

Kansas State University Libraries

## New Prairie Press

---

Adult Education Research Conference

2018 Conference Proceedings (Victoria, BC  
Canada)

---

# Skill Utilization of Older Workers in South Korea: The Effect of Diverse Types of Learning Experiences and Organizational Learning Supports

Hyunok Ryu

*University of British Columbia, inggreater@gmail.com*

Doo Hun H. Lim

*University of Oklahoma Norman Campus, dhlim@ou.edu*

Junghwan Kim

*University of Oklahoma Norman Campus, jkim@ou.edu*

Intak Kwon

*Chonbuk National University, itkwon@jbnu.ac.kr*

*See next page for additional authors*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://newprairiepress.org/aerc>



Part of the [Adult and Continuing Education Administration Commons](#)



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial 4.0 License](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Ryu, Hyunok; Lim, Doo Hun H.; Kim, Junghwan; and Kwon, Intak (2018). "Skill Utilization of Older Workers in South Korea: The Effect of Diverse Types of Learning Experiences and Organizational Learning Supports," *Adult Education Research Conference*. <https://newprairiepress.org/aerc/2018/roundtables/4>

This Event is brought to you for free and open access by the Conferences at New Prairie Press. It has been accepted for inclusion in Adult Education Research Conference by an authorized administrator of New Prairie Press. For more information, please contact [cads@k-state.edu](mailto:cads@k-state.edu).

---

**Author Information**

Hyunok Ryu, Doo Hun H. Lim, Junghwan Kim, and Intak Kwon

## Skill Utilization of Older Workers in South Korea: The Effect of Diverse Types of Learning Experiences and Organizational Learning Supports

Hyunok Ryu  
University of British Columbia

Doo Hun Lim  
University of Oklahoma

Junghwan Kim  
University of Oklahoma

In Tak Kwon  
Chonbuk National University, South Korea

**Abstract:** Using OECD's 2013 PIAAC data, this study examines how diverse types of learning experiences and organizational supports for learning influence older workers' skill utilization in South Korea.

**Keywords:** older workers, formal, non-formal, and informal learning, organizational learning supports, skill use

South Korean society is rapidly entering an aging society, while experiencing a low birth rate and baby-boomer's retirement (Kim, 2016). This means that the society has a high potential to face a significant workforce shortage in the labor market in the near future. Meanwhile, several older adults/workers still have a tendency to remain in the workplace and aspire to develop their competencies through various types of learning and education (Kooij et al., 2014). Given these contexts, it is time for South Korean organizations to seriously reflect how they can accommodate and utilize the older workforce to fill the void in organizational manpower.

Several studies note the needs of older workforce's utilization and their learning and educational participation to enhance skills. In fact, many older workers who have rich experience and knowledge would stay even with a lower pay rate due to their desire to work and life fulfillment and due to their personal affection toward the organization (Schleicher et al., 2011). Given the situation of baby boomers exiting the labor market in several countries, organizations must establish key initiatives of how to better utilize older workers (Lim, Smith,

& Kim, 2016). Regarding this, Desjardins and Rubenson (2013) point out that older workers' participation in various types of learning and educational programs demonstrates higher literacy and numeracy skills in the developed countries. Specifically, non-formal and informal education/learning play a significant role in helping adults develop and maintain job related knowledge and competencies throughout their lifespan (Dämmrich et al., 2016). However, not many studies have been conducted to investigate this issue in the context of South Korea.

The purpose of this study is to examine how learning experiences and organizational support for learning influence older workers' skill utilization in their workplace in South Korea. Research questions are as follows: (a) How are older workers' learning experiences in non-formal and informal settings influencing their proficiency levels and skill use? (b) What organizational and individual level variables affect their proficiency levels and skill use?

### **Methods**

We used the 2013 Programme for International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) data set of OECD. This data set includes measures of key competencies, problem-solving and diverse types of learning activities for job or non-job-related reasons. By selecting the sample to include baby boomers and traditionalists (aged 50-54 and 55-65) who were employed in the workplace organization, we analyzed 1,247 older workers using stepwise regression.

### **Findings**

The four dependent variables for the present study showed good internal reliabilities, with Cronbach's alpha ranging from .729 to .982. The multiple-item scales among independent variables (i.e., work flexibility, learning opportunities at work, and learning strategies) also appeared to be reliable, with Cronbach's alpha being .938 (4 items), .729 (3 items), and .895 (6 items) in order.

As the major findings of the study, it is identified that older adults with the following characteristics (male, fulltime employment status, employed in private organization, in managerial position, participated in non-formal education) indicated a significantly higher score in their proficiency levels (numeracy and literacy) and their skill use (numeracy and literacy) in the workplace than their counterpart. From the regression analysis, we found that older adults' education level, participation in non-formal education, years of work experience, active learning strategies, and work flexibility significantly affected their proficiency levels (numeracy and literacy) and their skill use (numeracy and literacy) in the workplace respectively.

## Conclusion and Implications

Based on the findings, we conclude that several individual level variables (years of work experience, age, education level), individual learning variables (informal learning, active learning strategies), and an organizational level variable (work flexibility) significantly influenced Korean older adults' proficiency levels and use of such competencies in the workplace. At the same time, their participation in non-formal and informal learning significantly influenced their skill use in the workplace. As an implication, it is strongly suggested that Korean organizations should utilize various organizational measures to facilitate older adults' active learning, non-formal and informal learning in order to improve their literacy and numeracy competencies and their application of such competencies in the workplace.

## References

- Dämmrich, J., Kosyakova, Y., & Blossfeld, H-P. (2016). Gender and job-related non-formal training: A comparison of 20 countries. *International Journal of Comparative Sociology*, 56(6), 433-459.
- Desjardins, R., & Rubenson, K. (2013). Participation patterns in adult education: The role of institutions and public policy frameworks in resolving coordination problems. *European Journal of Education*, 48(2), 262-280.
- Kim, S. Y. (2016, August 22). *Difference in retirement age between the blue collar and white collar workers in South Korea* (News Brief). Retrieved August 25, 2016, from [http://news.chosun.com/site/data/html\\_dir/2016/08/22/2016082201014.html](http://news.chosun.com/site/data/html_dir/2016/08/22/2016082201014.html)
- Kooij, D. T., Jansen, P. G., Dijkers, J. S., & de Lange, A. H. (2014). Managing aging workers: A mixed methods study on bundles of HR practices for aging workers. *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 25(15), 2192-2212.
- Lim, D. H., Smith, K., & Kim, J. (2016). Integrating aging workforce: Organizational cases based on generational differences in the United States. *Andragogy Today: Interdisciplinary Journal of Adult & Continuing Education*, 19(2), 151-170.
- Schleicher, D. J., Hansen, S. D., & Fox, K. E. (2011). Job attitudes and work values. In S. Zedeck (Ed.), *APA Handbook of Industrial and Organizational Psychology* (Vol. 3), (pp. 137-189). American Psychological Association, Washington D.C.