and practices into four categories: (a) people-related practices (including practices related to workforce planning, recruitment, training, development and engagement), (b) performance-related practices (including rewards, feedback, senior management, goal setting and behavioural evaluations), (c) information-related practices (including internal and external communication in organisation) and (d) work-related practices (including the functions and structures of the organisation).

Aims, questions and substudies of the HeRMo-project

The aim of the current research and development project was to a) examine how creativity and learning emerge in growth companies, b) identify the types of HRM structures and practices within growth companies, and c) understand which HRM structures and practices support or restrict creativity and learning at work. The project contains four sub-studies focusing on HRM, creativity and learning. The research questions of the sub-studies are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Sub-studies and research questions

Title of the Sub-study	Research questions of the study
1) *The Relationship of Collective Creativity with Managerial Work and Workplace Climate in Hierarchical and Less Hierarchical Organisations* (Riivari, Jaakkola, Lemmetty et al., forthcoming)	1. How do managerial work and workplace climate influence collective creativity in organisations with different types of hierarchies?
2) *Self-Organised Structure in the Field of ICT—Challenges for Employees' Workplace Learning* (Collin, Keronen, Lemmetty, et al., 2021)	1. What learning-related challenges or problematic features are described in self-organised structures? 2. What are the consequences of these problematic features on employee learning?
3) *Human Resources Development Practices Supporting Creativity in Finnish Growth Companies* (Collin, Lemmetty, & Riivari, 2020)	1. What kinds of requirements for creativity do the personnel describe in their work? 2. What human resources development practices align with the requirements of creativity as defined by employees?
4) *Conflicts Related to Human Resource Management in Finnish Project-Based Companies* (Lemmetty, Keronen, Auvinen & Collin, 2020)	1. What kind of conflicts and their consequences are described by employees in project-based companies? 2. What areas of human resource management practice can these conflict situations be seen to engage with?

Methodology and data

Mixed methods and ethnographic approaches

Creativity and HRM at work have often been studied using surveys and statistical methods, thus enabling a general but superficial understanding of various dynamic connections. Statistical approaches alone are not sufficient to shed light on the crucial, qualitative nuances of everyday working life. Because research on creativity and HRM practices in organisations clearly lacks the kinds of methodological tools that would enable a wide and profound description of the interconnections between individual actors and the surrounding community and contexts, we utilised ethnographic (e.g., Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007), as well as quantitative and qualitative, approaches to gain a broader and more holistic understanding that could make significant contributions to both theory and practice.

Data

In the HeRMo project, the target organisations were Finnish growth companies from the construction, technology and artistic design sectors. In addition to the field of industry, the target organisations differed in size, location and organisational structure (hierarchy level). The companies included both units that have operated for more than 20 years and small and agile companies. The target organisations were interested in receiving support because of an increase in the number of their employees and the development of new technologies requiring constant changes in daily work. These changes force employees to reflect on and promote their skills through various means of workplace learning, thereby enabling creative activity. Although organisations have different traditions, practices and structures, the pursuit of flexibility and competitiveness was a common aim across all organisations under study. This was achieved in the organisations by lowering hierarchies, creating project teams, increasing the responsibility and freedom of individuals or reducing bureaucracy. The organisations have been given pseudonyms: *technology, industrial, software, information, resolution*, and *design*. The data collected were examined through four sub-studies, which are described in more detail in Tables 1 and 2. In each sub-study, the target organisations, themes, data formats and analyses were selected based on the research aims and questions.

Within the mixed methods and ethnographic framework, a multimethod approach towards data gathering and analysis was applied. First, a *survey* of employees' experiences of creativity, leadership and management, as related to organisational culture and their life conditions and creativity at work, was conducted. The survey investigated the conceptions of managers, leaders and their subordinates regarding their roles as creative practitioners and their opportunities to exercise creativity. From the project's point of view, the relevant indicators were managerial work and climate indicators (Heiskanen & Jokinen, 2015) and the questions measuring creativity (as applied by Bissola & Imperatori, 2011). Second, a total of 118 interviews were conducted; the participants were employees of the organisations, middle managers and top management. The interviewees were randomly selected, and the interviews were semi-structured thematic interviews. The themes were management and staffing, creativity and learning, and competence development. In addition, the interviews discussed the work community, the support needed at work and work interactions. The interviewees were asked more specific questions about each, if necessary. Surveys and interviews were designed

to facilitate a comparison of different professional groups, fields of industry and the sizes of the different organisations.

Analysis

Methods suitable for the research context, using both theory- and data-driven methodologies, were applied. The units of analysis were determined in accordance with the purpose of the research and the research questions. Various analytical tools within the mixed methods and ethnographic framework yielded the findings described below. Basic information from the survey data – namely, tools for comparing different professional groups, fields of activity and the sizes and structures (hierarchy levels) of the organisations – were developed. Multiple linear regression and correlation analyses were used as analytical tools for the questionnaire data. In addition, thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) and content analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005) were employed in the qualitative sub-studies.

Because both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods and analytical tools were used, the validity and credibility of the research was enhanced by the application of methods and researcher triangulation (Patton, 2002). In the case of the quantitative surveys, multiple ways to enhance the validity and credibility of the data were employed (e.g., large enough samples and validity tests). Method triangulation means that key aspects of the research phenomenon and contexts are taken into account when combining different data sets (surveys and interviews). Thus, method triangulation was used to increase the internal validity of the data analysis and create a multifaceted understanding of the phenomenon of interest. Each stage of the analysis involved at least two researchers.

Summary of the main findings of the substudies of the HeRMo-project

Next, we present the main findings of the sub-studies in a condensed fashion and elaborate on the conclusions of the project more broadly. In Table 2, we describe the studied phenomena and original publications of the sub-studies, the utilised data in each of the studies and the main findings.

Table 2. Data and findings of the HeRMo project

Substudy	Data and analysis	Main findings
Substudy 1	Electronic questionnaire responses (N = 265) consist of respondents' accounts of collective creativity, managerial work and workplace climate. Multiple linear regression and correlation analysis	The climate in the workplace and managerial work are linked to collective creativity. Managerial work mediates the relationship between workplace climate and collective creativity. Organisational hierarchy does not change the relationship between climate and creativity.
Substudy 2	A total of 36 thematic interviews with the personnel of two self-organised organisations (software and information) Content analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005)	Problematic features of self-organised organisations in relation to employee learning are unclear structures, unclear roles and a lack of responsibility. These features cause challenges in guidance and support for learning, challenges in long-term sustainable competence development and challenges with organising and prioritising work tasks related to learning.
Substudy 3	A total of 98 thematic interviews with the personnel of five growth organisations. Content analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005) and thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006)	Requirements of creativity described by employees are time and freedom, resources and support, possibilities for competence development, collectivity, a peaceful work environment and versatile work content. HRD practices aligning with these requirements are related to multifaceted tasks, communication, individual and team autonomy, self-directed project teams, sparring partners, developmental teams, competence-based recruitment, employee-oriented career paths, formal and informal trainings, spontaneous training and learning possibilities, developmental and check-point discussions, team meetings, clear organisational structures, flexible practices and sparring supervisory work.
Substudy 4	A total of 95 thematic interviews with the personnel of five growth organisations. Content analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005) and thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006)	Conflicts between employer and employee emerged in cases of lack of employee orientation in people-related HRM practices, unfairness in performance-related HRM practices, lack of transparency and contradictory action in information-related HRM practices, and lack of clarity in work-related HRM practices. The consequences of the conflicts were experienced by employees as frustration, problems in getting help, a slower pace of work, stress, motivation problems, illness, feelings of insecurity and inequality, and anxiety. These can become problems for creativity and learning at work.

The results from Sub-study 1 (Riivari, Jaakkola, Lemmetty et al., forthcoming) indicate that collective and collaborative creativity takes place in the interactions found in all the studied organisations. The results also demonstrate that workplace climate and managerial work are connected with collective creativity. When comparing different hierarchical levels in organisations (high level, low level and self-organised), the level of hierarchy did not change the relationship between climate and creativity or managerial work and creativity – that is, the connections were similar regardless of the level of hierarchy. Consequently, it can be inferred that the climate of the workplace and managerial work are important for creativity, regardless of organisational hierarchy.

In Sub-study 2 (Collin, Keronen, Lemmetty, et al., 2021), it was found that in self-organised organisations, the personnel described a variety of challenges for workplace learning. Special attention was paid to those challenges suggested as emerging from the self-organised structure (i.e., low hierarchies). A self-organised structure appeared to sometimes foster unclear roles, as well as problems in having and taking responsibilities. These, in turn, are reflected as challenges in having long-term sustainable competence development, receiving support when needed, and organising one's work and learning, as well as prioritising it. Learning was described as constantly occurring and as embedded in everyday work practices.

Sub-study 3 (Collin, Lemmetty, & Riivari, 2020) found creativity in growth companies as strongly connected to competence development and learning. Therefore, a variety of tools to support learning are required. In interviews, the employees stated that their creativity requires time and freedom, resources and support, possibilities for competence development, collectivity, a peaceful work environment, and versatile work content. Several kinds of creativity-supporting HRD structures and practices were already in use in the organisations under study, such as project and developmental teams, competence-based recruitment, and developmental and check-point discussions with a supervisor or HR manager.

Sub-study 4 (Lemmetty et al., 2020) revealed a variety of problematic HRM practices that emerge from teamwork, communication and everyday leadership. Informed by the findings, HRM practices can result in conflicts between an employer and employee when they are not based on employee-orientedness, fairness, transparency or clarity. The consequences of the conflicts were experienced by employees as frustration, problems in getting help, a slower pace of work, stress, motivation problems and illness, feelings of insecurity and inequality, and anxiety. These consequences can also produce problems for employees' learning and creativity at work.

Four main conclusions from the HeRMo-project

Learning and creativity processes at work can be seen both as individual activities and as group activities and interactions (Riivari, Jaakkola, Lemmetty et al., forthcoming; Collin, Lemmetty & Riivari, 2020). In addition, they have been discussed in the literature as strongly intertwined phenomena (Amabile, 1996; Ford, 1996; Runco, 2015). Creativity requires learning that is emerged in different work practices (Lemmetty & Collin, 2020). The manifestations of creativity and learning are influenced by the environment in which individuals and groups operate. Because of these factors, it is clear that all activities within an organization contribute to the promotion and support of learning and creativity. In the HeRMo project, we looked at supporting learning and creativity, especially from the perspectives of the HRM and HRD frameworks. However, these are not limited to individual staffing activities such as recruitment, training, and rewards, but to a wide range of management activities ranging from daily managerial work to reaching organizational strategic solutions.

Based on the previous literature and the findings of our research project, we have formed four conclusions that focus on supporting creativity and learning at work:

1) Creativity and learning are collective and informal phenomena at work,
2) A variety of structures and practices enable creativity and learning at work,
3) Both equality and employee orientation in structures and practices are important,
4) A context-specific examination of creativity, learning and supporting practices is needed.

Creativity and learning are collective and informal phenomena at work

The manifestations of creativity and learning have been examined in the context of working life and it has been found that they are often strongly collective, attached to everyday work practices and, thus, also oftentimes informal (see also Anderson et al., 2014; Lemmetty & Collin, 2019). It has been typical to connect creativity and learning to daily-based problem-solving processes and developmental work (see also Collin, Lemmetty, Herranen, et al., 2017). Because of mainly project-based work, requiring collaboration with both colleagues and customers, it is natural that creativity emerges in these particular situations.

Our survey data showed that collective creativity was present in all the studied organisations (see Riivari, Jaakkola, Lemmetty et al., forthcoming). The descriptions of creativity were examined in our research project, especially in sub-study 3 (see Collin, Lemmetty, & Riivari, 2020). Although the main aim was to focus on employees' descriptions of the issues supporting creativity, it was not possible to separate these descriptions from the participants' definitions of creativity. In this context especially, the descriptions of creativity as informal and practical were predominant. Expert work was identified as creative because the tasks and projects at hand included new kinds of problems that needed to be solved. In turn, problem solving often required learning new things and seeking information, either individually or collectively. Interviewees stressed the importance of colleagues in developing expertise and advancing problem-solving processes. Younger and less experienced workers in particular saw collaboration with more experienced ones as important (Collin, Lemmetty & Riivari, 2020).

The need to make creative solutions and, thus, to also learn something new, stems strongly from everyday work tasks. The tasks of different actors in the organizations under study were linked to each other and formed entities. For this reason, cooperation between different actors, but also an understanding of the overall picture in organizations, is crucial (Collin, Lemmetty & Riivari, 2020; Collin, Keronen, Lemmetty et al., 2021).

A variety of structures and practices enable creativity and learning at work

Because there are many different tasks that require creativity and learning in working life, organizations need a variety of structures and practices to manage and support them. Recent studies of creativity have emphasised the features of looseness, limitlessness and (non)laboriousness as important for creativity (see, for example, Collin, Herranen, Auvinen, et al., 2018). At the same time, many kinds of external concerns (clients, business aims, colleagues and stakeholders) affect people's actions at work, despite prevailing high or low organisational hierarchies. In our research, we found that creativity and learning can be enabled by a wide variety of organizational structures and practices. In other words, the structure itself does not necessarily increase or limit opportunities for creativity and learning, but what mattered was how people experienced these structures: are they realized as supportive or controlling? (Riivari, Jaakkola, Lemmetty et al., forthcoming; Lemmetty, Keronen, Auvinen & Collin, 2020). Additionally, the need for clear and transparent roles and frames were repeated in the interviewees' answers (Collin, Keronen, Lemmetty et al., 2021). Thus, employees need to know where to seek help and support. In enhancing the integrity and clarity of the aforementioned features in organisations, the role of HRM can become vital.

Our research project revealed a wide range of practical ways to support creativity and learning: various team models, sparring partners or development groups promoting

collaboration and interaction were perceived as useful arenas for creativity and learning (Collin, Lemmetty & Riivari, 2020). Different kinds of discussions between supervisor and subordinate were also seen as an important space in planning and evaluating one's own learning. Many of these actions implemented in the organization also supported goal setting at the individual, team and organisational level, making it possible to direct creativity and learning towards goals.

Equality and employee orientation in structures and practices are important

Organisations' structures and practices create and maintain an organizational culture. Our research highlighted that a wide variety of organizational structures or practices may appear to be conducive to creativity and learning, but it is still important to consider our results related to workplace climate and managerial work as well: open and encouraging climate and supportive, coaching managerial work became a more essential factor in terms of collective creativity than the levels of the organizational hierarchy (Riivari, Jaakkola, Lemmetty, et al., forthcoming). Thus, it is important to pay attention at how organisational culture and climate are communicated and spread in organisations through structures, roles, and practices.

Clearness is also important in terms of organisational culture and practices. Our findings reveal that clear structures for support, collegiality and a cosy climate enhance creativity and learning. These factors prevail in a support-enhancing climate within the organisation. The conflicting situations studied (in sub-study 4) also showed that employees hoped for HR and leadership to be equal, referring also to the organisational culture that isconstructed in everyday practices and encounters. Consequently, the role of HRM is to build a big picture for everybody, offer equal possibilities for people to learn and develop themselves, and show direction for various actors in the organisation.

Our project also indicates that if HRM and organisational culture are based on making a profit and on 'tough' values, that employees' perspectives are not taken into account or the organization is not equal, there is a risk of exhaustion, decreased motivation and, with them, of a loss of creativity and learning. The lack of equal and employee-orientedness in organisations also caused pressures, fatigue and stress (Lemmetty, Keronen, Auvinen, Collin, 2020). By designating 'soft' values as secondary and considering people only as resources, HRM can harm profitability. Instead, in organisations where people are seen as the key actors in making creative outcomes, implementing creative processes and increasing organizational competence, employee orientation could be seen as a natural part of the culture, that emerge behind the structures and practices (Lemmetty, Keronen, Auvinen & Collin, 2020; Collin, Lemmetty & Riivari, 2020). Decision-making should be participative and should support employees' possibilities to influence their own work. Simultaneously, HRM should mean taking care of the personnel's capacity to work, including their safety and well-being, without neglecting the company's profitability.

In the HeRMo-project, we also noticed that the requirement of being equal and fair and employee-oriented at the same time can produce a paradoxical situation, as all should be treated equally and fairly and yet approached as individuals. However, during the project, we understood that this paradox was not necessarily restricting. Fairness and equality can be seen as the starting point on which the company's basic HR plans and guidelines are based, still leaving opportunities for individuals to make choices and influence within these frameworks. In practice, this can mean, for example, that every employee is offered the same possibilities for learning, but every employee also chooses to use these possibilities as they find meaningful. Thus, fairness could result in new possibilities for an employee-oriented mind-set.

A context-specific examination of creativity, learning and supporting practices is needed

It is important to acknowledge that theoretical connections and understandings affect the ways in which creativity and learning are addressed and practically manifested, recognised and supported in the everyday work of different organisations. Learning, addressed from the perspective of knowledge transmission, has practical and pragmatic implications that also connect with knowledge (objective and absolute), whereas a knowledge construction and reconstruction perspective takes a more relativistic and subjective tone and 'move' learning into an informal realm, closer to creativity. This latter approach also affects the evaluation and measurement of creativity and learning, and, therefore, the methods of validating them. Knowledge transmission points of view, as well as more objective evaluations of creativity, create a dangerous dichotomy when compared with the knowledge construction paradigm – required by contemporary working life – and its adjoined, more subjective, approaches to creativity.

Creativity and learning seemed to be an essential part of the personnel's everyday work. Thus, their role in developing the business and profitability of the growth company is important. In organising workplace learning, more traditional knowledge transmission approaches compete (and clash) with knowledge construction paradigms that expand into informal learning opportunities, and they both need to be addressed. Similarly, creativity needs to be addressed at different levels. Our findings also emphasise the need to further investigate how to best support creativity and learning in different organisations.

Previous studies have shown that many of the phenomena in working life are highly context- and industry-specific (see, for example, Collin, Herranen, Auvinen, et al., 2018). In the HeRMo project, we could not find such unambiguous HRM/leadership structures or models that would be functional in any organisation. Instead, we found many context-specific HRD practices that support creativity and learning (see Collin, Lemmetty, & Riivari, 2020; Lemmetty et al., 2020). Interestingly, many examples of functional HRD practices were also found. Similarly, HRM practices can create conflicts and questionable actions but can also be responsible within their contexts. Thus, the variation seems to depend on whose opinion is sought, and what the respondent's experience of the issue at hand is.

Closing thoughts

Based on the HeRMo project, we can conclude that clear and transparent structures and roles, as well as equal and employee-oriented HRM practices, support creativity and learning at work. These practices vary depending on the industry, size and mission of the organisation. The most functional HRM practices in the participating organisations seemed to be developed by listening to the personnel and collaborating with employees, with management then taking into account organisation-specific features and situations. Therefore, we believe that the solutions brought from outside of the organisation do not result, most of the time, in the hoped outcomes. Creativity, learning and HRM should be analysed and defined by the organisation, teams and individuals in a thoughtful and engaged manner. This sounds easy, but, very often, there is too little time for reviews or the setting of future goals because of business pressures. Thus, courage is needed from the organisation to stop and critically elaborate on what kind of creativity it hopes to see from its employees, how it defines creativity, and how creativity is supported in a way that enhances profitability.

With HR practices increasingly becoming a part of organisations' strategies, more comprehensive studies investigating organisations are needed, especially to provide a more detailed understanding of how to support creativity and learning in a turbulent working life. In addition to growth organisations, more research on these phenomena in other organisations is required. Because of the context-bound nature of this chapter, we especially need research involving small start-ups and large hierarchical public sector organisations. Although the needs and wishes – and even definitions of creativity and learning – of all the organisations above are inevitably different, we believe that continuous learning is needed in all organisations, no matter the industry.

Acknowledgments

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