

Empowering the Workforce: Drivers and Barriers to Effective Professional Development for Low-Skilled Employees

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Abstract

The rising demand for skilled labour in modern economies highlights the necessity for effective upskilling of low-skilled workers. Traditionally defined by limited formal education and job-related skills, these individuals encounter significant challenges in adapting to changing societal and economic demands. This study addresses the gap in understanding the complex factors influencing the professional development and learning of low-skilled employees. Funded by the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Latvia (project No. VPP-IZM-Izglītība-2023/4-0001), the study aims to explore the main aspects of effective professional development for low-skilled employees and identify the factors that either facilitate or hinder the transfer of training outcomes into practice. A systematic literature review was conducted, screening 299 articles from six databases. After applying eligibility criteria, 22 high- and good-quality empirical studies (2011-2023) from various countries were selected. The findings illuminate nine interconnected aspects related to the effective upskilling of low-skilled employees. Each aspect is crucial in understanding and addressing the multifaceted needs of this target group. Effective upskilling is largely characterised by tailored training programmes, supportive learning environments, and strong institutional and employer support. The review emphasises the importance of tailored approaches that consider both personal and contextual factors to foster effective professional development. To enhance job-related skill acquisition, job satisfaction, performance, and career progression for low-skilled workers, it is essential to align training content with job requirements and provide flexible, accessible, and practice-oriented learning opportunities.

Keywords: effective upskilling; influencing factors; lifelong learning; low-skilled workers; training transfer