

INTERGENERATIONAL MENTORING AND LEARNING IN THE WORKPLACE (LEARNGEN)

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Research Question: More people in the EU aged 55-64 years have been active in labour market and it is expected that workers within this age range will increase to 28.5% of the total population by 2050. EU Commission communicated in 2017 an inclusion and diversity strategy promoting the inclusion of older staff to equal work opportunities as younger staff. Issues around ageing in the workplace such as adjustment to workplace digitalisation and intergenerational communication are not being addressed proactively and this results in a continued mismanagement of talent, decreasing as such employee morale and increasing discrimination in the workplace. The main question addressed in the present research was how can we better combat segregation, discrimination and social exclusion of marginalised workers through intergenerational learning? The reserach was conducted in the framework of the LearnGen project, an Erasmus plus funded project that aims to to assist develop skills in both older-aged and younger-aged worker groups to learn from each other, making them less vulnerable to societal biases.

Purpose: The main purpose of the LearnGen project was to develop Curriculum and Training material to provide an avid pool of knowledge and practical applications for VET providers and in-service trainers so they can create relevant strategies within their organizations/company settings and successfully address workplace ageism and social exclusion. It is expected to result in the implementation of innovative practice at the organizational level, specifically by having older workers mentoring youth on skills such as strategic and critical thinking and problem-solving and young workers using reverse mentoring to train older workers to become digitally and media literate.

Method: The project consortium (countries: Bulgaria, Ireland, Portugal, Greece, Cyprus and the Czech Republic) worked together on creating rich training material based on empirical evidence and best practices that aimed to help managers, HR Managers and Trainers support elderly and young wokres to develop core skills necessary to teach and learn from each other and engage in reverse mentoring. The training was implemented and piloted in all the participating countries. A total of 122 participants from all partner countries participated in the piloting of the training. The material and the project's online platform of resources were presented and evaluated before finalisation and dissemination through the online platform and multiplier events.

Results: The participants exhibited strong intentions to take measures and/or create opportunities to all workers, regardless of their age group, in order to avoid huge future

discrepancies between labour market demand and supply.

Organization: The pilot training participants realised that they themselves sometimes hold stereotypical age biases and they agreed that the ageing working population is not often spoken about, with a lack of resources and strategies available to organisations to combat the issue.

Society: All pilot training participants agreed that the government and other responsible parties should firstly raise awareness and then proceed with the creation of a concrete plan.

Originality: The concept of reverse mentoring with the aim of combating ageism and social workplace exclusion is a new one with not a lot of research done.

Limitations / further research: The main limitations of this research are its cross-sectional nature, the self-reported data collected and the relatively small sample size. Future research could aim at developing and testing the effectiveness of more resources and practices that could combat the issue of ageing specifically in the workplace.

Keywords: intergenerational learning, mentoring, reverse mentoring, workplace inclusion, combating ageism, combating social exclusion.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Kiki Kallis. With a BA in Psychology and Human Resource Management from Keele University and a MA in HRM from the University of Leeds, Kiki has had an international career spanning over 25 years working in various companies and organisation in roles ranging from Consultant to HR Business Partner. She is currently the HR Manager for HR Award-winning, non-profit research and training organisation CARDET, responsible for the organisation's HR systems, policies and their implementation. She is a Fellow member of the Cyprus HR Management Association of which she served as a Board member. She is also an Associate Professional Member of the CIPD. A Certified trainer, Kiki loves delivering HR training workshops for capacity building. Her professional passions include Talent Management, Inclusion and Diversity, Employee Wellbeing and Employee Engagement.

