



# Employee's perceptions of WPL- Lessons from China

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# Why study WPL

- **Life long learning (LLL) has been widely accepted, emphasized, and studied in China with the influence of European literature (Li, 2007; Ministry of Education; 2009, H. Zhang, 2010)**
- **But workplace learning (WPL) has not been extensively studied**
- **We did a comprehensive search using workplace learning with database and only found 14 papers since 2000.**



# Calling for WPL

- **There are increasing demands from the workplace on learning because of the increasingly intensive interactions among the expanding work content, division of labor, transition of management style, organization change, advancement of technology, intensive competition, even the transition of the economy (Li, 2008; Sun & Zhang, 2009; Wu & Hao, 2009; Zhang & Ma, 2008)**
- **A large number of publications in the name of HRD and HRM.**



# Purpose

- **To investigate the current situation of workplace learning (including general attitude of employees towards workplace learning, why employees want to learn at workplace, what they want to learn, what they were learning, and what effects workplace learning could produce on employees' work and life) in the eyes of employees.**
- **To provide data for comparative study of Network 2 of LLL Research Hub.**

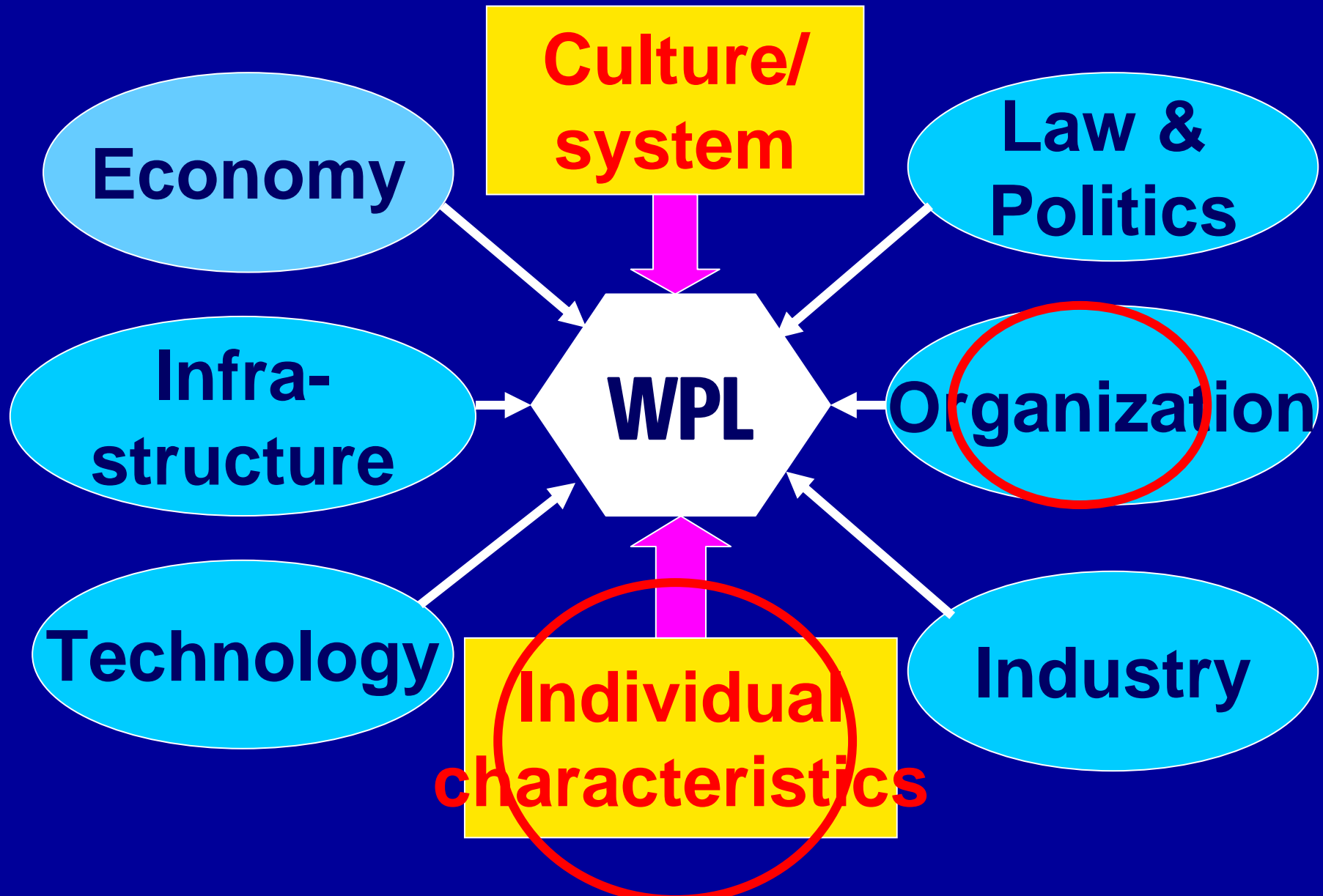
# Arguments from HRM

- Chinese organizations tend to guide employees' workplace learning by linking enterprise efficiency with employee benefits, which as a result enhances the effectiveness of workplace learning outcomes for both the organization and the individual employees (Sun, 2007; Zhou, 2008).
- Intensive work competitions make people aware of the importance of workplace learning, and trigger a self-directed learning in order to improve their employability (Su, 2009; Xu & Li, 2006; Zeng & Zhou, 2008).



- **However, the primary concern for workplace learning by employee is whether it would help to achieve the intended personal purpose in the future, which makes learning motivation and interests more pragmatic and utilitarian (Xu & Li, 2006; Zeng & Zhou, 2008).**
- **More and more employees are aimed at increasing their social capital by taking part in some kind of learning activities related with the work (Sun, 2007; Zhou, 2008)**

# A Systematic Model of WPL



# Employee Training Outlay

- **1.5% of the total amount of pay should be invested as training budget for employees (Ministry of Labor, 1990)**
- **2002- 56.4% implemented that policy, among them 16.3% beyond 1.5%**
- **2003- 57.2% fulfilled that policy**
- **2004- 59.7%, among them 20.6 beyond 1.5 %**
- **2005- 61.2%, 24.2% beyond 1.5%**
- **2009- 68%, 25.6% beyond 1.5%**





# Methods

- **Questionnaire (translation and back translation with 7 graduate students)**
- **Stratified randomly sampling from manufacturing and banking industries in different locations**

# Sampling



- Altogether 1000 questionnaires were distributed
- **18 companies** are sampled from the south, the north, the east, and the middle of China, which represent the geographic characteristics of the organizations.
- State-owned enterprise (SOEs), private business, and joint-venture are all covered in the sample.
- **10 to 40 employees** are sampled randomly from each organization as respondent.



- **Eventually 620 respondents were collected with a response rate of 62%.**
- **546 are usable for the analyses, of which 280 are from banking industry and the rest 266 are from manufacturing industry.**

# **Workplace learning opportunities provided by employers**

- **The most training opportunities employers offer are “Courses that are held in special places on the company premises to improve job-related knowledge and skills ” (57%),**
- **“Courses to make sure that all employees have basic skills (literacy and numeracy)” (32%) and**
- **“Spontaneous meetings with your colleagues to resolve new and special issues and problems ” (25.1%).**

- Many respondents participate “Manuals and materials that you can use to learn about new equipment, software and procedures” (20.1%),
- “Short workshops/seminars now and again that last for one day or less” (23.1%),
- “Courses offered by trade unions or staff associations to improve knowledge about employees’ rights ” (22%) and
- “E-Learning courses that employees can follow at their desk”(12.5%).
- 18.9% of the surveyed employees said that employers in the workplace do not provide any training.

# **Time for workplace learning**

- **Most employers provide employees with work-related education and training, which focus on job-related knowledge and skills.**
- **36.8% respondents report that courses are usually offered off the working time, 13.7% of those surveyed think courses offered by the employer are always during working time.**
- **35.5% respondents take part in work-related courses more often than not in working time and only 7.6% say their courses are always off working time.**

# **Motivation and content of workplace learning**

- **In the past twelve months, 34.2% respondents chose courses for purely personal reasons,**
- **31.9% chose to attend courses and got support from employers in some way,**
- **but 22.5% of the surveyed employees “chose to follow in their own time which were not supported by employers”.**
- **The results show that employees have a strong sense of participation in workplace learning and could get some support from their employers.**

- **As to course contents, respondents report courses “directly or closely related to my current job” (44.7%),**
- **“related to a job I would like to have in the future” (34.6%) and**
- **“related to my job as well as to my personal development” (29.5%).**
- **Some employees think courses “useful for my work, but not really essential” (22.5%) and**
- **some represent courses are “related to more general employment and work condition issues affecting all people in paid work” (11.9%).**





- **Conversely, a few surveyed employees indicate that courses are not related with their work, and they think courses are “not really work-related, more for my general education” (17.6%) or “just for personal pleasure” (7.1%)**

# Gender Differences

- **There exist significant differences between female and male employees in some of the attitudes towards workplace learning.**
- **Female employees agree significantly less than male employees with the statement “Learning is always necessary, but it might not always be what you might choose to do yourself” (item 10-1) ( $F=6.19$ ,  $p<0.05$ ).**



- **For the statement “If employers would support more general education (and not just for their jobs) for their employees, more people would want to improve their knowledge and skills” (item 10-6), female employees agree more (1.43) than the male (1.57) ( $F=3.95$ ,  $p<0.05$ ).**
- **It seems that the female have more interest in general education than the male.**

- **Regarding whether “people who do not keep up their learning should be punished by their employer ” (item 13-4) the female have shown more tolerance and agree the statement significantly less than the male ( $F=4.91$ ,  $p<0.05$ ) .**
- **Furthermore, female employees perceive significantly more expectations from the society to keep on learning (item 13-9) than the male employees do ( $F=1.53$ ,  $p<0.05$  ).**



- There is significant difference in the evaluation of positive effects of workplace learning on employees' knowledge and skills between male and female employees.
- More female than male employees report that *through organized courses* they improved their abilities and skills in making decisions and interpersonal communication ( $\chi^2=6.391$ ,  $p<.05$ ;  $\chi^2=4.547$ ,  $p<.05$ , respectively).
- More female than male employees think workplace learning in everyday work has positive effect on their ability to use foreign language ( $\chi^2=5.166$ ,  $p<.05$ ).

- **There is significant difference in the evaluation of positive effects of workplace learning on the quality of employees' life between male and female employees.**
- **More female than male employees believe that workplace learning in everyday work can improve their connections with the natural environment ( $\chi^2=3.860, p<.05$ ) and their community life and voluntary activities ( $\chi^2=4.319, p<.05$ ).**



# Conclusion

- **Chinese employees have relatively strong desire to improve their knowledge and skills despite of the type of organizations, employment relations, as well as job levels.**
- **However, the problem of workplace learning lies precisely in this passive attitude—learning is not something that employees want to, but something they think they ought to.**
- **Employees believe that if they could make their own decision about learning, they could learn more and get better results.**



- **Employees have a strong sense of participation in workplace learning and could get some support from employers.**
- **Most employers provide training or courses about job-related knowledge and skills, which are usually beyond working time**
- **Some differences between female and male employees in the perception of the necessity of learning, expectations for learning, and effectiveness of learning.**





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*Thanks for your attention*

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