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HELIX VINN EXCELLENCE CENTRE

V I N N E x c e l l e n c e C e n t r e



Organizing Effective Competence Development: Towards an Integrated Model

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HELIX Excellence Centre

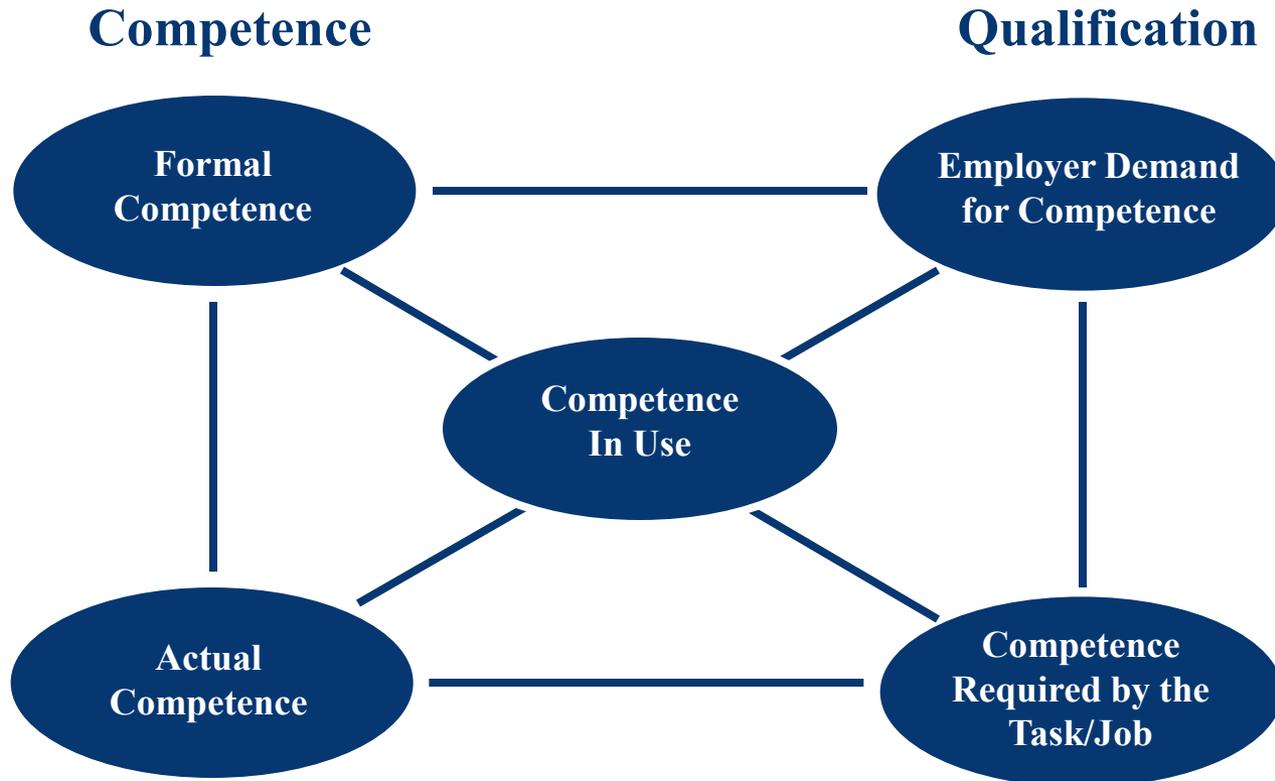
- A ten year research and innovation programme
- Organized as a partnership between the university, companies, public sector and labour market organizations
- Based on a multi-disciplinary and interactive research approach

The Concept of Competence

Defined here as:

- the potential capacity of an individual (or a collective)
- to successfully handle certain tasks (or situations)
- according to certain formal or informal criteria, set by oneself or by somebody else

The Concepts of Competence and Qualification



Potential Effects of Competence Development

- Improved organizational performance (e.g. in terms of quality, delivery on time, productivity)
- Increased ability for problem-solving, idea development and practice-based innovations (“everyday innovations”)
- Improved work related health and reduced risks for stress
- Individual development and lifelong learning

Main Forms of Competence Development

- Training and development through formal learning activities, e.g. courses
- Non-formal learning activities, e.g. seminars, conferences, supervision programmes
- Informal learning activities, i.e. learning in and through daily work

Four Levels of Outcomes

- Satisfied participants
- Learning of e.g. new knowledge or skills
- Increased competence = capacity to put knowledge to work
- Improved organizational performance in terms of e.g. improved quality or delivery on time

(adapted after Kirkpatrick, 1998)

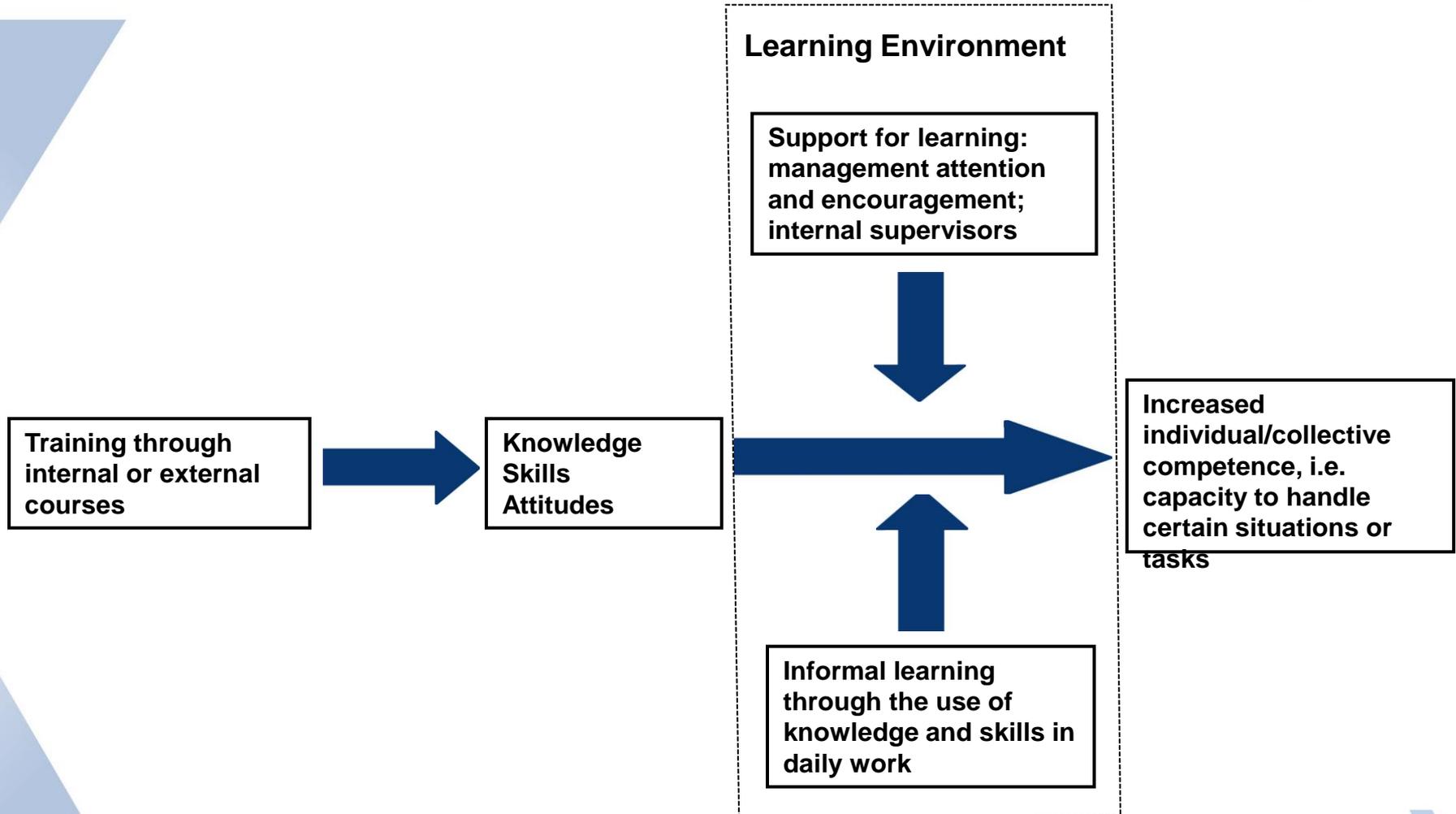
Too Much Confidence in Training as a Magic Bullet

**Training
(e.g. courses)**

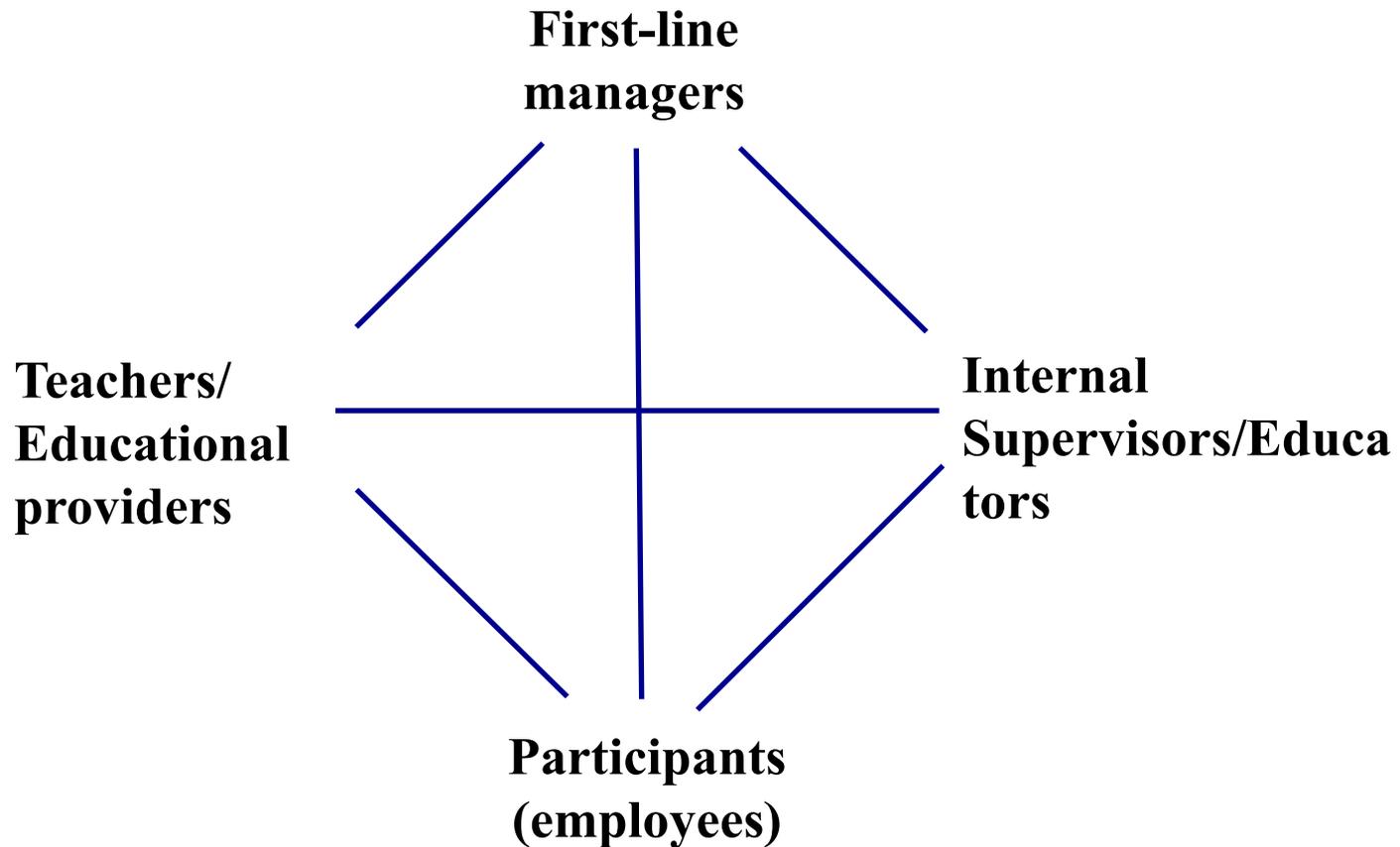


**Increased individual
competence and
organizational
performance**

Effects of training are not achieved automatically



Actors in an Integrated System of Workplace Learning



The Importance of the Workplace as a Learning Environment

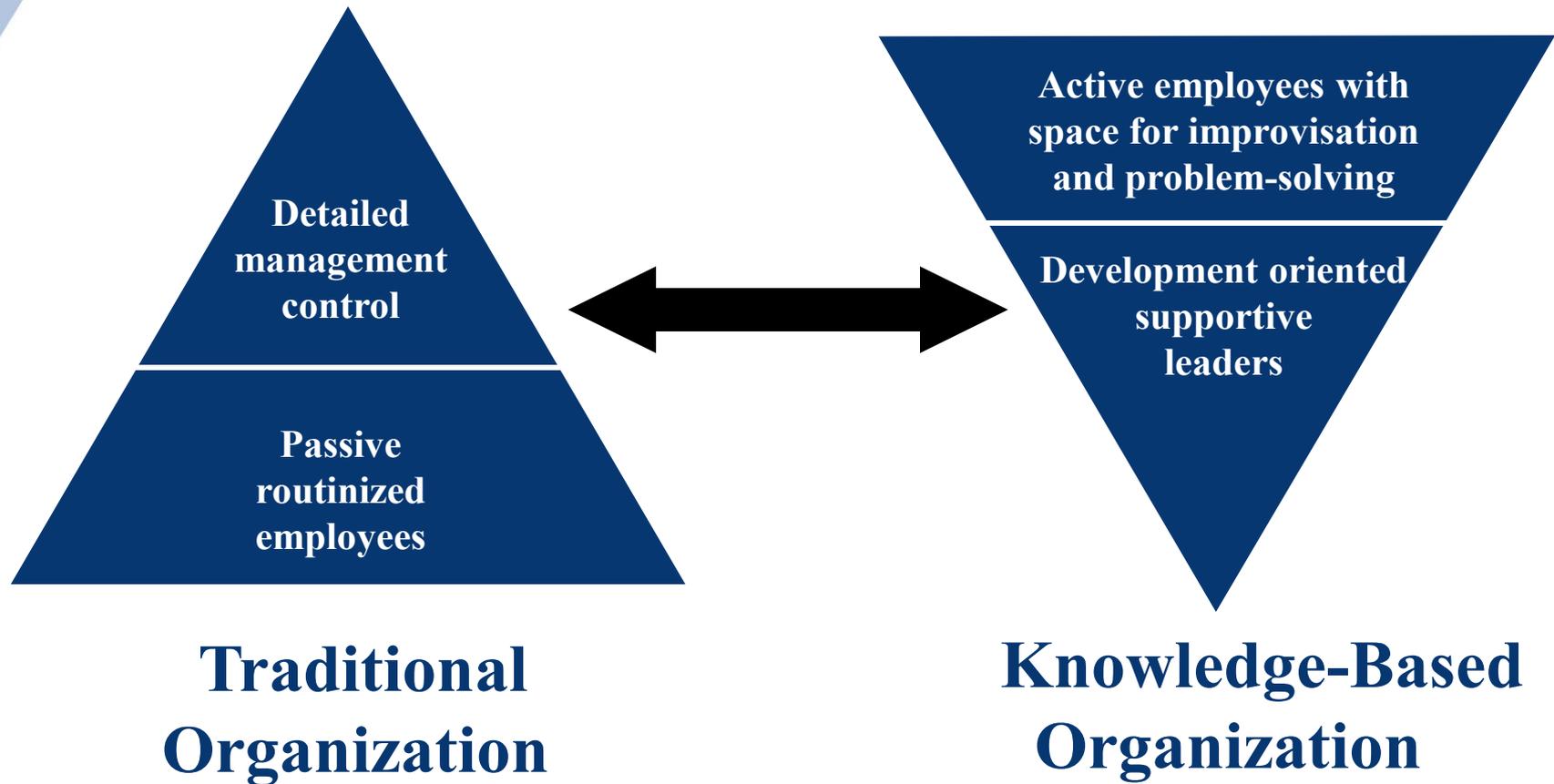
- The effects of competence development depend to a large extent on the opportunities for knowledge use and further learning in and through work
- And thereby on the workplace as a learning environment

Two Types of Learning Environment: Constraining and Enabling

A workplace offers a constraining or an enabling learning environment depending on:

- the learning potential of the tasks (e.g. complexity, task variety, scope of action/control);
- opportunities for feedback and reflection;
- management attention, encouragement and support for learning at work;
- employee participation in problem handling and development activities;
- cultural aspects, e.g. openness and trust
- available time and other resources for learning

Constraining and Enabling Learning Environments



Enabling Learning Environments Require a Balance Between Two Logics

The Logic of Development:

- reflection, alternative thinking, experimentation, risk taking;
- tolerance of ambiguity, variation, and mistakes;
- critical analysis;
- creative (innovative) learning

The Logic of Performance/Production:

- high demands on efficiency;
- problem-solving through avoidance or the application of given rules or instructions
- a focus on consensus, and stability – a low tolerance of variation
- reproductive learning

Leadership for Learning: What does it mean in practice?

Development Oriented Leadership

- Issues related to training and development are understood as an integrated part of the duties of being a manager
- First-line managers attend to, encourage and support the co-workers' learning activities at work (clarify expectations, create necessary resources, follow up on activities)

Administratively Oriented Leadership

- First-line managers do not view issues related to training and development as part of their duties as managers – these issues are delegated to others
- A main focus on administrative issues, operations, and everyday work

A Main Message

Effective competence development at the workplace presupposes:

- Training activities (e.g. courses) that are properly planned, designed, delivered, and evaluated
- But sending employees to courses is not sufficient for achieving effects in terms of improved competence and organizational performance
- What is equally (or even more important) is to create enabling learning environments that provide “good soil” for further learning at work
- In practice, this might require an active partnership between educational providers and companies.

Selected Publications

Ellström, E. (forthcoming). Managerial Support for Learning at Work: A qualitative study of first-line managers in elder care . *Leadership in Health Services*.

Ellström, E. (under review). Managers' Influences on Learning Outcomes: A Study of a Work-based Training Programme. *Journal of Workplace Learning*.

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Ellström, P.-E. (2011). Informal Learning at Work: Conditions, Processes and Logics. In: M. Malloch et al. (Eds.) *The SAGE Handbook of Workplace Learning*. London: Sage Publications.

Ellström, P.-E. (2010). Practice-based innovation: a learning perspective. *The Journal of Workplace Learning*, 22, 1-2, pp. 27-40.

Ellström, P.-E. & Kock, H. (2009). Competence Development in the Workplace: Concepts, Strategies, and Effects. In: K. Illeris (Ed.) *International Perspectives on Competence Development. Developing Skill and Capabilities*. London: Routledge.

Ellström, P.-E. (2006). Two Logics of Learning. In: E. Antonacopoulou, P. Jarvis, V. Andersen, B. Elkjær, & S. Høyrup (Eds.), *Learning, Working and Living. Mapping the Terrain of Working Life Learning*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Ellström, P.-E. (2001). Integrating Learning and Work: Conceptual Issues and Critical Conditions. *Human Resource Development Quarterly*, 12, 4, 421–435.

Ellström, P.-E. (1997). The Many Meanings of Occupational Competence and Qualification. *Journal of European Industrial Training*, 21, 6/7, pp. 266–273.

Kock, H. & Ellström, P.-E. (2011). Formal and Integrated Strategies for Competence Development in SMEs. *Journal of European Industrial Training*, 35, 1, pp.71—88.

Thank you for your attention!

V I N N E x c e l l e n c e C e n t r e

