

**MASTER THESIS**

**Exploring the Relationship between Learning Climate, Informal Learning and  
Employability**

**Maastricht University**  
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## Abstract

**Purpose:** Employees need to constantly develop their knowledge, skills and competences in order to remain employable. This study investigates the effect of learning climate and social informal learning activities (i.e., feedback seeking, help seeking and information seeking) on employability (i.e., occupational expertise, anticipation & optimization, balance, personal flexibility and corporate sense). Little evidence has been found about the specific relationship between learning climate, informal learning activities and employability. Therefore, this study explores whether engaging in informal learning activities influences the relationship between learning climate and employability.

**Method:** Data were collected from N = 372 participants from a Dutch municipality and the Dutch Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations. Questionnaires were used to investigate the proposed relationships. Multiple mediation analyses were used to investigate the effect of informal learning on the relationship between learning climate and employability.

**Findings:** It was found that informal learning is related to employability. More specifically, the three informal learning activities influenced the five dimensions of employability positively but differentially. Furthermore, the results showed that learning climate encourages engagement in all three informal learning activities. Finally, it was found that feedback seeking only mediated the relationship between learning climate and corporate sense. Help seeking was found to be mediating the relationship between learning climate and occupational expertise and balance. Information seeking was found to be mediating the relationship between learning climate and four out of five dimensions of employability (all except for occupational expertise).

**Keywords:** employability, informal learning, learning climate, workplace learning.

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## 1. Introduction

The pace of innovation and change within and across organizations poses several challenges for organizations. In order to optimally perform, organizations need to have the capacity to adapt to change (Valverde, Tregaskis, & Brewster, 2000). This organizational demand requires employees to be able to perform different tasks (within a function) and different functions and, also, to develop a wider set of employees' competences (Valverde et al., 2000). This need for functional flexibility is in line with fast changing job requirements (Froehlich, Beasuaert, Segers, & Gerken, 2014). Simultaneously, careers have become boundaryless and cross-organizational (Brown, Hesketh, & Williams, 2003; Van der Heijde & Van der Heijden, 2006). Departmental and organizational boundaries are crossed more frequently compared to earlier hierarchical career paths (DeFillipi & Arthur, 1996). Since careers have become less predictable and job requirements are interpreted in a broader sense (Van der Heijden, Boon, Van der Klink, & Meijs, 2009), this implies that employees need to constantly develop their knowledge, skills and competences. Functional flexibility and boundaryless careers require employees to continuously update their domain-specific knowledge. However, domain-specific expertise is insufficient to guarantee career outcomes (Van der Heijden et al., 2009), which leads to the need to acquire and develop transferable skills that can be applied in various contexts. Employees need to anticipate work-related changes and developments, be able to comprise between their own needs and that of the employer and be flexible within their function. In this respect, Van der Heijde & Van der Heijden (2006) use the concept of employability, defined as "the continuous fulfilling, acquiring or creating of work through the optimal use of competences" (p. 435). As competences they identify occupational expertise (having domain-specific knowledge), anticipation and optimization (proactively and creatively preparing for and adapting to future job-related changes), personal flexibility (passively adapting to current job- and labour market related changes), corporate sense (participating in different workgroups and accepting collective responsibility), and balance (comprising between one's own interest their employers' interests). These competences enable the employee to identify, create and act upon career opportunities (Froehlich et al., 2014; Fugate, Kicki, & Ashfort, 2004). Employable employees are able to cope with fluctuating job requirements and possess the capacity to increase their knowledge and develop their expertise (Thijssen, Van der Heijden, & Rocco, 2008; Van der Heijde & Van der Heijden, 2006).

Given the importance of employable staff, supporting employees to maintain and further develop their employability competences is on the human resource development (HRD) agenda of many organizations. Employability can only be attained and enhanced by employees when they engage in learning activities (Froehlich et al., 2014; Murdoch-Eaton & Whittle, 2012; Van der Heijden,

et al., 2009). Workplace learning refers to the ways through which employees learn or acquire knowledge within an organization (Jacobs & Parks, 2009; Manuti, Pastore, Scardigno, Giancaspro, & Morciano, 2015). Workplace learning occurs formally (i.e., in a structured setting) and informally. Informal learning is characterized as less structured and often occurs unconsciously and at the employee's own initiative (Doornbos, Simons, & Denessen, 2008; Marsick & Watkins, 2001). Informal learning is defined as "learner initiated, occurs on as-needed basis, is motivated by intent to develop, involves action and reflection, and does not occur in a formal classroom setting" (Noe, Tews, & Marand, 2013, p. 3). Former research indicates that both formal and informal learning are related to the development of employees' employability although the effect of informal learning is stronger (Froehlich, et al., 2014). Moreover, scholars have been arguing that the majority of workplace learning comprises informal learning (Conlon, 2004; Eraut, 2004; Manuti, et al., 2015; Noe et al., 2013). Noe and colleagues (2013) for example estimate that informal learning accounts for over 70% of learning at the workplace. Consequently, informal learning comprises several activities that facilitate this particular type of learning.

Some authors differentiate between two types of informal learning, namely individual informal learning and social informal learning (Doornbos, et al., 2008; Noe et al., 2013). Individual learning comprises spending time on reflecting on one's performance and on ways to improve it. It also involves learning from non-(inter)personal sources, such as books, publications and online sources (Noe et al., 2013). Social informal learning is characterized by learning from others, which involves interacting with peers, colleagues and superiors (Boud & Middleton, 2003; Mulder, 2013; Noe et al., 2013; Kyndt, Dochy, & Nijs, 2009). Employees who engage in social informal learning solicit feedback, share information and seek for advice. These learning activities emphasize the social character of informal learning. Furthermore, these social informal learning activities also depict proactive behavior that is related to one's ability to acquire new (domain specific) knowledge, anticipate future job-related changes and sharing collective responsibility. Social informal learning has been operationalized by Froehlich and colleagues (2014) in three concrete behaviours, namely feedback seeking, help seeking and information seeking. These authors have not only integrated the social exchange of information in relation to social informal learning, but also proactive behaviour. It is not merely a case of receiving relevant information, but one needs to actively search for it and, consequently, act upon it.

Existing research on informal learning addresses different outcomes, such as job performance (Van der Rijt, Van den Bossche, & Segers, 2012), career development (Van der Sluis & Poell, 2003), innovative work behaviour (Gerken, et al., 2016). However, there are several gaps in the literature on informal learning. Firstly, despite emerging focus on informal learning, the majority of

studies on informal learning used a general conceptualization of informal learning. These studies often failed to clearly differentiate between individual and social informal learning (Gerken, Beauseart, & Segers, 2015). Therefore, it is important to focus on the effect of social informal learning separate from individual informal learning. For example, Doornbos and colleagues (2008) investigated types of work-related learning among a sample of executive Dutch police officers. They found that these police officers frequently learned from their peers. They also found that a characteristic of workplace practices influencing learning was the possibility for collegial feedback. In addition, research on learning of employees of two consultancies showed that these individuals engaged in proactive feedback and help-seeking (Froehlich, Beusaert, & Segers, 2014). Moreover, despite recent studies indicating the importance of social informal learning (e.g., Froehlich et al., 2014; Gerken et al., 2015), the conceptualization of social informal learning is often too broad and research on specific social informal learning activities remains scarce. Furthermore, these specific social informal learning activities were studied in different contexts. Namely, the study by Froehlich and colleagues (2014) focused on feedback seeking from the supervisor and from colleagues, information seeking and help seeking across three organizations (i.e., a Dutch educational institution, an Austrian federal chamber and an Austrian IT company). In addition, research on social informal learning has also been done among faculty staff in higher education (Gerken et al., 2015). Finally, despite emerging focus on informal learning and employability, research on the relationship between informal learning and employability remains limited (Froehlich, et al., 2014; Van der Heijden et al., 2009). More specifically, research has focused on the three informal learning activities discussed by Froehlich et al. (2014), but only few studies focused on employability as an outcome as well. In order to further investigate the effect of these specific informal learning activities on employability, more research is needed.

There is increasing evidence for these specific social informal learning activities to be positively related to employability (Froehlich et al., 2014; Gerken et al., 2015). Therefore, this study will build upon previous research by Froehlich and colleagues (2014) and will address social informal learning activities as described by these authors, namely feedback seeking, information seeking and help seeking. The current study seeks to contribute to the small body of research on the relationship between these socially relevant informal learning activities and employability. Since Froehlich and colleagues (2014) included only three competences of employability, this study aims to give more insights on the relationships between the three social informal learning activities (i.e., feedback, information, and help seeking) and all five competences of employability.

In identifying the importance of informal learning in relation to employability, it is also crucial to investigate what factors promote informal learning. In order for learning to take place, an

environment that facilitates learning is required (Marsick & Watkins, 2003). Such an environment is often referred to as a learning climate (Marsick & Watkins, 2003; Nikolova, Van Ruysseveld, De Witte, Van Dam, 2014). Nikolova et al. (2014) defines learning climate as “employees’ perceptions of organizational policies, and practices aimed at facilitating, rewarding and supporting employee learning behaviour” (p. 259). Prior studies showed that learning climate is positively related to employees’ learning intentions and positive attitudes toward learning (e.g., Armstrong-Stassen & Schlosser, 2008). Furthermore, organizational facilitation of learning is found to be positively related to participation in learning activities (Tharenou, 1997). These findings indicate that creating a learning climate may be essential for employees to engage in informal learning. Past studies on learning climate did investigate its effect on learning, however, no study to date has researched the effect of learning climate on the three informal learning activities in specific. Furthermore, research on a possible relationship between learning climate and employability does not exist to date.

Concluding, this study seeks to contribute to existing research on informal learning and employability. More specifically, it focuses on social informal learning activities in relation to employees’ employability. Furthermore, it aims to further investigate the role of learning climate in stimulating employees to engage in informal learning and, in turn, leads to more employable employees. Therefore, the following general research question will be addressed:

*To what extent does the learning climate influence employees’ engagement in social informal learning behaviours (i.e., feedback, help and information seeking) and, in turn, employees’ employability (i.e., occupational expertise, anticipation and optimization, balance, personal flexibility and corporate sense)?*

## **2. Theoretical Framework**

### **2.1. Employability**

The concept of employability has been defined in various ways over the last decades and has been adapted to changes in the labour market. The conceptualization of employability can be related to the organizational developments caused by the transition from an industrial to a postindustrial society (Thijssen & Van der Heijden, 2003). As stated by Gazier (1998), three perspectives on the conceptualization of employability can be identified. In the twentieth century, the concept of employability was introduced by distinguishing being employable from being unemployable,

depending on the ability and willingness to work (i.e., supply). The perspective shifted from this ability and willingness to work to also considering the changes and demands in the labour market in 1950s and 1960s. Up until the industrial trends in the 1970s, employability involved mainly employment participation. The government was considered to be responsible for the challenge of employment (Thijssen & Van der Heijden, 2003). During the last decades of the twentieth century, the concept of employability evolved to also focus on the outcomes on the labour market and to consider both the supply and demand on the labour market, as opposed to supply only (Brown et al, 2003). Congruent to the conceptualization of employability in the light of changes in the labour market, a shift of responsibility for achieving employment occurred simultaneously. The market developments in the 1980s and 1990s demand employees to take responsibility to develop and maintain their skills in order to be employable (Hall, 2004). It is no longer the issue of one's willingness to work, but it is the necessity of one's own responsibility to maintain employable.

These market developments, the shift to functional flexibility and boundaryless careers and change in responsibility for career development signals the need for competence identification, on part of the organization as well as the employees (Fugate, et al., 2004) and demands employees to develop a wider set of competences (Valveder et al., 2000). Similar to the resource-based view, competences can be perceived as valuable assets for an organization to achieve sustained competitive advantage. Some research directions focused on organizational outcomes, taking into account the strategic relevance of employable employees (e.g., Van Dam, 2000). Therefore, employability can be beneficial for both career outcomes (i.e., individual level) and organizational outcomes. Consequently, this has implications for the ideal employee profile and skills needed. From the employee perspective, this focus on competence management is in line with current changes in responsibility of remaining employable. Competence management and development can be used to unify individual competences with organizational core competences (Rothwell & Lindholm, 1999). Therefore, a competence-based approach to employability seems suitable in the light of aforementioned developments.

In this respect, more recently employability has been conceptualized as a combination of specific and more generic competences. Next to domain-specific knowledge and skills, social and adaptive competences are considered to be increasingly important (Rodriguez et al., 2002; Van der Heijde & Van der Heijden, 2006). Van der Heijde and Van der Heijden (2006) refer to job-specific competences and general career development competences. They define employability as "the continuous fulfilling, acquiring or creating of work through the optimal use of competences" (Van der Heijde & Van der Heijden, 2006; p. 435). This competence-based conceptualization of employability refers to five dimensions: domain-specific occupational expertise and four generic competences.

Firstly, *occupational expertise* refers to the required knowledge and skills to perform current job-tasks. Occupational expertise is crucial for employability (Boudreau, Boswell & Judge, 2001; Onstenk, & Kessels, 1999). *Anticipation and optimization* entails taking an active role in reflecting on current developments and preparing for future work changes in order to strive for positive career outcomes. *Personal flexibility* refers to an employee's capacity to passively adapt to work-related changes. *Corporate sense* refers to the identification with corporate goals and acceptance of collective responsibilities. The final generic competence is *balance*, referring to the compromise between the employer's interests and the employee's personal interest (private and work-related).

Generally, competences can be acquired and enhanced through learning (Bartram & Roe, 2008). Therefore, an employee's employability relies on his or her engagement in learning activities in the workplace.

## 2.2. Informal Learning from Others: feedback seeking, help seeking and information seeking

Prior research on workplace learning mainly focused on formal learning (Nauta et al., 2009; Van der Heijden et al., 2009), while other studies showed that informal learning constitutes over 70 percent of workplace learning (Noe et al., 2013; Baer et al., 2008). Therefore, a growing amount of researchers expressed interest in informal learning activities (e.g., Froehlich et al., 2014; Noe et al., 2013; Eraut, 2014). Informal learning is initiated by an intention to learn and involves an employee's motivation to develop and reflect on actions and experiences (Baer et al., 2008; Marsick, Volpe & Waktins, 1999; Noe et al., 2013). Furthermore, following Marsick and colleagues (1999), informal learning occurs when people have the need and opportunity to learn. Therefore, it is important to identify what informal learning exactly entails and how employees engage in informal learning.

Informal learning consists of different types of learning (Doornbos, et al., 2008; Noe et al., 2013). Several studies on informal learning have found different learning activities and behaviours that are self-focused and other-focused (Doornbos et al., 2008; Lohman, 2005). These can be divided in two specific categories: individual learning, and learning from others (Doornbos et al., 2008; Lohman, 2005). This is in line with Marsick et al.'s (1999) conceptualization of informal learning, where a distinction is made between self-directed learning, networking and coaching. Individual learning mainly involves learning from non-interpersonal sources (Doornbos et al., 2008; Noe et al., 2013). Social informal learning refers to learning from others, such as peers and superiors (Kyndt et al., 2009; Noe et al., 2013).

Social informal learning has been operationalized in specific learning activities (Ashford,

1986; Bamberger, 2008; Froehlich et al., 2014; Kyndt et al., 2009). Kyndt and colleagues (2009) believe that employees seek advice from others, engage in feedback from others, share knowledge and information. Similarly, Froehlich and colleagues (2014) have operationalized social informal learning in the following learning activities: feedback seeking, help seeking and information seeking.

In his research, Eraut (2007) identifies the social significance of informal learning. More specifically, he recognizes that work-related encounters, relationships and opportunities for receiving feedback are important factors for workplace learning. Similarly, Mulder (2013) found that feedback stimulates communication and discussion with colleagues even more. This indicates the significance of the social aspects of workplace learning, in this study identified as social informal learning. Since workplace learning often includes interaction with colleagues, supervisors and managers (Boud & Middleton, 2003; Doornbos et al., 2008), the focus of the current study is on learning from others. Research has shown that social informal learning activities, such as feedback, help and information seeking, are related to several dimensions of employability (Froehlich et al., 2014; Gerken, Beausaert, & Segers, under revision; Gerken et al., 2015).

### 2.2.1 Feedback seeking

According to Ashford (1986, p. 466), feedback seeking refers to “the conscious devotion of effort toward determining the correctness and adequacy of behaviors for attaining valued end states”. Feedback seeking is a process in which one actively seeks for feedback, interprets the feedback and subsequently acts upon it (Ashford, Blatt, & VandeWalle, 2003). Feedback seeking behavior within an organizational context finds its roots in social psychology (Ashford & Cummings, 1983). Employees may be driven by three possible motives to engage in seeking, selecting, processing and reacting to information relevant to oneself (Ashford et al., 2003). Firstly, employees may seek feedback that can regulate their behavior. In this case, feedback has instrumental value. Secondly, employees may refrain from feedback seeking when it is potentially threatening for the receiver (e.g., hurting the employees’ feelings of self-esteem or self-confidence; Ashford et al., 2003). Thirdly, employees may also refrain from seeking feedback when it involves potential ‘face-loss’ costs (Ashford et al., 2003).

Feedback seeking is a proactive process to identify factors influencing effective or ineffective performance (Salas & Rosen, 2010). The review study by Ashford and colleagues (2003) showed that feedback seeking is related to obtaining a more accurate view of one’s skills and abilities, an improved performance by increasing goal setting and maintaining or enhancing one’s image. In this respect, actively reflecting on domain-specific skills and performance may be linked to one’s level of occupational expertise and one’s ability to anticipate future or latent changes within one’s job.

### 2.2.2 Help seeking

Bamberger (2008) defines help seeking within a workplace context as “an interpersonal process involving the solicitation of the emotional or instrumental assistance of a work-based colleague” (p. 51). Help seeking includes several critical elements. Firstly, there should be a problem or difficulty for which one needs help to solve (Lee, 1997). Secondly, there should be a person in need of help and a source of help (Lee, 1997; Nadler, 1991). Thirdly, the help seeker should be proactive in searching for the right remedy of the problem (Lee, 1997). Help seeking differs from feedback seeking in that it is by definition problem-oriented (Lee, 1997), whereas feedback seeking relates to performance monitoring and has a more evaluative component. Thus, *help seeking* constitutes proactively seeking assistance or advice from others (Van der Rijt et al., 2012). The concept of help seeking and its antecedents and consequences in the workplace has received little attention. However, social and clinical psychology literature indicates that social proximity to the help-seeker and supporting organizational climate determine the degree to which employees seek help of others (Bamberger, 2008). Help-seeking is related to performance as it can reduce uncertainty and clarify one’s understanding of his or her work context (Bamberger, 2009; Morrison, 1993). In other words, by clarifying one’s understanding of his or her job-related activities, one can actively adjust his or her behavior accordingly, thereby optimizing skills or abilities related to the job.

### 2.2.3. Information seeking

Information seeking generally refers to an employee’s proactive behavior to obtain knowledge (Morrison, 1993). Information seeking is linked to a different research domain, compared to the other social informal learning activities. Behavior, such as information seeking, results from active decision-making of an individual (Bamberger, 2009). However, this also depends on the contextual and situational factors. More specifically, an evaluation of the costs and benefits may influence the extent to which one actively seeks for information. Information seeking is important in learning, since it clarifies job tasks and roles and promotes understanding of the organizational culture (Cross et al., 2001; Cross & Sproull, 2004). Similar to feedback seeking and help seeking, information seeking is a proactive process and goal-oriented. However, while feedback seeking and help seeking requires certain levels of social interaction and social exchange, information seeking is mostly unidirectional. Furthermore, information seeking may occur in different stages of employment. For example, new employees seem to actively seek for information to aid in their adjustment to the new work environment (Morrison, 1993). In sum, information seeking is a proactive process that may

clarify domain-specific tasks and expectations within a work environment.

### 2.3. Learning Climate

Workplace learning can be influenced by individual and organizational factors (Mulder, 2013). Organizational factors influencing the way knowledge is acquired and transferred have been conceptualized in different terms, such as learning organization, learning culture, organizational culture, learning climate, organizational climate and learning environment (e.g., Ortenblad, 2002). Although often used interchangeable in relation to workplace learning, these terms are conceptually different. More specifically, the terms learning culture and learning climate are used interchangeably, since these are complex in nature but strongly entangled (Nikolova et al., 2014). However, culture and climate differ in essence. Culture refers to organizational beliefs and values, established by individuals. It is less salient and less tangible. In contrast, climate is a direct manifestation of the phenomenon culture (Nikolova et al., 2014). Nikolova and colleagues (2014) define learning climate as “employees’ perceptions of organizational policies, and practices aimed at facilitating, rewarding and supporting employee learning behaviour” (p. 259). These authors perceive learning climate as “a precursor of valuable outcomes, such as employees’ learning intentions, positive attitudes towards learning and participation in learning activities” (Nikolova, et al., 2014, p. 259). According to Marsick and Watkins (2003) perceived learning climate refers to employees’ perceptions of organizational efforts in creating opportunities and activities that promote continuous learning. These efforts include creating continuous learning opportunities, promoting inquiry and dialogue, encouraging collaboration and team learning, crating systems to capture and share learning, empowering people toward a collective vision, connecting the organization to its environment and providing strategic leadership for learning (Marsick and Watkins, 2003). Similar to this conceptualization, Eldor and Harpez (2015) refer to perceived learning climate as the employees’ perception of organizational activities that support and enable knowledge creation, acquisition and transfer.

In his literature review on the concept of learning organization, Ortenblad (2002) developed a typology of learning organization and identifies four perspectives, one of which is relevant for the understanding of the concept of learning climate. Firstly, he identified the organizational learning perspective, which focuses on knowledge storage within the organization. Secondly, the learning at work perspective refers to the general idea of an organization where employees learn at the workplace. Thirdly, Ortenblad (2002) identifies the learning climate perspective, referring to an organization as one that facilitates learning of its employees. Finally, the learning structure

perspective views an organization as flexible and to have an organic structure.

The conceptualization of Ortenblad's (2002) perspective of learning climate resembles that of Nikolova and colleagues (2014). Recently, they have defined learning climate as "employees' perceptions of organizational policies, and practices aimed at facilitating, rewarding and supporting employee learning behaviour" (p. Nikolova et al., 2014, p. 259). They identified three components of a learning climate, namely a facilitation learning climate, appreciation learning climate and error-avoidance climate. More specifically, a facilitation learning climate refers to supporting and facilitating organizational practices that may influence learning. The appreciation learning climate refers to providing appreciation on behalf of the organization for valued behaviour expressed by the employees (e.g., in terms of material, monetary or non-material rewards). In this way, organizations provide incentives to encourage employees to engage in learning. Finally, the error-avoidance climate refers to the level of psychological safety within an organization. An organization that emphasizes error-avoidance may prevent employees to experiment and learn from mistakes or unsuccessful practices (Nikolova et al., 2014). In contrast, when an organization emphasizes error-management, the opposite may be encouraged. The facilitating character of Nikolova et al.'s (2014) operationalization of learning climate is in line with Ortenblad's (2002) learning climate approach and, therefore, this definition will be used in the current study.

Although this study conceptualizes learning climate according to Nikolova et al. (2014) and Ortenblad (2002), more conceptualizations of learning climate exist (e.g., Marsick & Watkins, 2003; Garvin, Edmondson, & Gino, 2008). The intent of this study was initially to operationalize learning climate similar to Nikolova and colleagues (2014). However, due to data collection limitations a different operationalization of learning climate was necessary. Therefore, the operationalization by Garvin et al. (2008) is used in this study.

Garvin et al. (2008) refers to a supportive learning environment, when discussing what environment promotes learning within an organization. A supporting learning environment should include an atmosphere of psychological safety, appreciation of differences, openness to new ideas and time for reflection (Garvin, et al., 2008). Employees should feel safe to learn from errors, express their opinions, share ideas and knowledge and to take time to reflect on their experiences. Garvin et al.'s (2008) conceptualization is similar to Nikolova and colleagues (2014), in that both stress the importance of an environment that tolerates failures and promotes learning. However, they do differ regarding providing specific learning opportunities. Nevertheless, a climate that emphasizes learning, provides ample learning opportunities and emphasizes error management allows employees to truly learn from their successes and failures.

## 2.4. Learning Climate and Informal Learning from Others

Learning is influenced by organizational factors, such as organizational systems, rules, processes, resources, policies and cultures (Jeon & Kim, 2012; Kyndt, 2009). As indicated before, learning is also influenced by the organizational climate. More specifically, an environment that facilitates and supports learning is essential for informal learning (Armstrong-Stassen & Schlosser, 2008; Marsick & Watkins, 2003; Nikolova et al., 2014). Learning climate also encourages social exchange of information and knowledge between employees, which is also a critical characteristic of social informal learning (e.g., Garvin et al., 2008; Marsick & Watkins, 2003). Therefore, it can be assumed that learning climate positively influences informal learning from others (Marsick & Watkins, 2003).

An organization's learning climate has been found to positively influence informal learning (Marsick & Watkins, 2003). A work environment that encourages employees to engage in informal learning opportunities may enhance actual informal learning (Ellinger, 2005; Skule, 2004). For example, Ellinger (2005) found that organizational factors such as learning-committed leadership of supervisors, an internal culture committed to learning, the availability of work tools and resources and personal networks positively influence informal learning. Skule (2004) identified similar factors that influence informal learning, namely: supportive management for learning, superior feedback and rewards of proficiency. A more recent study by Van der Rijt et al. (2012) showed that a supportive environment might enable employees to engage in proactive behaviour (i.e., feedback seeking). A learning climate in which employees feel psychologically safe to express their opinions and learn from their errors, promotes engagement in informal learning activities such as acting upon feedback, information seeking and help seeking. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

*H1: Learning climate positively relates to employee engagement in informal learning activities (i.e., feedback seeking, help seeking and information seeking).*

## 2.5. Informal learning and Employability

The growing academic interest in the relationship between informal learning and employability provides grounds for this study to investigate which specific informal learning activities relate to what dimensions of employability. In a study among non-academic university employees, Van der Heijden et al. (2009) found that informal networking within and outside one's own organization was positively related to employability. Furthermore, a study among employees in the financial sector in their early employment by Van der Rijt and colleagues (2012) found that feedback seeking affects

perceived career development. More specifically, they found that it is primarily the quality of feedback of the supervisor (and not the frequency of feedback) to be positively related to perceived career development (Van der Rijt et al., 2012). Recent research by Gerken and colleagues (under revision) included slightly different informal learning activities and three out of five dimensions of employability by Van der Heijde & Van der Heijden (2006). They found that two informal learning activities (i.e., creating opportunities to gather information and proactive learning from others) were positively related to the dimension anticipation and optimization. Furthermore, research by Froehlich et al. (2014) indicated that external information seeking, acting upon feedback and help seeking positively predicted employees' anticipation and optimization, occupational expertise and personal flexibility. More specifically, they found that feedback seeking from colleagues positively affected anticipation and optimization. Help seeking was found to positively affect all three dimensions. Information seeking was found to be positively related to anticipation and optimization and personal flexibility. Seeking for information was also positively related to occupational expertise, but to a lesser extent (Froehlich et al., 2014).

These studies indicate that informal learning from others indeed is related to employability. However, the extent to which these different informal learning activities relate to the different dimensions of employability may vary. This reasoning results in the following hypothesis:

*H2: The informal learning activities feedback seeking, help seeking and information seeking are positively but differentially related to the five dimensions of employability (i.e., occupational expertise, anticipation and optimization, personal flexibility, corporate sense and balance).*

## **2.6. Learning Climate and Employability: the mediating role of Informal Learning**

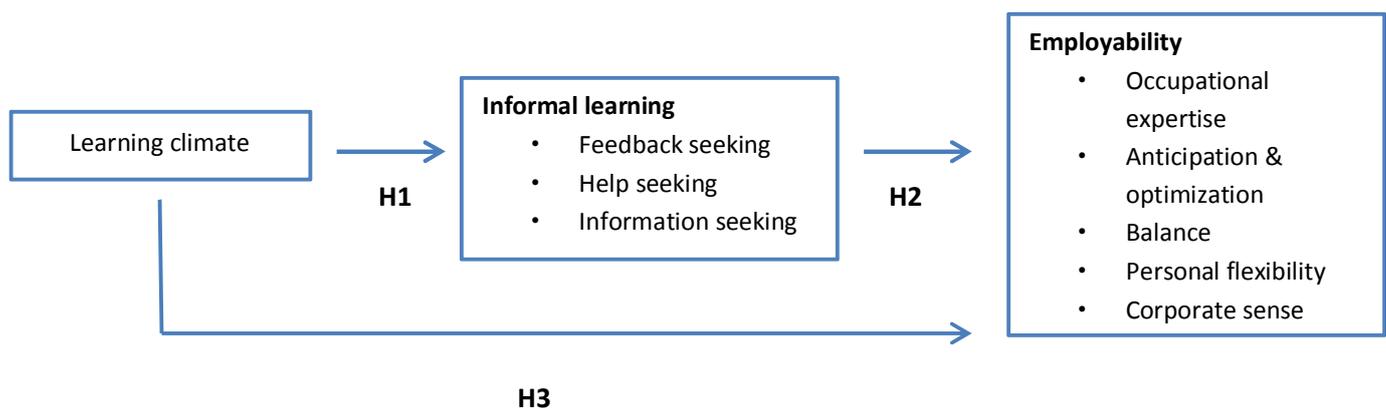
Although research has shown that learning climate can be positively related to employee outcomes, such as engaging in learning behaviour and feeling psychologically safe (e.g., Tharenou, 1997; Gavin et al., 2008), research on the relationship between learning climate and employability remains very limited. However, Marsick and Watkins (2003) argue that organizational support contributes to an employee's professional development through learning. Furthermore, when employees are aligned with a common, organizational vision, they are able to interpret the changing environment and act accordingly (Watkins & Marisck, 1999). In other words, feelings of support from and identification with the organization enable employees to better interpret job-related changes. Since the dimensions of employability as conceptualized by Van der Heijde and Van der Heijden (2006) relate to domain-specific knowledge and skills (e.g., occupational expertise) and generic competences

related to work and career outcomes, it seems that employability is naturally linked to an organization's climate. More specifically, a learning climate facilitates learning by offering learning opportunities in which one can acquire and enhance his or her skills and competences.

Therefore, this study argues that such a supportive learning environment influences the extent to which employees engage in learning activities, which in turn supports employees to become (more) employable. Since these concepts of learning climate, informal learning and employability are interrelated, this study aims not only to determine the relationship between the separate concepts, but also whether informal learning influences the relationship of learning climate on employability. This results in the final hypothesis:

*H3: Informal learning from others will fully mediate the relationship between learning climate and employability.*

Figure 1. Proposed hypothetical relationships between learning climate, informal learning and employability



### 3. Method

#### 3.1 Research setting

The data was collected in two organizations: a municipality in the South of the Netherlands and the Dutch Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations. The municipality in the South of the Netherlands was a traditional organization. Policies on learning and development are scarce, but the organization did provide assessment cycles and some trainings. The Dutch Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations has set up the Program Learning & Development within the Government

where it has mapped the activities of the learning and development departments within the various ministries (i.e., *Algemene Zaken, Buitenlandse Zaken, Binnenlandse Zaken, Defensie, Economische Zaken, Financien, Infrastructuur & Milieu, Onderwijs, Cultuur & Wetenschap, Sociale Zaken & Werkgelegenheid, Veiligheid & Justitie and Volksgezondheid, Welzijn & Sport*). Several academies and learning centres have been established, in which learning and development practices are tailored to needs of the specific ministries.

## 3.2 Sample

A total of  $N = 372$  employees participated in this study. The total sample consisted of 144 participants of the municipality and 228 participants of the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations. A total of 155 males (41.7%) and 217 females (58.3%) participated in this study. The average age was 48.69 years ( $SD = 9.962$ ). The professional work experience ranged from less than 1 year (0.3% of the participants) to 47 years (0.5% of the participants). 61.1% of the participants worked between 1 and 5 years in the current position.

## 3.3. Procedure

Regarding the data collection at the municipality, the HR officer was contacted first. Hereafter, personal emails were sent to approximately 300 employees including the link to the online questionnaire. The participants received two times a reminder to complete the questionnaire.

Regarding the data collection at the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations, the program manager of Learning and Development within the Government (*Leren en Ontwikkelen Rijk*) was contacted first. Subsequently, personal emails were sent to (in)direct colleagues of the program manager (approximately 100 employees) including a request to fill out the online questionnaire and an additional request to further distribute the email to (in)direct colleagues within the department or, if possible, to the entire organisational part. The participants contacted first were sent two reminders to complete the questionnaire and to further distribute the questionnaire.

## 3.4 Measures

### 3.4.1. Employability

Employability is measured with a validated employability scale developed by Van der Heijde and Van

der Heijden (2006). It consists of 47 items, tapping five dimensions that measures the following competences: *occupational expertise* (e.g., “I consider myself competent to engage in in-depth, specialist discussion in my job domain”), *anticipation and optimization* (e.g., “I take responsibility for maintaining my labor market value”), *personal flexibility* (e.g., “I adapt to developments within my organization”), *corporate sense* (e.g., “I am involved in achieving my organization’s mission), and *balance* (e.g., “I suffer from work-related stress”). All items were rated on a 6-point Likert scale. The internal consistency of all five scales were satisfactory with a Cronbach’s alpha of 0.86 for occupational expertise, 0.86 for anticipation and optimization, 0.82 for balance, 0.85 for personal flexibility and 0.79 for corporate sense. These values are similar to those established in the validated study by Van der Heijde and Van der Heijden (2006), who found a Cronbach’s alpha of 0.90 for occupational expertise, 0.81 for anticipation and optimization, 0.79 for balance, 0.83 for personal flexibility and 0.78 for corporate sense.

### 3.4.2. Informal learning from others

Social informal learning is measured with a survey developed by Froehlich et al. (2014), consisting of 12 items and rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = completely disagree; 5 = completely agree). This scale measures four informal learning activities, namely *acting upon supervisor feedback* (e.g., “feedback from my supervisor makes me reflect”), *acting upon colleague feedback* (e.g., “feedback from colleagues motivates me to act”), *help seeking* (e.g., “Getting help would be one of the first things I would do if I were having trouble at work”), and *information seeking* (e.g., “I participate in project groups to discuss work-related problems”). The internal consistency of the following scales were satisfactory: a Cronbach’s alpha of 0.75 was found for information seeking and 0.89 for feedback seeking. Feedback seeking consists of two subscales, namely feedback seeking from supervisors (Cronbach’s alpha of 0.92) and from colleagues (0.86). These values are even higher than those found in the validated study by Froehlich et al. (2014). They found a Cronbach’s alpha of 0.69 for information seeking, 0.86 for feedback seeking from supervisors, and 0.83 for feedback seeking from colleagues. The Cronbach’s alpha for help seeking was quite low, namely 0.46. However, Froehlich and colleagues (2014) found a Cronbach’s alpha of 0.66 on this dimension. Therefore, it was to include this scale in the questionnaire.

### 3.4.3. Learning Climate

Learning climate is measured with a shortened version of the original Learning Organization Survey by Garvin et al. (2008). The scale of Singer, Moore, Meterko, & Williams (2012) is used. This scale comprises 7 items on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree). Example items are “If you make a mistake in this unit, it is often held against you”, “Differences in opinion are welcome in this unit”, and “In this unit, people are open to alternative ways of getting work done”. A Cronbach’s alpha of 0.75 was found for learning climate. This is slightly lower than the finding by Singer et al. (2012), namely 0.93 in a non supervisor sample and 0.94 in a supervisor sample, but still satisfactory.

#### **3.4.4. Control variables**

Based on previous research, age, gender, level of education, years of (current) job experience are selected as control variables (Froehlich et al., 2014). Studies on the relationship between age and employability have found a positive effect (Patrickson & Ranzijn, 2003), a negative effect (Raemdonck, Tillema, Grip, Valcke, & Segers, 2012; Van der Heijden, 2002) or no effects (Van der Heijden et al., 2009). Years of current job experience also affected employability (e.g., Wittekind, Raeder, & Grote, 2010). Furthermore, years working in the organization and number of positions in the organization are also selected as control variables.

#### **3.5 Data analysis**

The final dataset comprised data collected from both the municipality and the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations. Firstly, primary analyses were applied to explore the relationship between learning climate, informal learning from others and employability. (i.e., means, standard deviations and correlations). Next, multiple regression analyses were performed in order to investigate the relationship between learning climate and informal learning, and informal learning and employability. To test the (indirect) effects of the multiple mediators (i.e., feedback seeking, help seeking and information seeking) on the relationship between learning climate and employability, the multiple mediation analysis developed by Preacher and Hayes (2004, 2008) was used.

## 4. Results

### 4.1 Preliminary analysis

The descriptive statistics and correlations are reported in table 1. Participants' engagement in social informal learning varied. Help seeking had the highest score ( $M = 4.04$ ,  $SD = 0.69$ ), followed by feedback seeking ( $M = 4.00$ ,  $SD = 0.69$ ) and information seeking ( $M = 3.64$ ,  $SD = 0.88$ ). The standard deviations of all scales were low, indicating that participants did not vary much in their undertaking of social informal learning activities. Regarding employability, occupational expertise had the highest mean score ( $M = 4.87$ ,  $SD = 0.66$ ), closely followed by personal flexibility ( $M = 4.80$ ,  $SD = 0.61$ ). This suggested that participants believed to possess relatively high level of expertise and to be flexible in their work context. Balance ( $M = 4.21$ ,  $SD = 0.91$ ), anticipation and optimization ( $M = 4.13$ ,  $SD = 0.99$ ), and corporate sense ( $M = 4.12$ ,  $SD = 0.79$ ) followed next.

Next, a correlational analysis was conducted to examine the relationships between social informal learning and employability. The results can also be found in table 1. The results indicated that participants who sought feedback from their colleagues and supervisors showed more occupational expertise ( $r = 0.20$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), balance ( $r = 0.22$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), personal flexibility ( $r = 0.22$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), and corporate sense ( $r = 0.20$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). No significant results were found for feedback seeking and anticipation and optimization ( $r = 0.10$ ,  $p = ns$ ). Furthermore, participants who engaged in information seeking showed more anticipation and optimization ( $r = 0.53$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), balance ( $r = 0.15$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), personal flexibility ( $r = 0.36$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), and corporate sense ( $r = 0.32$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Information seeking was not significantly related to occupational expertise ( $r = 0.06$ ,  $p = ns$ ). Finally, participants who engaged in feedback seeking were better at all dimensions of employability, namely occupational expertise ( $r = 0.20$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), anticipation and optimization ( $r = 0.34$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), balance ( $r = 0.18$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), personal flexibility ( $r = 0.33$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), and corporate sense ( $r = 0.35$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Out of the three social informal learning activities, only feedback seeking was related to all dimensions of employability.

**Table 1. Means, standard deviations, and correlations**

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
1. Gender	1.58	0.49	X															
2. Age	48.69	9.96	-.13*	X														
3. Formal education	4.77	1.36	-.03	-.23**	X													
4. Tenure	6.42	7.41	-.04	.30**	-.24**	X												
5. Contract type	1.33	0.68	.06	-.04	.08	-.18**	X											
6. Employers	4.71	4.00	-.02	.15**	.00	-.09	.04	X										
7. Professional work experience	25.41	10.96	-.08	.89**	-.32**	.33**	-0.07	.16**	X									
8. Help seeking	4.04	0.69	.19**	-.08	-.06	.02	.01	-.01	-.07	X								
9. Information seeking	3.64	0.88	.00	-.09	.34**	-.22**	.10*	.08	-.11*	.12*	X							
10. Feedback seeking	4.00	0.69	.13*	-.18**	.15*	-.20**	.12*	.04	-.15**	.37**	.43**	X						
11. Learning climate	4.90	1.08	-.05	-.03	.04	-.09	.01	.02	.02	.20**	.21**	.40**	X					
12. Occupational expertise	4.87	0.66	-.03	-.03	-.01	.14*	-.01	.01	.02	.20**	.06	.20**	.18**	X				
13. Anticipation and optimization	4.13	0.99	-.03	-.08	.22**	-.17**	.09	.07	-.11*	.10	.53**	.34**	.23**	.32**	X			
14. Balance	4.21	0.91	-.07	.08	-.7	.13*	-.04	-.06	.11*	.22*	.15**	.18**	.40**	.38**	.24**	X		
15. Personal flexibility	4.80	0.61	-.04	-.09	.05	-.15**	.09	.09	-.08	.20**	.36**	.33**	.26**	.43**	.48**	.26**	X	
16. Corporate Sense	4.12	0.79	-.14**	-.01	.10	.04	-.03	.02	-.01	.20*	.32**	.35**	.24**	.33**	.50**	.29**	.47**	X

Note. N = 372.

\* $p < 0.05$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$

## 4.2 Hypothesis tests

Regression analyses were used to test the relationships between learning climate and informal learning, and informal learning and employability. In order to examine to what extent employability is predicted by learning climate and social informal learning, the multiple mediation analysis by Hayes (2004, 2005, 2013) was used. Control variables were included in all analyses.

*Hypothesis 1* predicted that learning climate would be positively related to social informal learning. Learning climate was indeed found to be positively related to all three social learning activities, namely help seeking ( $\beta = 0.212, p < 0.001$ ), information seeking ( $\beta = 0.159, p < 0.01$ ), and feedback seeking ( $\beta = 0.289, p < 0.001$ ). Hypothesis 1 is supported.

*Hypothesis 2* predicted that the three social informal learning activities would positively but differentially relate to each dimension of employability. The results indeed indicated that social informal learning is positively related to dimensions of employability, but not all. The following significant relationships were found. Only help seeking was positively related to occupational expertise ( $\beta = 0.1136, p < 0.01$ ). For anticipation and optimization, only information seeking was positively related to this dimension ( $\beta = 0.1136, p < 0.001$ ). For balance, both help seeking ( $\beta = 0.1977, p < 0.01$ ) and information seeking ( $\beta = 0.1500, p < 0.01$ ) were found to be positively related to this dimension. Furthermore, only information seeking was significantly related to personal flexibility ( $\beta = 0.1978, p < 0.001$ ). Both help seeking and feedback seeking were almost significantly related to this dimension. Finally, for corporate sense, both information seeking ( $\beta = 0.2617, p < 0.001$ ) and feedback seeking ( $\beta = 0.2308, p < 0.001$ ) were positively related. Help seeking was almost significantly related to this dimension. The second hypothesis is partially supported, since not all social informal learning activities are positively related to all dimensions of employability. Overall, social informal learning is positively, but differentially related to the five dimensions of employability.

*Hypothesis 3* stated that social informal learning would fully mediate the relationship between learning climate and employability. Five multiple mediation analyses have been performed with the various dimensions of employability as dependent variables, namely occupational expertise, anticipation and optimization, personal flexibility, corporate sense and balance. For each analysis, the total indirect effect of learning climate on the dimension of employability is provided. Furthermore, the specific indirect effects of the proposed mediators (i.e., feedback seeking, help seeking and information seeking) on the relationship between learning climate and the specific dimension of employability, is reported as well. Additionally, effect sizes, standard errors (*SE*), Z scores (*Z*), significance level (*p*) and bias-corrected confidence intervals (*CI*) are reported in a

separate table. Finally, a model can be found that illustrates the strength of the relationships of the variables included in the analysis.

Regarding occupational expertise, the total indirect effect of learning climate on this dimension of employability is  $f = .45$ , CI [.014, .088]. See Table 2 for an overview of the results of the specific indirect effects. The specific indirect effects are  $a_1b_1 = .019$  (through *help seeking*),  $a_2b_2 = .001$  (through *information seeking*), and  $a_3b_3 = .026$  (through *feedback seeking*). There was only a significant indirect effect of learning climate on occupational expertise through help seeking ( $Z = 1.997$ ,  $p < 0.05$ , CI [.005, .042]). According to Baron and Kenny (1986), when the direct effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable disappears, this is indicative of a fully mediating relationship. Since the total effect of learning climate on occupational expertise is significant, whereas the direct effect is non significant (see Table 2 and Figure 2), help seeking is considered a full mediator in this model.

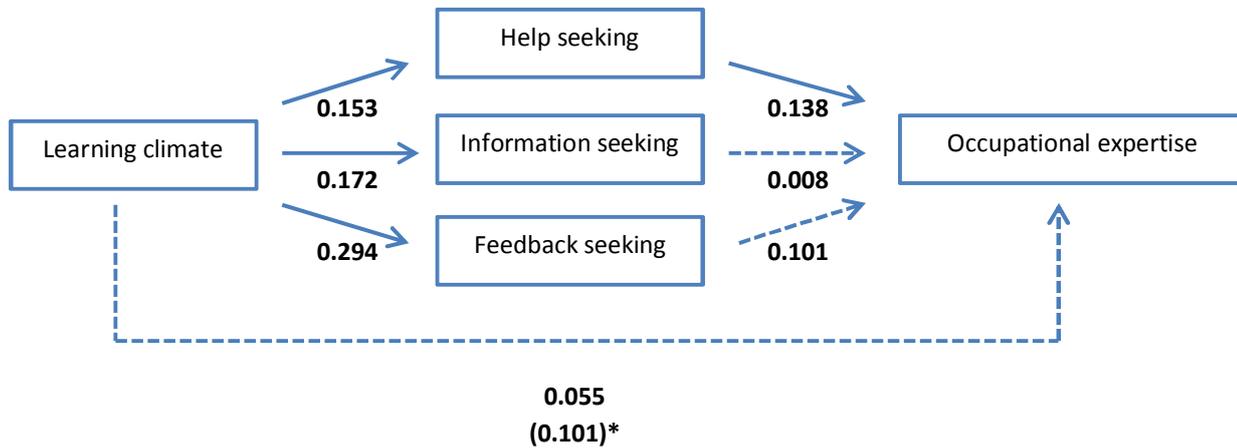
**Table 2. Mediation of the effect of learning climate on occupational expertise through help seeking, information seeking, and feedback seeking**

Model	Estimate	SE	Z	p	CI (lower)	CI (upper)
<b>Model without mediators</b>						
LC OE (c)	0.101	0.045		<0.05	0.012	0.189
$R^2_{Y,X}$	0.066					
<b>Model with mediators</b>						
LC Help ( $a_1$ )	0.135	0.039		<0.001	0.059	0.211
LC Info ( $a_2$ )	0.131	0.043		<0.01	0.047	0.215
LC Feedback ( $a_3$ )	0.255	0.034		<0.001	0.188	0.322
Help OE ( $b_1$ )	0.138	0.055		<0.01	0.029	0.246
Info OE ( $b_2$ )	0.008	0.051		0.874	-0.091	0.108
Feedback OE ( $b_3$ )	0.101	0.068		0.141	-0.034	0.236
LC OE ( $c'$ )	0.055	0.046		0.235	-0.034	0.236
Indirect effect ( $a_1 \times b_1$ )	0.019	0.009	1.977	<0.05	0.005	0.042
Indirect effect ( $a_2 \times b_2$ )	0.001	0.007	0.151	0.880	-0.012	0.015
Indirect effect ( $a_3 \times b_3$ )	0.026	0.018	1.434	0.152	-0.005	0.066
$R^2_{Y,MX}$	0.103					

*Note.* Learning climate is the independent variable (X), help seeking, information seeking and feedback seeking are the mediators (M), and occupational expertise is the dependent variable (Y). The model without mediators indicates the total effect of learning climate on occupational expertise, without consideration of any mediators.  $R^2_{Y,X}$  is the proportion of variance in occupational expertise explained by learning climate. The model with mediators include the regression weights  $a$ ,  $b$ ,  $c$ , and the direct effect of learning climate on occupational expertise  $c'$  (also illustrated in Figure 2). The  $R^2_{Y,MX}$  is the proportion of variance in occupational expertise

explained by learning climate and the three mediators. The 95% confidence interval (CI) for the indirect effects  $a \times b$  is obtained by the bias-corrected bootstrap with 5000 resamples.

**Figure 2. The effect of the mediating variables (i.e., feedback, help, and information seeking) on the relationship between learning climate and occupational expertise**



*Note.* The solid lines indicate a significant relationship. The dashed lines indicate a non-significant relationship. The total effect of learning climate on occupational expertise is significant (marked with \*), whereas the direct effect is non-significant.

Regarding the second dimension of employability, the total indirect effect of learning climate on anticipation and optimization is  $f = .097$ , CI [.037, .175]. See Table 3 for an overview of the results of the specific indirect effects in this model. The specific indirect effects are  $a_1b_1 = -.003$  (through *help seeking*),  $a_2b_2 = .070$  (through *information seeking*), and  $a_3b_3 = .031$  (through *feedback seeking*). Again, there was only one significant indirect effect of learning climate on anticipation and optimization through informal learning, namely via information seeking ( $Z = 2.881$ ,  $p < 0.01$ , CI [.027, .122]). Again, the total effect of learning climate on anticipation and optimization is significant, whereas the direct effect is non significant (see Table 3 and Figure 3). Therefore, information seeking is a full mediator in the relationship between learning climate and anticipation and optimization.

**Table 3. Mediation of the effect of learning climate on anticipation and optimization through help seeking, information seeking, and feedback seeking**

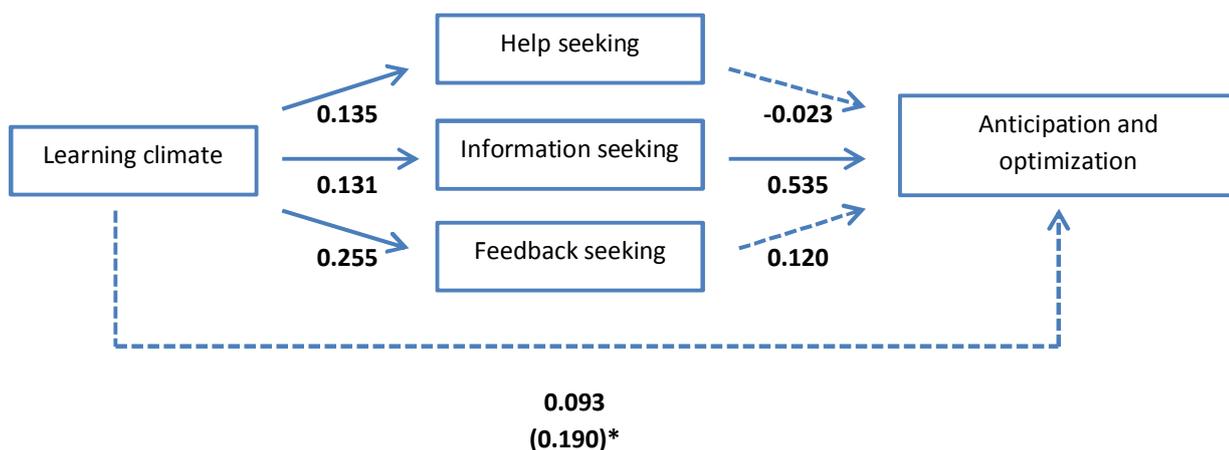
Model	Estimate	SE	Z	p	CI (lower)	CI (upper)
Model without mediators						
LC AO (c)	0.190	0.058		<0.001	0.077	0.304
$R^2_{Y,X}$	0.116					

Model with mediators

LC	Help ( $a_1$ )	0.135	0.039	<0.001	0.059	0.211	
LC	Info ( $a_2$ )	0.131	0.043	<0.01	0.047	0.215	
LC	Feedback ( $a_3$ )	0.255	0.034	<0.001	0.188	0.322	
Help	AO ( $b_1$ )	-0.023	0.074	0.754	-0.169	0.123	
Info	AO ( $b_2$ )	0.535	0.062	<0.001	0.413	0.657	
Feedback	AO ( $b_3$ )	0.120	0.089	0.179	-0.056	0.296	
LC	AO ( $c'$ )	0.093	0.056	0.098	-0.017	0.203	
	Indirect effect ( $a_1 \times b_1$ )	-0.003	0.010	-0.301	0.764	-0.024	0.017
	Indirect effect ( $a_2 \times b_2$ )	0.070	0.024	2.881	<0.01	0.027	0.122
	Indirect effect ( $a_3 \times b_3$ )	0.031	0.023	1.313	0.189	-0.012	0.081
	$R^2_{Y,MX}$	0.318					

*Note.* Learning climate is the independent variable (X), help seeking, information seeking and feedback seeking are the mediators (M), and anticipation and optimization is the dependent variable (Y). The model without mediators indicates the total effect of learning climate on anticipation and optimization, without consideration of any mediators.  $R^2_{Y,X}$  is the proportion of variance in occupational expertise explained by learning climate. The model with mediators include the regression weights  $a$ ,  $b$ ,  $c$ , and the direct effect of learning climate on anticipation and optimization  $c'$  (also illustrated in Figure 3). The  $R^2_{Y,MX}$  is the proportion of variance in anticipation and optimization explained by learning climate and the three mediators. The 95% confidence interval (CI) for the indirect effects  $a \times b$  is obtained by the bias-corrected bootstrap with 5000 resamples.

**Figure 3. The effect of the mediating variables (i.e., feedback, help, and information seeking) on the relationship between learning climate and anticipation and optimization**



*Note.* The solid lines indicate a significant relationship. The dashed lines indicate a non-significant relationship. The total effect of learning climate on occupational expertise is significant (marked with \*), whereas the direct effect is non-significant.

Regarding balance, the total indirect effect of learning climate on this dimension is  $f = .041$ , CI [.001,

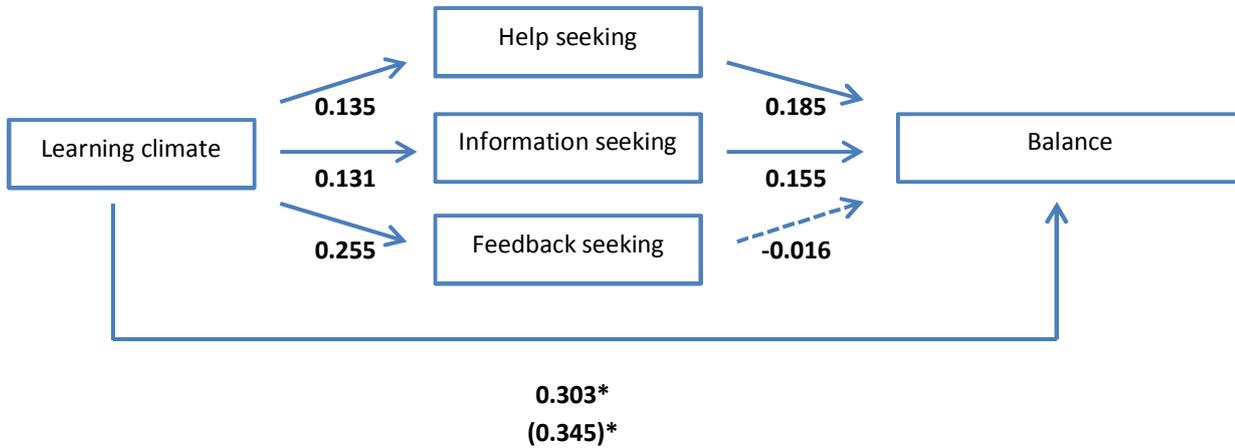
.088]. See Table 4 for an overview of the results of the specific indirect effects in this model. The specific indirect effects are  $a_1b_1 = .025$  (through *help seeking*),  $a_2b_2 = .020$  (through *information seeking*), and  $a_3b_3 = -.004$  (through *feedback seeking*). In this model, there were two significant indirect effects of the learning climate on balance through help seeking ( $Z = 1.985, p < 0.05, CI [.006, .057]$ ) and information seeking ( $Z = 1.796, p = 0.072, CI [.004, .050]$ ). However, since both the total and direct effect of learning climate on balance are significant (see Table 4 and Figure 4), help seeking and information seeking are partial mediators in this relationship between learning climate and balance.

**Table 4. Mediation of the effect of learning climate on balance through help seeking, information seeking, and feedback seeking**

Model	Estimate	SE	Z	p	CI (lower)	CI (upper)
<b>Model without mediators</b>						
LC B (c)	0.345	0.045		<0.001	0.256	0.434
$R^2_{Y,X}$	0.208					
<b>Model with mediators</b>						
LC Help ( $a_1$ )	0.135	0.039		<0.001	0.059	0.211
LC Info ( $a_2$ )	0.131	0.043		<0.01	0.047	0.215
LC Feedback ( $a_3$ )	0.255	0.034		<0.001	0.188	0.322
Help B ( $b_1$ )	0.185	0.074		<0.01	0.040	0.330
Info B ( $b_2$ )	0.155	0.067		<0.05	0.024	0.287
Feedback B ( $b_3$ )	-0.016	0.094		0.864	-0.200	0.168
LC B ( $c'$ )	0.303	0.052		<0.001	0.201	0.405
Indirect effect ( $a_1 \times b_1$ )	0.025	0.013	1.985	<0.05	0.006	0.057
Indirect effect ( $a_2 \times b_2$ )	0.020	0.011	1.796	0.072	0.004	0.050
Indirect effect ( $a_3 \times b_3$ )	-0.004	0.023	-0.170	0.865	-0.050	0.042
$R^2_{Y,MX}$	0.245					

*Note.* Learning climate is the independent variable (X), help seeking, information seeking and feedback seeking are the mediators (M), and balance is the dependent variable (Y). The model without mediators indicates the total effect of learning climate on balance, without consideration of any mediators.  $R^2_{Y,X}$  is the proportion of variance in occupational expertise explained by learning climate. The model with mediators include the regression weights  $a, b, c$ , and the direct effect of learning climate on balance  $c'$  (also illustrated in Figure 4). The  $R^2_{Y,MX}$  is the proportion of variance in balance explained by learning climate and the three mediators. The 95% confidence interval (CI) for the indirect effects  $a \times b$  is obtained by the bias-corrected bootstrap with 5000 resamples.

Figure 4. The effect of the mediating variables (i.e., feedback, help, and information seeking) on the relationship between learning climate and balance



Note. The solid lines indicate a significant relationship. The dashed lines indicate a non-significant relationship. The total effect of learning climate on occupational expertise is significant (marked with \*). The direct effects remains significant.

Regarding personal flexibility, the total indirect effect of learning climate on this dimension is  $f = .061$ , CI [.028, .097]. See Table 5 for an overview of the results of the specific indirect effects in this model. The specific indirect effects are  $a_1b_1 = .012$  (through *help seeking*),  $a_2b_2 = .026$  (through *information seeking*), and  $a_3b_3 = -.023$  (through *feedback seeking*). There was only a significant indirect effect of learning climate on balance through information seeking ( $Z = 2.461$ ,  $p < 0.05$ , CI [.011, .052]). The total effect of learning climate on balance is significant and the direct effect is non significant (see Table 5 and Figure 5). This indicates that information seeking fully mediates the relationship between learning climate and personal flexibility.

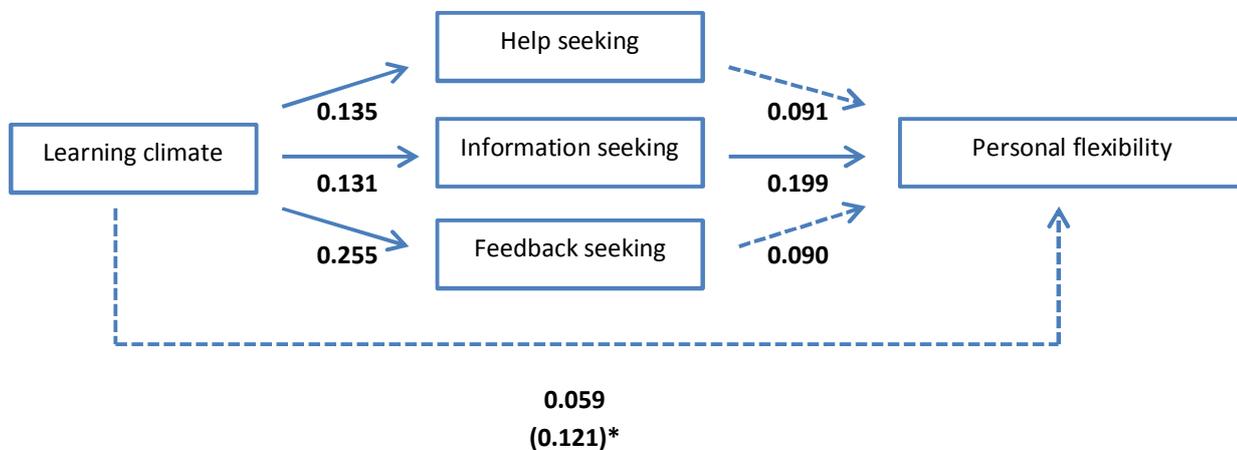
Table 5. Mediation of the effect of learning climate on personal flexibility through help seeking, information seeking, and feedback seeking

Model	Estimate	SE	Z	p	CI (lower)	CI (upper)
Model without mediators						
LC PF (c)	0.121	0.034		<0.001	0.055	0.187
$R^2_{y,x}$	0.088					
Model with mediators						
LC Help ( $a_1$ )	0.135	0.039		<0.001	0.059	0.211
LC Info ( $a_2$ )	0.131	0.043		<0.01	0.047	0.215
LC Feedback ( $a_3$ )	0.255	0.034		<0.001	0.188	0.322

Help	PF ( $b_1$ )	0.091	0.055	0.102	-0.018	0.199
Info	PF ( $b_2$ )	0.199	0.046	<0.001	0.108	0.290
Feedback	PF ( $b_3$ )	0.090	0.065	0.164	-0.037	0.218
LC	PF ( $c'$ )	0.059	0.034	0.081	-0.007	0.126
	Indirect effect ( $a_1 \times b_1$ )	0.012	0.008	1.437	0.151	0.000
	Indirect effect ( $a_2 \times b_2$ )	0.026	0.010	2.461	<0.01	0.011
	Indirect effect ( $a_3 \times b_3$ )	0.023	0.016	1.360	0.174	-0.008
	$R^2_{Y,MX}$	0.200				

Note. Learning climate is the independent variable (X), help seeking, information seeking and feedback seeking are the mediators (M), and personal flexibility is the dependent variable (Y). The model without mediators indicates the total effect of learning climate on personal flexibility, without consideration of any mediators.  $R^2_{Y,X}$  is the proportion of variance in occupational expertise explained by learning climate. The model with mediators include the regression weights  $a$ ,  $b$ ,  $c$ , and the direct effect of learning climate on personal flexibility  $c'$  (also illustrated in Figure 5). The  $R^2_{Y,MX}$  is the proportion of variance in personal flexibility explained by learning climate and the three mediators. The 95% confidence interval (CI) for the indirect effects  $a \times b$  is obtained by the bias-corrected bootstrap with 5000 resamples.

Figure 5. The effect of the mediating variables (i.e., feedback, help, and information seeking) on the relationship between learning and personal flexibility



Note. The solid lines indicate a significant relationship. The dashed lines indicate a non-significant relationship. The total effect of learning climate on occupational expertise is significant (marked with \*), whereas the direct effect is non-significant.

Regarding the final dimension, the total indirect effect of learning climate on corporate sense is  $f = .108$ , CI [.062, .164]. See Table 6 for an overview of the results of the specific indirect effects in this model. The specific indirect effects are  $a_1b_1 = .035$  (through *help seeking*),  $a_2b_2 = .060$  (through *information seeking*), and  $a_3b_3 = -.060$  (through *feedback seeking*). Two significant indirect effects of

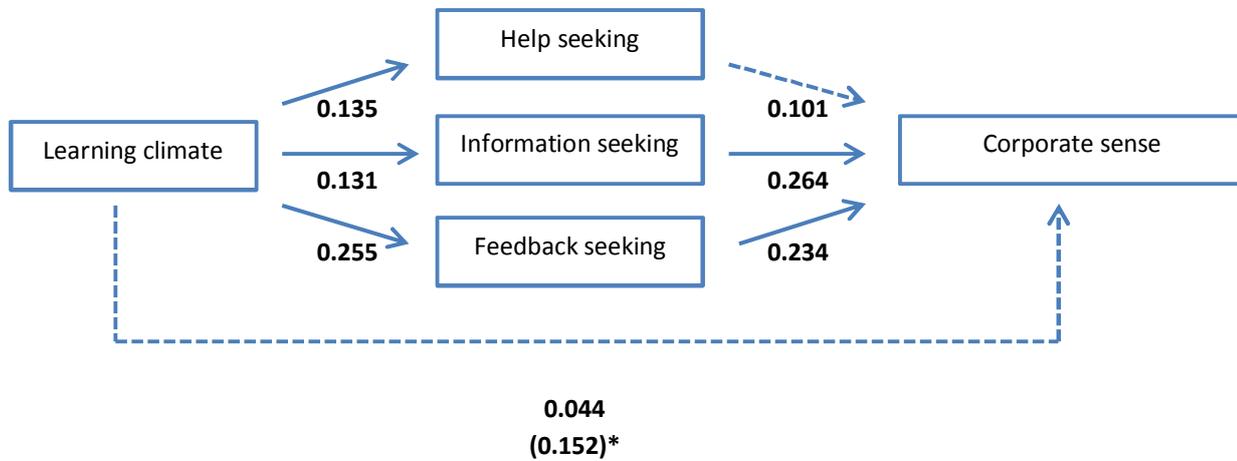
learning climate on balance through informal learning was found, namely information seeking ( $Z = 2.592, p = .01, CI [.014, .065]$ ) and feedback seeking ( $Z = 2.945, p < 0.01, CI [.024, .104]$ ). Since the total effect of learning climate on corporate sense is significant and the direct effect non significant (see Table 6 and Figure 6), both information seeking and feedback seeking fully mediates the relationship between learning climate and corporate sense.

**Table 6. Mediation of the effect of learning climate on corporate sense through help seeking, information seeking, and feedback seeking**

Model	Estimate	SE	Z	p	CI (lower)	CI (upper)
<b>Model without mediators</b>						
LC CS (c)	0.152	0.045		<0.001	0.063	0.241
$R^2_{Y,X}$	0.200					
<b>Model with mediators</b>						
LC Help ( $a_1$ )	0.135	0.039		<0.001	0.059	0.211
LC Info ( $a_2$ )	0.131	0.043		<0.01	0.047	0.215
LC Feedback ( $a_3$ )	0.255	0.034		<0.001	0.188	0.322
Help CS ( $b_1$ )	0.101	0.063		0.113	-0.024	0.225
Info CS ( $b_2$ )	0.264	0.052		<0.001	0.161	0.366
Feedback CS ( $b_3$ )	0.234	0.072		<0.001	0.092	0.377
LC CS ( $c'$ )	0.044	0.045		0.322	-0.044	0.132
Indirect effect ( $a_1 \times b_1$ )	0.014	0.009	1.401	0.161	-0.001	0.036
Indirect effect ( $a_2 \times b_2$ )	0.035	0.013	2.592	<0.01	0.014	0.065
Indirect effect ( $a_3 \times b_3$ )	0.060	0.021	2.945	<0.01	0.024	0.104
$R^2_{Y,MX}$	0.364					

*Note.* Learning climate is the independent variable (X), help seeking, information seeking and feedback seeking are the mediators (M), and corporate sense is the dependent variable (Y). The model without mediators indicates the total effect of learning climate on corporate sense, without consideration of any mediators.  $R^2_{Y,X}$  is the proportion of variance in occupational expertise explained by learning climate. The model with mediators include the regression weights  $a, b, c$ , and the direct effect of learning climate on corporate sense  $c'$  (also illustrated in Figure 6). The  $R^2_{Y,MX}$  is the proportion of variance in corporate sense explained by learning climate and the three mediators. The 95% confidence interval (CI) for the indirect effects  $a \times b$  is obtained by the bias-corrected bootstrap with 5000 resamples.

Figure 6. The effect of the mediating variables (i.e., feedback, help, and information seeking) on the relationship between learning climate and corporate sense



Note. The solid lines indicate a significant relationship. The dashed lines indicate a non-significant relationship. The total effect of learning climate on occupational expertise is significant (marked with \*), whereas the direct effect is non-significant.

## 5. Discussion

The concept of employability has evolved in the light of changes and trends in the labour market. The shift in responsibility for career development and the demand for more functional flexibility and boundaryless careers leads to the notion of a competence-based approach to employability. The current study uses a definition of employability that is currently commonly used by scholars. More specifically, employability is conceptualized as having occupational expertise and a complementing set of more general competences that can be acquired, retained and enhanced. This implies a developmental approach to employability. Therefore, research on employability takes on a learning perspective to employability. Consequently, this study takes this learning perspective to employability as well.

Specific leaning activities related to employability are identified. This study includes three social informal learning activities. Furthermore, in order for effective learning to take place, an environment that promotes learning is required (Marsick & Watkins, 2003). Such an environment is often conceptualized in literature as supportive learning environment, learning culture or learning climate (e.g., Ortenblad, 2002). Therefore, the aim of this study is to investigate to what extent learning climate influences employees' engagement in social informal learning activities and, in turn, employees' employability. The main assumption was that the three social informal learning activities (i.e., feedback seeking, help seeking and information seeking) influenced the relationship between

learning climate and the five dimensions of employability (i.e., occupational expertise, anticipation and optimization, balance, personal flexibility and corporate sense).

The current study found significant effects of social informal learning on every dimension of employability, thereby providing strong evidence for the relationship between informal learning and employability. More specifically, participants who engaged in help seeking showed higher levels of knowledge and skills and were better able to comprise between their needs and interests and that of their employer. Furthermore, information seeking was related four out of five dimensions of employability. Participants who engaged in information seeking, were better able to anticipate work-related changes and developments and to passively adapt to current changes internal and external to the employee. Additionally, these participants were more flexible and have a better understanding when exposed to these changes. Finally, these participants showed to be more engaged to organization as a whole. Regarding the final social informal learning activity, participants who engaged in feedback seeking were also more engaged to the organization. In sum, these findings support the notion that social informal learning activities lead to higher levels of employability. This partially confirms the previous findings on the relationship between social informal learning and employability (Froehlich et al., 2014; Gerken et al., under revision; Gerken et al., 2015). However, despite the general finding that social informal learning is positively related to dimensions of employability, this may differ per study. For example, in the current study, feedback seeking is related to occupational expertise only, whereas in studies by Froehlich and colleagues (2014) and Gerken colleagues. (2014) it was found to be related to anticipation and optimization. Similarly, information seeking in the current study was related to one's ability to anticipate changes, but also to balance and corporate sense, which are two dimensions that were not included in previous study (e.g., Froehlich et al., 2014; Gerken et al., 2015). This also applies to help seeking, which is also related to balance and corporate sense. However, this study contributes to the small body of research on informal learning and employability, by investigating the effects of the three social informal learning activities to all dimensions of employability.

Furthermore, this study also investigated the relationship between learning climate and the three social informal learning activities. The results indicated that a work environment supportive of learning led participants to be more engaged in feedback seeking, help seeking and information seeking. This is in line with previous studies on organizational environment and informal learning (e.g., Ellinger, 2005; Marsick & Watkins, 2003; Skule, 2004). More specifically, it provides evidence for the notion that a supportive learning environment encourages social exchange of information and knowledge (e.g., Garvin et al., 2008; Marsick & Watkins, 2003).

Finally, this study sought to investigate the role of social informal learning in the relationship

between learning climate and employability. The results showed that feedback seeking only mediated the relationship between learning climate and corporate sense. Additionally, help seeking was found to be fully mediating the relationship between learning climate and occupational expertise. Help seeking was also found to be partially mediating the relationship between learning climate and balance. Finally, information seeking fully mediated the relationship between learning climate and anticipation and optimization, personal flexibility and corporate sense. In addition, information seeking partially mediated the relationship between learning climate and balance. In sum, social informal learning activities indeed partially influence the relationship between learning climate and employability. An interesting finding is that only the relationship between learning climate and balance remained significant, after including the mediating variables. This indicates a direct effect of learning climate on balance. This may imply that balance is more long-term performance oriented compared to the other dimensions of employability. More specifically, it stresses the importance of an honest employer-employee relationship (Paauwe, 2007). However, according to leader-member exchange theory, such a relationship needs to be developed first (Graen & Cashman, 1975). Mutual trust and respect between employer and employee is important, but takes time to build (Bezuijen, Van Dam, Van den Berg, & Thierry, 2010). In this respect, a learning climate in which social exchange is already promoted, may lead to better employer-employee relationships. In other words, learning climate may be directly related to this specific dimension of employability (i.e., balance), because of its more long-term orientation.

The results contributed to the existing literature on learning and employability. Firstly, the current study included all dimensions of employability proposed by Van der Heijden and Van der Heijde (2006) as opposed to several other studies using this same measure. Therefore, we were able to link the three social informal learning activities to all dimensions of employability, thereby contributing to previous research (e.g., Froehlich et al., 2014; Van der Heijden et al., 2009). Secondly, this study confirmed that a learning climate is essential for employees to engage in social informal learning activities. Finally, this study is the first to explore the influence of learning climate and social informal learning on employability. The fact that full mediation has occurred, stresses the importance of an organizational environment supportive of learning. Learning climate influences certain social informal learning activities, which, in turn promote employability. This suggests that organizations that adopt a learning climate encourage employees to become more employable.

## 5.1 Limitations and directions for future research

The first limitation of this study relates to the conceptualization of learning climate. This study used

the shortened version of the Learning Organization Survey by Singer and colleagues (2012). Although the scale was validated by the original authors (Garvin et al., 2008), it includes only one out of three dimensions (i.e., supportive learning environment, concrete learning processes and practices and leadership). The dimension supportive learning environment was assumed to be similar to a learning climate, in terms of psychological safety and openness to different opinions and new ideas. However, since the shortened scale included only this dimension, it could be that the construct of learning climate is not fully measured. Therefore, the results may not encompass the full effect of learning climate. It is suggested that future studies on learning climate use the operationalization by Nikolova et al. (2014). These authors make a clear distinction between facilitation of learning, appreciation of learning and psychological safety (i.e., error-management). Furthermore, the scale of Nikolova et al. (2014) includes only three items per dimension (total of nine). Including this scale is less time-consuming, as opposed to the original 36 items of Garvin et al. (2008) and is a more complete measure of learning climate than the scale used in this study.

Secondly, the sample included in this study may pose a limitation as well. The sample consists of employees working in a specific domain, namely the government. It could be that employees' perceptions of a learning climate differ from employees in other work domains. This also applies to the level of engagement in specific learning activities. Therefore, future research should explore this relationship in other contexts as well.

A third limitation relates to the learning perspective of this study. The current study operationalized social informal learning in only three activities. However, more conceptualizations of social informal learning exist (e.g., Eraut, 2004) and argue for different learning activities (e.g., Marsick et al., 1999). Therefore, future research may want to focus on exploring other social informal learning activities.

## 5.2 Practical implications

The findings of the current study may have some implications for organizations and their HRD department. Firstly, it is worthwhile to invest in informal learning. Organizations can encourage social exchange and, in turn, enhance employability. For example, this could be stimulated by including inter-departmental workgroups or creating platforms where employees can informally meet and discuss. Fostering interaction between employees can help identify which employees hold relevant knowledge, which in turn may promote pro-active behaviour on part of the employees.

Secondly, organizations should not only create specific informal learning activities, but

should also adopt a learning climate. A climate in which employees feel safe to experiment and learn from their mistakes, can in turn lead to more engagement in those specific informal learning activities and, thus, more employability. For example, organizations can promote learning by providing incentives (material or non-material), such as a competition or a chance to work on skills that are not necessarily related to one's current job. Also, organizations can consider organizations can provide learning opportunities by allocating time for learning or trainings.

One apparent benefit of social informal learning is enhanced employability. To enhance employability, organizations and their HRD departments should focus on how they can facilitate, reward and promote learning by strategically adopting a learning climate.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A – Invitation mail for data collection

Beste,

Graag stel ik mij aan u voor: Mijn naam is Samantha Crans, studente aan de Universiteit Maastricht. Vanaf maart dit jaar ben ik werkzaam bij BZK als onderzoeks-stagiaire en word ik hierbij begeleid door Birgit Dewez (Programma Leren en Ontwikkelen Rijk).

In het kader van de master opleiding Management of Learning, doe ik onderzoek naar leeractiviteiten, mogelijke factoren die deze leeractiviteiten beïnvloeden en mogelijke uitkomsten van deze leeractiviteiten. Specifiek ben ik geïnteresseerd in de relatie tussen leerklimaat, informeel leren (leren op de werkvloer) en duurzame inzetbaarheid.

Het Programma Leren en Ontwikkelen Rijk heeft in kaart gebracht wat de huidige visie is op L&O bij het Rijk. Het doel van mijn onderzoek is om te specificeren wat de relatie is tussen **leerklimaat, informeel leren** en **duurzame inzetbaarheid**. Wat is de invloed van het leerklimaat op leren in het algemeen? Welke leeractiviteiten worden het meest uitgevoerd? Is dit gerelateerd aan de inzetbaarheid van de medewerker?

Deze vragen tracht ik te beantwoorden middels een kwantitatief onderzoek.

Hiervoor wil ik u vragen om deze [link naar de vragenlijst](#) door te zetten naar uw collega's, afdeling of organisatieonderdeel (de collega's binnen uw organisatie die ik ook benaderd heb met dit verzoek staan onderaan deze mail). Ook hoop ik dat u zelf de vragenlijst wilt invullen. Het invullen van de vragenlijst duurt ongeveer 10 minuten.

De antwoorden zullen, met in achtneming van de privacy-regels, anoniem worden verzameld en verwerkt. Wij kunnen de antwoorden niet terug herleiden naar de persoon en/of de specifieke organisatie. De dataverzameling vindt plaats in de maand april, de resultaten van het hele onderzoek zullen in juli beschikbaar zijn. Om voldoende respons te genereren, zullen we over een week (10 april) een reminder sturen.

Heeft u inhoudelijke vragen over dit onderzoek, neemt u dan contact op met Samantha Crans ([s.crans@student.maastrichtuniversity.nl](mailto:s.crans@student.maastrichtuniversity.nl)). Heeft u andere vragen, dan kunt u contact opnemen met het Programma Leren en Ontwikkelen Rijk ([programmalerenenontwikkelenrijk@minbzk.nl](mailto:programmalerenenontwikkelenrijk@minbzk.nl)).

Bij voorbaat dank,

Samantha Crans

## Appendix B – Questionnaire

1. Geslacht:

- Man
- Vrouw

2. Leeftijd: \_\_\_\_

3. Wat is uw hoogst genoten formele opleiding, die u heeft afgerond met een diploma?

- VMBO
- HAVO
- VWO
- MBO
- HBO
- WO

4. Hoeveel jaar werkt u in uw huidige functie: \_\_\_\_

5. Heeft u een leidinggevende functie?

- Ja
- Nee

6. Bekleedt u momenteel een vaste functie, bent u belast met een tijdelijke taak of beide?

- Vaste functie
- Tijdelijke taak
- Beide

7. Wie is uw primaire doelgroep?

- a) Collega's of ander (e) departement(en)
- b) Externe doelgroep

8. In hoeveel **functies** bent u reeds werkzaam geweest, inclusief uw huidige functie, bij de Rijksdienst: \_\_\_\_

9. In hoeveel **organisaties** bent u reeds werkzaam geweest, inclusief uw huidige organisatie: \_\_\_\_

10. Hoeveel jaren professionele werkervaring heeft u in totaal: \_\_\_\_

11. Voor wat voor soort organisatie werkt u?

- 1. Kerndepartement
- 2. Uitvoering
- 3. Inspectie
- 4. Bedrijfsvoering
- 5. Anders, namelijk...

12. Wie is uw werkgever binnen de Rijksdienst?

*Met uw werkgever wordt de werkgever binnen de Rijksdienst bedoeld, dus het ministerie, de uitvoerende dienst of het Hoog College van de Staat*

- 1. Algemene Zaken

2. Binnenlandse Zaken en Koninkrijksrelaties
3. Buitenlandse Zaken
4. Economische Zaken
5. Financien (*exclusief Belastingdienst?*)
6. Veiligheid en Justitie (*exclusief DJI en IND?*)
7. Onderwijs, Cultuur en Wetenschap
8. Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid
9. Infrastructuur en Milieu (*exclusief Rijkswaterstaat?*)
10. Volksgezondheid, Welzijn en Sport
11. Hoog College van Staat (Eerste Kamer, Tweede Kamer, Algemene Rekenkamer, Raad van State, Nationale Ombudsman)
12. Belastingdienst
13. Rijkswaterstaat
14. Dienst Justitiele Inrichtingen (DJI)
15. Immigratie-en Naturalisatiedienst (IND)

### **Informeel leren / Informal learning**

**A. Deze vragen gaan over situaties waar u informatie, feedback en hulp zoekt.** In welke mate zijn de volgende stellingen op u van toepassing – *op een schaal van 1 (helemaal oneens) tot 5 (helemaal eens)*:

1. Als ik werk gerelateerde zaken niet goed begrijp, vraag ik één van mijn collega's mij op weg te helpen.
2. Hulp zoeken is één van de eerste dingen die ik doe als ik problemen ondervind in mijn werk.
3. Ik bezoek presentaties van gastsprekers.
4. Ik ontmoet collega's uit andere organisaties door deelname aan symposia, workshops, beurzen of themabijeenkomsten.
5. Feedback van mijn leidinggevende zet mij aan het denken.
6. Feedback van mijn leidinggevende motiveert me om actie te ondernemen.
7. Feedback van mijn leidinggevende helpt me.
8. Feedback van mijn collega's zet mij aan het denken.
9. Feedback van collega's motiveert me om actie te ondernemen.
10. Feedback van collega's helpt me.
11. Ik participeer in werkoverleg (bijv. Vergaderingen, bijeenkomsten)
12. Ik participeer in projectgroepen om werkproblemen aan te pakken.

### **Leerklimaat / Learning climate**

**B. De volgende uitspraken hebben betrekking op de leerklimaat.** In hoeverre zijn de volgende stellingen van toepassing op de afdeling waarin u werkt – *op een schaal van 1 (helemaal oneens) tot 7 (helemaal eens)*?

1. Als je een fout maakt in deze afdeling wordt het vaak tegen jou gebruikt.
2. Medewerkers op deze afdeling delen graag informatie over wat werkt en wat niet werkt.
3. Meningsverschillen zijn welkom op deze afdeling.
4. Medewerkers op deze afdeling staan open voor andere manieren van werken.
5. Medewerkers in deze afdeling waarderen nieuwe ideeën.
6. In deze afdeling zijn er constructieve conflicten en discussies tijdens vergaderingen.
7. Op deze afdeling worden onderliggende aannames geïdentificeerd en besproken die van

invloed kunnen zijn op belangrijke beslissingen.

### **Inzetbaarheid / Employability**

#### ***Occupational expertise***

**C. De volgende uitspraken hebben betrekking op uw duurzame inzetbaarheid.** In hoeverre zijn de volgende stellingen op u van toepassing –

*1 helemaal niet – nauwelijks – in niet zo'n sterke mate – in tamelijk sterke mate – in sterke mate – 6 in zeer sterke mate.*

1. Ik was in het afgelopen jaar, over het algemeen, ... in staat om mijn werkzaamheden secuur en met weinig fouten uit te voeren.
2. Ik was in het afgelopen jaar, over het algemeen, ... in staat om snel beslissingen ten aanzien van mijn werkaanpak te nemen
3. Ik ben over het algemeen ... in staat om hoofd-en bijzaken te onderscheiden en prioriteiten te stellen.
4. Ik acht mezelf ... in staat om de 'voors en tegens' van bepaalde keuzes omtrent werkmethoden, materialen en technieken op mijn gebied af te wegen en te beredeneren.
5. Over het algemeen zijn mijn vaardigheden op ... niveau.

#### ***Anticipation and optimization***

**De volgende uitspraken hebben betrekking op verandering voorzien en daarmee omgaan.**

In hoeverre zijn de volgende stellingen op u van toepassing –

*1 nooit – zelden – soms – tamelijk vaak – vaak – 6 zeer vaak*

1. Ik ben in het afgelopen jaar ... actief bezig geweest met het verkennen van aangrenzende gebieden om te zien waar succes geboekt zou kunnen worden.
2. Ik heb in het afgelopen jaar ... met mijn werk aangesloten bij de nieuwste ontwikkelingen op mijn gebied.
3. Ik besteed ... bewust aandacht aan het toepassen van (door mij) nieuw verworven kennis en vaardigheden.
4. Ik besteed ... tijd aan het verbeteren van de vaardigheden en vergroten van de kennis die mijn werk ten goede komen. (*1 zeer weinig 6 zeer veel*)

#### ***Balance***

In hoeverre zijn de volgende stellingen op u van toepassing –

*1 helemaal niet – nauwelijks – in niet zo'n sterke mate – in tamelijk sterke mate – in sterke mate – 6 in zeer sterke mate.*

1. Mijn werk en privé-leven zijn ... in balans
2. Mijn werkinspanningen zijn ... in verhouding met wat ik er voor terug krijg (primaire en secundaire arbeidsvoorwaarden, werkplezier).
3. De tijd die ik besteed aan mijn werk en loopbaanontwikkeling enerzijds, en mijn persoonlijke ontwikkeling en ontspanning anderzijds, is ... evenwichtig verdeeld.
4. De mate waarin ik gericht ben op het bereiken van mijn eigen werkdoelen is ... in balans met de mate waarin ik collega's ondersteun.

#### ***Personal Flexibility***

**De volgende uitspraken hebben betrekking op “flexibel zijn” in tijden van verandering.** In hoeverre zijn de volgende stellingen op u van toepassing?

1. Ik pas me ... aan veranderingen op mijn werkplek aan. *(1 zeer moeilijk t/m zeer gemakkelijk)*
2. Ik pas me ... aan ontwikkelingen binnen mijn organisatie aan. *(1 zeer slecht t/m 6 zeer goed)*
3. Ik speel over het algemeen ... in op veranderingen in mijn werkomgeving. *(zeer langzaam t/m 6 zeer snel)*
4. Ik streef ernaar dat mijn takenpakket ... is. *(1 zeer weinig gevarieerd t/m zeer gevarieerd)*
5. Ik sta ... tegenover veranderingen in mijn functie. *(1 zeer negatief t/m zeer positief)*

### **Corporate Sense**

**De volgende uitspraken hebben betrekking op betrokkenheid bij de organisatie.** In hoeverre zijn de volgende stellingen op u van toepassing

*1 nooit - zelden – soms – tamelijk vaak – 6 zeer vaak*

1. Ik ondersteun ... de bedrijfsprocessen binnen mijn organisatie.
2. In mijn werk neem ik ... initiatief om verantwoordelijkheden met collega's te delen.
3. In mijn organisatie neem ik ... deel aan het vormen van een gemeenschappelijke visie met betrekking tot waarden en doelen).
4. Ik deel mijn ervaring en kennis ... met anderen.

**Official statement of original thesis**

## Appendix 1

### **Official statement of original paper/report/thesis**

By signing this statement, I hereby acknowledge the submitted ~~paper/report/thesis\*~~, titled:

Exploring the Relationship between Learning Climate, Informal Learning and Employability.  
.....

to be produced independently by me, without external help.

Wherever I paraphrase or cite literally, a reference to the original source (journal, book, report, internet, etc.) is given.

By signing this statement, I explicitly declare that I am aware of the fraud sanctions as stated in the Education and Examination Regulations (EERs) of the SBE.

Place: Geleen.....

Date: 23 June 2017.....

First and last name:  
Samantha Crans.....

Study programme:  
MSc Management of Learning.....

Course/skill: Master.Thesis.....

ID number: 6030131.....

Signature: .....

\*~~strikethrough~~ the subjects that are not applicable.