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Working and ageing

Guidance and counselling for mature learners



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for mature learners

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The **European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training** (Cedefop) is the European Union's reference centre for vocational education and training.

We provide information on and analyses of vocational education and training systems, policies, research and practice.

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Foreword

Population ageing is one of the most significant developments in Europe in the next decades. The economic crisis meant that several immediate concerns, such as fast rising unemployment among young people and sustainability of public finances needed to be addressed, which shifted the focus towards measures that encourage sustainable recovery. The long-term trend of ageing, however, is returning to the policy debate and 2012, the European year for active ageing and solidarity between generations, is the year to prepare the EU for the challenges ahead.

Cedefop is contributing actively to the European year by providing research, analysis and evidence on what ageing means for learning and working. This publication, the second in the series *Working and ageing*, highlights the importance and potential of guidance and counselling in supporting longer and more satisfying careers in ageing societies in Europe. It is organised in three parts. The first reviews factors contributing to the success of active ageing from various angles, while the second examines contemporary approaches to guidance and counselling. The third part presents several examples of successful measures and practices launched in EU Member States.

Analysis and results presented in this publication reveal encouraging signs of progress, but at the same time indicate that much remains to be done to promote more successful integration of ageing workers into the labour market and society. Guidance and counselling for ageing people are key elements to address the intertwined trends of ageing, changing work and emerging skill needs and to promote longer careers which follow a different logic to traditional career models.

The insight that successful guidance and counselling for ageing people requires different ways of thinking is far from new. A report published as early as 1948 by the Counselling Office of Toronto states that ‘providing guidance for such individuals [ageing workers] is just as essential as for youth, but it requires a radically different approach and technique, and as much if not more expert direction’ (1).

(1) *Report of the counselling service for applicants for employment over 45 years of age*. Toronto: Counselling Office, 1948.

In the next decades, Europe's growth and prosperity will increasingly depend on the ability to capitalise on the skills and experience of ageing people. Guidance and counselling is crucial for longer and more satisfying careers by supporting ageing people in terms of learning, career development and employability. This publication concludes that successful approaches to guidance and counselling encompass a lifecycle perspective, are responsive and comprehensive and are supported by all stakeholders involved.

I trust this publication can help policy-makers make the case for age-aware guidance and counselling and I am convinced it can be a starting point for more discussion and debate on active ageing among policy-makers, practitioners and researchers at EU level and in Member States.

Christian F. Lettmayr
Acting Director

Acknowledgements

This publication results from proceedings of the workshop *Supporting longer working lives: guidance and counselling for ageing workers* organised by Cedefop in autumn 2010. It has been edited by Cedefop experts, Jasper van Loo (ageing workers) and Mika Launikari (lifelong guidance), who reviewed the chapters and who, together with Christian Lettmayr, Acting Director of Cedefop, drafted the introduction and conclusions chapters. Thanks are extended to all of them, as well as to Pascaline Descy, Head of Area Research and Policy Analysis, who supervised the publication. Comments and suggestions from Alexandra Dehmel were highly appreciated. Cedefop would also like to acknowledge all those who contributed to the workshop and this publication.

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CHAPTER 1

Setting the scene: promoting an inclusive labour market for ageing workers

Jasper van Loo, Christian Lettmayr, Mika Launikari

With population ageing starting to have real impacts on society and the labour market, debates on its consequences in terms of employment and sustainability of pension and social security systems are increasingly considering implications for lifelong learning of older adults. This introductory chapter places population ageing in a context of several important societal trends. It contains an analysis of the situation of older workers in the European Union, assesses the impact of skills upgrading and describes recent trends in career management. After reflecting on the implications for career guidance and counselling, an overview of the different contributions in this publication is presented.

1.1. Introduction

Effects of population ageing are increasingly visible in many societies across the world. When the debate about the ageing phenomenon started three decades ago, it was approached as a trend with distant future consequences but we are now at a turning point where concrete effects are starting to appear. Discussion on population ageing and its impact has traditionally focused on its implications for employment and sustainability of pension and social security systems. Governments and policy-makers have responded with initiatives that increase labour-market participation among older people, curtail early labour market exit routes and increase the statutory pension age.

Relatively recently, the question of how to support people in having longer careers has become central to discussions about ageing populations (Cedefop, 2010c). A shift in attitudes and behaviour towards older workers will be required to turn demographic trends into economic opportunities and ensure sustainable social development across countries. This has reinforced

lifelong learning as a core element of modern careers and supported notions of ‘active ageing’ and ‘active age management’.

This publication examines recent national policy, strategy, research and practical developments in Europe on an ageing workforce and presents examples of how countries, regions and organisations are currently dealing with active age management. Its specific focus is on highlighting approaches applied in EU Member States to provide information, advice and guidance support for lifelong learning and career management of ageing workers. Individual contributions in this publication highlight increasing policy attention paid towards greater age diversity in workplaces across Europe.

Despite remarkable progress, evidence suggests that more successful integration of older workers into national labour markets calls for more comprehensive cross-sectoral policies and strategies as well as harmonised all-age legislative frameworks across Member States. Currently, countries have different legislation and diverse traditions and practices in recruiting older workers and meeting their specific learning and career needs in the workplace.

1.2. Contemporary trends shaping work, labour markets and societies

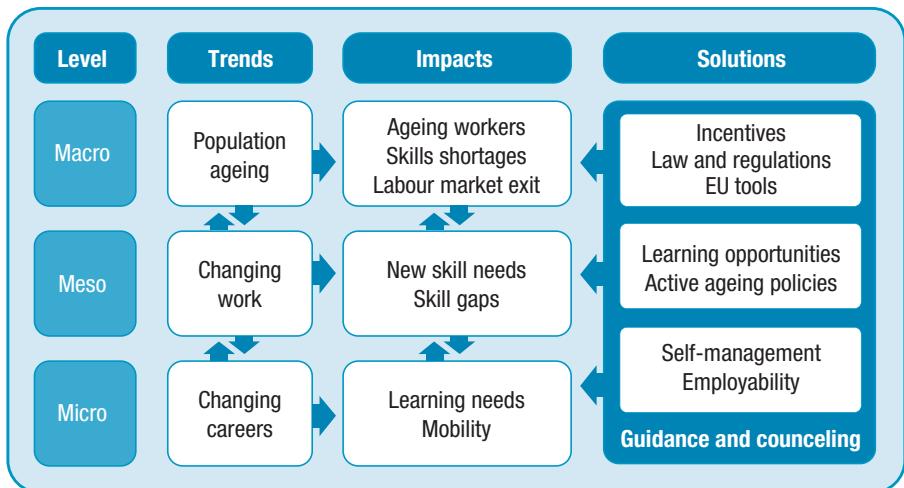
Population ageing cannot be meaningfully assessed in isolation. The phenomenon needs to be seen in a context of important societal trends that have profound impacts. These trends are discussed more in depth in the subsections that follow.

Figure 1.1 provides a condensed overview of main trends at three levels (macro, meso and micro), the impacts they have at each level and policies, instruments and concepts offering possible solutions. Although it can be argued that these developments play a role at all levels, here the approach is to examine the most important trend at each level. After providing a general overview, we discuss each trend in more detail.

Population ageing as a macro trend leads to more ageing workers, increasing labour-market exit and possible skills shortages. These trends can be counteracted and/or managed by providing incentives supporting longer careers and by laws and regulations restricting early exit and increasing (statutory) pension ages. Common European Union (EU) tools such as the European qualifications framework (EQF) aim to support longer working lives for instance by encouraging lifelong learning by promoting validation of non-formal and informal learning.

Increasing globalisation, intensifying international competition and greater focus on quality of goods and services are important trends impacting on organisations. The implication is that, at meso level, the main trend is changing work. This leads to new skills needs and in a context of insufficient learning skill gaps. Providing sufficient and tailored learning opportunities embedded in active ageing policies that support career development is a core way to address these challenges.

Figure 1.1. Main trends shaping work, labour markets and societies



Source: Authors.

At micro level, changing careers are highlighted as a main trend, closely linked to changing work and skill needs. They will require new forms and content of learning and mobility. Self-management and employability are the core concepts which are supposed to allow individuals to deal with these new demands.

Other related trends are changing work-life patterns, flexibility in the labour market, growing importance of R&D activities, more jobs requiring higher education, increasing female employment and rising qualification levels among women (OECD, 2010).

1.2.1. Ageing, older workers and employment in the EU

The most significant challenge for Europe in the coming years will be to combat the global economic crisis and consequently to introduce measures to reduce unemployment as well to increase productivity, economic growth and social inclusion in Member States. The *Council conclusions on active ageing* (Council of the EU, 2010a) highlight the fact that future competitiveness and prosperity of Europe relies largely on its capability to put its labour resources to active use. This includes extension of employment periods over lifetimes and adoption of necessary policy action to support better work-and-life balance. Addressing skill needs of older workers through more and better education and training, promoting active ageing, creating more inclusive labour markets as well as tackling labour market segmentation and segregation are fundamental challenges for our societies.

In particular, as Europeans tend to live longer, older workers should be encouraged to remain longer in the labour market. Job quality and job satisfaction are key factors for sustainability of work and retaining older workers in the labour market (European Commission, 2007b). However, the economic crisis of 2008 has radically challenged economic conditions for both young and older citizens, and many have experienced unemployment and unexpected job and career transitions. The crisis also drastically reduced opportunities for entering the labour market. Some were forced to return to education and training for additional learning and skills upgrading.

Also due to the crisis, the EU failed to reach the target of 70% participation rates of the working age population in employment by 2010 (²) (European Commission, 2011b). For 2020, the EU has set an even more ambitious goal: an employment rate of 75% (³) (European Commission, 2011a). For older workers (55 to 64 years) the target employment rate is 50%. By 2010, this goal was not reached by EU-27, although Member States managed to increase the employment rate of older workers to 46.3% in 2010 (compared to 36.9% in 2000) (Eurostat, 2011). The above employment targets can be met only by creating new jobs, increasing labour participation (engaging women, young and older workers to a much greater degree than currently), launching structural reforms and fostering lifelong learning.

(²) In 2010, the employment rate of workers aged 20 to 64 stood at 68.8%.

(³) It is one of the five key elements of the EU's growth and jobs strategy, Europe 2020.

1.2.2. Changing work and emerging skill needs

The nature of work is changing due to new technology and computerisation and the dynamics of modern work organisation. Baethge et al. rightly pointed out that this does not only hold for knowledge-intensive work. Across the board:

- (a) there is a clear need for extended basic general knowledge next to occupational expertise;
- (b) there are higher requirements for analytical and problem-solving skills;
- (c) demand for social-communicative skills is increasing (Baethge et al., 2006 cited in Bohlinger and van Loo, 2010, p. 34).

In addition to changing skill requirements in most types of work, employers demand greater flexibility. Quantitative flexibility in terms of the amount and distribution of work hours; and qualitative flexibility in terms of assignments (work content) and willingness to learn. Organisations need greater productivity and flexibility, and innovation to respond properly to market conditions (Hiltrop, 1995).

As most jobs are becoming more knowledge- and skills-intensive, Europe has to continue investing in education and training to increase human capital to promote competence-development and innovation (Cedefop, 2010a). Training systems have not been sufficiently capable of equipping workers and job-seekers with skills and competences required by employers (European Commission, 2011b). Governments have been introducing skills and competence strategies not just to help people into jobs, but to help break working cycles of low skills, unemployment, short-term jobs and low wages. As part of these strategies many countries have taken concrete measures to improve assessment and recognition of skills acquired throughout life as well as to support adults' participation in education and training (Cedefop, 2011; European Commission, 2006, 2007a).

One of the challenges is how to match (in quantity and quality) supply and demand. For the time being, however, national labour markets are not well balanced as there are shortages of adequate skills in some regions, sectors and occupations coinciding with relatively high levels of unemployment (European Commission, 2010c). To this end, with the new skills for new jobs initiative, the Council of the European Union (2009c) aims at establishing a mechanism for regular assessment of long-term skills supply and demand to monitor better trends in the European labour markets, develop tools and services for job-related mobility and address skills mismatches. Proper skills improve individuals' employability, ease employment transitions as well as support re-entry into the labour market (Cedefop, 2010a), which all are crucial for older workers' more active labour-market participation.

Recently, the EU raised the target of 25 to 64 year-old adults active in lifelong learning to 15 % to be reached by 2020 (Council of the European Union, 2009a). Adults/older workers are not always aware of the qualification opportunities available to them and they sometimes have no clear view of their own skills and know-how. Also learning opportunities for skills development in formal as well as non-formal and informal settings are not transparent enough and are not easily accessible for adults in working life (Cedefop, 2011). To improve this situation, the agenda for new skills and jobs emphasises, among other things, that careers guidance should be available for all employees to have better access to lifelong learning and validation of non-formal and informal learning (European Commission, 2010a).

1.2.3. New careers and emerging career development models

To understand the main impact of trends in work and organisations on careers and career development for individual workers at micro level, we need to consider the psychological contract between workers and firms. The core insight from psychological contract theory (Argyris, 1960; Levinson et al., 1962) is the implicit non-written labour contract based on the (justified) expectations of workers and employers. Attention to this labour ‘contract’ increased, resulting from the changing nature of workers/employers relationships (van Loo, 2005). In traditional careers, which evolved within one or a few organisations over a lifetime, success was defined by increasing salary and promotions. Workers exchanged loyalty for job security. In a modern, more contingent, employment contract, with the needs for cost reduction, increased flexibility and performance improvement, workers exchange performance and flexibility for continuous learning and marketability (Sullivan, 1999).

Changes in the ‘deal’ between employers and employees also have an impact on careers. Sullivan and Emerson (2000) described three changes marking the transition from organisational to borderless careers:

- (a) a move towards professional loyalty instead of organisational loyalty;
- (b) a change in focus from extrinsic to intrinsic rewards (or psychological success; Hall, 1996);
- (c) a move towards self-reliance.

Moving towards a borderless career implies that career development will be cyclical rather than linear, that mobility will become a standard feature of careers and that career development responsibility shifts from the organisation to the individual (Mirvis and Hall, 1994, p. 368-369). The new career concept also appears as the ‘protean’ career in literature (Hall, 1976). It is defined as ‘a process which the person, not the organisation, is managing. It consists of

all the person's varied experiences in education, training, work in several organisations, changes in occupational field, etc. The protean career is not what happens to the person in any one organisation' (Hall, 1976, p. 203).

The main implications of changing careers are learning needs arising at various stages in working life and mobility within or between organisations becoming more common. Managing these needs requires employability and self-management. Self-management can be linked to four career competences (Ball, 1997): optimising the current situation, career planning, engaging in personal development and balancing work and non-work. In terms of labour market, employment and lifelong learning, career planning and engaging in personal development are most relevant self-management dimensions. In ageing societies characterised by change, self-management is a true core competence enabling successful and satisfying working lives lasting beyond career retirement ages.

1.3. Lifelong guidance and counselling

Guidance is a continuous process that enables citizens of any age and at any point in their lives to identify their capacities, competences and interests, to make educational, training and occupational decisions and to manage their individual life paths in learning, work and other settings in which those capacities and competences are learned and/or used. Guidance covers a range of individual and collective activities relating to information-giving, counselling, competence assessment, support, and teaching decision-making and career management skills (Council of the European Union, 2008).

The main aim of lifelong guidance is to support citizens' lifelong learning, sustainable employment, empowerment, employability, social inclusion and active citizenship. Lifelong guidance is the interface between education, training and employment sectors. In a rapidly changing economy, guidance services have a key role in addressing skill shortages and inappropriate qualifications among older workers. Sustainable success may depend on a lifelong learning and lifelong guidance system as well as a qualifications framework to be in place to support progression in learning and acquisition of relevant competences for the world of work (Cedefop, 2011).

Across Europe, measures have been taken to develop further guidance services especially for adults to support their participation in lifelong learning and career development (Council of European Union and European Commission, 2010). However, to date Member States have not been able to

establish a coherent lifelong guidance system that fully accommodates the information, advisory and guidance needs of all citizens. The main challenges to developing an all-age guidance system are linked to lack of coordination between education and employment sectors, numerous providers with diverse guidance practices, allocation of funding, expertise/professionalism of guidance practitioners, and to a limited evidence-base for assessing the impact of guidance services (Cedefop, 2011).

The Council of the EU adopted a *Resolution on better integrating lifelong guidance into lifelong learning strategies* in 2008 to reinforce lifelong guidance in European education, training and employment policies and to foster further guidance-related developments in Member States. The resolution identified four politically significant priority areas:

- (a) encourage lifelong acquisition of career management skills;
- (b) facilitate access for all citizens to guidance services;
- (c) develop quality assurance in guidance provision;
- (d) encourage coordination and cooperation among various national, regional and local stakeholders.

Since 2008, Member States have cooperated through the European lifelong guidance policy network in the four priority areas. Cedefop is supporting and accompanying this process. With their recent initiatives, countries addressed the public policy goals set for lifelong guidance provision. For learning goals, progress has been made especially in improving the overall framework of lifelong learning to help individuals in their learning processes and professional orientation. For labour-market goals, actions taken promote inclusive labour markets and more collaborative involvement of social partners and public employment services. For social equity goals, countries have been committed to reducing inequalities by improving guidance provision to at-risk groups (including older workers) to ensure they have a realistic opportunity to participate in learning and working, use their potential and individual capacities, and enable them to participate in civic dialogue (Cedefop, 2011).

A recent development across Europe is emergence of a more individualised service provision which considers actual life situations of individual service-users. This approach places new demands on guidance professionals who are supposed to cope with various factors and dimensions characterising life. The individually-designed service delivery model calls for new competences of guidance providers as well as a broadening of the service pallet to meet the demands of older workers (Cedefop, 2011).

Through cross-sectoral coordination and cooperation guidance services should be more easily accessible for all individuals at a time, place and form

most appropriate to their needs. This will require — and will only be feasible through — more intensive use (and development) of the possibilities offered today by modern information and communications technology. This could enable guidance services successfully to reach older workers and other groups. Increasing involvement of service users (in this case older workers) in designing and developing guidance provision is crucial to create more effective systems and to identify and meet requirements of diverse users (Cedefop, 2011).

1.4. Career management in changing labour markets

In the current labour-market situation, still affected by the economic crisis, public employment services in Europe are confronted with several urgent short-term challenges and the need to adapt to long-term strategic objectives. Continuing high unemployment rates, and youth unemployment rates more specifically, demand immediate actions, which ideally should be compatible with developments guided by the long-term strategic objectives defined in the *Europe 2020* strategy (European Commission, 2010b), the *Agenda for new skills and jobs* flagship initiative, and the European employment strategy, which calls for expanding investment in workers' skills for creating more and better jobs throughout the EU (European Commission, 2010c).

Public employment services are crucial actors if we want successfully to apply and develop skill needs forecasts. This will also require close cooperation between employers, trade unions and educational institutions across Europe to serve better the labour market (Cedefop, 2011; Council of the European Union, 2009b).

Public employment services could assume a dynamic role as labour-market change agents with priorities such as increased labour-market transparency and new support processes (including career management services) especially in relation to vulnerable groups. Public employment services can act as contributors, users and interpreters of labour-market information, provide job-and-career-related services through various (also electronic) channels (online, telephone and face-to-face services) as well as address special cases, for example, redundancy and outplacement (European Commission, 2009; Cedefop, 2010b). However, several gaps in labour-market information and guidance service provision have been identified (OECD, 2010). Relevant information is not always available or readily comprehensible for all those that could benefit from it.

To improve quality and transparency of job vacancy information and matching supply and demand for skills and competences on EU labour markets, a standard multilingual dictionary of occupations and skills will be developed (European Commission, 2008). This European skills, competences and occupations taxonomy (ESCO), a joint policy initiative ⁽⁴⁾ that will be carried out in cooperation between the European Commission and Member States, aims to support skills development and employability. It still remains somewhat open to what degree guidance will be an integral element in ESCO. ESCO has great potential to bring benefits to both job-seekers and employers, especially when guidance takes a prominent place in the initiative.

Member States have been working towards creating an infrastructure that eases citizens' lifelong acquisition, application and further development of career management skills by providing them with better opportunities for systematic career development. In the coming years, the focus will be on operationalisation of career management skills so that citizens will be empowered to formulate and put into practice personal action plans for further learning, career management and other life goals (Cedefop, 2011). Initiatives and actions also support employers to use better the talents and skills of their staff and engage more actively ageing workers in career planning at work (including occupational recycling, job-redesign, new function identification, flexible working schedules and cooperation in age-mixed and/or intergenerational teams).

1.5. Overview of this publication

This publication highlights the importance of guidance in an ageing workforce. It contains three parts. The first, *Supporting active ageing: aligning new labour-market needs with individual aspirations*, considers factors that impact on the success of active ageing by looking at it from various perspectives. In Chapter 2, Annemieke van Beek, Wilma Henderikse and Joop Schippers examine to what extent European employers in several countries support longer working lives and what specific measures and instruments they use. From the viewpoint of transitional labour markets, Dick Moraal considers the

⁽⁴⁾ ESCO is aimed at institutions and stakeholders in the labour-market and education sectors. It will be progressively developed over the coming years to include as many occupations as possible. To ensure that ESCO meets the needs of its users and interested parties (including employment services, social partners, companies, education and training institutions or developers of job search web tools), they are invited to take part in its development.

impact of demographic change in Germany and presents empirical evidence showing the extent to which German firms are in line with the new demographic situation (Chapter 3). In Chapter 4, Ida Wognum, Anouk Breukers, Max Witpotth and Beatrice van der Heijden present the findings of two studies that identify individual and organisational factors affecting the employability of an ageing workforce and make recommendations to enable enterprises to develop and implement employability-improving strategies. Antonia Ypsilanti and Ana Vivas discuss cognitive ageing and training in relation to demographic, neurobiological and psychological factors in Chapter 5. Donald Ropes explores the perspective of intergenerational learning in organisations by presenting a framework for a forthcoming research study in Chapter 6.

The second part, *Meeting the challenges: emerging guidance and counselling models in Europe*, presents contemporary approaches to guidance and counselling for ageing people in Europe. In Chapter 7, Stephen McNair examines a major study of training and work in later life in the UK, notes the distinction between well-off and less-well off groups of ageing workers, and identifies how guidance and counselling can address areas of market failure. The main issue addressed in Chapter 8 by Marg Malloch is that focus on the individual worker is merely one aspect of ageing in a work context. Enterprises, local authorities, and national and international policy-makers can also play a significant role by creating relevant policies and addressing the challenge of implementation. Relying on evidence from a pan-European study among older workers, Allan Brown and Jenny Bimrose examine career patterns and identities and highlight the role guidance and counselling can play in supporting successful labour market transitions in Chapter 9. In Chapter 10, Lyn Barham discusses how career guidance can be adapted better to the needs of older workers by looking at explanations for why older people are generally less satisfied with these services and argues that more effective counselling requires respect for diversity among older workers and further research.

The third part, *Making it work: successful guidance and counselling in EU countries*, presents good practice examples. Fabienne Caser shows that companies in France foster senior employment by focusing on preserving employee health, developing skills and fostering commitment in Chapter 11. She argues that guidance and counselling initiatives foster job maintenance for seniors, provided they contain a phase of mobilising those who might benefit from it and consider the specific features of older workers. In Chapter 12, Cristina Milagre, Maria Francisca Simões and Maria do Carmo

Gomes present the set-up and outcomes of a major initiative to upgrade qualifications in Portugal, which combines training with guidance and counselling and recognition and validation of competences. Chapter 13 by Roland Kadefors and Marianne Blomsterberg presents results from a case study in Sweden focusing on a programme for phasing out army employees. They conclude that both organisational and personal factors must be considered, and that guidance and counselling is a core element ensuring successful career changes. Graham Smith in Chapter 14 discusses the features and outcomes of a successful initiative in Scotland that aimed to improve employability in later life. Among the main findings are that lifelong learning is linked to individual background and educational experience and that successful guidance and counselling supports dealing with uncertainty and managing change, considering capacities, needs and aspirations of older adults.

The final chapter by Mika Launikari, Christian Lettmayr and Jasper van Loo provides conclusions, links these to the policy context, and outlines avenues for future research.

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PART 1

Supporting active ageing – Aligning new labour-market needs with individual aspirations

Do European employers support longer working lives?

Annemieke van Beek, Wilma Henderikse, Joop Schippers

Demographic changes and challenges in Europe with special focus on Germany

Dick Moraal, Gudrun Schönfeld

Individual and organisational predictors influencing ageing workers' employability

Ida Wognum, Anouk Breukers, Max Witpoth, Beatrice van der Heijden

Cognitive ageing in older workers and its impact on lifelong learning

Antonia Ypsilanti, Ana Vivas

Intergenerational learning in organisations – A research framework

Donald C. Ropes

CHAPTER 2

Do European employers support longer working lives?

Annemieke van Beek, Wilma Henderikse, Joop Schippers

In the European Union extending people's working lives is seen as a key element in curtailing rising costs associated with an ageing population and in solving looming labour shortages due to demographic shifts on the labour market. The issue is high on the agenda of policy-makers. Governments have taken initiatives to stimulate older workers to stay in the labour market and postpone retirement. However, employers are considered a major driving force in both defining the opportunities for retirement and the opportunities for working longer. This chapter aims to examine the role employers play in delaying retirement of their employees. Do employers recognise the value of older workers staying in the labour market? How do they deal with the consequences of an ageing labour force? What initiatives would be needed to address the needs of ageing workers and stimulate older workers to postpone retirement? To answer these questions data are used from a series of identical surveys carried out in five European countries and additional in-depth qualitative case studies of initiatives to encourage employees to delay retirement.

2.1. Introduction

Demographic trends show that across the EU the population is ageing due to a combination of low birth rates and rising life expectancy. An ageing workforce and long-term decline of the working age population will constitute a significant challenge for Member States, in the medium to long term, to maintain economic growth and sustain social support systems. According to Eurostat by 2060 there will be only two people of working age (15-64) for every person aged over 65 in the EU compared to a ratio of four to one today⁽⁵⁾. From 2012

⁽⁵⁾ Eurostat, employment rate of older workers by gender

http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/structural_indicators/indicators/employment.

onwards, the European working-age population is expected to shrink, while the population over 60 will continue to increase. The strongest pressure is expected to occur during the period 2015-35 when the baby-boom generation will enter retirement. Ensuring that the baby-boom cohorts stay longer in the labour market and remain healthy, active and autonomous as long as possible is therefore a key challenge.

Both the EU and national governments have set targets for sustainable participation of workers and the knowledge-based society. Active ageing is regarded as the central concept the EU developed to deal with an increasingly ageing society (European Commission, 2001, 2002; Walker, 2002; OECD, 2000). It encompasses an increase in labour force participation of older workers as well as promotion of productive activities in the life phase of retirement such as involvement of citizens in and commitment to matters of society. The key message is an explicit call for a 'dynamic lifecycle perspective'.

In 2004, the European Commission assessed progress achieved towards the Stockholm and Barcelona targets in its communication *Increasing the employment of older workers and delaying the exit from the labour market* and has judged it to be insufficient (European Commission, 2004). Member States were asked to take drastic action and develop comprehensive active ageing strategies (European Commission, 2005). The EU committed itself to supporting this development through policy coordination, exchange of experiences and best practices, and through financial instruments (European Commission, 2004; OECD, 2006). The two European reports on demography that followed (European Commission, 2006; 2008) assessed where Member States stand in responding to the challenges of demographic change.

Retirement of the baby-boom generation marks a turning point in demographic development of the EU. Ageing is no longer something that will happen in the future but is happening now and takes place in overwhelming numbers. The population aged 60 years and over will increase by two million people every year. The working-age population will stop growing and will be shrinking after 2012 by 1 to 1.5 million people each year. Rates of men and women in employment at the age of 60 are low which means that ageing baby-boomers are a major potential for Europe's labour force.

Ensuring that the baby-boom cohorts stay longer in the labour market and remain healthy, active and autonomous is a key opportunity for tackling demographic ageing.

To make this happen we need to improve our understanding of older workers decisions regarding retirement and impediments to staying in the labour market. And as employers are regarded as key players in the decision-

making process of older workers we need to improve our knowledge of attitudes and policies of employers regarding older workers. Active ageing is high on the agenda of policy-makers and governments but is it high on the agenda of employers as well? This chapter aims to examine employers' opinions and behaviour regarding older workers.

After a concise review of literature, a description of the data used for our analysis is provided. Next the results of our analysis are presented. We look at what major challenges European employers perceive for the future labour market. Is an ageing workforce regarded as one of these challenges and, if so, what are employers' expectations of the consequences of an ageing staff? What policy measures have employers taken so far? What do employers actually think of policy measures aiming to delay the exit of older workers from the labour market and postponement of retirement? Beside opinions and behaviour of employers we consider what initiatives are needed to address the needs of ageing workers and stimulate older workers to postpone retirement. Finally, we summarise the main conclusions.

2.2. Literature review

Van Dalen et al. noted that although national and international organisations frequently suggest, or promote, various measures, there is much less insight into how employers actually view the challenge of dealing with an ageing workforce and the expected decrease in labour supply (2006, p. 1-2). Organisations take most decisions on how to deal with ageing workers or implement measures. Thus, it is difficult, if not impossible, to extend working life without active support and commitment from employers.

Earlier research among employers clearly shows lack of focus on older employees. In the US and several European countries many employers are biased towards older workers and programmes to retain and retrain them are often lacking (Chiu et al., 2001; Guillemard et al., 1996; Henkens, 2005; Taylor and Walker, 1998). Since early retirement is often seen as a less painful way to prune the workforce than large-scale layoffs older workers find themselves in a vulnerable position, particularly when economic prospects are weak (Van Dalen et al., 2006, p. 1). Thijssen and Rocco (2010) noted that this phenomenon was strongly visible in many corporate policies in the 1970s and 1980s in Europe.

In various fields of research it is well established that many stereotypes prevail among employers regarding performance and learning ability of older

workers (Bohlänger and van Loo, 2010). Stereotypes of older workers have a negative connotation. They may lead to social exclusion of older workers, not only because one may judge employees on the basis of average and inaccurate representations of the category, but also because stereotypes may lead to self-fulfilling prophecies, when those who are subject to negative stereotypes behave accordingly (Hilton and Von Hippel, 1996).

Stereotypes do not only relate to older workers' productivity, adaptability and loyalty, but also to their retirement (Henkens, 2005). Although new ways of thinking are emerging, in many of today's workplaces, the belief that older workers should retire somewhere in their mid-50s or early 60s still dominates (Joulain and Mullet, 2001; McCann and Giles, 2003; Van Dalen and Henkens, 2005; Thijssen and Rocco, 2010). Several simultaneously occurring considerations may explain this. Promoting early retirement may reflect positive attitudes toward older workers in the sense that it is seen as well earned at the end of a long career of hard work. But it may also reflect more fundamental attitudes and beliefs that younger workers have more to offer to an organisation than older workers (McCann and Giles, 2003).

A belief among employers that older workers want to retire as soon as possible will hamper efforts to extend working life. At the same time, the necessity to call upon the labour force potential of older workers may increase substantially due to increasing skills shortages. Thijssen and Rocco (2010) report that, as a result, stereotypes and corporate policies are changing, but their analysis also reveals that the belief that ageing workers are an asset to organisations is far from universal yet.

2.3. Methodology

Our analysis is based on research carried out as part of the EU project 'Fair play for older workers'. This project aimed to improve the position of older workers in European labour markets⁽⁶⁾. Partly by analysing the causes for their disadvantaged position, but also by developing programmes stimulating employers to recognise the challenge of an ageing workforce and to take initiatives to support older workers and delay retirement.

The fair play research project was set up to address employers' behaviour and attitudes regarding the ageing population and its main consequences for

⁽⁶⁾ This challenge was defined as ensuring a higher share of those currently aged 55 to 64 stay in work and improving employability of those currently aged in their 40s and 50s.

labour-market and organisational policies. The research addressed four main questions:

- (a) to what extent is there a sense of urgency among employers regarding the ageing population and its consequences;
- (b) what do employers see as the possible implications of an ageing workforce for their organisations and what organisational policies are implemented;
- (c) which policies are currently implemented or considered in organisations in response to labour supply shortages;
- (d) which policies do employers prefer with regard to preventing a shrinking labour force.

The answers to the questions formulated above will shed light on the degree to which employers in Europe are aware of the ageing of the labour force and its implications for the labour market. The questions were answered with the aid of data from a set of comparative surveys carried out in five European countries: Greece, Spain, Hungary, the Netherlands and the UK, (Van Dalen et al, 2006, 2010; Henderikse and Schippers, 2006; Borsi et al., 2008). Of course these five countries do not represent the view of employers in the entire EU, but considering the diverse settings in these countries, the picture offered gives insights into existing differences among European countries. The highest labour force participation rate of workers over 55 years is found in the UK (57%). In the Netherlands (46%), Spain (43%) and Greece (42%) the rate is much lower and Hungary is at the end of the line with 33% (?). Also the actual retirement age of men and women in the countries studied differs, statutorily as well as effectively.

Data collection took place from March to October 2005 except for Hungary where the survey could not be carried out before the spring of 2008 for lack of funding. The total number of completed questionnaires amounts to over 2 300 and cover all sectors of the economy.

2.4. Findings

2.4.1. Challenges for the future labour market

Attitudes and policies of employers regarding an ageing workforce will be affected by their perception of threats and opportunities in the labour market. What do European employers perceive as the main challenges for the future

(?) Eurostat, 2005 – the year the research was carried out.

labour market and is an ageing workforce regarded as one of these challenges? Results of the fair play research show that employers perceive shortages of labour as one of the main labour-market challenges for the coming decades. In four of the five countries included in the survey labour shortages are mentioned among the top three (Table 2.1), with a notable exception for Hungary. However, data for Hungary are fairly recent and may be affected by the global recession.

The main conclusion based on the figures presented in Table 2.1 is that in all countries in our study there seems to be awareness that demographic developments will affect the future labour force and quantitative labour-market shortages are foreseen.

Table 2.1. Degree to which employers think the following developments will affect recruiting problems on the labour market in their own organisations (%)

Developments	EL	ES	HU	NL	UK
Ageing population	49	67	39	77	38
Labour market shortages	62	64	43	62	72
International competition	62	49	38	71	22
Increasing work place stress	60	45	55	52	44
Unemployment	57	54	30	45	9
Declining birth rates	51	46	49	44	36
Inflow of foreign workers	53	34	13	43	11
Poverty	51	51	58	21	56

Source: Fair play employer survey, 2005; OFA fair play employer survey Hungary, 2008.

2.4.2. Ageing of the workforce: expectations and consequences

A sense of urgency among employers regarding demographic challenges on the labour market makes it interesting to know more about employers' expectations of the consequences of ageing staff.

Looking at consequences of an ageing workforce, a divide among employers becomes visible (Table 2.2): Hungarian and British employers are far more positive on the economic consequences of ageing employees, whereas Greek, Spanish and Dutch employers predominantly see negative

consequences. Especially Dutch employers expect very negative consequences of an ageing workforce. Of the negative consequences of ageing an increase in labour costs is without doubt the most prominent, with an exception for the UK. The exception of the UK is probably due to higher labour force participation rate of workers over 55 years (57%), compared to the other countries studied.

Other negative consequences to be mentioned are greater resistance to change, an increase in absenteeism and less enthusiasm for new technology. Employers (except UK employers) expect a need to improve working conditions and a need to review how work is organised. Of course, such changes might cost.

Table 2.2. Expected consequences of ageing staff (%)

Consequences	EL	ES	HU	NL	UK
Costs (negative consequences)					
Increase in labour costs	62	52	60	77	42
Greater resistance to change	56	55	36	56	45
Increase in absenteeism/sick leave	69	54	31	53	40
Increase in cost of training/career development	52	29	23	18	17
Less enthusiasm for new technology	59	46	31	44	39
Deterioration of the organisation's image	37	22	8	16	13
More need to review organisation of work	59	50	62	46	43
More need to improve working conditions	51	49	72	46	25
Benefits (positive consequences)					
Increase in know-how and experience	68	67	69	61	78
Fewer conflicts within the organisation	34	37	40	13	24
Increase in productivity	33	37	46	7	25
Broader employability of staff	29	30	37	29	35
More staff mobility	12	13	33	17	28

Source: Fair play employer survey, 2005; OFA fair play employer survey Hungary, 2008.

As for the benefits of ageing, most employers in the five countries expect an increase in know-how and experience. Other benefits are less obvious in the eyes of employers. The increase in know-how apparently does not translate directly into higher productivity as most employers do not associate an ageing personnel structure with a higher productivity level. The discrepancy between know-how and productivity is largest for Dutch employers: only 7% of them expect an increase in productivity. From a cost/benefit perspective this finding is probably the most worrisome: labour costs increase, costly organisational changes may be necessary, but productivity cannot hold pace with these expected developments.

Employers may not only judge older workers on their own merits. It may be important to compare their views on older and young workers. Employers in the survey were asked to evaluate characteristics of workers of age 50 and over and workers 35 years and younger. In Table 2.3 we present for each country the differences between the scores of the 'young' and the 'older' age category.

Table 2.3. Differences in judgements of employers on functioning of older (50 years and older) and young (35 years or younger) workers (%)

(Strongly) applicable	EL	ES	HU	NL	UK
Social skills	11	29	5	50	34
Reliability	17	32	10	47	42
Commitment to the organisation	25	43	27	44	48
Accuracy	7	11	12	43	23
Customer-oriented skills	-6	15	-4	26	25
Mental capacity	-13	-12	-18	-22	-1
Productivity	-33	-9	-3	-37	9
Creativity	-44	-37	-14	-41	-9
Flexibility	-29	-22	-13	-49	0
Willingness to be trained	-48	-58	-37	-77	-36
Physical capacity	-57	-61	-26	-78	-36
New technology skills	-65	-63	-37	-84	-52

Source: Fair play employer survey, 2005; OFA fair play employer survey Hungary, 2008.

Positive scores in Table 2.3 indicate that older workers are considered to perform better than younger workers. Negative scores in the table indicate that younger workers are considered to perform better than older workers. The results for each country show to a certain extent a similar picture. Older workers are considered to be more reliable, more committed, more accurate and are supposed to have better social skills. Older workers are rated most negatively with respect to their willingness to be trained, their physical capacity and their capacity to deal with new technology. With regard to customer-oriented skills and productivity the results are mixed. Employers in the UK judge older workers' productivity higher than that of young workers. Employers in the Netherlands and in Greece are most negative about older workers' productivity.

2.4.3. Ageing of the workforce: policies and measures

Lagging labour productivity and other negative consequences of an ageing workforce perceived can induce employers to take several steps to solve looming labour shortages, due to demographic shifts on the labour market. Table 2.4 lists the policy measures which employers have taken so far to retain older personnel.

Greek and Spanish employers have implemented fewer measures, although they are likely to be heavily affected by an ageing population structure. Based on the number of actions taken one would expect the older worker to be in the best position in the Netherlands. However, on closer examination of the measures taken it appears that the Dutch employer only takes politically-correct measures, like extra leave, part-time retirement, and ergonomic measures, and avoids harder measures (like demotion, which would raise conflict with employees and unions). Also, part-time retirement schemes are just one example of costly measures that tend to 'spare' older workers. Fewer obligations and more privileges are generally proposed and negotiated. Privileges such as additional leave, age-related holiday entitlements, workload reduction, age limits for irregular work, or exemption from working overtime are quite normal in the Netherlands. Given all prior policy discussions – both at national and European levels – on issues like 'employability', lifelong learning and the need to turn Europe into a knowledge-based society, it is remarkable that so few employers report offering training programmes for older workers. In Greece and Spain it is only one in 10, in the Netherlands one in eight, in the UK one in six and in Hungary, that shows the best performance in this field, it is still not more than one in five. This pattern is reflected in other European data sources on training participation among

older workers, like labour force surveys, adult education surveys, etc. Participation in training programmes developed for the entire staff, usually decreases with age and workers over 50 hardly participate in training programmes (Elias and Davies, 2004).

Table 2.4. Degree to which employers implemented measures or were considering implementing measures aimed at retaining older personnel (%)

Measures	EL	ES	HU	NL	UK
Easing leisure/work trade-off					
Part-time early retirement	12	9	29	47	33
Additional leave for older workers	7	4	4	57	10
Prolonged career interruptions	7	8	3	10	12
Flexible working hours	12	16	– (a)	21	32
Adjusting working conditions					
Age limits for irregular work	7	4	11	31	3
Exemption from working overtime for older workers	7	6	14	29	5
Ergonomic measures	8	13	20	50	14
Adjusting tasks/capabilities					
Training programmes for older workers	10	10	20	13	18
Reducing workload for older workers	18	11	12	33	15
Compilation of working teams of different ages	29	21	36	25	50
Demoting older workers to a lower rank and pay package	6	3	10	6	16

(a) No data available for Hungary.

Source: Fair play employer survey, 2005; OFA fair play employer survey Hungary, 2008.

2.4.4. Older workers as a remedy for labour shortages

Policy-makers regard older workers as an important source of additional labour supply and ageing baby-boomers as a major potential for Europe's labour force. Employers, however, predominantly perceive negative consequences of an ageing workforce, with an increase of labour cost as the

most prominent. What do employers think about postponing retirement?

Employers were asked about the desirability of older workers working beyond the age of 60, respectively 65 years old (Table 2.5).

The UK is the only country of the five involved in the research in which a majority of employers think that working beyond the age of 60 is desirable. Greece, Spain and Hungary show an opposite picture: many employers oppose workers being employed beyond the age of 60. For Hungary an explanation could be that the official retirement age is lower than in most other European countries (62 years for men and 60 for women).

Table 2.5. Opinions of employers on the timing of retirement (%)

	EL	ES	HU	NL	UK
Working beyond the age of 60					
Desirable	29	44	29	42	60
Indifferent	27	27	29	39	32
Undesirable	44	29	42	19	8
Working beyond the age of 65					
Desirable	10	24	12	9	30
Indifferent	22	27	33	34	43
Undesirable	68	49	67	57	27

Source: Fair play employer survey, 2005 / OFA fair play employer survey Hungary, 2008

Working beyond the age of 65 is considered even less desirable. In none of the countries involved in the research is a majority of employers in favour of this option. Employers in the UK, however, are still the most positive about older workers working after the age of 65 and employers in Greece, Hungary and the Netherlands the most negative. The share of employers that think it is undesirable for workers to continue after the age of 65 is in these countries twice as high as in the UK.

To get more insight into employers' attitudes and behaviour regarding employing older workers, we asked employers what their policies are considering recruitment of older workers in response to personnel shortages (Table 2.6).

Although there are differences across countries, preferences of employers show that retaining or attracting older workers is obviously not their first or

best choice. Except for the UK, little has been or will be done to encourage workers to continue working until the age of 65. The same can be said for recruiting more older workers and calling back former retired employees.

In the UK female workers, older workers and workers from ethnic minorities are equally popular among employers. Only (partially) disabled workers fall behind as a potential solution for labour-market shortages. The picture in the Netherlands is quite different. Here (partially) disabled workers are regarded as the most attractive group to supply additional labour. Women and immigrant workers share second place, while older workers stay far behind. Employers either seem to think disabled workers are less problematic for the organisation than older workers, or financial incentives to hire disabled workers are thought to be attractive – the survey does not provide an answer to why employers prefer disabled workers to older workers. Greece and Spain show a similar pattern: women are still considered to be the main source of additional labour supply; (partially) disabled and immigrant workers share second place. Here too, older workers are at the end of the queue.

Table 2.6. Measures taken or considered by organisations in response to personnel shortages (%)

Solving the problem by	EL	ES	HU	NL	UK
Encouraging workers to continue working until the age of 65	10	14	16	12	60
Recruiting more older workers	8	7	31	8	42
Calling back former retired employees	4	3	24	3	23
Improving employability of workers	35	47	44	42	81
Introducing labour saving technologies	36	14	27	18	69
Recruiting more female workers	28	38	18	21	45
Recruiting more ethnic minorities	13	11	18	21	42
Reintegrating disabled workers	12	12	13	26	21

Source: Fair play employer survey, 2005; OFA fair play employer survey Hungary, 2008.

Improving employability of workers is the most popular measure to combat personnel shortages. Generally, this does not go together with training programmes for older workers. Usually, participation in ‘general’ training programmes decreases with age and workers over 50 hardly participate in

such programmes. In Greece and especially in the UK introducing labour saving technologies is a much preferred option as well.

Our conclusion that older workers are at the end of the line when it comes to recruitment of new staff is illustrated by the answers to the direct question posed to employers, which worker they would prefer to fill a vacancy: a newcomer to the labour market, a worker with six-year experience or a very experienced (and consequently somewhat older) worker with 25 years experience. Most choose the worker with six-year experience (Greece 58%; Spain 63%; the Netherlands 75%⁽⁸⁾). Only few prefer the very experienced candidate (Greece 20%; Spain 10%; the Netherlands 3%).

To conclude, even though employers, especially in the UK and the Netherlands, and to a lesser extent in Greece, Spain and Hungary, experience and/or expect labour-market shortages, they hesitate to consider older workers as a solution. Maybe we should add 'yet'. This picture only paints the current state of affairs. When in the (nearby) future employers will actually experience the turn of the tide they may trim their sails to the wind.

2.4.5. Initiatives to delay retirement

In-depth qualitative case studies of strategies and tools implemented by the fair play for older workers project show that initiatives to invest in older workers pay off and can ease longer working lives. It is of utmost importance to realise that the decision-making process regarding retirement is not only influenced by health and finance but also by work content and working conditions, which affect how older workers feel and act and how processes of (dis)engagement at work take place. Maybe the real challenge lies in how to learn to value older workers and show older workers their value is recognised. In return this opens the way to maximise the value of older workers' contributions to the organisation.

Undervaluing contributions of older workers to the organisation can decrease their participation in training programmes. It works from both sides. When older workers are seen as dispensable, employers are less likely to invest in training because they question whether investments will pay off. Older workers' morale will drop being pushed to the side and do not feel the need to participate in training programmes any longer. Further, case studies show that the willingness of older workers to take part in training programmes increases when needs, expectations, preferences and abilities of workers are

⁽⁸⁾ This question was not asked in the UK and Hungary.

considered and tailor-made instead of mass produced programmes are offered. Programmes need to be designed on a situational basis and build on the skill-base of older and more experienced employees.

Examples of mentoring programmes show benefits for both mentor and mentee and lead to higher retention rates. Older workers who take on the mentor role feel more valued and more attached to their organisation. Dealing with younger employees also improves their social network and their understanding of new social networking technologies. Junior mentees gain from mentoring programmes as they adapt faster to a new working environment and technical knowledge and learned techniques are passed on by older and experienced mentors.

More down to earth there is a need for supervisors to raise the issue of working longer and discuss what could be done to keep work interesting and make employees eager to work longer. Most often older workers retirement decisions are thought to be a personal matter and supervisors do not like to interfere in personal matters. However, in-depth qualitative case studies of strategies and tools implemented by the fair play for older workers project show that the better the social support of supervisors and colleagues, the greater the likelihood that employees will stay on the job.

2.5. Conclusion and discussion

Findings of the study show a discrepancy between aims of the EU and the five Member States of the research project in stimulating labour force participation of ageing workers and attitudes of individual employers. Working longer depends largely on employers' willingness to employ and retain older workers. As long as employers perceive older workers as a burden and neglect investing in human capital, they will not be the major driving force needed for prolongation of working lives.

Results show ambivalence among employers regarding the need for older workers to stay in the labour market. On one hand there is a sense of urgency among employers regarding demographic challenges on the labour market, but on the other they are reluctant to support later retirement of employees. This is caused by the perception of employers that ageing workers are a burden rather than a benefit. In each country involved in the study, the number of employers expecting costs of ageing due to lower productivity of older workers and higher labour costs, is by far larger than the number of employers expecting benefits. As a consequence, most employers oppose workers being employed beyond the age of 60.

Lagging labour productivity could induce employers to take measures to improve productivity of employees and as such retain personnel. Nevertheless, our results show that few measures are taken and certainly no measures meant to invest in human capital. Given the importance that issues like employability, lifelong learning and the need for improvement of the knowledge-based society play in European policy, it is remarkable that so few employers take measures to invest in older workers. Employers seem to take on a rather passive role. Unless policy-makers succeed in bridging the gap between macro and micro rationality, all kind and lofty words on the role of older workers and the necessity to use their talents run a risk of remaining empty rhetoric, good ideas with hardly any practical follow-up.

To a large extent, prospects of future older workers will depend on the capacity of governments and social partners to succeed in investing in older workers and investing in lifelong learning. Case studies show that initiatives to invest in older workers pay off and can ease longer working lives. Investments in human capital and employability of workers currently in their 40s or 50s can (at least partly) prevent future problems with older workers' productivity and the need for (expensive) repairs of productivity shortages at a later age. Nevertheless, European employers and their organisations are far from ready to accommodate the ageing workforce. Policy and practice do not change overnight and, therefore, joint efforts between key stakeholders at all levels and across sectors will be needed to make older workers fully accepted and valued in the labour market.

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CHAPTER 3

Demographic changes and challenges in Europe with special focus on Germany

Dick Moraal, Gudrun Schönfeld

European Union labour markets are currently confronted with several far-reaching structural developments (globalisation, Europeanisation, immigration, technological progress, social diversity, individualisation) influencing the world of work and also the demographic situation in European countries. The theoretical background of this chapter focuses at first on the analytical concept of transitional labour markets and then on transitions from the labour market into retirement/temporary disability and vice versa as well as from (long-term) unemployment of older persons to paid work and vice versa. These transitions, however, are not mere supply and demand processes, as the ‘push, pull, jump, stay, (re)entry’ approach stipulates. Especially in Germany ageing of the population as well the labour force has had noticeable impacts since the beginning of 2010. Composition of the potential work force by age cohort will also change radically. German enterprises are particularly reliant on older employees and on retention of their employability and will be required to react to demographic pressure exerted by the predicted shortage of skilled employees and highly qualified staff. This chapter reports on the empirical findings of the third European continuing vocational training survey (CVTS3) and the German additional CVTS3 survey. Further, the findings of a Leonardo-II project examining continuing vocational training for older employees in SMEs are presented.

3.1. Introduction

European Union (EU) labour markets are currently confronted with several far-reaching structural developments, especially trends towards internationalisation (globalisation, Europeanisation; see for example, with special reference to vocational training policy, Busemeyer, 2009; Dunkel and Jones, 2006; Gross, 2003) as well as technological developments and emerging social diversity among individuals (changing individual preferences,

choices, careers and life cycles, immigration, see for example, Bovenberg, 2008; Schmid, 2002). These developments apply to all EU Member States. Demographic development in Europe is also of special interest in our context. We will first give an overview of the main demographic changes. Then we will have a look at the changing world of work in enterprises and the consequences for future employment of older employees.

3.2. Demographic trends and shortage of skilled employees

The EU demographic situation is characterised by diversity. Differences exist in the fertility rate, life expectancy, net migration and labour participation rates. The European statistical office (Eurostat) regularly delivers projections for development of the population and potential labour force by age (Eurostat, 2010). Such projections provide important data on future labour-market developments and can support evaluation of passive and active labour-market policies. The latest projections ⁽⁹⁾ cover the period 2008-61. Population projections involve making internationally comparable population estimates and producing the most plausible figures for future years. In general, key assumptions are made with respect to mortality, fertility and migration by gender and age. In discussing population trends, two aspects are important:

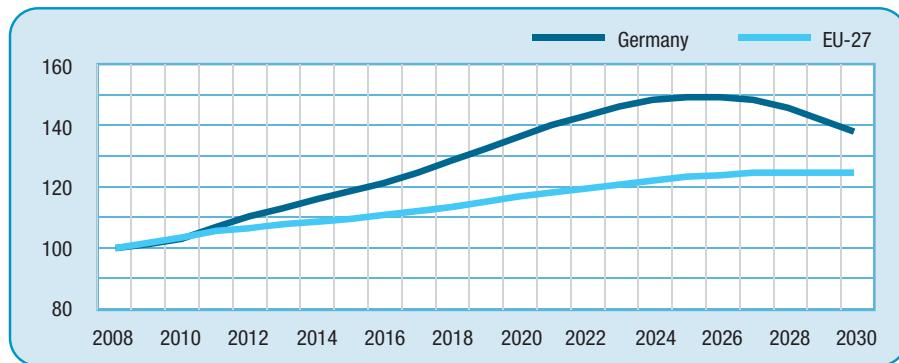
- (a) population trends are relatively autonomous and are exogenous influences upon a country's social system and labour market;
- (b) population trends are gradual and long lasting. Changes in the central components of population development – birth rate, life expectancy of the population, and even migration – influence the structure of the population for many decades.

The data show that, especially the German, population and also the potential working population (persons in the age group 20-64 years) will decline dramatically between 2008 and 2030. Figure 3.1 shows the indexed trend of the share of the potential working population ⁽¹⁰⁾ in the age group 55-64 years to the total potential working population for Germany and for the average of EU-27. This figure reveals the demographic situation most European countries will face in the next decades.

⁽⁹⁾ Results are available at the Eurostat database (Europop2008): <http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/population/data/database> [16.6.2011].

⁽¹⁰⁾ The concept of the potential labour force includes employed persons and the registered unemployed as well as 'hidden' unemployment.

Figure 3.1. Indexed trend of the share of the potential working population in the age group 55-64 years to the total potential working population for Germany and EU-27 average (Index 2008 = 100)



Source: Eurostat, Europop2008 (date of extraction 8.11.2010); own calculations.

Table 3.1 illustrates that from north and west European countries especially in Germany the average index point rise of the share of the potential working population in the age group 55 to 64 years of the total potential working population is highest. This means that the demographic pressure on German society, politics, social partners, enterprises, etc., will be very strong in the next two decades.

Table 3.1. Average index points increase of the potential working population in the age group 55-64 years to the total potential working population for 2008-30

Country	Index point	Country	Index point
Germany	129	Norway	105
Austria	123	United Kingdom	105
Luxembourg	119	Denmark	101
EU-27	115	Finland	100
Belgium	112	Sweden	97
Netherlands	111		

Source: Eurostat, Europop2008 (date of extraction 8.11.2010); own calculations.

3.3. The changing world of work

Internal (enterprise) and external (societal) labour markets are changing. At present there are two socioeconomic trends, which mutually complement each other. Company tenure (⁽¹¹⁾) is becoming less common for employees (caused by dismissals, reengineering, outsourcing, etc.) and job tenure (⁽¹²⁾) is also decreasing. Thus, a guarantee of a lifelong workplace as well as lifelong employment in the same job is becoming increasingly unrealistic. Many traditional workplaces in the blue-collar sector (declining importance of manufacturing) and even in the white-collar sector (such as banking) have already disappeared or are disappearing. Enterprises are increasingly forced to produce goods and services using fewer and fewer employees to remain competitive. There is a tendency in many enterprises for core employees to do the regular work, while more discontinuous activities are contracted from the external labour market (such as temporary workers or employees with a fixed-term contract). This will dominate employer-employee relationships and will have a strong impact on unemployed persons in the future (Booth et al., 2002; Cappelli and Neumark, 2004; Pfeifer, 2005; 2009). The future labour force will probably consist of:

- (a) core employees: a small group of highly qualified experts, technicians and managers; and a core group of skilled/unskilled employees;
- (b) a quantitatively important group of highly qualified external experts, who will temporarily work for enterprises on a contract basis. This group will take on many tasks formerly done by middle management;
- (c) a temporary labour force of semi-skilled employees for peak times;
- (d) short-term unemployed persons;
- (e) long-term unemployed persons.

Such a labour force distribution seems ideal from the viewpoint of enterprise costs. However, just-in-time production going on in enterprises is consistent with just-in-time work and, in many enterprises, even just-in-time training. This more vulnerable future 'employment relationships model' may, however, disrupt continuity of production of goods and services in case of difficulties (such as supply bottlenecks, shortage of qualified staff). It is just as much in enterprises' interests to maintain continuity of production of goods and services, which implies more or less stable employer-employee relationships.

⁽¹¹⁾ The German expression is *Betriebsbindung*.

⁽¹²⁾ The German expression is *Berufsbindung*.

Naturally, these changes on the internal labour market within enterprises also influence external labour markets in sectors, regions and society as a whole. One important development is that the classic pattern of the working lifespan is gradually losing its dominance in working life: the prototype of the male breadwinner in full-time employment, who works until the age of 65 (or above), is gradually diminishing. That does not mean that employees will work less, but that the work is more evenly distributed over a lifetime. However, changes in working life patterns will not develop rapidly. So far, job hopping concerns only special groups in the labour market (such as younger professionals). Thus until now, regular employment is still the norm for most employees. However, increasing variety of working life patterns for employees is emerging: some men, but especially women, alternate periods of work with periods of leave, education and caring responsibilities. Employees attach more importance to a good balance between work and private life (Köhler et al., 2008; Schmid, 2002). The current debate on the changing world of work concludes that the shift from an employee-based industrial society to an entrepreneur-based knowledge society will bring about a new situation where individuals have to take over direct responsibility for their own work and lives, and thus individuals will be the entrepreneurs of their own working power and lives (¹³).

3.4. Theoretical approach

To put discussion on the changing world of work and demographic pressure into a broader perspective, this chapter confronts these developments with the analytical concept of transitional labour markets, developed in the mid-1990s by Schmid and his colleagues at the Social Science Research Centre, Berlin (Schmid, 1993; 1994; 2002; 2006; Schmid et al., 1996), and with a concept which tries to describe transitional forces especially for older employees on transitional labour markets: the ‘push, pull, jump, stay, (re)entry’ approach (Bredgaard and Larsen, 2005; Sørensen and Møberg, 2005).

3.4.1. Concept of transitional labour markets

In the past two decades, the concept of transitional labour markets influenced scientific and policy discussions regarding current developments on internal and external labour markets. It delivers an interesting – in the first instance,

(¹³) Discussion on this concept was initiated in Germany by the Kommission für Zukunftsfragen der Freistaaten Bayern und Sachsen (1997).

heuristic – vision of new social and economic dynamics in societies. Moreover, the concept stresses the relevance of transitional labour markets for future labour-market research and policies. Individualisation in society leads to discontinuous life cycles and working life patterns. In the future, continuous transitions in and out of work will increasingly determine individual working life and drive the way labour markets function. As a framework for the changes in individual work patterns and their consequences for passive and active labour-market policies, the analytical concept of transitional labour markets is very fruitful. It enables better understanding of institutional arrangements that support both flexibility and security to make it easier to move from precarious to stable jobs or to deal with discontinuities in the life cycle. The concept allows assessing practices in Germany and other European countries against criteria for good transitional labour markets, to compare them and to benefit from common learning (Schmid, 2006).

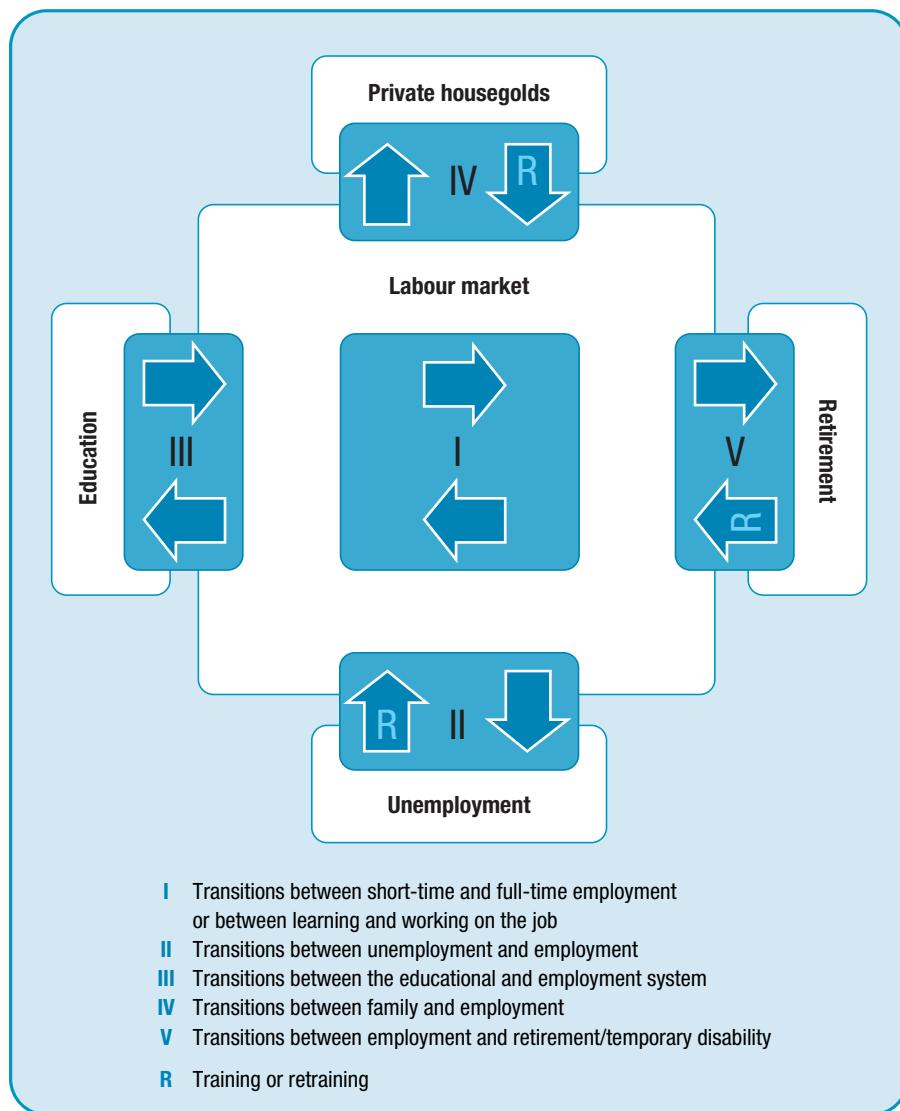
Transitional labour markets are characterised by both continuous transitions of persons within labour-market segments (part-time/full-time employment and unemployment) and transitions to other socioeconomic segments (such as education, care and retirement). The concept is heuristic, first and foremost, and should be seen as a framework for research design to grasp the relationships between the core labour market (¹⁴) and other societal situations. However, it also describes institutional labour-market structures and strategic policy options for passive/active labour-market policies, for example implementation of policies and measures that change institutional arrangements. Measures that aim to increase employment have to consider framework regulations put in place by, for example, the State. Figure 3.2 gives an overview of the concept by outlining the different flows.

The core of this concept is that individuals will not occupy one fixed position during their working lives, but several. This of course means a substantial break with the traditional approach where individuals occupy unique positions with unique time sequences during their working lives. Moreover, the concept encompasses people occupying several positions at the same time (such as combining part-time work with care) – in this case, the important link with the core labour market can continue to exist. This analytical scheme can be interpreted at individual level, with reference to the individual's life cycle and working life. It then shows how individuals can have several employment

(¹⁴) The core labour market is characterised by fairly stable jobs, relatively steady wage rises often confirmed by collective agreements, working and health measures or employee representations, while labour conditions at the periphery are precarious (temporary work contracts, shorter working time, lower wages, hazardous working conditions, etc.).

situations in their lifetime careers (patchwork career). The individual thus jumps from one situation into another. The individual needs to be able to manage all these situations and thus remain employable all the time.

Figure 3.2. Transitional labour markets



Source: Schmid, 2002, p. 233.

The causes of transitions vary, however. They may be caused by unemployment, illness, (partial) disability, (semi-)retirement, care leave or (re)training. In transitional situations II (transitions between unemployment and employment), IV (transitions between private households and employment) and V (transitions between employment and retirement), a return to the core labour market is only possible in most cases with training or retraining (R). Retraining the unemployed, women wishing to work, and even in some cases activation of older people or people temporarily unable to work is an important part of active labour-market policy in European countries. Transitional situation III (transitions between employment and education) also describes continuing vocational training of employees as well as training in connection with, for example, educational leave, parental leave or job-rotation⁽¹⁵⁾.

Positional changes are not just flows between situations; they are also determined by permanent societal structures and institutions. The combination of flows and societal situations, moreover, defines the transitional labour market concept not only as an analytical research concept, but also as a starting point for passive and active labour-market policies. Thus, this 'heuristic' scheme of transitional labour markets additionally implies the institutional prerequisites to implementing policies, which aim to further smooth and steady transitions. It also shows the institutional settings and arrangements for possible interventions: for example, training interventions by the State, collective agreements regulations, ageing policy, etc.

The concept also describes different stages in the lifetime of individuals in a society. It further implies the individual's choice on how to cope with the different stages, as well as societal regulation/arrangements (by law, social policy measures, etc.) of these institutions. One central question raised is the form of political strategies to be used in different transitional stages to support these transitions. This is the institutional setting of 'transitional bridges' between work and non-work (Schmid, 2006; Schmid et al., 1996).

One core assumption of the concept is that the labour market works better if individuals are able to cope with transitions in and out of work, which occur

⁽¹⁵⁾ There are two forms of job-rotation:

- (a) internal form of work organisation in which individual employees exchange jobs with one another at regular intervals to improve their versatility or relieve monotony of the work;
- (b) a scheme for temporary replacement of existing employees during sabbatical, parental and training leave by unemployed persons. This form is especially well-known in Denmark and meant in this context.

during their working lifetimes. Activating employment policy has to provide and institutionalise transitional (framework) regulations between work and non-work and create possibilities for individuals to react successfully to breaks in their life cycles or working life patterns. The degree to which individuals react successfully to critical life events determines the quality of their lifetime careers. This also implies a political debate on the different transitions. It is necessary to create possibilities for individuals to maintain a continuous link with the labour market throughout their lifetimes. If individuals are (temporarily) outside the labour market, institutional stimuli should exist to enable individuals to return to work. It is important to invest continuously in human capital. It is essential for policy to reduce irreversible choices. To support training activities of individuals, guidance and counselling through public service providers could be helpful. An example of a successful instrument is the training cheque programme in the German federal state of North Rhine-Westphalia. It offers enterprises and employees in SMEs financial support for continuing vocational training. Use of the training cheque requires obligatory, but free counselling at consultation centres (Jelich, 2009; Moraal 2007b).

The enterprise is an important determinant of working life patterns. Working life patterns are linked directly to processes within enterprises. Among other things, enterprises need to adapt to rapidly changing market conditions while ensuring a certain stability and continuity of production. Flexible use of the labour force secures optimal use of production factors. However, too much emphasis on flexibility also harbours dangers, for example to continuity of labour supply. High rotation of personnel bears high operational costs (such as induction/training), as well as diminishing staff commitment and enterprise loyalty and insufficient investment in human capital. Participation in working life is a condition for social inclusion of individuals and societal groups. However, individuals are increasingly confronted with voluntary and involuntary transitions in and out of work.

3.4.2. Transitional forces on the labour market: the ‘push, pull, jump, stay, (re)entry’ approach

This section focuses on flexible transitions from the core labour market to retirement (or temporary disability) and vice versa (transition V) as well as from (long-term) unemployment of older persons to the core labour market and vice versa (transition II). These transitions, however, are not mere supply and demand processes, as the ‘push, pull, jump, stay, (re)entry’ approach stipulates (Bredgaard and Larsen, 2005; Gambetta, 1987; Sørensen and Møberg, 2005). In this approach, patterns of different combinations of

economic and non-economic transitional forces are described as push, pull and jump processes, steering labour supply, and stay and (re)entry processes, steering labour demand. The main questions for understanding these transitional forces, for example, from work into retirement and vice versa, are whether these transitional forces are based on structural constraints or on rational individual choices.

Labour supply aspects are:

- (a) push forces: primarily endogenous work-related forces, such as worsening working conditions, increasing workload and work stress;
- (b) pull forces: primarily exogenous forces, such as favourable pension arrangements (such as early exit options);
- (c) jump forces: more based on individual preferences (choices between voluntary work and employment, leisure activities and employment, etc.).

Labour demand aspects are:

- (a) stay forces: primarily endogenous work-related forces, such as favourable continuing vocational training conditions in enterprises or working and health conditions;
- (b) (re)entry forces: primarily exogenous forces, such as abolition of early exit options, increase of pension age.

Transitional processes are partly determined by policy interventions from the State. National regulation of pensions and early retirement schemes partly determines the employment rate in the 55 to 64 age group. However, willingness and interest among enterprises to retain older members of their staff in employment and/or increase recruitment among unemployed older persons prepared to work again, is crucial. Besides policy measures and economic conditions, a decision over staying or leaving the labour market also depends on a wide diversity of non-economic motivations of a job's appeal related to individual preferences –compared with freedom to choose how to spend free time following retirement. It is a combination of economic and non-economic motivations, incentives and disincentives, which steers transition in and out of work respectively.

3.4.3. Transitional forces influencing labour supply

Push The most decisive push factor is dismissal of employees. Such redundancies could be a result of general recession – or of reduced employment in some sectors or in certain enterprises in a sector. Another important push factor is (partial) disability of employees. A less decisive push factor would be worsening job conditions. Such worsening could affect most employees in an enterprise – or it could

selectively affect only older employees or relatively low-skilled/unskilled employees. Push could also be exercised if an employer offers a ‘golden handshake’, a lump sum of money as compensation for dismissal. Instead of money, the enterprise might offer paid continuing vocational education and training, giving fair chances of finding a satisfactory new job. A further possibility is the enterprise offering permanent employment, but on condition of ‘down grading’ (as opposed to promotion), implying either worsening job conditions or reduced wage and esteem (or both) – which, if rejected, would function as a push factor. Summing up, decisive push factors relate to the inability to maintain a job, which is satisfying, acceptable and/or suitable. However, in any of these cases, push factors depend to a high degree on corporate personnel policy strategies.

Pull

Pull is seen, in general, as a result of several factors making it economically possible to withdraw from the labour market – where ‘possible’ depends upon age, health conditions and income level compared to the income expected from continued labour-market participation. Reduction of the pull factor is on the agenda in most European countries, either by rising the pension age and curtailing early exit arrangements, by sharpening definitions of disability or by reducing income compensation for those leaving the labour market. Many proposals for reforms in European countries are directed towards making these conditions less favourable in general. Pull might also be reduced if postponing retirement several years into the future would result in a lump sum of money and higher level of early retirement wage compensation for the last few years until ‘normal’ retirement age. Pull could also be related to the degree to which job satisfaction, the working environment and job conditions fulfil (and will continue to fulfil) the preferences of the individual considering continuing or retiring from work. Of course, these individual preferences are influenced by an individual’s former education and socialisation, including their working life biography – and are thereby related to socioeconomic situations.

Jump

An important dimension of jump forces is the individual trade-off between work and leisure time. If individual living conditions offer much more interesting and/or satisfactory activities and

occupations – be it hobbies, small-scale utility value production for the household, the neighbourhood or the community, membership of clubs or associations, care for children, grandchildren or other family members – then a ‘jump’ out of the labour force, away from wage work towards self-determination of everyday life, would seem rather tempting. This of course has to be balanced against the economic costs of retirement from the labour market. If the costs in terms of income loss are not too high, the temptation to ‘jump’ is naturally higher (Sørensen and Møberg, 2005).

3.4.4. Transitional forces influencing labour demand

- Stay* Permanent updating of qualifications of older employees and hence regular continuing vocational training of older employees is one dimension which supports the stay forces. Another dimension is improving working and health conditions for older employees and to offer more attractive jobs so older workers are willing to stay longer on the labour market.
- (Re)entry* In case of dismissals of (older) employees having very little chance of finding another job, training or retraining of the unemployed is an important policy option. The crucial question is what chances the individual might have to return to employment. This depends on individual characteristics, especially if qualifications have a transfer value and are in demand elsewhere in the labour market and, of course, there must remain a certain time span in which the enterprise could profit from the (new) qualifications. Naturally it is much shorter for older workers. Even with appropriate qualifications, an enterprise might prefer a younger applicant for whom financing continuing vocational training shows a better return on the balance sheet. Particularly unskilled or low-skilled older unemployed are in danger of being excluded from (re)entry measures – and so are some skilled unemployed, depending on whether their qualifications are scarce (or unique, which might be the case for some groups of highly educated top-level employees) or are common and in surplus in the labour market. Older persons with (partial) incapacity, who therefore cannot find a job on ‘normal’ terms, can be integrated into the labour market if they are offered public support for establishing jobs with some kind of protected conditions. Employers could also make jobs for older employees

more attractive, so that waged work could compete better against non-waged work activities. Job enrichment and a more attractive working environment might, therefore, prove effective (Sørensen and Møberg, 2005). Counselling both enterprises and older persons could be a promising element to identify new chances – especially for the predicted skills shortage and demographic changes. In Germany, employment agencies are the first contact points for both.

3.5. Empirical results from CVTS3 and the AgeQual project

Discussion on the influences of push, pull, jump, stay and (re)entry processes makes it clear that public policy can primarily influence pull forces and indirectly stay and (re)entry forces which govern exit and entry mechanisms on the labour market, the supply side. However, policies influencing enterprises have a role to play as well – it is also important to consider the demand side of the labour market. Importance of the demand side is most directly related to stay and (re)entry forces, since enterprises decide on hiring and firing. Ability of enterprises to avoid involuntary ‘jump’ is limited in the short term, but could be improved over the longer term if enterprises concentrate their personnel policies more on training/retraining and improving working conditions in enterprises. Stay and (re)entry forces are significant in negative aspects of pull forces. To attract appropriate staff an enterprise must ensure that the working conditions resulting from a personnel policy are well adjusted to the – divergent – preferences of both existing staff members and those to be recruited.

What can enterprises do for older employees (stay) and eventually for older unemployed persons ((re)entry)? Which measures are enterprises initiating and how can they afford support (such as financial support or counselling)? Some answers are given in the next sections: first, by presenting some results of the third European continuing vocational training survey (CVTS3) and the additional German CVTS3 survey (⁽¹⁶⁾). Second, the Leonardo-II project AgeQual, continuing vocational training for older employees in SMEs and development of regional support structures, shows how enterprises can be supported, for example by regional qualification networks.

⁽¹⁶⁾ Especially the latter survey shows that provision of effective support for older employees requires a differentiated mixture of measures.

3.5.1. Training participation of older workers in Germany – Results from CVTS3

Continuing vocational training is an important part of lifelong learning and is, therefore, of great importance for policy, the economy, society and all individuals. It is central for maintaining, broadening and updating the qualifications required by employees and is necessary to maintain competitiveness of enterprises. A core aim of the CVTS3 (¹⁷) is to examine how continuing vocational training is practised by enterprises in Europe. The findings indicate that it is stagnating in Germany and is even on the decline in some cases. Compared to other European countries, Germany continues to rank no higher than midfield and compared to European countries with similar socioeconomic structures, Germany actually trails northern and western European countries. In Germany, fewer enterprises offered their employees continuing vocational training in 2005 than in 1999, and fewer employees in all enterprises participated in continuing training. However, those enterprises that provided continuing vocational training courses trained more employees and also made more learning time available per participant. Despite this, enterprises invested nominally less overall in continuing training per participant, which was particularly evident in the amount of direct expenditure on courses (¹⁸) (Behringer et al., 2008).

For the first time since its start, CVTS3 collected European-wide data of training participants in enterprises by age group. A report dealing with the age question shows that participation of older employees in continuing vocational training is much differentiated across Europe. On average, one in four employees attended continuing vocational training; in enterprises offering it for its employees one in three employees participated. Germany ranks in the lower middle, therefore running behind nearly every other northern and western European countries (Bannwitz, 2008). In most Member States, changes in age structures will go hand-in-hand with a decline in population size. As mentioned, in Germany this development has become visible since 2010. Composition of the potential work force by age cohort will also change

(¹⁷) European surveys on continuing vocational training in enterprises provide important information on quantitative and qualitative structures of continuing vocational training and supply comparable data from many European countries. Three surveys were conducted with the reference years 1993, 1999 and 2005. The next survey will be held in 2011. 28 countries and more than 100 000 enterprises participated in CVTS3. Results are available from the Eurostat database <http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/education/data/database> [17.6.2011].

For an evaluation and interpretation of CVTS3 see Cedefop, 2010.

(¹⁸) Fees and payments of courses, travel and subsistence payments, labour cost of internal trainers and other costs (teaching material, rooms, etc.).

radically. As a result, the share of the middle age cohort of 35-54 will shrink while the share of 55-64 will grow noticeably. The increase in the potential workforce in this latter age cohort in Germany will be among the most significant in Europe. The effects arising from this trend will impact first and foremost those people who are between 30 and 50 years of age today. If they are to counteract effects of demographic trends, it is necessary to start preparing them now for the challenges it will bring – by stepping up continuing training measures, for instance (Bellmann and Leber, 2008; Hillmert and Strauss, 2008; Moraal, 2007a).

3.5.2. Measures to support employment of older workers – Results of the German additional CVTS3 survey

In Germany the CVTS3 was accompanied by an additional survey of training enterprises carried out in 2008 (¹⁹). Among other things, this survey examined continuing vocational training for older employees and problems enterprises encounter because of demographic change (Moraal et al., 2009b; Moraal, 2009). First, we look at some aspects of the labour supply push-processes in enterprises, which are determining the decision whether employees will leave or stay in an enterprise. Of those enterprises that provide continuing vocational training 81% employed older employees from 2005 to 2007. The share of older employees grows steadily in tandem with enterprise size. Employment of older employees is concentrated in banks/insurance enterprises (93%) and manufacturing enterprises (89%). At 44%, the share of enterprises in skilled trades that employ older employees is significantly smaller.

From 2005 to 2007, in 59% of enterprises no person left the enterprise before reaching the legal pension age. In 25% of enterprises, older employees left prior to reaching retirement age for personal reasons; 7% cited operational reasons and 8% reported both. Only relatively few enterprises (17%) predict larger numbers of older employees retiring early in the years 2009-11. Early retirement will occur more in larger enterprises than in smaller enterprises in the future.

Most enterprises (64%) that provide continuing vocational training agreed that decrease of the labour supply starting in 2010 could cause problems for them in the future. In different size classes and sectors of activity the perceived

(¹⁹) This survey dealt with additional questions regarding qualitative aspects of continuing vocational training (such as linking initial and continuing vocational training, forms of learning used in continuing vocational training, training participation of semi- or low-skilled employees). Of enterprises that provided continuing vocational training and also participated in CVTS3, 302 were interviewed. More information is available at <http://www.bibb.de/en/wlk30480.htm> [17.6.2011]. See also Moraal et al., 2009b.

severity of the problem varies: problems are particularly expected by larger enterprises with more than 500 employees (74%), but only 55% of small enterprises with 10 to 19 employees anticipate problems. Especially enterprises in the sectors transport, storage and communication (75%), construction (74%) and real estate, renting and business activities (71%) expect problems. By contrast, a markedly smaller share (23%) of enterprises in the sector 'other community, social and personal service activities' foresee problems.

Enterprises were also asked how they assessed their chances of compensating for early retirement of older employees by hiring younger employees. Of these enterprises, 35% view their chances as poor and 30% as good. Medium-sized and large enterprises in particular judged their chances positively. Enterprises in the financial intermediation sector were especially negative in their assessment. By contrast, at nearly 80% skilled trades viewed their chances positively. One reason that 49% of enterprises which provide continuing vocational training cited for not being able to compensate for early retirement of older employees by hiring younger employees, is that these individuals' qualifications and skills are not a precise fit for their enterprise; 34% say that the volume of labour supply is not sufficient. All in all, this means that recruitment problems are already visible.

Of enterprises that provide continuing vocational training, 67% take the age structure of the enterprise's workforce into consideration in their personnel and organisation development policy. Some 68% see the proportion of young employees to older employees in their individual enterprise currently well balanced.

The German additional survey also examined which employees' competences are fostered by different types of continuing vocational training in enterprises (Moraal et al., 2009a). Individual competence dimensions taken together depict occupational competence and are not to be viewed as isolated variables (Hensge et al., 2008). The survey broke occupational competence down into the following four dimensions:

- (a) social competence (such as ability to work on a collaborative basis with colleagues, ability to deal competently with customers);
- (b) personal competence (such as ability to work alone, assumption of responsibility);
- (c) methodological competence (such as ability to solve problems, better time management, organisational skills);
- (d) technical competence (such as specialised knowledge and skills specific to a task or job).

Using this method, the study examined whether not only technical competence but also transversal competences such as social, methodological

and personal competences have become more important. Comparing the importance of individual competences for an enterprise in relation to the strengths of older employees shows that older employees are particularly seen to have a greater degree of methodological and social competence. Little difference exists in personal and technical competences between younger and older employees. Older employees' strengths and experience are put to use for other employees in 85% of enterprises that provide continuing vocational training.

Analysing the measures used by enterprises to bind older employees over a longer period (stay) or to reintegrate them into employment ((re)entry), the additional German survey shows that only 31% of enterprises that provide continuing vocational training use such instruments. However, 35% will use them in the future. The most significant instruments are special measures in job structuring and flexible working arrangements (73%), but in the future these instruments will be used less (65%). Of enterprises, 48% use targeted health promotion measures which will be used much more in the future (65%). Ageing-oriented personal development/continuing training measures are the third most frequently used type (37%). These will also become more important in the future (42%). Enterprises will also use a transgenerational corporate culture (currently 23% and 31% in the future) and ageing-oriented personnel policies (currently 19% and 32% in the future) more frequently in the future.

Regular continuing vocational training of older employees is key to keep them in employment. Of the surveyed enterprises 65% feel that continuing vocational training could reduce the negative effects of the anticipated decline in labour supply. Enterprises support their older employees who undergo continuing training by providing them with financial assistance (90%), releasing them from work (89%), offering flexible working hours (80%) and providing access to enterprise resources (74%). They offer these assistance measures to an almost equal degree.

External promotion of an age-based company policy (such as by public promotion or fixed in collective agreements) should refer to this differentiated mix of support measures already used in enterprises. Of enterprises which participated in the German additional survey, 36% are aware of government funding programmes ⁽²⁰⁾ and 35% feel that special continuing vocational training for older employees is a good idea.

⁽²⁰⁾ In Germany 'Perspektive 50 plus' (<http://www.perspektive50plus.de> – 17.6.2011) or WeGebAU (<http://www.arbeitsagentur.de/Dienststellen/RD-BW/Stuttgart/AA/A01-Allgemein-Info/Publikation/pdf/Wegebau2007.pdf> – 17.6.2011). The 'Perspektive 50 plus' programme is implemented by the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs to promote more and better employment for older people. It is targeted at the regions and has launched a series of regional pacts since 2005.

3.5.3. Regional networking to support employment of older workers – Results of the AgeQual project

Demographic development in most European countries will have profound implications for the age structure of the working population. Increases in working years and a later entry into retirement are probable, and they will alter the age structure of personnel in enterprises. Enterprises will have to implement a prospective personnel policy to maintain the skills and innovation abilities of their employees. Through present personnel policies, future competences of older employees can be guaranteed and can then be used as important resources for enterprises. This implies, among others, to preserve the employability of older employees and to encourage their vocational qualifications during their professional careers. Usually SMEs find it difficult to deal with these problems on their own. This problem is visible in most European countries.

In 2004-06, the Leonardo II AgeQual project (²¹), continuing vocational training for older employees in SMEs and development of regional support structures, was conducted in five European countries (Moraal and Schönfeld, 2006). It focused on the low level of participation of older employees in qualification measures, on underinvestment in human resources especially in SMEs, and on deficits observed in regional support structures due to lack of experience in vocational qualification of older employees. The four most important objectives of the project were to:

- (a) conduct international comparisons of employment structures, measures and regional structures in model regions;
- (b) conduct international comparative analyses of endogenous and exogenous causes for underinvestment in, or absence of, continuing vocational training in SMEs that participate only to a small degree, or not at all, in continuing vocational training and in the target group of older employees;
- (c) develop instruments and measures for reducing current deficits. These include instruments for self-evaluation that can be used in collaborative activities with regional facilities and for developing target-group-specific measures;
- (d) develop regional support structures for vocational training of older

⁽²¹⁾ The AgeQual project aimed at fostering vocational training for older employees in SMEs with an eye to stabilising employment among this group. The project also viewed fostering continuing vocational training as a regional structural development task. Due to this, the project was conducted in one region in each of the five participating European countries (Belgium, Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands and Austria) (<http://www.bibb.de/en/19230.htm> – 17.6.2011).

employees in SMEs – regional networks comprised of enterprises, educational institutions and social partners.

Most enterprises in Germany are SMEs (around 90%). Their share in total employment is around 60%. Compared to large enterprises – with a few exceptions – SMEs are deemed to be less active when it comes to systematic planning of initial and continuing vocational training; human resources development work is rare (Bellmann and Leber, 2006; 2008; Schönfeld, 2006). A project team of the University of Erfurt carried out qualitative and quantitative case studies in SMEs (25-170 employees) in the German federal state of Thuringia to gather information about demands of enterprises and employees to support employment in a context of ageing. Older employees and employers' representatives (senior/human resources management) were interviewed. The purpose was to gather information about the age structure of each enterprise and the personnel (development) policy. Employees were asked about their working biography, a vocational self-assessment and their future employment careers.

In small enterprises visited in Thuringia hardly any systematic and medium-term measures to sustain employability of older workers exists, but individual-related arrangements are practised. Almost all human resources managers were keen to keep older employees at the enterprise. Since SMEs are often unable to benefit from publicly-supported programmes of early retirement for financial reasons, efforts are frequently made to avoid redundancies by finding alternative employment opportunities for older employees that no longer fit certain physical job requirements. Older employees have almost always been with the enterprise for many years – human resources managers feel they have a social obligation towards them. The main positive factors mentioned for keeping these employees in the enterprise are their highly developed problem-solving skills, multifunctional aptitude and great flexibility about working hours. A structural perception of an ageing 'problem', which manifests itself in enterprises above all through changes in the age structure of the overall workforce and a drop in the regional availability of employees for recruitment, is less widespread.

Several interviews with representatives of labour market institutions, members of employers associations and training institutes took place to get a picture of cooperation between enterprises and other regional institutions on employment of ageing workers. Based on these interviews (with enterprises, employees and experts) instruments were developed to support SMEs and assist training providers in implementing age-driven human resource development and qualification. They were also designed to help employees

carry out self-assessment of the skills they have acquired. Overall three guiding tools were produced, one for enterprises, one for employees and one for use in training institutions. Each of these groups has a specific view on employment and qualification in the advanced ageing period and therefore specific demands and needs. (Husemann et al., 2007). The AgeQual project also focused on promoting regional qualification networks. The region is the starting point for building such a policy network. Specific frame conditions for interaction between regional actors have to be considered. Region-specific resources should be used to achieve the aims of active networking. Region-specific coordination and conflict potentials have to be identified and considered by setting up a regional network of regional actors. SMEs in particular do not have information and resources regarding qualification needs. These enterprises need advice about their enterprise qualification profile and future qualification developments. Successful qualification strategies should be based on existing relationships between regional actors and on knowledge and competences of these actors. Active networking means establishing a win-win situation for all involved. However, active networking and management of networks will always operate in the space between conflict and cooperation.

In Thuringia, a network of qualification counsellors exists (22). Qualification counsellors work at regional level and regularly visit enterprises to discuss qualification demand. They use the three guiding tools developed by the AqueQual project to enlarge their normal working field to cover age-related strategies. The strategic aim is to improve cooperation between enterprises and regional institutions and support regional structures (not only enterprise level) to increase employment of ageing workers (Husemann, 2010).

3.6. Summary

Discussion about the ageing population and labour force is dominated by political discourse focusing on the supply side of the labour market. Forecast growth in the population outside the labour force is considered the major challenge. To prevent – or at least reduce – anticipated growth of the ‘societal burden’, most governments have already initiated – or are preparing – reforms of pension and social security schemes aimed at increasing employment of older persons and prolonging their stay in the labour force.

(22) See <http://www.qualified-fachkraefte.de> [17.6.2011].

German enterprises are aware of the risks they will face in the future. As seen, they already use various measures to counter predicted skills shortages and ageing workforce. Continuing vocational training is one measure to help employees to stay longer in employment or to cope better with transitional phases of unemployment or family care. At the moment, at least in Germany, training measures are not one of the most important activities. However, disposition of older employees in the labour market depends, among others, on their qualifications. By such measures they can update their qualifications, protect their jobs or even improve their position in the labour market.

To face demographic challenges, German enterprises should offer more age-based long-lasting support measures. Some are presented in this chapter (besides training, such as regional qualification networks, improvement of work or health conditions, age-oriented personnel policies). Better counselling and guidance and public support of both enterprises and employees will be needed. Lessons learned from successful initiatives (such as qualification counsellors in Thuringia or obligatory counselling from consultation centres to get a training cheque in North Rhine-Westphalia), should be used when expanding these policies and measures.

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CHAPTER 4

Individual and organisational predictors influencing ageing workers' employability

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An important way to improve ageing workers' employability is through participation in formal and informal human resource development (HRD) activities. However, older workers remain underrepresented in most forms of training and development, and company policies are hardly directed at improving older workers' employability through learning and development initiatives. Personal motivation and ability to learn reflect employees' accountability for investments in their own development. Organisations need to promote competence development of employees, by means of, for example, a supportive and stimulating learning climate, supervisor support, and good social relationship between employees and their supervisors. Two studies were recently carried out to identify which individual and organisational factors affect employability of an ageing workforce. The most important findings are presented here. Based on these findings, recommendations are made to stimulate companies to develop and implement strategies to improve ageing workers' employability.

4.1. Introduction

Against increasing competition, redundancies, business closures and mergers and an increasing degree of uncertainty, organisations must be able to adapt to fluctuations in demand and changes in their environment to ensure organisational viability (Valverde et al., 2000). They, therefore, require a highly employable workforce that not only performs well in its current job, but that is also able to take over new tasks and functions within, or outside the organisation in case one has to leave one's current employer. In this respect, the changing demographic composition of the world population is an important issue. Countries are facing unprecedented demographic changes. In the

European Union for instance, the number of youngsters is decreasing, while the number of people aged 60, and over, is at the same time rising roughly twice the rate observed until a few years ago (European Commission, 2010). These demographic changes imply an ageing working population and necessitate companies to rely increasingly on older workers' competences and efforts. Companies are in need of growing participation of senior people, and are forced to retain their older workers longer, to make use of their rich expertise, and to prevent skills shortages in critical domains.

Results from a broad scan on 'age and work', initiated by the Dutch labour union FNV⁽²³⁾ in 2006, revealed that, in many companies, age-related policies to prevent older workers from early retirement are absent (Klomp, 2010). Other studies confirm there is a serious lack of strategic responses to the ageing workforce (Armstrong-Stassen and Schlosser, 2008; Kooij, 2010). Based on a survey among over 28 000 employers in 25 countries, the Manpower report of 2007 concluded that one key reason for this is simply that employers do not understand how to do so effectively (Armstrong-Stassen and Ursel, 2009). The Manpower study found that a growing proportion of the older worker population may be quite willing and able to continue working for years to come, if workers are engaged and encouraged to do so (Manpower, 2007). It is thus important to find out in what ways work organisations could positively affect employability of their ageing workforce and support longer working lives. Therefore, the main research question addressed in this chapter is what factors affect employability of an ageing workforce.

4.2. Understanding employability

Thijssen (1997) distinguished three types of employability definitions:

- according to the core definition, employability encompasses all individual possibilities to be successful in a diversity of jobs in a given labour market situation;
- the broader definition covers not only actual employability but also individual capacities to improve and use employability;
- in the all-embracing definition, contextual factors and effectuation conditions are added as well. Effectuation conditions are context-bound factors that help or hamper a worker's employability, such as training provided by the firm and human resources policies in place. In this all-

⁽²³⁾ Federation Dutch labour movement; *Federatie Nederlandse Vakbeweging* (FNV).

embracing definition, employability encompasses all individual and contextual conditions that determine a worker's current and future position on the labour market (Thijssen, 1997).

Consistent with the broader definition of employability, Van der Heijde and Van der Heijden (2006) defined employability as 'the continuous fulfilling, acquiring or creating of work through the optimal use of competences' (p. 453). Based on various authors, Van der Heijden et al. (2009) added that employability can be referred to as the ability to engage in a permanent process of acquisition and fulfilment of employment within or outside the current organisation, today and in the future. Consequently, organisations require employees who not only have the occupational expertise to perform well in their current job, but also possess a set of more general competences to fulfil different tasks and functions within and outside the organisation in case their employment is no longer required.

In this competence-based approach, the concept of employability comprises five dimensions, in which occupational expertise is complemented with four more general competences, anticipation and optimisation, personal flexibility, corporate sense, and balance (see Van der Heijde and Van der Heijden, 2006; Van der Heijden et al., 2009, for elaborate explanations of the different dimensions).

4.3. Factors affecting employability

Considering the competence-based approach to employability, it could be stated that development of employees' competences appears to be an important aspect of employability. The more competences individuals develop and the better they can work in different situations, the higher their employability is. Employees are (partly) responsible for investments in their own human capital, and for their job security, learning, and future career development (Van der Heijden et al., 2009).

Personal motivation and ability to learn are important (De Grip et al., 2004; Van der Heijde and Van der Heijden, 2006). Motivation to learn, defined as the desire to engage in training and development activities to acquire new knowledge and skills, to learn training content, and to embrace the training experience (Köroğlu, 2008), seems to be a fundamental precondition to fulfil the need for a partly self-controlled kind of ongoing learning. Learning motivation triggers employees to be enthusiastic about learning, and to engage in developmental activities (Noe and Wilk, 1993). It directs them to really learn

the content and stimulates them to make use of newly acquired knowledge (Lange, 2010). Learning motivation is significantly positive related to employees' feelings about learning and the learning itself (Liao and Tai, 2006).

Employees' ability to learn depends on the capacities they have. According to Heckman 'early learning begets later learning' (2000, p. 5). Abilities are created in various learning situations and these abilities in turn foster further learning; more able people acquire more skills and more skilled people become more able. By following Heckman's reasoning it could be hypothesised that highly educated workers have a greater possibility to participate in training and development (Oosterbeek, 1998). The more extensive employees' basic knowledge is, the easier they will learn new competences and improve their employability. Training history provides a picture of what activities individual workers have undertaken in the past to maintain or improve their employability (Bloch and Bates, 1995). It will also give insights into their capability to undertake new learning and development to become more employable.

Next to employees' accountability for investments in their own development, and in line with the all-embracing definition of employability, organisations need to promote employees' competence development and thus improve their employability (Thijssen, 2000). Even environments play a crucial role in motivating and producing educational success (Heckman, 2000). Employees' learning environments, or learning climates, should provide opportunities to enlarge their professional expertise by developing new knowledge and competences. There is increased awareness that much valuable learning happens on-the-job, in groups, or through conversations (Marsick and Watkins, 2003). Tasks should be varied and to some degree unpredictable and employees should be enabled to explore them freely without heavy pressure to achieve an immediate goal. Employees can develop their competences and acquire new skills through, for example, job rotation and guided career development, aimed at further development of their knowledge and skills (Forrier and Sels, 2003). Job rotation is a – temporary – change of tasks or jobs within an organisation or between organisations to upgrade competences of those already employed (Madsen, 1999). Career guidance from the organisation can encourage employees to undertake activities that improve their employability.

Supervisor support is another important factor given the added value of high quality interaction between employees and their supervisors (Verbruggen et al., 2008). This interaction, or fruitful exchange relationship, is positively associated with a worker's employability (Van der Heijden et al., 2009). But

individuals' social exchange relationship with their supervisors, referred to as leader-member exchange (LMX) (Liden et al., 1997), has not been frequently studied in the context of HRD. LMX theory proposes that superiors do not use a general leadership style for all their subordinates, but rather develop individual exchange relationships with each of them. High quality exchange relations were found to have a positive effect on turnover, commitment, performance and many other variables of organisational interest (Liden et al., 1997). Support for training and development is also expected to depend on the quality of the leader-member exchange relationship (Collinset al., 2009; Rousseau, 1995). According to relational demography theory (Riordan and Shore, 1997; Tsui and O'Reilly, 1989), an increased degree of similarity between subordinate and supervisor, with regard to one or more demographic characteristics, leads to an increased level of interpersonal attraction and, in turn, to a relationship of higher quality. With regard to differences in age, this relation is moderated by existing social and organisational norms. Dissimilar dyads where the supervisor is younger than the subordinate, or the other way around, tend to yield less favourable relational outcomes than similar dyads. Meanwhile, dyads with older supervisors and younger subordinates mostly result in more favourable outcomes compared to the opposite age distribution (Tsui et al. 1995). These findings are also in line with career timetable theory (Lawrence, 1988) which states that objective norms exist where employees should be at a given point in their careers. Subordinates' ages, relative to the age of their supervisors, contains important information about their pace of promotion relative to existing norms.

4.4. Ageing employees

An important way to improve employability is through participation in human resource development (HRD) activities (Van der Heijden et al., 2009). Within this domain, a general distinction between formal and informal forms of learning can be made. The prototype of a formal HRD activity is a planned and structured activity in an external location in which some sort of certificate or diploma is attained. Informal learning takes place in the work context, as a by-product of another activity, without involvement of the organisation and without an identifiable learning outcome (Malcolm et al., 2003). In older publications, formal and informal learning were considered two distinct categories. In more recent studies, however, researchers agree that informal and formal learning should not be seen as two distinctive categories, but rather

as two sides of a continuum on which learning activities are situated (e.g. Malcolm et al., 2003; Billett, 2001; Boekaerts and Minnaert, 1999). This implies that employees do not participate in purely ‘formal’ or ‘informal’ learning, but rather in one or more activities that differ from one another with regard to their degree of formality (Horstink, 2008). And according to Van der Heijden et al. (2009), participation in a mix of formal and more informal HRD activities can improve employability.

However, employees differ in their involvement in HRD activities. Funk (2004) noticed that investments in labour market-relevant qualifications continuously decrease as retirement approaches, and company policies are hardly directed at improving older workers’ employability through training and development initiatives (see also De Lange et al., 2005). The level of participation in these activities differs considerably between age groups (Horstink, 2008; Shore et al., 2003; Forrier and Sels, 2003). Older workers remain underrepresented in most forms of training and development (Klomp, 2010; Wognum and Bos-Horstink, 2010), although a faster decline in older workers’ participation is visible for more formal HRD activities compared to more informal ones.

Although some literature shows no age differences with respect to motivation to learn (De Lange et al., 2005), many studies report a negative link between age and learning motivation (Colquitt et al., 2000; Lange, 2010). Various studies also showed that older people prefer other learning activities compared to their younger colleagues. Older people do not prefer formal learning. Development by means of ‘learning by doing’, on-the-job learning and coaching seems more appropriate for their career development (Rhebergen and Wognum, 1997). It also appears that content of learning plays a clear role in older workers learning preferences. Wognum et al. (2006) found that older pharmacist’s assistants prefer workplace learning for acquiring communication and interactive skills, but want to learn, for example, computer skills, by attending courses.

Older employees, as well as their younger colleagues, could take advantage of a work environment that supports and stimulates their learning and development (De Lange et al., 2005). A healthy learning climate within organisations seems to be an important organisational factor for improving older and younger workers’ employability (Van der Heijden et al., 2009).

According to Oosterbeek (1998), employees’ age appears to be an important factor regarding ability to learn, because the potential benefits of training vary directly in line with age. Skills acquired early on make later learning easier, as Heckman (2000) stated. However, competence

development is still important for low and higher educated mature workers as abilities are not fixed and can be altered; schooling produces ability while ability creates a demand for schooling (Heckman, 2000).

The study of Collins et al. (2009) is relevant when bearing in mind employees' individual social exchange relationship with their supervisor (LMX), and the ageing workforce. They found that older workers expect less from their younger supervisors than younger workers. Older employees with younger supervisors will probably show more severe participation deficits in training and development activities than their peers with same-aged supervisors. Since participation in these activities can be regarded as a necessary means to improve employability, it can be expected that older employees with younger supervisors will have the most serious shortcomings in employability (Sopranos, 1999).

4.5. Two studies on factors affecting ageing workers' employability

Based on the above theory, Breukers (2010) and Wittpoth (2011), master students at the University of Twente (NL), recently carried out two studies to identify factors that could affect ageing workers' employability. Both students selected a large industrial company in the Netherlands facing an ageing workforce. The average age in Breukers' study was 47.2 years, and 40 years in the Wittpoth study. Breukers collected data by means of a paper and pencil questionnaire among a stratified random sample of 298 employees and obtained a 76% response rate. Wittpoth gathered data using a paper and pencil questionnaire among 332 employees and achieved a response rate of nearly 40%.

Breukers focused on predictors that affect employability with emphasis on personal factors, motivation and ability to learn, and organisational factors, namely learning climate, job rotation, and supervisor support. She hypothesised that both individual factors are positively related to employability, with age having a negative moderating effect on the relationship between motivation and ability to learn, on the one hand, and employability, on the other. She also hypothesised that discerned organisational factors are positively related to employability. Regarding age, she expected a positive moderating effect on the relationship between job rotation and learning climate, and all five dimensions of employability, but a negative moderating effect in case supervisor support was the predictor variable.

Wittpoth specifically focused on the dyad between supervisors and subordinates possibly affecting workers' competence development and, subsequently, their employability. Based on relational demography theory, he assumed that the quality of LMX differs with age as a demographic characteristic. With social and organisational norms and career timetable theory in mind, he hypothesised that older workers with younger supervisors differ from other kinds of dyads on size and formality of their HRD portfolio, and on their employability.

In both studies, the concept of employability was assessed with Van der Heijde and Van der Heijden's (2006) 'employability instrument' which has proved to have sound psychometric qualities (see also Van der Heijden et al., 2009). The instrument includes five scales measuring:

- (a) occupational expertise (15 items);
- (b) anticipation and optimisation (8 items);
- (c) personal flexibility (8 items);
- (d) corporate sense (7 items);
- (e) balance (9 items).

To collect data on the concepts of motivation to learn, learning climate, and supervisor support, Breukers used previously validated scales; motivation to learn was measured by five items based on Nijman (2004); the learning organisation questionnaire developed by Marsick and Watkins (2003) was used to assess learning climate, while supervisor support was measured by means of 10 items from the learning climate questionnaire of Mikkelsen and Gronhaug (1999) concerning management relations and style. Ability to learn was measured by asking for the number of years in which additional training and courses were attended after completing initial education. Because job rotation is not intended as promotion, but as an opportunity to learn new tasks and thus develop new competences, this concept was measured by asking for changes in jobs within and between subsidiaries and without increase in salary. Cronbach's alpha of these scales ranged from 0.80 to 0.93, confirming their reliability.

To gather data on participation in formal/informal HRD activities, Wittpoth also used scales that had already proved their reliability. Both size and average formality of respondents' HRD portfolio were assessed by means of the formality scale developed by Horstink (2008). The number of training activities an employee participated in, out of seven HRD activities identified by Wognum and Bartlett (2002), was used to determine the size of the HRD portfolio. The formality of HRD portfolio was identified by calculating the mean average formality of all activities in which the employee participated.

Cronbach's alpha per activity varied from 0.72 (for the HRD activity external course) to 0.45 (for new task or function), with an alpha of 0.34 for networking, which was probably due to a low percentage of respondents that had experienced this learning activity.

4.5.1. Main research findings Breukers

Means and standard deviation for the variables under study

Of the five dimensions of employability, occupational expertise ($M=4.77$; $SD=0.51$) and balance ($M=4.37$; $SD=0.60$) have a higher mean score, whereas anticipation and optimisation ($M=3.93$; $SD=0.70$) and corporate sense ($M=4.01$; $SD=0.85$) have a somewhat lower mean score, on a six-point scale running from, for instance, 1=not at all to 6=totally agree. The personal factor 'motivation to learn' was measured on a five-point scale running from 1=totally disagree to 5=totally agree and was scored with a mean score of 4.06 ($SD=0.63$). Learning climate was measured on a six-point scale from 1=never to 6=always and was scored with a mean score of 3.58 ($SD=0.72$), whereas support by supervisor obtained a high mean value ($M=3.99$; $SD=0.68$), which was measured on a five-point scale from 1=never true to 5=always true.

Differences between age groups for the variables under study

Because it is important to identify possible differences between age groups, respondents were divided into three age groups, young employees up to 40 years, middle-aged workers from 40 to 55 years, and older workers aged 55 years and older. This division is based on the Social and Cultural Planning Office's (SCP) classification (Horstink, 2008), although the SCP classified young employees up to 35 years. Breukers decided to classify young employees in the age group up to 40 years due to a low percentage of young employees within the company under study. Statistical analyses were done to determine possible and significant differences between the discerned age groups and main results are presented below.

First, significant differences between young ($N=44$), middle-aged ($N=127$) and older employees ($N=54$) were found for the variable 'education': younger employees were significantly better educated than their older colleagues. No significant differences were found between middle-aged and older employees. Significant differences were found between younger employees ($N=20$), middle-aged employees ($N=55$) and older employees ($N=22$) for 'motivation to learn'; younger employees ($M=4.43$) did not significantly differ from middle-aged employees ($M=4.08$), but they did significantly differ from their older

counterparts ($M=3.69$) and appeared to be better motivated to learn than older employees. Middle-aged employees were found to be significantly more motivated to learn than their older colleagues. For job rotation without salary increase the results show that older employees ($N=53$, $M=2.6$) significantly differed from their younger ($N=43$, $M=1.3$) and middle-aged colleagues ($N=125$, $M=1.7$) in this respect.

Impact on employability

To identify factors that have an impact on the dimensions of employability, a multiple regression analysis was performed with one dimension of employability as dependent variable in each analysis. In step one, the control variables education, tenure of employment and tenure in current function were inserted. In step two, the variables motivation to learn, ability to learn, learning climate, job rotation without salary increase and support by supervisor were added. The main results are:

- (a) impact of personal factors: first it was tested whether a positive relationship existed between motivation to learn and each dimension of employability. Motivation to learn was found to explain a significant amount of variance in occupational expertise, anticipation and optimisation, personal flexibility, and balance. Ability to learn appeared to explain a significant amount of variance in corporate sense;
- (b) impact of organisational factors: regression analysis showed that job rotation without salary increase had a significant negative relationship with personal flexibility. This indicated that employees who often rotate jobs without a salary increase did not adapt easily to changes in the organisation. Learning climate proved to have a positive relationship with three of the five employability dimensions, anticipation and optimisation, corporate sense, and balance. Supervisor support was not found to have a significant impact on any employability dimensions.

Age as a moderating variable

It was hypothesised that the impact of personal and organisational factors differed for employees depending upon their age category. Multiple hierarchical regression analyses were performed to understand better the predictive validity of the distinguished factors. In step one of the analyses, the specific factor (for example, motivation to learn) was inserted. Age was added in step two, and in step three the interaction term 'factor * age' was inserted. This procedure was performed for each personal and organisational factor in relation to each dimension of employability.

It was first assumed that the relationship between motivation to learn and employability was stronger for younger employees than for older ones. After adding age in the analyses, no significant outcome appeared for any dimension of employability, except for personal flexibility. When the interaction term was inserted, age appeared to contribute significantly to personal flexibility, although in a negative sense. After adding the interaction term, 'motivation to learn * age' a significant negative outcome appeared for personal flexibility. This indicates that age negatively influenced the relation between motivation to learn and personal flexibility; age was only a moderating variable for the dimension personal flexibility in this respect.

It was then assumed that the relationship between ability to learn and employability was more positive for younger employees than for older ones. The variable age did explain a significant proportion of the total variance in anticipation and optimisation and in personal flexibility. This indicates that the older the employee, the lower the score on anticipation and optimisation and personal flexibility. After adding the interaction term, no significant outcomes appeared for any dimension of employability, except for anticipation and optimisation. Also significant results for age on these dimensions disappeared. This indicates that age negatively influenced the relation between ability to learn and anticipation and optimisation. This implies that age only serves as a moderating variable for the relationship between ability to learn and the dimension anticipation and optimisation.

It was also assumed that the relationship between job rotation without salary increase and employability was more positive for older employees than for younger ones. The variable age explained a significant proportion of the total variance in anticipation and optimisation and in personal flexibility. After adding the interaction term, no significant outcomes appeared for any dimension of employability. This indicates that age was not a moderating variable on the relation of job rotation without salary increase and all five dimensions of employability.

The relationship between learning climate and employability was supposed to be more positive for older workers than for their younger colleagues. The variable age explained a significant proportion of the total variance in anticipation and optimisation. No interaction effect for any of the five dimensions of employability could be found.

It was also assumed that the relationship between supervisor support and employability was more positive for younger employees than for their older colleagues. The variable age appeared to explain a significant amount of variance in anticipation and optimisation. This indicates that age negatively

influenced dimension anticipation and optimisation. Again, no interaction effect for any of the five dimensions of employability could be found.

4.5.2. Main research findings Wittpoth

Means and standard deviation for the variables under study

On average, employees scored relatively high on all five subscales of employability, which were occupational expertise ($M=4.71$, $SD=0.51$), anticipation and optimisation ($M=3.98$, $SD=0.69$), personal flexibility ($M=4.13$, $SD=0.63$), corporate sense ($M=4.20$, $SD=0.81$) and balance ($M=4.23$, $SD=0.56$). All items were measured on a six-point scale running from, for instance, 1=not at all to 6=totally agree.

Concerning respondents' participation in HRD, 101 of 130 respondents appeared to have participated in one or more HRD activities within the past year. In total, 270 HRD activities were reported. On average, of the active ones, employees participated in 2.57 activities ($SD=1.49$), 50% participated in an external course or training and 50% received informal feedback from a colleague or supervisor. About one third (32.3%) took part in training on the job, 29.2% engaged in learning a new task or function and 20.8% received formal feedback from a mentor or coach. Twenty percent reported to have learned through self-study and 5.4% learned by means of networking with people outside the organisation. The group of employees who did not participate in any HRD activity within the past year had a significantly longer tenure, and was significantly older than the group of employees that did. HRD activities were experienced as more formal than informal ($M=3.04$, $SD=0.77$), measured on a five-point scale running from 1=most informal to 5=most formal. A one-sample t-test showed that the HRD activity 'external course or training' was perceived significantly more formal than average formality, while training on the job did not differ from average formality. HRD activities 'mentor or coach, informal feedback and self-study' were significantly less formal than the mean. HRD activity 'networking' did not significantly differ from the mean, which can be attributed to the small number of employees who participated in this activity.

Differences between age groups for the variables under study

Respondents were divided into two age groups, young employees up to and including 40 years, and older workers over 40 years of age. This categorisation is in line with earlier research on both employability and age-related HRD (Maurer et al., 2003; Thijssen, 1996; Boerlijst et al., 1993). In Wittpoth's sample, 52.5% of respondents, who indicated their year of birth, could be

classified as younger (40 years and below, N=64). To find out whether this group differed significantly from the group of older employees (over 40 years, N=58), statistical analyses were performed and the main results are presented below.

Groups differed significantly with regard to the size of their HRD portfolio: older employees participated in a significantly smaller number of HRD activities than their younger colleagues. While younger employees, on average, participated in 2.9 HRD activities in the past year, their older colleagues only participated in 2.1 activities. Older employees participated significantly less often in HRD activities 'training on the job, and mentor or coach'. The difference with regard to self-study was found to be close to significance. No significant differences were found pertaining to other HRD activities.

Further, both groups were compared on their perception of formality. No significant differences were found in the mean formality of the HRD portfolio between the groups. However, the group of older employees perceived the activity 'external course or training' less formal than the group of younger employees. No differences in the formality perception for other HRD activities were found.

Although no differences between employability and age were found, multivariate analysis was used to determine whether age groups differed with regard to any employability dimensions. No differences were found between the group of older and younger employees for any of the employability dimensions.

Impact on employability

Wittpoth specifically focused on the dyad between supervisors and subordinates possibly affecting workers' competence development, and subsequently, their employability. It was assumed that employees with an HRD portfolio with a medium degree of formality would perceive their employability as higher than employees with portfolios with either a relatively low or high degree of formality. As said before, descriptive statistics showed that the mean formality was 3.04. Based on calculation of the estimated marginal means, portfolios with a formality lower than 2.89 were defined as having a low degree of formality (N=37) and portfolios higher than 3.19 were defined as having a high degree of formality (N=41). Portfolios with a value between 2.89 and 3.19 were defined as having an average formality (N=23). In a one-way analysis of variance, the employability subscales were used as dependent variables, and formality (low, medium, high) was defined as the independent one. No

significant differences were found between employees with HRD portfolios of low, medium and high formality, and any of the employability dimensions.

It was also supposed that employees with a larger HRD portfolio perceived themselves as significantly more employable than employees with a smaller one. On average, employees participated in 2.57 activities ($SD=1.49$). HRD portfolios that comprised three or more activities were classified as large while HRD portfolios with two or less were defined as small. Based on this classification, 82 employees (63%) belonged to the group with small HRD portfolios and 48 employees belonged to the group with a large HRD portfolio. Univariate analyses showed no significant differences between employees with large or small HRD portfolios with regard to any employability dimensions.

Age as a moderating variable

It was further hypothesised that the HRD portfolio of older workers with younger supervisors was significantly smaller and less formal than the HRD portfolio of older workers with same-aged supervisors. The group of older employees with a younger supervisor constituted 3.1% of the whole sample. The group of older employees with older supervisors was 35.4%. Of the remaining group of respondents, 12.3% could not be categorised as a dyad since they had removed the tracking code needed to determine the age of the supervisor and/or had failed to indicate their own age, 3.8% were younger employees with a young supervisor, and 45.4% were younger employees with older supervisors. However, no differences were found between the dyads. Also no significant differences concerning the formality of HRD portfolios were found between any of the groups. A Bonferroni pairwise comparison showed that there is no significant difference in formality between older workers with older and younger employees.

4.6. Conclusion and discussion

Findings of the two studies point to the importance of various factors which affect employability of ageing workers. These could help companies to develop and implement relevant strategies. Based on Breukers' findings, it can be concluded that focusing on measures to improve older workers' motivation and ability to learn would be an important step towards a higher employable workforce. Regarding organisational factors, we, unexpectedly, found that job rotation without salary increase appears to be negatively related to one dimension of employability, personal flexibility. This could be because

respondents that are rotated are not flexible. However, above average mean scores for the employability dimensions were also found. This signals that employees in the studied companies perceived themselves as employable. The unexpected result regarding job rotation might as well be caused by imposed job rotation, due to reorganisation in the studied company. In cases of job rotation, employees must understand the value of it, while the tasks to be performed should have sufficient potential for learning. The latter is an important condition for integrating learning and work (Ellström, 2001), which especially holds for older workers who prefer to learn and develop by means of new tasks and projects (Horstink, 2008). Learning potential of tasks can be improved by increasing task complexity, variety and control. To do so, organisations are advised to consider introducing systematic job rotation programmes (Rump, 2008), or other forms of job enrichment or enlargement. However, work-based learning should not be considered an automatic process that can be triggered by arranging a workplace that offers good objective working conditions with high potential for learning; employees also require the capacity to identify and capitalise on existing opportunities to learn (Ellström, 1994; Frese and Zapf, 1994; Hackmann, 1969, cited in Ellström, 2001). Among these 'subjective' factors self-efficacy and motivation play an important role.

With regard to low self-efficacy, organisations should take precautions to ensure that older employees especially succeed in training and courses (Colquitt et al., 2000). This goal can be achieved by taking care that employees have the prerequisite knowledge and skills necessary to succeed by means of preparatory resources and/or to build training tasks from simple to complex to help build confidence and minimise early failure (Sterns and Doverspike, 1989). Since self-efficacy can also be improved by observing others, similar to oneself, successfully engaging in learning and development experiences, successful older learners should be made visible and their success stories should be communicated. Also, materials for training and development that depict individuals 'modelling' correct behaviour should include older 'models' next to younger ones (Maurer, 2001). In addition, employees' self-efficacy can be improved by direct persuasion, for instance in carefully designed career guidance and development activities. Therefore, support and encouragement to participate in learning and development activities should be provided to all employees by supervisors and the organisation as a whole. To do so, a learning climate should be created in which older employees feel appreciated. Breukers found that people who experience a better learning climate scored higher on employability dimensions, anticipation and optimisation and corporate sense, namely they

anticipated more proactively future changes and were better able to work together in different workgroups.

Kooij's (2010) study is, to some extent, in line with the aforementioned findings regarding learning climate and job rotation. Many older workers in her study indicated that they no longer wished to attend training courses, but that they felt appreciated and recognised when given a choice to do so. She found that older workers' most important motives to continue to work were related to the job. And the job or the work itself can be influenced by, for example, job redesign, or lateral job movement. In line with Armstrong-Stassen and Ursel (2009), older workers appeared to prefer organisations that explicitly value older workers and signal this through human resources practices that reflect their needs and desires (Kooij, 2010, p. 171).

Contrary to our expectations, supervisor support was not found to have an impact on any of the employability dimensions. One possible reason could be the way this concept was measured in Breukers' study. But another even more important explanation may be found in the unexpected result concerning the social exchange relation of employees and their supervisors (LMX). Wittpoth found that dyads with younger supervisors and older subordinates did not have smaller-sized HRD portfolios than other dyads, although employees' participation in HRD activities declined with age. The influence of the supervisor in Wittpoth's sample was rather limited. The organisation reported that participation in more formal HRD activities was decided by means of a training and development plan developed by the organisation on which direct supervisors did not have much influence. With regard to their influence on more informal activities, several points have to be considered: according to Gordon and Arvey (2004), an increase in relevant information about, and experience with subordinates, leads to a decrease in age-related stereotyping. Given that functions on the work floor are narrow, and tenure in the sample was quite high, it can be supposed that supervisors have sufficient knowledge about the performance of their subordinates, and therefore do not have to fall back on stereotypes. Besides, other factors than those related to supervisors' demographic factors, such as age, could be important. Future research could elaborate on factors that moderate or mediate the relation between age differences, relational quality and participation in HRD activities. An interesting issue is in how far a violation of the career timetable is actually perceived in the dyad. Other interesting factors are the learning potential of the workplace, or the influence the supervisor has on allocation of training and development activities to employees in the organisation. Kooij (2010) for example, found different perspectives of employees and line

managers concerning companies' human resource practices.

Wittpoth's study confirms earlier findings that participation in learning and development activities declines as age increases. Since participation in HRD activities is an important means to improve employees' capability to learn (Heckman, 2000) and their employability (Van der Heijden et al., 2009), steps have to be taken to stimulate older workers to reengage in a process of continuous learning and development to avoid negative consequences for employees and the organisation alike. To achieve this, companies have to become aware of older workers' learning preferences. Implementing training and development practices targeting older workers, tailored to their needs, as well as providing interesting and challenging job assignments are important for development of older workers (Armstrong-Stassen and Ursel, 2009). Although exceptions exist (Wognum et al., 2006), it can be stated that older workers generally need other learning activities than merely formal ones (see also Lange, 2010). According to Rhebergen and Wognum (1997), activities such as learning by doing, learning on the job, and individual coaching are far more relevant for older employees' career development than more formal HRD activities. Investments in age-appropriate HRD activities that integrate learning into the workplace are thus important. Yet another reason to do so is that the conditions that promote learning at work are also instrumental in reducing stress and promoting healthier working conditions (Karasek and Theorell, 1990; cited in Ellström, 2001). This is confirmed by the finding of Wittpoth that employees that learned a new task or function scored higher on the employability dimension of balance.

Based on Wittpoth's study, it can be concluded that the size or formality of the HRD portfolio did not have an impact on employability dimensions, and no differences between age groups were found. This could partly be caused by respondents' characteristics or by their job level. Another factor that makes a leniency effect likely is participants' apparent fear of negative consequences. Although anonymity of the responses was stressed numerous times to reduce this bias, about 6% of respondents removed the tracking code put on the survey to identify the age of the supervisor. All these employees belonged to the group of older employees. Possible explanations can either be a general tendency of older workers to mistrust any form of change or fear to be made redundant. Perhaps, employees' fear of negative consequences was also influenced by the fact that the questionnaires were handed out by their supervisors.

Some methodological weaknesses of both studies have to be discussed. Ability to learn, for instance, is measured as additional education in number

of years. Initial education, for example completing secondary vocational education (MBO in Dutch), was not included in this variable. In further research, this could be included, because a higher level of initial education might imply greater learning ability (Oosterbeek, 1998).

Outcomes of both studies have to be interpreted somewhat cautiously. The studies were cross-sectional. Results could have been influenced by the situation at this specific point in time. Employees in Breukers' study had just heard that the company had to reorganise when the survey was administered. This might have had an impact on employees' responses to the questionnaire, for instance regarding employability questions. They may have feared that answers might be used to influence decisions or motives for any dismissal as part of the reorganisation. The moment of data collection by Wittpoth (December and January) can be expected to have lowered the response rate. Since both studies were conducted in a single organisation, results can not easily be generalised to other organisations.

Abbreviation list

HRD human resources development

LMX leader-member exchange

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CHAPTER 5

Cognitive ageing in older workers and its impact on lifelong learning

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An increasingly ageing population worldwide poses significant challenges in the employment, social and healthcare sectors. The decline in cognitive abilities is a natural but feared process that characterises normal ageing. However, ageing does not affect equally all aspects of cognition, and there is also great variability among individuals. The mechanisms that affect cognitive decline in normal ageing are not clearly understood. It is widely accepted that more research is needed to identify the factors that affect cognitive ageing in healthy adults, and possible ways to overcome or delay this process. Moreover, understanding demographic, biological and psychological factors that underpin cognitive ageing would provide substantial information for professionals in guidance and counselling to encourage older workers to engage in lifelong learning. To this end, the purpose of this chapter is twofold: first it attempts to provide an overview of ongoing research in cognitive ageing and cognitive training in older adults in relation to various demographic (such as gender, economic status, educational level), neurobiological (brain pathology) and psychological factors (premorbid intelligence). Second, it discusses the cognitive functions related to work efficiency and productivity as well as ways to maintain or improve them during ageing.

5.1. Introduction

Cognitive ageing differs extensively from individual to individual. Defining cognitive ageing has been challenging, but most studies agree that it is ‘the impact of age itself on cognition’ (Deary et al., 2009 p. 2) in healthy individuals, which is a gradual process that starts from early adulthood (over 25 years of age). According to Erikson’s theory of psychosocial development (1956) ageing is yet another stage of cognitive development that requires successful

resolution of conflicts that all adults encounter throughout their life spans. In middle adulthood (ages 35 to 65) most people face challenges of creativity and generativity in their personal and professional environments. Successful ageing entails a sense of productivity, achievement and contribution to society and future generations.

Determinants of individual variability in cognitive ageing are not fully understood. However, progress has been made over past decades to understand the most significant factors that affect cognitive ageing. Some involve inherited genes, neurobiological changes, general medical condition, socioeconomic and educational background, dieting and lifestyle. To complicate matters further, researchers have not been able to identify fully the characteristics of normal ageing as opposed to mild cognitive impairment in ageing. Indeed, most researchers agree that healthy cognitive ageing and dementia form a continuum rather than two distinct phenomena (Deary et al., 2009). A crucial question to be answered is what are the features that predict the transition from mild cognitive impairment to dementia (Rinne and Någren, 2009). Although, in recent years, use of technologically-advanced neuroimaging techniques has greatly increased our understanding of the brain changes that accompany normal ageing, the functional significance of these changes is not clear.

The importance of studying cognitive ageing stems from two basic facts. First, an ageing population worldwide causes important economic and health challenges to society, directly linked to prolonged life expectancy. Second, the cognitive decline associated with normal ageing may disrupt the quality of life of older adults in their personal and professional environments. Although research on cognitive ageing has been fruitful, there are significant differences in results and conclusions in studies. These differences stem from methodological discrepancies in design, sampling, analyses and focus in terms of tasks examined.

Professionals in guidance and counselling should consider age-related changes when advising older workers to avoid job-related stress and early retirement. Supporting longer working lives through counselling increases the likelihood of engaging in lifelong learning, updating and renewing skills and adapting to new working conditions. To provide better counselling and guidance services it is essential to understand the needs and abilities of older workers from a cognitive perspective. Specifically, understanding the processes of normal ageing and the changes, if any, in cognitive functions of older workers should increase involvement of workers and employers in lifelong learning.

5.2. Methodological considerations

There are several methodological considerations when discussing cognitive ageing. As mentioned above pathological and non-pathological ageing form a continuum, so it is inevitable that some studies will include participants with a pathological condition in their sample. Another issue is isolating the age factor when interpreting results. Cognitive ageing is a multifaceted phenomenon affected by various factors which makes it difficult to find cause and effect relationships even in the most controlled studies. Most empirical evidence is based on cross-sectional studies that typically compare younger with older adults simultaneously. The observed differences in performance are explained in relation to the age factor but there are other possible explanations; for example premorbid intelligence is considered a significant predictor of cognitive performance in older adults. In addition, there may be other confounding variables, such as lifelong training and lifestyle that may improve or underpin differences between the two populations (Hedden and Gabrieli, 2004). Ideally, longitudinal studies, which involve following-up the same participants across the life span, would provide more coherent information on cognitive ageing. Such studies are more difficult to perform as they require long-term data collection and need a large cohort that will inevitably decrease over the years.

Deary et al. (2009) noted that although the profile of normal ageing is well established, with some cognitive abilities being more affected than others, the factors that underpin cognitive decline are weakly supported by empirical data. Most studies show small effect sizes (<0.20 according to Cohen's conventions). Cohen (1988) conceptualised effect sizes as a measure of the strength of the relationship between two variables. Having small effect sizes essentially means that the effect of each factor on cognitive ageing is small but can be statistically significant. Some studies show methodological inaccuracies that are difficult to replicate and other studies find contradictory results. Despite these methodological considerations, research has provided substantial information on non-pathological cognitive ageing and has provided significant information of the factors that determine successful ageing.

5.3. Fluid and crystallised intelligence

There is great variation on which cognitive functions decline earlier during the life span. Most researchers agree that crystallised and fluid intelligence are affected differently in normal ageing. Horn and Cattell (1966) explained that crystallised intelligence involves general acquired knowledge and vocabulary and is related to linguistic ability and expression. Fluid intelligence refers to ability to think logically and to solve novel problems, to reason and to draw conclusions. It is particularly relevant in scientific, mathematical, technical abstract thinking. Age-related differences in fluid intelligence have been identified using brain-scanning techniques (Bugg et al., 2006) that document a strong relation with a decline in speed of processing. On the other hand, crystallised intelligence remains relatively unaffected across the life span with a peak in middle adulthood (40-55 years) (Horn and Cattell, 1967). However, recent studies challenge the notion of early cognitive ageing suggesting that changes in cognition do not become evident before the age of 65 years (Nilsson et al., 2009).

Following the distinction between fluid and crystallised intelligence, it has been found that verbal ability, general knowledge and certain numerical skills are least affected by ageing. Other functions such as memory and speed of processing start deteriorating as early as middle adulthood and may cause downstream effects to other cognitive abilities. For example, slow speed of processing is associated with weak language abilities and poor memory in older adults. These cognitive functions seem to be more involved in everyday activities and significantly affect job-related performance. Therefore, it is important to explore the link between cognitive ageing in middle-aged and older adults and job-related performance in a multidisciplinary way.

5.4. Memory and ageing

One of the most significant functions of the cognitive system is the ability to encode, maintain/store and retrieve information. Memory is expressed in different modalities depending on the involved sensory system through which it is acquired. Visual and auditory inputs are among the most important in survival and evolution and have been studied extensively in relation to cognitive ageing. Memory involves external stimuli, oneself, space and time, rituals and routines, goals and aims as well future plans. There are different memory systems depending on the amount and type of information they can

Table 5.1. Summary of studies examining age-related memory decline in healthy adults

Study	Groups	Task	Results
Cabeza et al., 2004	Younger/older adults	Working memory	No differences in performance between the two groups.
Blacker et al., 2007	Older adults > 57 years	Episodic memory	Episodic memory was a reliable predictor of cognitive impairment in healthy adults.
Rosen et al., 2002	Older adults > 60 years	Declarative memory	There is profound variation in the severity of the decline.
Cabeza et al., 1997	Younger/older adults	Encoding and retrieval	No differences in performance between the two groups. Differences in the brain areas activated during the tasks.
Grady et al., 2008	Younger/older adults	Working memory	There were no reliable age differences in this pattern of activity.
Park et al., 2002	Adults >20 years old	Working memory/long-term memory	Regular decline across the life span. No specific differences in performance between older and younger adults.
Zelinski and Burnight, 1997	A 16-year longitudinal study of two groups: 30-36 and 55-81	Short-term memory/long-term memory	Differences in recall but not in recognition between the two groups.
Hedden et al., 2005	Two groups: 20-54 and 55-92	Working memory	Older adults may use age-related increases in knowledge to partially compensate for processing declines when environmental support is available.
Salthouse, 2003	1 250 participants from 20 to 90 years	Short-term/long-term memory for words and faces	There is a downward shift in memory across the life span that starts before the age of 50.
Schroeder and Salthouse, 2004	5 391 participants from 30 to 50 years	Short-term/long-term memory	Small differences in memory in these age groups.

hold as well as on the way information is stored and organised. A basic distinction is that between short-term and long-term memory. Short-term memory involves immediate recall of items, has a capacity of 7 ± 2 items and is commonly used when attempting to memorise a short list of items. While long-term memory involves permanent storage of information in an organised ‘mental lexicon’, it is unlimited in capacity and often described as a library of knowledge encoded and stored in a relevant and meaningful individual manner, to be recalled later. Working memory is a theoretical concept first described by (Atkinson and Shiffrin, 1968) that involves ability actively to hold relevant information to perform a complex task such as problem-solving and reasoning. The working memory system (Baddeley, 1999) includes a central executive that organises sensory input with assistance of attentional mechanisms, a visuo-spatial sketchpad (for non-verbal information) and a phonological loop (for verbal information).

Long-term memory is further separated into episodic, semantic and procedural memories, which involve events, meanings and procedures respectively. Although long-term memory is unlimited most times healthy individuals fail to retrieve information accurately. Mnemonic strategies may reduce forgetting but memory failures are the rule rather than the exception in everyday situations. The reasons for forgetting have been extensively investigated due to the importance of memory in personal and professional environments. Most people in middle adulthood complain that they can not recall substantial information on processes, procedures and events and are forced to use reminders to improve their memories. The most important reasons for forgetting are:

- (a) encoding specificity (Thomson and Tulving, 1970);
- (b) decay (Woodworth, 1938);
- (c) lack of access because of emotional load or repression (Baddeley, 1999);
- (d) interference (Barnes and Underwood, 1959);
- (e) amnesia (Baddeley, 1970).

Given the importance of memory in daily activities, several authors have discussed memory deficits resulting from normal ageing (Gregoire and Van der Linden, 1997). The studies yielded contradictory results. Table 5.1 provides an overview of the main findings of more recent studies on memory and ageing in non-pathological individuals.

From Table 5.1 it is clear there are substantial differences in results depending on age groups and the task used. In relation to short-term memory which involves immediate recall of short lists of digits there is small decline that accelerates after the age of 70. On the other hand, well-practiced tasks

that involve knowledge (crystallised intelligence) show little or no decline across the life span. This indicates that life experience and wisdom compensate for slight changes in memory ability in older adults particularly over 60 years of age. It is likely that older adults use their experience to adapt effective strategies while younger people rely more on their processing abilities and increased memory performance.

5.5. Speed of processing and ageing

Speed in cognitive processing emerges as a unique and reliable predictor of cognitive ability in adults. Decision speed refers to the ability to respond accurately and quickly to complex problems that not everyone would be able to answer if given indefinite time. On the other hand, perceptual speed refers to the ability to respond quickly to relatively easy tasks that everyone can correctly answer if given indefinite time (Salthouse, 2000). Age-related delay in speed can be illustrated with simple reaction time tasks that require an individual to press a button at the presence of a stimulus. Verbal fluency is another indicator of speed in linguistic ability, which is a predictor of memory in older adults (Luszcz, 2000). Speed of processing and general knowledge are both reliable predictors of memory tasks in older adults (Hedden et al., 2005).

A decline in speed of processing has been documented in several studies (Salthouse, 2000; Birren and Fisher, 1995). However, this decline is more evident after the age of 60 and affects other cognitive abilities, such as memory and reasoning. According to the processing speed theory (Salthouse, 1996) cognitive ability is affected by processing speed because some cognitive operations can only be successfully completed within a time framework since the supporting operations may no longer be available if processing is achieved at a later stage. In essence, speed of processing reflects not only the ability to perform a specific activity but also the ability to perform rapidly other tasks that support the target activity. Indeed, slow processing may reduce the amount of available information needed to perform a task that requires a higher level of processing. For example, in a complex task, operations such as associations, elaborations, and rehearsals should be readily available within a specific time framework to achieve higher performance. If processing speed delays these supporting operations due to decay or displacement, performance will be weaker (Salthouse, 1996). Overall, speed of processing appears to account for several age-related cognitive deficits. General slowing of processing ability may begin as early as

the 30s but there is great individual variability depending on educational background, and socioeconomic status (Salthouse and Ferrer-Caja, 2003).

Healthy ageing is accompanied by changes in the brain particularly in the cerebral cortex and hippocampus. A description of these changes may provide insight into the cognitive decline of healthy adults.

5.6. Neurobiology and cognitive ageing

One of the most obvious structural changes of the brain in normal ageing is a decrease in brain volume and an increase in cerebral fluid in the ventricular spaces (Deary et al., 2009). Neural degeneration accelerates in old age particularly in the prefrontal areas that are most involved in problem-solving, executive control and reasoning. Although brain cells do not have the ability to regenerate, there is substantial plasticity in the adult brain. Plasticity refers to reorganisation of cortical regions as a response to the external environment. This means that if a brain region is injured other nearby or distant areas may compensate for the lost functions. Brain atrophy begins in the cell bodies (grey matter) rather than the nerve fibres (white matter) that remain relatively preserved until about the age of 70 (Raz et al., 2004). Preservation of nerve fibres assists in communication between distant cortical areas crucial for execution of higher cognitive functions (Sullivan and Pfefferbaum, 2004). Factors that affect age-related brain atrophy include hypertension, corticosteroid levels, vascular changes and stress (Whalley et al., 2004).

Despite technological advances in brain imaging techniques, structural changes in the ageing brain and cognitive deficits observed are only modestly related (Hedden and Gabrieli, 2004). This surprising finding is explained in relation to early life cognitive ability, education level and professional status that seems to predict, if not to determine, cognitive ageing (Whalley et al., 2004). It is also believed that the ageing brain compensates for lost cognitive functions by recruiting other areas of the brain to take over. In other words, brain changes are not always mapped on age-related cognitive changes. Stern (2009) proposed the concept of cognitive reserve to explain the discrepancy between brain damage and its behavioural manifestation. He suggests that individual differences in processing cognitive tasks or differences in underlying brain circuits, allow some people to cope better with structural brain changes than others.

Particular importance has also been placed in identifying changes in the hippocampus, a brain structure associated with memory. There is small yet

significant shrinkage in the hippocampus in mid-50s in healthy adults (Raz et al., 2004). Also, activity of the left hippocampus is lower in older adults than in younger individuals (Mitchell et al., 2000).

5.7. Cognitive training and job-related performance in older workers

Age-related changes in cognition do not necessarily translate into job-related deficits particularly before the age of 60. This is a surprising finding since age is associated with cognitive decline and cognitive ability is a reliable predictor of job-related performance (Park, 1994). However, older workers usually have extensive experience in their job duties and are familiar with the relevant processes of their profession, which allows them to compensate for lost cognitive abilities. Another possibility is that some older workers have developed job-related expertise that is valuable to their profession despite other cognitive declines. In some cases, older workers have a supporting professional environment (assistants, colleagues) that undertake tasks and duties based on specific skills, permitting them to supervise or organise complex job-related problem-solving. However, research indicates that when older workers are confronted with novel job demands they take longer to learn, are less efficient and show less proficiency after training compared to younger workers (Kubeck et al., 1996; Park, 1994). However, if new tasks are built onto existing skills older workers are more efficient (Park, 1994). Indeed, recent involvement with skills related to new job-related demands helps with performance in older and younger workers. Therefore, it is important to encourage older workers to engage in lifelong learning to update their skills continuously and maintain a recent and modern way of thinking in which they can encompass new skills.

A large body of research highlights the importance of cognitive training through lifelong learning in successful ageing and increased job-related performance (Kemper, 1994; Lawrence, 1996; Schaie, 1994). Yet some workers seem reluctant to learn new skills and find it difficult to maintain high job-related performance. It is particularly important for careers counsellors to identify priorities of senior workers in their personal and professional environments. Optimising efforts on a few selected skills most relevant to the worker's job will increase motivation and performance of older workers (Park, 1994). Considering that stress affects cognitive ageing negatively and given that older adults experience more uncontrolled stress due to physical and

medical challenges, it is possible they are more reluctant to participate in lifelong learning due to emotional unavailability. Experimental evidence for this hypothesis remains elusive; however Aldwin et al. (1996) found that 43% of older workers (aged 43-54) reported job-related problems that cause stress.

Cognitive training through lifelong learning in the professional environment could increase the cognitive reserve (Stern, 2009) by maintaining or improving cognitive abilities thought to deteriorate with age. Complex job demands, which require cognitive training in the occupational environment, could potentially be beneficial for compensating for age-related cognitive decline (Andel et al., 2005; Bosma et al., 2003; Shimamura et al., 1995). Recently, Gajewski et al. (2010) explored this hypothesis by comparing the cognitive performance of older (aged 48-58) and younger workers (aged 18-30) employed either on an assembly line or in quality protection, maintenance and service at a big manufacturing company. Job demands of the groups differed significantly in daily job requirements and complexity. All participants were assessed on working memory, task switching and error processing. Their results indicated that older workers on the assembly line showed worse reaction times and increased error rates in complex memory load conditions than those working in non-assembly services. No differences were found in the low working memory load conditions indicating that the more the cognitive load the less successful compensation mechanisms in older workers with repetitive non-challenging jobs. Moreover, error rates of older workers working in non-assembly services were in some cases lower than those of the younger groups.

Most studies agree that older workers benefit from lifelong learning and complex job demands by increasing their cognitive functioning and reducing age-related deficits (Hansson et al., 1997; Schooler et al., 1999). Challenging job demands can potentially protect older workers from cognitive impairments and this effect appears to be independent of general intellectual ability (Bosma et al., 2003). In a longitudinal study with 1 036 participants, Potter et al. (2008) found there was an interaction between job demands and general intellectual ability: workers who scored lower on intelligence scales in their early adulthood, were benefiting more from intellectually demanding jobs. This finding was independent of other factors such as years of education and gender.

Participating in intellectually stimulating activities during the life span predicts cognitive decline in older adults. The notion of 'use it or lose' seems to be reliably supported by cross-sectional and longitudinal studies. Continuous involvement of adults in intellectually challenging activities increases plasticity of the brain and affects the structure and function of cortical and subcortical areas positively. Behavioural data support the

'cognitive reserve hypothesis' (Stern, 2009), which maintains that active participation and lifelong learning creates an increased cognitive 'reservoir' across the life span and reduces the impact of age on cognition. More specifically, active involvement in activities that improve cognition such as, learning new tasks in the workplace, increase cognitive training, which in turn, improves brain activity and acts as a preventive mechanism to cognitive deterioration. It is not clear whether this effect is independent of premorbid intelligence. Perhaps individuals with higher cognitive ability engage in more stimulating activities throughout their life spans, have more challenging jobs, and pursue more active lifestyles.

There are only a few carefully controlled studies on cognitive training in older adults and most assess individuals over the age of 60. The long-lasting memories project is one, funded by the European Commission (Directorate-General Information, Society and Media) which aims to explore cognitive and physical ageing in the elderly using an ICT platform. The platform offers end-users cognitive training combined with physical activity in the framework of an advanced ambient-assisted living environment, in five different countries (Greece, Spain, France, Austria and the UK). The main objective is to provide older people with a user-friendly service to improve their cognitive and physical performances and consequently their quality of life, to prolong their independence and contribution to society. Publication of results of the double-blinded controlled studies is planned for the end of 2011 and beginning of 2012 (<http://www.longlastingmemories.eu/>).

5.8. Conclusions

Results of empirical research on cognitive ageing and job-related performance in healthy individuals provide substantial insight into determinants of successful ageing and beneficial effects of lifelong learning. Several conclusions can be drawn from this analysis:

- (a) cognitive ageing is a gradual process, part of normal development, that begins in early adulthood and involves cognitive change. Several brain areas have the ability to reorganise and respond to age-related changes, which may or may not be accompanied by behavioral changes in cognition;
- (b) there is great heterogeneity in cognitive ageing but most studies agree that there is a plateau in cognitive abilities in middle adulthood and a decline in older age. Indeed, most cognitive abilities remain unchanged

until the age of about 60-65. However, some cognitive processes are more prone to ageing (speed of processing and memory) than others (verbal ability and general knowledge). Deterioration in cognitive processes has been linked to premorbid intellectual ability;

- (c) longitudinal studies – compared to cross-sectional studies – provide more insight into cognitive ageing since they control for other confounding variables such as years of education and socioeconomic background;
- (d) life experience and wisdom compensates for age-related changes in cognitive ability in healthy adults. Senior workers benefit from lifelong learning particularly those involved in more demanding jobs. Carefully controlled studies on cognitive training will provide important information on the factors that affect successful ageing in older adults.

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CHAPTER 6

Intergenerational learning in organisations – A research framework

Donald C. Ropes

The purpose of this chapter is to lay the groundwork for a large-scale design-based research ⁽²⁴⁾ programme on how intergenerational learning can help mitigate some problems associated with an ageing workforce by capitalising on the abilities of older employees, especially those working in knowledge-intensive organisations. To remain competitive, organisations need to improve continually and build their capacity, but threats from changing demographics might impede these processes. The project started in late 2010 and will run for at least four years. It includes several different types of organisations as research partners, both in the public and private sector. In the private sector research will focus especially on SMEs; one research stream will look at how family businesses deal with knowledge transfer and learning in general and during succession between family generations in particular. In the public sector, secondary and tertiary educational sectors will be participating in the research. Preliminary results should be available by autumn 2012. Insights gained from ongoing research may require revisions or extensions to the framework. An introductory review of literature on ageing in organisations showed that there are three emergent themes; one dealing with how to retain critical skills by stemming (early) retirements, one concerned with retaining critical organisational knowledge and one looking at how generations within organisations learn together to increase organisational capacity. This chapter serves to give some insight into these themes to start developing a more comprehensive research framework based on the third theme, which is termed intergenerational learning. This research is original in that it approaches intergenerational learning as a two-way relationship between older and

⁽²⁴⁾ Design-based research is a prescriptive approach to management research that concurrently produces new knowledge for research and new insights for practice (van Aken, 2004).

younger workers. A model for guiding the research and some preliminary research questions are presented at the end of the chapter.

6.1. Introduction

According to numerous studies published by policy research centres in the EU and other developed countries, the pool of available workers is diminishing at an alarming rate due to retirement and an ageing population (²⁵). For example, in a report published by the Dutch Ministry of Interior and Kingdom Relations, predictions were showing that in 2020 there will be gaps of 30% or more in the employment pool for teachers and policemen, and even higher gaps for nurses (BZK, 2010). The same report states that due to combined budget cuts and a shrinking labour pool, an estimated seven out of 10 current public servants will no longer be in service by 2020. Similar projections have been made for other fields, especially those where highly-educated knowledge workers are employed. Government policy-makers are aware of this problem and have started taking measures to combat it. However, government interventions such as increasing retirement age, giving tax incentives for workers who remain in service, and other measures that attempt to stymie (early) labour force exits, are not expected to be powerful enough to compensate for the demographics of an ageing society. This could be a realistic expectation, considering the years of effort most EU countries have put into developing incentives, that have proven rather efficacious, for workers to exit the labour force early (Borsch-Supan, 2000). Now, current workers need to be convinced to remain in the labour force longer than the previous generation. But why would they? Will threats of reduced pensions or the possibility of higher wages due to labour shortages be stimuli enough to keep older workers in the labour force?

If government measures that delay labour force exit prove to be at all effective, or if other factors such as threats to pension or higher wages are strong enough to keep people working longer, then work organisations will be faced with an ageing staff. Consequently, organisations will be forced to understand how older workers can be utilised efficiently and take appropriate measures if they are to remain competitive. A scenario where organisations need to keep their existing workers for a longer period is especially believable

(²⁵) Bureau Bartels (2010); European Commission (2007; 2009); Stam (2009).

for highly experienced, highly educated, and technically proficient workers, or what we call knowledge workers (Ropes and Stam, 2008). Older knowledge workers, the focus of this research, are often irreplaceable and so organisations will need to focus on keeping this specific type of employee in service.

While there is quite some work on the problems expected to arise due to an ageing population, reports in scientific journals and practitioner literature fail to present much empirical work on the specific topic of how organisations can capitalise on the knowledge and innovative capacities of an older worker (INNO-Grips, 2008). Mostly one finds government reports and studies that further define the problem and speculate about future negative consequences like those mentioned above. Other literature, much of it coming from the fields of occupational health, gerontology and cognitive psychology, concerns the changing capabilities of the older worker in regard to physical and cognitive abilities (see also Cedefop, 2010).

The important points just raised will be considered during the research. However, this research endeavours to study the situation from various theoretical approaches explained later. By using a multidisciplinary approach, realising the goal of this research will be possible. This is directly related to the complexity of the organisational contexts in which research will be done. It is also directly related to the goal of the research, namely to develop concrete policy measures using intergenerational learning for organisations to assure older knowledge workers maintain a positive contribution to the development and effectiveness of the organisation. These concepts have been cited regularly in the recent report by the European Commission on the new European strategy (Andriessen, 2004; European Commission, 2010).

This chapter focuses on what an ageing population means within an organisational context. It looks at three themes found in the organisational and management science, knowledge management and human resource development literature: (a) dealing with how to stem (early) retirements to keep critical skills; (b) retaining critical organisational knowledge; and (c) how generations within organisations learn together to increase organisational capacity. These themes are introduced to show the logic behind the research model pertaining to theme number three.

6.2. Theme one: retaining critical organisational skills

This first theme explores how organisations can reduce levels of stress to keep older workers from retiring (early) (26). Loss of critical skills can be devastating for an organisation and workers leaving for early retirements take these critical skills with them. One main reason for workers leaving has to do with the stress they experience in their relationship with the work organisation.

Stress is a powerful mechanism for leading older workers to leave the work organisation and can be caused by different reasons, mostly linked to organisational demands and individual capability. For example decreases in physical work capacity and mental changes can result in stress. Regarding the former point, most research shows that physical capacity is not a serious issue for white-collar workers below the age of 70 (Barnes-Farrell, 2006). Mental changes on the other hand are pertinent to this research and so are discussed in some detail below, especially in regard to how these changes affect the older employee's relationship with the organisation.

6.2.1. Mental changes accompanying the ageing process

Mental changes accompanying the ageing process can be linked to changes in mental functional capacity – considered to be the ability to perform different tasks using one's intellect. Research in geriatrics often points towards decline in functional capacity for persons above 70 years of age in regard to cognitive functions such as learning, understanding, memory, communication, etc., or the relationships between individuals and their environments (Ilmarinen, 2001). Occupational health literature also looks at cognitive functioning, but for people still part of the labour force. This is important because although geriatric studies point towards severe decreases in cognitive abilities, occupational health studies show something different.

Studies on declines in cognitive ability have shown the adage 'you can't teach an old dog new tricks' is highly dependant on the age of the dog and the type of trick one tries to teach (Korchin and Basowitz, 1957; Nauta et al., 2005). The ability to learn new tricks is crucial to a knowledge worker who must regularly process new information to solve organisational problems. Although some aspects of information processing such as speed of perception, memory and the ability to realise the outcomes of the decisions

(26) Barnes-Farrall (2006); Bureau Bartels (2010); Ilmarinen (2001); Kanfer and Ackerman (2007); van der Heijden (2001).

made do slow with age, the [...] actual functions of information processing change very little in the course of one's career. Moreover, some cognitive functions such as control of use of language or ability to process complex problems in insecure situations, improve with age (Ilmarinen, 2001, p. 548). So, what does this mean in regard to how older workers experience stress and consequently leave the work organisation (early) because of it? The link to this question lies in the way older employees experience their changing relationship with the organisational environment. In organisational psychology research, person/environment fit models have been consistently used to help understand how workers experience their work environment in regard to norms, values and individual abilities (Edwards, 1996). According to person/environment fit models, incongruence between person and environment leads to stress. Incongruence can be in the form of differing expectations about workflow organisation, but it can also be in the form of role ambiguity, role conflict, and other psychosocial stressors coming from the organisation.

Organisational climate can also be a stressor and as such is also pertinent to the changing roles older employees have (Schultz and Wang, 2007). For example, stressors such as lack of intergenerational solidarity, negative stereotypes about older employees' abilities or workplace expectations about appropriate career trajectories can seriously influence a workers' decision to retire early.

6.2.2. Organisational policy issues

There are several different types of organisational policy actions aimed at keeping workers in service longer. It seems that most policies on this topic come from the management literature and have to do with developing interventions based on changing reward schemes that try to make remaining in the work organisation more attractive than retirement.

Other policy recommendations, mostly coming from organisational psychology research, accent how organisations might rethink work flows and organisation of work processes for older employees in the hope of reducing the impact of organisational stressors. For example, older workers have a need for flexibility with personal workflow organisation. Allowing older workers to plan their own work schedules is one way organisations do this.

6.2.3. The role of guidance and counselling

A literature search on the specific topic of guidance and counselling of ageing workers employed in knowledge-intensive organisations was rather fruitless,

especially in regard to empirical studies. However, there was some conceptual work that called for a change in the way guidance is given in the changing world of work. Bimrose (2006) brings up the idea that differences between counselling, guidance and coaching are becoming blurred. Sultana (2003) points to a needed shift in the provisions of guidance from that of skill-based improvements to career-based ones. This latter model for guidance would probably be more appropriate for ageing knowledge workers whose skill-sets are based more on metacompetences (such as learning to learn) than on vocational ones. And while this research project deals with ageing workers currently employed, McNair (Chapter 7 in this volume) emphasises the need for creating career awareness among these 'insiders' due to possibilities of redundancy caused by organisational changes or technological advancements – both factors can lead to increased stress.

6.2.4. Research possibilities

The section above is about the relationships older employees have with the organisation in which they work and how stress negatively affects this relationship. According to literature, this is a two-way relationship (Griffiths, 1997; Hansson et al., 2001).

This section uses this concept as a basis for developing specific research possibilities to contribute to our understanding of intergenerational learning: there are strong links between learning, knowledge transfer and retention and organisational development.

There are five emergent possibilities for research on this theme:

- (a) existing policy analysis: there is little or no exploratory research on what knowledge transfer and retention strategies organisations actually have developed in regards to an ageing workforce. This is important to begin developing structured comparisons and methodologies for evaluative research on the effectiveness of strategies;
- (b) evaluating effectiveness of policies: linking knowledge management initiatives to results – improved innovation, increased organisational capacity, etc. – is difficult and so is rarely attempted. New methods for understanding effectiveness of initiatives are needed to show if they are valuable and accomplished their goal;
- (c) new research methodologies for understanding knowledge retention policies: Stam (2010) did structured comparisons among firms who use specific interventions to elicit and retain expert knowledge from leaving employees. In the research, he used a specific methodology for trying to show understanding of how the interventions worked and the mechanisms

behind their working. However, this was a first attempt at using that particular methodology and needs further work;

- (d) new interventions for stimulating knowledge transfer and retention: as in the first theme, prescriptive, design-based research can be done here as well. This can lead to practical knowledge about how organisations can transfer and retain crucial knowledge older employees have;
- (e) developing new guidance and counselling models: as mentioned above, guidance and counselling models directly related to ageing knowledge workers have only recently started to emerge. Research is needed to understand the differences between knowledge workers' needs and employees in other sectors.

6.3. Theme two: retaining critical organisational knowledge

This theme comes mainly from knowledge management literature and explores how organisations can retain and reuse critical organisational knowledge in face of an ageing organisational population. This theme too is based on the idea that, considering demographic predictions of labour force make-up, organisations will be faced increasingly with an ageing worker population. In turn it means they will lose, at an increasing rate as well, not only critical expertise, but also critical knowledge. Such a situation will be especially problematic for knowledge intensive organisations because they are dependent on using and reusing critical knowledge and know-how to remain competitive. Because of the complex and rapidly changing nature of the competitive environment in which firms operate, highly-skilled knowledge workers are crucial to a firm's success. In organisations where intricate skills and knowledge are difficult to codify, the knowledge worker forms the basis for both organisational knowledge retention and transfer. Knowledge management systems are just not advanced enough to deal with the complexity alone. From a knowledge management perspective, organisations will not only be challenged to keep their knowledge workers in service longer, they will also need to develop ways in which organisational knowledge, located in the minds of older workers, is transferred and subsequently retained for reuse. The two concepts of retention and transfer are closely tied together; without the latter, the former cannot really occur.

Knowledge retention is problematic for most knowledge-intensive firms, but an ageing population confounds this further, making retention the biggest

knowledge management challenge (Stam, 2010). Because more workers will be leaving the labour force, organisations will need to find ways to assure that expert knowledge does not leave with them. However, not all knowledge is critical, nor does it necessarily reside in one particular person. So deciding what knowledge is critical, and then finding which employees have that knowledge, needs to be the first consideration when developing a knowledge retention strategy. Another consideration is that one must understand how knowledge is approached in the organisation; is it a good that can be packaged and transferred, or is it more fluid and depends on who has it and who uses it? Corporate epistemologies thus play a major role in developing a knowledge management strategy based on either codification or personalisation (Hansen et al., 1999). This, in turn, has an effect on knowledge transfer strategies.

6.3.1. Organisational policy issues

Like retention strategies, knowledge transfer strategies are developed in line with corporate epistemologies; they as well are contingent on how knowledge is understood within the organisation as well. Basically, if an organisation understands knowledge to be a packageable good, then transfer strategies will be focused on codification and storing of expert knowledge in systems such as databases, content-management systems, and libraries. However, organisations that understand knowledge to be inextricably woven into expertise typically choose strategies that rely on personalisation, or bringing people together. Depending on the corporate epistemology, different ways of explicating critical tacit knowledge are used. In the case of the older worker, who is usually considered to have a great store of this critical knowledge, organisations will be challenged to understand how complex, expert knowledge is explicated and subsequently transferred.

6.3.2. Research possibilities

Thus, from a knowledge management perspective, the relationship a worker has with the organisation also considers how knowledge is retained and transferred.

This section uses this idea as a basis for developing specific research possibilities that can be developed to contribute to our understanding of intergenerational learning: there are strong links between learning, knowledge transfer and retention and organisational development.

There are four emergent possibilities for research on this second theme, nearly identical to those in theme one, except that guidance models play a

lesser role due to the knowledge management perspective:

- (a) existing policy analysis: there is little or no exploratory research on what knowledge transfer and retention strategies organisations actually have developed in regard to an ageing workforce. This is important to begin developing structured comparisons and methodologies for evaluative research on effectiveness of strategies;
- (b) evaluating the effectiveness of policies: linking knowledge management initiatives to results – improved innovation, increased organisational capacity, etc. – is difficult. New methods for understanding effectiveness of initiatives are needed to show if they are valuable;
- (c) new research methodologies for understanding knowledge retention policies: Stam (2010) structured comparisons among firms who use specific interventions to elicit and retain expert knowledge from leaving employees. In the research, he used a specific methodology for trying to show understanding of how interventions worked and the mechanisms behind their working. However, this was a first attempt at using that particular methodology and needs further work;
- (d) new interventions for stimulating knowledge transfer and retention: prescriptive, design-based research can be done here as well, leading to practical knowledge about how organisations can transfer and retain crucial knowledge older employees have.

6.4. Theme three: (intergenerational) learning and organisational capacity building

Using older workers to develop organisational capacity is the focus of this research framework. To remain competitive, organisations need continually to develop and build capacity⁽²⁷⁾. This is done in different ways. For example, organisations might invest in knowledge management systems, or try forging strategic alliances to gain important knowledge for developing new products or services. Or perhaps organisations invest in human resource development trajectories, such as (re)training schemes for improving (technical) skills. Another way is through learning. Organisations build capacity by developing new competences needed to remain competitive. This form of organisational

⁽²⁷⁾ This is true for both private and public sectors; while the former strives for increased market share and competitive advantage, the latter strives for more effectiveness, usually as a result of decreasing budgets.

learning considers that learning processes occurring at group, organisational and individual levels should lead to new organisational capabilities.

Learning at individual level is distinct from training in that it is not necessarily focused on becoming capable, or more capable, for a specific task or function, but rather is a part of the daily work of the knowledge worker. In this sense it is also more situated in the context of the work organisation than typical training programmes. Again, the logic is that if actors in the organisation become more capable, then so will the organisation.

Another form of organisational learning considers outputs of the learning processes, such as innovation. In this sense, learning is directly linked to innovation (Thölke, 2007). Most learning in organisations where knowledge workers operate is in the service of innovation, be that either radical or incremental in nature (Stam, 2007).

The first theme was essentially about how organisational structures can be developed to reduce stress for older workers. The second theme was about how organisations try to retain critical knowledge in different ways. The third theme differs in its perspective. Here the idea is to understand ways organisations can actually conduct improved productivity of older employees through learning-based organisational interventions. What literature there is on this theme focuses generally on questions such as: how work organisations can be developed that lead to more effective ageing workers in regard to learning and innovation (Jones and Hayden, 2009; Sprenger, 2007).

Learning in organisations is often seen as a cyclical process in which different levels within the organisation interact and consequently learn and develop new knowledge (Crossen et al., 1999). However, much literature regards the individual as a main catalyst for organisational learning and building capacity. This important point is especially true for knowledge intensive organisations and sets the stage of this research, which is how organisations can develop capacity by using the relationships between older and younger colleagues. The learning that occurs within this relationship can be called intergenerational learning.

6.4.1. Conceptualising intergenerational learning

While one standard definition of intergenerational learning does not seem to exist, it has been conceptualised similarly in different fields as an interactive process between groups of people from non-adjacent generations engaged in a relationship where one or both parties learn. However, from a learning-as-outcome perspective, different fields understand intergenerational learning differently. For example, sociology typifies traditional intergenerational learning

as taking place within the family unit at home. In this situation a grandparent is teaching a grandchild different things about society that leads to socialisation of the child in regard to customs and values. This type of intergenerational learning may be either intentional or unintentional. For example, sometimes public programmes are developed that intentionally try to replace traditional intergenerational learning that occurs in a family situation, because of breakdown of the extended family. Such programmes help reduce (negative) stereotypes on both sides, as well as help participants learn about the world around them. Other results of intergenerational social programmes are improved social skills, feelings of inclusion and feelings of empowerment (Newman and Hatton-Yeo, 2008).

Such outcomes are also found in reports on educational programmes based on promoting intergenerational learning. Other outcomes mentioned in educational literature are: improved competences, especially of the younger participant; improved networks for both participants; and valuable experiences in lifelong learning for older participants (Duvall and Zint, 2007).

In the few reports on intergenerational learning in organisations (Spannring, 2008; and www.eagle-project.eu) one finds references both to outcomes of the intergenerational learning process closely related to those mentioned above and passing (and thus retaining) critical organisational competences from the older worker to the younger one. Mentoring, which is the practice of linking older, more experienced workers with their younger colleagues, is a prime example of how organisations try to stimulate intergenerational learning.

In reports on intergenerational learning coming from sociology, education and organisational development, processes of learning between generations are similar; only outcomes differ and then not as greatly as one might think. Among other things, intergenerational learning seems to be effective in lowering barriers and breaking through negative stereotypes between generations in all different types of situations. Further, intergenerational learning is portrayed as a valuable way for building competence and retaining knowledge between generations.

6.4.2. Organisational policy issues

Intergenerational learning is a rather underdeveloped theme. The little work there is on the topic comes from a mixture of scientific and practical literature spanning the three disciplines mentioned above. In knowledge management literature, intergenerational learning is linked nearly exclusively to knowledge transfer and retention and mentoring is highlighted as a major instrument for doing this. Communities of practice, which are social collaborative learning

groups in a specific context, have also been shown to be effective knowledge management instruments for knowledge transfer and retention (such as learning and innovation) between generations (Ropes, 2010).

Intergenerational learning is also important for building social capital (Kerka, 2003), a main driver for innovation and learning in organisations (Akdere and Roberts, 2008) and a contributor to a positive learning climate – needed for continual renewal and development, especially for knowledge-intensive organisations.

Thus, although learning between generations might be an age-old, naturally occurring phenomenon, there needs to be more research on intergenerational learning within organisations and especially on how it can be implemented in the service of learning, innovation and knowledge retention to improve organisational capacity.

6.4.3. Research possibilities

The research framework aims to explore further and expand the concept of intergenerational learning within organisational contexts to achieve two goals. The first is to build knowledge and understanding of how intergenerational learning relationships resulting in innovation, learning and knowledge retention can contribute to organisational capacity development. This is important for both research and practice because it gives insight into how strategies and policies can be developed for implementing intergenerational programmes, which is the second and main goal of the research.

For the research proposed in this chapter, it is important to understand fully crucial differences of how and why older workers learn compared to younger colleagues. For example, we know that older workers have different motivations for learning (Carré, 2000; Knowles, 1974) and that their learning styles and abilities are also different (Ackerman, 1996; Korchin and Basowitz, 1957; Nauta et al., 2005). Once the aspects of individual learning within the organisation are understood, a start can be made to look at how different generations interact and consequently learn together. Approaching intergenerational learning as an interactive process in which learning goes both ways between generations has rarely been done (Baily, 2009; Tempest, 2003). This leads to the following specific possibilities for research on this theme:

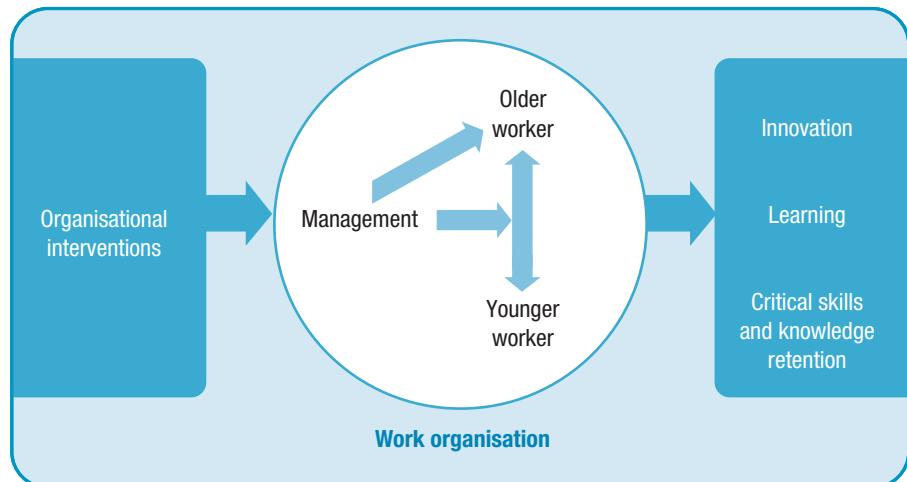
- (a) explore learning relationships between generations: most research looks at how the young learn from the old. A possibility exists to look at how the opposite might take shape, as well as how the relationship between different generations might lead to improved learning, innovation and knowledge retention;

- (b) explore and compare workers in different sectors: literature on how ageing knowledge workers operating in different sectors learn, or what motivates them to learn, is scarce. For example, how management consultants in SMEs learn compared to university lecturers; are their learning processes different, or the same;
- (c) benchmark existing policies in different sectors: structured comparisons of current policies and practices, and their effectiveness, could be valuable additions to understanding intergenerational learning in organisations;
- (d) explore the role guidance can have on promoting intergenerational learning: older knowledge workers might not be aware of the added value of their participation in lifelong learning – one facet of intergenerational learning in organisations;
- (e) develop new methodologies for understanding intergenerational learning: other fields such as educational science and sociology have considerable bodies of knowledge concerning intergenerational learning and have developed methodologies for understanding the learning processes occurring. Desk research in these fields could develop knowledge useful to researching intergenerational learning in organisations.

6.5. Synthesising the three themes

The first goal of the research programme outlined in this chapter is descriptive in nature: knowledge needs to be developed and expanded to understand fully the complexity of intergenerational learning in organisations. The second – and principal – goal of the research is to develop and test organisational interventions promoting effective intergenerational learning. In this research, ‘effective’ implies that results of interventions lead to innovation, employee learning and critical knowledge retention, which in turn contributes to development of organisational capacity. Figure 6.1 shows a model representative of this main research goal. It will be used to guide design of the research, specifically related to developing and testing organisational interventions. As one can see in the model, the research will also consider the whole work organisation: management, ageing and younger workers.

Figure 6.1. Conceptual research model



Source: Authors.

Again, the link to improved organisational capacity, not pictured in the model, lies in the outcomes of the interventions, namely innovation, learning and knowledge retention.

From this model some preliminary research questions for helping to direct the research have been derived. These are given below.

Preliminary research questions

The following research questions were developed using the model pictured above. While they are preliminary and subject to revision, they give a clear idea of the direction the research will be taking. The main question is what measures, related to an ageing workforce, can management take to increase organisational effectiveness.

The answer will be a series of tested policy recommendations that can be used for designing organisational development trajectories in knowledge-intensive, service-based organisations. A mixed-methods approach to data gathering is probably the most suitable, due to the complexity of the research question (Gorard and Taylor, 2004).

The following subquestions have been formulated to help guide further research in its exploratory phase: what processes occur in the relationship between older and younger workers that have an affect on learning, innovation and critical knowledge retention? How do organisational contexts affect the

relationships between older and younger workers that contribute to learning, innovation and knowledge retention?

To answer these subquestions a combination of desk research and empirical work is needed. The research artefacts will be a set of general policy recommendations for different sectors.

Once the exploratory part of the research is done, an experimental phase will begin aimed at developing knowledge about what types of interventions are effective (and why or why not) in promoting intergenerational learning in service of the organisation. Design of the interventions will be based on policy recommendations developed in the exploratory part of the research, theory and practice-based knowledge. Each intervention will be subsequently tested for both efficacy and effectiveness. A design-based research methodology will be used in this phase of the research because this specific methodology is a valid way for bridging the rigour-relevance gap mentioned above, and so often associated with organisational research (Andriessen, 2004; DBRC, 2003).

6.6. Concluding remarks

Focus of the research programme sketched out in this chapter is on helping organisations to develop capacity by capitalising on abilities of the ageing worker. The context of the research is in knowledge-intensive organisations employing large numbers of (ageing) knowledge workers. This makes designing programmes for stimulating intergenerational learning complex, as varying interventions will need to address three distinct levels within the organisation:

- (a) the greater collective, where awareness-raising programmes focused on eliminating negative stereotypes of older (and younger) employees might prove to be an important first step in an organisation-wide programme;
- (b) the individual worker, who might need guidance and counselling to understand the importance of lifelong learning within an organisational context;
- (c) group level, where interventions aimed at stimulating multiage (innovative), teams could be performed to raise social capital, breakdown generational barriers and generally improve innovative capacity.

Complexity of the organisational environment as a context for policy experiments will add value to the research in regard to practical relevance, but at the same time constitute a threat to the rigour of it. In any case, this study on intergenerational learning in organisations will help contribute to our

understanding of how ageing knowledge workers can be more than just active participants in organisational development, but can add considerable value to the processes as well, especially concerning learning and innovation.

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PART 2

Meeting the challenges – Emerging guidance and counselling models in Europe

Learning, work and later life in the UK:
guidance needs of an ageing workforce

Stephen McNair

Policy, research and practice:
supporting longer careers for baby-boomers

Marg Malloch

Changing patterns of guidance, learning and careers
of older workers in Europe

Alan Brown, Jenny Bimrose

Career development in later working life:
implications for career guidance with older workers

Lyn Barham

CHAPTER 7

Learning, work and later life in the UK: guidance needs of an ageing workforce

Stephen McNair

This chapter examines the impact of an ageing society on the nature of and need for career guidance and training, in the context of the UK government's attempts to extend working life and of a major study of training and work in later life in the UK (McNair, 2010). It considers the changing nature of the life course, and the older labour market, including the influence of sector, cohort, and gender. It notes the distinction between older workers already in relatively secure jobs, whose employment prospects have improved in recent years, and those who become unemployed after 50 whose prospects of return remain very poor, and identifies areas of labour-market failure which might be addressed by a combination of career guidance and training.

7.1. Careers guidance and training for older workers

Careers guidance has traditionally been seen as a service for people in the first half of life, to help them to manage their entry into and progression through the paid labour market. Lack of attention to people in the second half reflects a general cultural assumption that older workers are marginal to the mainstream economy and keen to retire as soon as possible. It also reflects that retirement itself is a relatively short period of leisure and dependency with few, if any, career implications. Although this is not a universal view, attempts to build careers services relevant to older people have been very small in scale, and often temporary (Brown, 2010; Ford et al., 2008). The traditional view is increasingly under challenge as a result of demographic change, and its associated economic and social pressures.

Conversely, training is widely proposed as the solution to many ills of the labour market including unemployment, and underuse, of older people. However, participation in training declines rapidly after 50, and evidence of

unmet demand is limited, as is the supply. To explore this issue a major study of the role of training and work in later life in the UK, the learning and work in later life project, was carried out between 2006 and 2009 (McNair, 2010).

7.2. The UK policy context

Policy interest in the older workforce has been increasing over the past decade, in response to economic and social implications of rising life expectancy and declining fertility rates. In the UK, as in most developed countries, demography confronts governments with the economic challenge of deteriorating dependency ratios, and potential labour shortages. As a result of retirement and economic growth, the latest projections suggest there will be some 13 million vacancies to fill in the UK over a decade (UKCES, 2008), but the school population which will enter the workforce in that time includes only eight million, leaving a shortfall of several million people. Demography also creates cultural challenges: as retirement expands to become a third, and for some a half, of adult life, questions arise about the nature of the social contract, between the State and its older citizens and between generations, as well as questions of the meaning and purpose of life which are close to some of the traditional concerns of careers counsellors (DWP, 2009).

By international standards the UK's labour market participation rates are high. At the end of 2010 employment rates for people aged 50-64, and over 64 were both the highest since records began (Office of National Statistics, 2011). Real average retirement ages continue to rise, and in 2011 reached 64.5 for men and 62.0 for women. State pension ages, currently 60 for women and 65 for men, are to be harmonised at 65 by 2018, and raised to 66 by 2020, and ministers have proposed indexing them to (rising) life expectancy.

In its review of older labour-market policies, the OECD found that the UK had gone further than most Member States to eliminate incentives to early retirement, and to create incentives to stay longer in work (OECD, 2005). When age discrimination at work was outlawed in 2006, a default retirement age of 65 was created as an interim measure, allowing employers to dismiss people on grounds of age at that point (or later), subject to a process of appeal. This created a formal system for employers and employees to discuss retirement, and most requests to stay were, in the event, approved, suggesting that the process avoided a significant loss of human resources through premature retirement. However, the default retirement age was abolished in 2011, and older people now have a right to continue indefinitely, subject to

normal employment law. There are financial incentives to defer drawing the State pension, and individuals are allowed to draw on occupational and State pensions while continuing in employment. However, UK State pensions are low by international standards (AVIVA, 2010), with a significant minority of people supplementing these through more substantial company schemes.

7.3. Shape of life course

Despite these changes, policy and public attitudes, still tend to see 60/65 as the normal retirement age, and government statistics still use these to define the working age population. This has been recently criticised in the report of an independent national commission of inquiry into the future for lifelong learning (Schuller and Watson, 2009). The commission argued that the traditional model of the life course, with youth ending around 20, and retirement beginning at 60/65 fails to recognise the real nature of most people's lives in the 21st century.

The commission proposed a redefinition in public policy based around a four-stage model, with the life course divided at 25, 50 (the point after which age discrimination begins to be powerful in the labour market, and ill health drives some people out of work), and 75 (by which point most people are to some degree dependent on others for some requirements of everyday life). Table 7.1 compares the traditional and proposed models.

Table 7.1. A new model of the life course

	0-20	21-25	25-50	50-65	65-75	75+
Current model	Youth	Adult/worker			Retired/pensioner	
Proposed model	Extended youth		Adult/worker	Third age		Fourth age

Source: Schuller and Watson, 2009.

The commission argued that public policy, and statistical systems should use the four-stage model because the traditional model:

- (a) fails to reflect how people live now. Most people now do not establish themselves in full adult roles until their mid-20s, while most wish to (and are capable of) continuing contributing to society well into their 70s;
- (b) produces dysfunctional imbalances in pressure across the life course. The second phase puts extreme stress (evident in wellbeing studies) on

people in the second phase (25-50) in building and maintaining careers while creating homes and raising families. After 50, they then find themselves underemployed, rejected by the labour market when they have the ability, willingness and time to contribute more;

- (c) conceals imbalances in use of resources. Around 2000, the UK government dramatically increased spending on education for adults, but analysis of participation data shows that this was entirely concentrated on adults aged 18-25, while spending on people over 25 actually fell;
- (d) conceals significant economic activity. The dramatic increases in labour market participation by people over 65 in recent years were sometimes overlooked, because they were excluded from the definition of working age.

The commission carried out a major analysis of available data to examine participation and expenditure on learning from all sources (public, private and third sector). Table 7.2 shows participation ratios ⁽²⁸⁾ and expenditure figures broken down by the four phases. Although it can be argued that young people require more time and resources, the scale of imbalance shown suggests that lifelong learning has yet to become a reality.

Table 7.2. Participation and resources across the four life stages

	18-24	25-49	50-74	75+
Formal learning participation index	3250	225	27.0	5.5
Informal learning participation index	325	90	27.0	5.5
Percentage of total expenditure (%)	86	11	2.5	0.5
Expenditure per learner (GBP)	12 395	633	319.0	–

Source: Schuller and Watson, 2009.

7.4. Learning and work in later life

The learning and work in later life project was commissioned in 2006 by the Nuffield Foundation, from the Centre for research into the older workforce at the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education. Its aim was to investigate the relationship between age, labour-market participation and training for people over 50, in the light of broad demographic change. The key question

⁽²⁸⁾ Calculated from numbers participating multiplied by the average length of participation.

was, how far, and in what ways, training contributes to the employability of older people, and to extending working life.

The study included a literature review; a short survey (which asked 15 500 adults about their skill levels and participation in training); an analysis of data from six major national sources ⁽²⁹⁾; and a reanalysis of qualitative interview data from two previous surveys of older people and one of employers. The findings were published in 2010 (McNair, 2010).

The report is the most extensive investigation to date into the role of training in the older labour market, but most of the research was undertaken during a very long period of economic growth, when attitudes to work might be expected to be positive, and employers unusually aware of labour shortages. Were the research to be repeated after the recession which began in 2008 some responses would probably be different.

7.5. Research base

One important finding is scarcity of research evidence on training and older workers in the UK and other English speaking countries ⁽³⁰⁾. This reflects the position of older workers on the margin of several distinct academic disciplines. Until recently, labour-market economists tended to treat older workers as a contingent workforce, to be retained or driven out of the active labour market in response to economic and business cycles, rather than a resource in their own right. Gerontologists, by contrast, focused on ageing post-employment, while those researching education and training concentrated mainly on vocational education for young people and adults in mid-career, or on education for leisure for those in retirement (McNair and Maltby, 2007).

The one exception to this pattern is research into training and unemployment among older people, where there is a substantial body of work, mainly commissioned by government to evaluate specific policy interventions and schemes (Newton et al., 2005; Newton, 2008). This evidence is important but concerns a small and unrepresentative group of older people engaged in (often short lived) pilot programmes from which it would be difficult to extrapolate to the wider older population.

⁽²⁹⁾ UK labour force survey (2009), workplace employment relations survey (2004), the English longitudinal study of ageing (Wave 3, 2007), the national adult learner survey (2005), the NIACE annual adult learning survey (2009), and the survey of employer policies, practices and preferences in relation to age (2006).

⁽³⁰⁾ Though one may suspect that this is true for other countries as well.

A further confusing factor in the research on this issue is that much of literature dates from the 1990s and before. The validity of this evidence a decade or more later is severely limited for several reasons:

- (a) generational change, which may make the experience of previous generations of retirees a poor guide to the future. Those now approaching State pension age are the first of the 'baby boomers', born after the Second World War, and with a very different experience of life and work from those retiring 20 years before, although the empirical basis for such generational labels has been challenged (Parry and Urwin, 2011);
- (b) nature of the economy. During this period the UK economy has seen a major shift from heavy manufacturing and extractive industries to service work (and automation of much heavy work), which means that far more jobs are now within the capabilities of older workers, and older workers themselves are healthier, more physically capable, and better educated (Harper, 2011);
- (c) data are often difficult to compare, because of exclusion from surveys of people over State pension age (which is different for men and women);
- (d) change in the impact of gender (see below);
- (e) life expectancy has risen significantly during this period. Many older people are now aware that retirement may last decades, rather than years, and as a result think differently about how quickly they want to leave work.

Nevertheless, in the past decade the body of research has been growing, and more detailed survey evidence is becoming available, with development of the English longitudinal survey of ageing (Banks, 2008), and the arrival at retirement age of the subjects of the first of the large longitudinal cohort surveys: all born in one week of March 1946 and surveyed regularly since then ⁽³¹⁾.

7.6. The older labour market in the UK

In all recessions before 2008, older workers were treated as a disposable resource: the first to leave, encouraged by early retirement and generous redundancy schemes. Recently this position has changed strikingly. Between 2001 and 2010 the employment rate for people over 50 rose from 62% to 64.5%, and for those over 65 it rose from 4.9% to 8.4%. Further, this trend has continued despite recession, with the 65+ rate reaching 9.1% at the end

⁽³¹⁾ See Centre for Longitudinal Studies, at <http://www.cls.ioe.ac.uk/>.

of 2010, while rates have fallen for prime-age workers (Office of National Statistics, 2011).

The age of 50 is an important dividing line in the labour market. After that point, age discrimination in recruitment begins to be relatively common, and ill health begins to drive people out of active employment in significant numbers. Although most of the latter are quite capable of some kind of work, the market is not good at supporting such redeployment (Black, 2008), and studies of occupation, life expectancy and health make it clear that those working in some industries have very much better chances than others (Marmot, 2010).

However, the labour market continues to change after 50, becoming more part-time (and part-time working is, by European standards, relatively common), and concentrating after 60 increasingly in some sectors and occupations. During the 50s, the market loses its top and bottom. At the top a proportion of wealthy people retire to pursue other interests, while at the bottom, those in poor health and on very low pay are forced out, and unable to find alternative forms of employment suited to their skills. However, during the 60s the process reverses, with disappearance of middle-range jobs, as the market divides increasingly between a minority in high-skilled professional and technical occupations (around 25% of workers in their late 60s), and a much larger group in relatively low-skilled ones. Among the latter are some who are continuing a lifetime of such work, while others have moved from more skilled and highly paid work, either because of failure to find a job which uses their skills and experience, or through a conscious choice to move to something less demanding.

A second important factor is the changing nature of women's work. The skills at work surveys have been studying the skills content of work regularly since the 1980s, examining the skills and qualifications required for entry to particular jobs, and the time taken to become fully proficient (Felstead et al., 2007). This is a much more subtle measure of skills in the labour market than formal qualifications, and it shows not only a steady rise in the skills of most jobs over 30 years, but a much more dramatic rise in the skills of older women's work. Where older women were, 30 years ago, almost exclusively concentrated in low-skilled manual work, those in their 50s are now working at comparable levels (though not for comparable pay) to men (Felstead, 2009).

Perhaps the most important division in the older market, however, is between insiders and outsiders. For those in relatively secure employment, who are known to make a contribution, the chances of staying longer in work

are now better than ever before, especially if they continue to do the same job. Employers increasingly appear to recognise the value of the tacit skills and experience they bring, and the costs and risks of recruiting new replacement staff (McNair et al., 2007). It is probably these insiders who account for the continuing rise in employment rates for older workers, reinforced by the existence of internal labour markets within organisations. For outsiders, who have left work through redundancy or through career breaks, and who want to get back after 50, the situation does not appear to have changed. For them, prejudices about older workers remain a powerful barrier, employers continue to suspect that being unemployed indicates incompetence or lack of motivation, and the very factor which makes insiders employable – their tacit skills – is the one most difficult to demonstrate to a potential employer.

7.7. Attitudes and expectations

Perhaps the key factor in determining retirement behaviour is the expectations and aspirations of individuals, and the shifting balance of power in the employment relationship as people approach normal retirement age, with the choice to leave if they do not like the work. It has been increasingly clear since surveys in the early 2000s began to examine the issue (McNair, 2006) that most older people in work would be willing to work longer, although they may only be willing to do this if it can be more flexible or less stressful (Smeaton and Vegeris, 2009). Most recently, a survey by City and Guilds Development found that around half of all economically active people are unconcerned about having to work longer, especially if the work can be flexible or part-time ⁽³²⁾ (City and Guilds Centre for Skills Development, 2011). However, faced with the opportunity to retire and live on a pension (albeit a limited one) their willingness to stay longer depends considerably on how they are managed, and how far the work, and the working environment, meets their own needs.

The reasons why people choose to stay in work when they could retire can be broadly grouped into intrinsic, social and financial. Intrinsic factors include interest of the job, the chance to use one's skills and knowledge, and the status of being seen as a contributing member of society. Social factors involve regular contact with other people, ranging from close relationships with colleagues and more casual contact with customers, clients and the general

⁽³²⁾ Most people working after 64 are part-time.

public. Financial reasons reflect the current and future value of pensions and other benefits, and range from concern to avoid poverty, to enjoying a little additional income. It is widely believed that the main reason why people stay longer in work is financial necessity, and there are undoubtedly people who do stay in unattractive jobs for this reason. There are also some who retire, and then return to work when they find that their pensions are less adequate than they had expected. However, finance is only one of several reasons which people give for staying in work (McNair et al., 2004), and not always the first, or the only, reason cited. Even allowing for a distinctively British reluctance to discuss money, and admitting to poverty (Fox, 2004), it is clear that finance is not the only, or even the principal, driver. Its importance also changes with age. Smeaton found that while half of workers aged 50-64 mentioned finance as a reason to stay, this fell to one in seven among those working after 70 (Smeaton and Vegeris, 2009), while intrinsic and social reasons became increasingly important. Employers and careers workers should understand these issues, alongside the more practical ones of working time and flexibility, if people are to be helped to stay in work longer.

Older people's participation rates are also influenced by the attitude of employers. Here the evidence is contradictory. Most employers deny discriminating (Metcalf and Meadows, 2006), and qualitative evidence shows many saying that they actively prefer to employ older people (McNair et al., 2007). Further, the UK labour force survey shows that employers are more likely to provide time off for training to older workers than young ones. However, despite these positive indicators, age discrimination is the most commonly reported form of discrimination at work in the UK (Age concern, 2004), although age cases are less likely than others to be taken formally to employment tribunals, and when there, they are less likely to be successful (Ministry of Justice and Tribunals Service, 2010) ⁽³³⁾.

Examination of qualitative interview evidence shows two underlying factors which may explain the apparent contradiction. First, the stories senior employers tell about older workers are typically of successful 'survivors', exceptional long-serving people who are visible in the organisation, but may be untypical of ageing workers generally. As a result, their attitudes to older workers are generally positive. However, line managers (whose attitudes may be critical to recruitment decisions, and may determine the quality of working life for individuals) have to manage less productive colleagues in their 50s,

⁽³³⁾ However, this may reflect that age has only recently become a legitimate basis to claim unfair discrimination.

and often see them as problems. Second, the positive features which employers identify are conservative ones, like reliability, experience, tacit knowledge, and familiarity with the workplace and its practices, rather than dynamic ones. It would appear that older workers keep a firm stable, but that qualities like dynamism, creativity and innovation are associated with younger people (McNair et al., 2007). As a result, older workers are more likely to find themselves locked into undemanding and unrewarding jobs (and the average time a person spends in a job rises significantly after 50) ⁽³⁴⁾, reducing motivation and in turn, feeding prejudices about older workers motivation.

7.8. Training needs and effectiveness

For many years the UK government has argued that the country's international competitiveness requires raising the general skills levels of the workforce (DIUS, 2007; Leitch, 2006). Sometimes such assertions rest on relatively crude international comparisons of qualification levels, and the economic return on such qualifications. These may, however, be misleading in relation to older workers because: they neglect the tacit skills which employers identify as the key value of older workers; they do not allow for decay of qualifications over the life course; and calculations of the economic value of qualifications are often based on lifetime return on qualifications earned before the mid-20s. The claim that older workers will be more employable if they are better qualified may therefore be seriously mistaken.

Further, policy-makers' frequent claims that all firms and workers would benefit from more training can overlook the difference between high and low training sectors and occupations. Although policy-makers often suggest that training is always a good thing, it is not surprising that doctors train more than manual labourers, since the skills and knowledge base is larger and changes more rapidly. Also, a high proportion of all work related training is induction, or driven by law or regulation, like health and safety training. Older workers are, by definition, more likely to have been in the firm a long time, and have already done such training. Some variation in training between sectors and occupational groups is therefore to be expected.

Government skills policy has also placed considerable weight on international comparisons of qualifications, and funding has been heavily

⁽³⁴⁾ UK labour force survey data.

focused on specific, formal qualifications, rather than on broader, or more work-embedded forms of learning. While older people are less likely to have formal qualifications (because in the past many young people were not encouraged to seek them), many have invaluable experiential, but unaccredited, learning. The training which employers and employees welcome is rarely qualification based, but rather focuses on improving performance in the current job, where returns are visible and quick.

However, there is evidence that the pattern of training by age is changing. National surveys of adult learning, carried out annually by the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE), which uses a very broad definition of learning, reveals that whereas participation used to decline steadily from 20 to 65, it is now fairly constant from 25 to 55, after which it still falls (Aldridge and Tuckett, 2009). The explanation offered most frequently by employers and employees in the qualitative interviews is arrival of information technologies in the workplace. This happened in almost all jobs in mid-career for those now in their 50s and 60s, and created an evident and unavoidable need for training for all. This changed people's perception of the need for training, and of their ability to do it. If this is right, one might expect training levels to rise among older workers in the next decade.

7.9. Is training necessary?

While levels of training are higher than they used to be, and less affected by age up to the early 50s, participation then falls significantly. However, the most striking finding of the research is that neither employers nor older employees think there is a problem. When asked how well their skills and knowledge match the requirements of the job, only 5% of all workers said that their skills were lower than needed. By contrast, nearly half (45%) thought they were overqualified for their jobs. When responses were examined by age, the proportion reporting 'about right' rises, from 52% in the early 20s to 70% at 70. This suggests that over time most people settle into jobs where they feel they fit and can cope, and no longer expect, or feel a need to progress. However, this is not a universal experience, and a significant minority in the learning and work in later life survey say they are 'very overqualified', rising from 12% of workers at 50 to over 20% at 70. Although some have deliberately chosen less demanding work as they age, and some overestimate their skills, this still represents a waste of human resource. One strategy for addressing this is to make more use of older workers as mentors, trainers and supervisors

and in quality assurance roles, where pressures of the job can be less severe, and personal expertise and status is recognised, but managerial progression ladders are not blocked (McNair and Flynn, 2005).

Employers seem to agree that the skills base is broadly adequate. The 2009 national employer skills survey (UKCES, 2010) found that only 7% of firms had skills gaps (where current staff are underqualified), which may well represent a natural level, since with normal staff turnover, a proportion of employees will always be new and learning the job. Further, only 3% report skills shortages where they are unable to recruit qualified people. Significantly, two of the sectors with the highest proportion of skills gaps and shortages (retail, and health and social care), are also sectors with a high proportion of older workers, which suggests that the market does respond when employer needs and employee aspirations coincide.

The contrast could hardly be more stark than between these views of employees and employers on one hand, and government, which has been arguing for decades that the country has a major skills problem, and needs much more training (DIUS, 2007). There are several possible explanations for this disagreement. One is that, despite good intentions of senior managers, there is a ‘conspiracy to underperform’ between line managers and older workers. Organising and paying for training requires extra work by busy managers, and may be uncomfortable for workers who have not trained for years. Both may feel that suboptimal productivity is a price worth paying for a quiet life. However, their tacit agreement to opt for an easier life increases the risk for the individual, should they later be made redundant.

However, the most likely explanation, especially in relation to older workers, is perceptions of time and risk. Government necessarily takes a longer-term view of skills needs and the economy than individual employers, whose business planning is often relatively short term. For older employees, the timescale is even shorter. The two groups who continue to learn share a sense of an ongoing future: those in high training occupations and sectors, who are likely to work longer, and lifelong learners who have always enjoyed learning, and would continue beyond retirement.

The rest of older workers divide into two groups. For the insiders, who have found a reasonably secure place in the labour market, the question is ‘can I last until retirement without the extra effort of training?’ There are two reasons why their answer may be wrong. First, they may underestimate the time to retirement, or the length of retirement (most people underestimate their life expectancy (Turner, 2009)). It is becoming easier to work longer, and some will find they need the money. Second, they may underestimate the risk of

redundancy, as a result of organisational change, or changes in technology and markets which makes their skills obsolete. In both cases, the case for training rests on a future need, which may be underestimated.

The policy challenge is to make sure that older workers and their employers are aware of the risks, and prepare for them. It suggests that more attention should be given to career review, and guidance more generally after the mid-40s, before the effect of age discrimination becomes severe, regularly reviewing how to develop transferable, and demonstrable, skills which will increase security, with the current firm, with another firm or in an extended retirement. There is a potential role for training here to broaden people's horizons and encourage them to develop, and learn to transfer, their skills before redundancy strikes. However, there is relatively little training of this sort available, and neither government nor employers have shown any inclination to support it (indeed government, by focusing funding on young people is implicitly endorsing the discriminatory attitudes it deplores in some employers).

The training picture is also problematic for outsiders. Once out of work after 50, the chances of returning at a comparable level or of returning at all, are very low, and decline rapidly with age. No doubt, some people become unemployed, and unemployable in later life because their skills are out of date, but for some the problem is more inability to prove skills acquired through experience and on the job. However, the idea that training will make it easier to return, does not necessarily follow. In 2008, the Learning and Skills Council⁽³⁵⁾ commissioned a telephone survey of 10 000 learners who had taken courses provided for the unemployed (Casebourne, 2008). It found that for unemployed people in general, the training provided did lead to a modest improvement in people's chances of getting back to work, but that this benefit was much reduced by age. For older people, training improved self-confidence and wellbeing, but courses on their own had little effect on employability, because employers still tend to see employing an older person as a higher risk.

What has been shown to work, usually on a small scale, is training linked to work placement or to very specific needs, organised in conjunction with particular sectors. Pilot projects in the south-east in care and security (both sectors with current labour shortages) offered unemployed older people an introduction to a sector which they had never considered before. They were given short training to provide background knowledge of the sector, a set of basic, sector specific, skills and knowledge, and a guaranteed trial work

⁽³⁵⁾ The LSC was the national agency funding most publicly-funded vocational education (replaced in 2010).

placement. For very small employers, who lack the time and skills to undertake such conversion training, the result was a supply of well-informed applicants with motivation, and a relevant basis of skills and knowledge, which could then be built on through learning on the job (Wilson, 2010), and a chance to try them out in the workplace before making an employment decision. A parallel programme, which offered 1 000 people in work after 50 a careers guidance interview, linked to the offer of short targeted training, found very positive responses from both employees and employers: employees were pleased that someone was offering them personalised advice on their careers, and employers reported improved productivity and motivation (McNair, 2008).

An alternative strategy, especially for older professionals, has been self-organised groups (jobclubs) which provide a peer group for moral support and encouragement, and help build networks within the community to find jobs which (like many in the labour market) are never advertised, but recruited by word of mouth (Wilson, 2010).

7.10. Implications for careers guidance

There are clearly significant inefficiencies in the older labour market. Despite growing labour shortages faced by employers, many older people leave the market earlier than they would like, either because they fail to find work rewarding, or because they are driven out through redundancy, and unable to return.

It is against this background that we need to consider guidance and older people. One might expect that guidance could help:

- (a) people in the third age (broadly from 50 to 75+) who wish to continue to contribute to society through paid or unpaid work;
- (b) employers, who will increasingly need to retain older workers, in face of labour shortages, as supply of young entrants shrinks;
- (c) those experiencing age discrimination, which remains a powerful force excluding people from paid work, especially in recruitment;
- (d) people whose talents and changing aspirations are not being recognised by their employers;

Careers guidance and vocational training exist to help overcome such market failure, but have not, to date, been systematically deployed to do this. However, the UK government has been planning a new careers service for some years. Following the general election of 2010, policy changed, and the planned adult guidance service is now to be an all-age one. The plan is to

produce the most comprehensive adult careers guidance service ever created in the UK, building on the very extensive online and telephone services developed over recent years, to provide support face to face, by telephone and online.

The new service aims to be universal, open to all, whether or not they are (or seek to be), in the active labour market. However, there is clearly a risk that, especially in a time of financial constraint, it will fail to address the needs of people approaching labour market exit⁽³⁶⁾. If the focus on adults was lost it would be regrettable, since it is clear that a major policy priority is to enable people to make best use of the final years of their working lives, and to make smooth and rewarding transitions into active retirement.

The evidence described in this chapter suggests that an effective strategy for the older labour market might include three key elements to which careers guidance and training could contribute:

- (a) preventative guidance and training aimed at ensuring that people currently in work, but especially those most at risk (who have low skills and who have been a long time with the same employer or job), understand the likely length of their working lives and the risks they will face in their 50s of premature exit and inability to return. There are models in other European countries which may have lessons for the UK, notably the Finnish workability model, which provides a holistic assessment of the match between job and worker to anticipate and correct problems likely to lead to early retirement (Ilmarinen, 1999). Another systematic model is the French *bilan des compétences* which provides the individual with a systematic assessment of strengths, weaknesses and potential (Cedefop, 2010);
- (b) guidance to help unemployed older people to return to work which makes appropriate use of their skills. Individuals need guidance to explore their strengths and aspirations in the context of the local labour market (since older workers are usually less mobile than younger ones) to explore precisely what saleable skills and knowledge they have and how these might be improved by learning of some kind. These strategies imply a closer link between guidance and training. A key task for guidance workers is to help individuals to manage the damage to self-confidence caused by redundancy and repeated rejections of job applications. But this needs to

⁽³⁶⁾ As a result of government reductions on public expenditure, some services for young people have been closed for lack of funding before the new service could be set up.

be linked to specific, probably short, training which builds self-confidence and generic skills, but also provides immediate saleable skills in specific sectors. Such approaches appear to work best where organised in conjunction with employers who recognise a skills or labour need, and who are prepared to offer trial work placements. The role of careers professionals as 'brokers' of such arrangements is underdeveloped;

- (c) guidance to address underemployment. After 50 the proportion of people reporting being very overskilled for their jobs rises steadily. Even for those who have chosen to move to less demanding or stressful jobs this is a waste of talent, and for many the final years of work are frustrating, trapped by the fear of age discrimination in jobs which offer little challenge or opportunity.

A final question concerns expertise of careers guidance workers themselves. Most careers workers are trained and experienced in work with young and mid-career people, but the aspirations and circumstances of most people in the last decade of working life are very different from those of young people. For older workers there is always, at least in the background, the potential to retire if the opportunities to work do not offer sufficient reward, and this colours attitudes and decisions. Careers workers need to understand the changing balance of the employment relationship, the impact of age discrimination, and the complexities of pensions, benefits and health conditions which have a growing bearing on career decisions with age.

As the younger workforce shrinks, employers will need to make better use of older workers, both those who have unused skills and knowledge, and those who need to boost their skills for new kinds of work. Experience of the past decade, especially in sectors facing labour shortages, is that the market can respond, and will drive up participation rates and real retirement ages. Faced with the need, many employers will make work more attractive. However, the process could be substantially improved by better guidance. To achieve this calls for a more extensive and relevant guidance service, which recognises the diversity of older workers and the distinctive features which age and retirement bring to career decision.

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CHAPTER 8

Policy, research and practice: supporting longer careers for baby-boomers⁽³⁷⁾

Marg Malloch

The baby-boomer generation is identified variously, referring to the generation born after the Second World War, and generally encompasses those born between the years 1946 to 1964 (Jorgensen, 2003; Lancaster and Stillman, 2002). The boomers are reaching retirement age and the population bulge they present is now a challenge for individual workers, businesses, enterprises and policy-makers internationally. Particularly in a time of international financial difficulties, ability of the nation State to support an ageing population is stressed. Concerns abound about having a sufficiently skilled workforce, coping with the imbalance of having too few taxpayers, and too high health and social care demands on the State. Older workers can experience difficulties in remaining in employment, moving into new roles and participating in learning. Attention is therefore turning, albeit slowly, given the rapidly greying population, to a consideration how best to cope with this. To support longer working lives, ageing workers need guidance and counselling, the focus of this publication. It is argued in this chapter that focus on the individual worker, while important, is merely one aspect of the situation. It is businesses, enterprises, local authorities, and national and international policy-makers who need seriously to address the issues, create relevant policies and implement them.

8.1. Introduction

The overall picture of an ageing workforce is one of a population bulge of baby-boomers requiring old age pensions, increased medical care and supported accommodation and transport, draining resources from taxes of a smaller number of younger workers. There are concerns about viability of

⁽³⁷⁾ With thanks to M'Hamed Dif, Marja-Leena Stenstrom, and Liliana Voicu for suggesting additional literature and providing feedback on drafts of the workshop paper.

pension and social support schemes and healthcare costs. Debates are in train on retirement ages, with legislation being reviewed. Immigration policies with emphasis on skilled worker migration continue to be a topic of lively political discussions.

Given the demographic situation of ageing populations, it is timely that policies and practices are employed which are supportive of older workers. It is important economically and for social wellbeing that the needs and concerns of this sector of the population be addressed. The western world, and Europe in particular, faces the conundrum of an ageing workforce, a demographic legacy of postworld war baby-boomers many of whom now have to continue in paid work to support their living needs. In a financially challenged economic environment, pensions, government subsidies and health care are no longer so readily available. People are living longer and with this comes a range of societal and economic pressures. For those wishing to work, the challenges can be even greater.

Health of people is also a factor for consideration for individuals and for national economics: '[...] people who stay on the job (or in equivalently intensive volunteer work) remain healthier and live longer' (Dychtwald et al., 2006, p. 38). Older age needs to be rethought.

It is slowly being recognised that skilled ageing, or older workers will be increasingly important to companies and organisations, and shortages of skilled and indeed unskilled workers are already occurring in developed countries. This chapter discusses models and presents recommendations for guidance and counselling for ageing workers taking particular note of national policies and organisational approaches. These are developed from analysis of literature and policy documentation.

Currently, employment rates of people aged between 55 and 64 are not high but as reported by Eurostat, there is a gradual increase. In 2008, the percentages were, for example, for the EU 45.6%, France 38.3%, Germany 53.8%, the Netherlands 53.0%, Finland 56.5%, and the UK 58.0% (Eurostat, 2010a, p. 286). Naegele and Walker (2011) in research into European policies relating to older workers point to the need to address recruitment, promotion and task allocation with a lack of prejudice against older workers. They discuss a range of better practices to support employment of older workers, primarily with organisations undertaking a whole working life and all age groups as a focus, not just on older workers, with consideration of both short- and long-term needs and with remedial provisions for older workers.

However, it is not only the national economic concerns or the business needs of organisations that should contribute to development of models for

guiding older workers, but the workers' needs as well. Interests and concerns of workers contribute to ideas for models of operation: 'employees of all ages want meaningful work and responsibility, opportunities to learn, a congenial and respectful workplace, fair pay, and adequate benefits, but to varying degrees. Matures expect the mix, especially such elements as pension accumulation and payout options, to reflect the value of their experience and their retirement preferences' (Dychtwald et al., 2006, p. 42). Dychtwald et al. also argue that matures want a rewarding pattern of work such as a downshifting, which still promotes productivity and stimulation. Career concerns are for people of all ages, not merely younger generations. Denmark for example, is already addressing such concerns with an approach of 'flexicurity,' as reported by Bredgaard et al. (2005) which addresses individual and systemic issues and needs. The flexicurity model brings together elements of a flexible labour market, generous welfare schemes and active labour-market participation, with 'high mobility between jobs with a comprehensive social safety net for the unemployed and an active labour market policy' (Bredgaard et al., 2005, p. 5). The model has been successful although there remains a challenge to engage enterprises more through retention of older workers, and to integrate people no longer in the workforce (Bredgaard et al., 2005, p. 33).

For achievements to be made in relation to employment and inclusion of ageing workers and to provide guidance and counselling, human resources policies and practices will need to change. Dychtwald et al., (2006) for example, advocate hiring mature workers, implementation of flexible retirement, and reforms to simplify pension and benefit laws. Such advances need to be supported by guidance and counselling for older workers.

A perspective of viewing the whole of a person's life with work integral to that can inform practice. Research into lifelong learning (Harris and Chisholm, 2011) provides a model for learning to be an integral part of life for all throughout the entire lifespan, primarily through recognition of learning achieved through various ways, tacit, explicit, formal, informal, accredited, non-accredited.

These ideas are discussed and presented for consideration of how ageing workers can be included in organisational and national endeavours rather than being discarded. It is argued that focus upon the individual ageing worker by providing counselling and advice, while important, to be effective needs to be positioned within an organisational and systemic model of operation.

For this chapter a selection of literature on older workers and the ageing workforce has formed a basis for consideration of perspectives and a range

of models contributing to development of recommendations to address the situation of an ageing workforce considering the needs of older workers. Reference is made to a cross section of European developments. The desk search of literature employed a key word approach, including the terms older workers, ageing workforce, baby-boomers, lifelong learning, policies on employment of older workers, exit age from workforce, opportunities for education and training and with focus on a selection of European countries.

8.2. A snapshot of older workers and work

'Older' is an adjective used to describe people over 50, over 55, or older. The years of age attached to the 'older' category vary. Ages for retirement vary from country to country, ages to obtain State pensions where they exist, vary. Frequently, there is a lower age for women, a higher age for men. These workers, the baby-boomers, are causing concerns. Gielen (2009, citing OECD, 2004) reports that for the UK by 2050 the 65 plus age group will form 47% compared to the total working age population percentage. This is compared with 27% in 2003. It is such demographic predictions that underline the concerns for discussing the older worker, the ageing worker.

Naegele and Walker (2011) note that people of 50 years and over represent one in five of the workforce and this level of participation will increase. They report Sweden, Denmark and the UK as having the highest employment rates of older persons.

Given such trends and the impact of the global financial crisis, the European Commission goal to increase employment rates considerably has not been achieved.

'One of the five EU targets of Europe 2020 strategy is to raise the employment rate to 75% by 2020. Current indications are that the EU will fall short of this target by 2-2.4% – a shortfall that can be made up through adoption of measures to create jobs and increase labour participation. Given the ageing EU population and relatively low use of labour compared to other parts of the world reforms are needed to promote skills and create incentives to work' (European Commission, 2011a, p. 5).

Strategies recommended to support achievement of the 75% goal are multipronged, advocating reforms to encourage inclusion of all groups in work, and including flexible work arrangements, child care, increasing the retirement age, taxation and pensions (European Commission, 2011a). Employment of women, young and older workers will need to be increased. These strategies

will need to be supported by structural reforms if the ambitious goal is to be reached and they will need to be complemented by addressing skill needs through more and better education and training, promoting a lifecycle approach to active ageing, and creating more inclusive labour markets as well as tackling labour market segmentation and segregation (European Commission, 2011b).

A snapshot of the 50 to 64 age group is presented in Table 8.1, drawing statistical information from Eurostat reports (2010 a,b,c and d). Percentages of people in age class, employment, workforce exit age and lifelong learning provide an indication of the location of the age group in age category, the number in employment, the age of leaving work, and overall participation in lifelong learning. Eurostat takes a broad definition of lifelong learning, describing it as activity on an ongoing basis to improve knowledge, skills and competence (2010c, p. 84). This provides an indication of overall rather than specific education and training.

Sweden, although not listed in Table 8.1, has the highest percentage of employment for the 55-64 age group at 70.1% (Eurostat, 2010b, p. 91). The EU benchmark for older workers, that is 55-64 years, employment rate is 50%, which has been achieved by some countries.

Table 8.1. Snapshot of Eurostat information on the ageing population

Country	Age class % (50-64 years) 2008	Employment % (55-64 years) 2008	Workforce exit age 2009	Lifelong learning % (25-64 years) 2008
EU-27	18.6	45.6	61.4	8.5
France	18.6	38.3	60.0	7.2
Romania	18.2	43.1	64.3	1.5
Finland	21.5	56.5	61.7 (*)	23.1
UK	18.0	58.0	63.0	19.9

(*) 2003.

Source: Eurostat (2010a, p. 53, 85 and 91; 2010d).

The picture that emerges from this snapshot of a cross section of European countries is that there is diversity, and that local situations, national policies and global trends have an impact on employment, age of exit from work and opportunities for training.

8.3. National and organisational needs

Nations continuously stress the need for a skilled workforce, which may or may not exist, although labour force participation will fall. This perceived need influences prioritisation in migration policies for people with specific skills and qualifications, a strategy frequently employed prior to considerations of the older workforce. However, migration is not sufficient to bolster populations or skills requirements. When attention turns to the ageing worker, there are many challenges to be identified and addressed at national, organisational and individual levels. Dawe (2009, p. 7) reporting on the situation of older workers in Australia, highlighted the challenges for older workers to reenter the workforce. Especially if this is accompanied by lower literacy and numeracy skills, lack of work experience, in lower socioeconomic, rural or remote areas, these groups require intensive support.

This antipodean observation also applies to the European context where most countries have 65 years as the official retirement age (Simonazzi, 2009, p. 24). In the UK shifts in employment of older workers changed markedly over the past 30 years, from the 1970s with decline of blue-collar work, to a decline in other areas of work over the next two decades. Early retirement post-50 became more common. Ageism extended to access to training (Knight, 2006). In 2006, the UK passed the employment equality (age) regulations providing a default retirement age of 65, and employees can request to work beyond that. Advice provided by the advisory conciliation and arbitration service, funded by the Department for Business Innovation and Skills, encourages challenging stereotypes about older people and work, and emphasises using human resources planning and career planning in all aspects, from recruitment to training (ACAS, 2010).

Finland is described as taking an integrated comprehensive policy approach to the ageing workforce with employment, pensions and learning considered in policy development and in line with the European Commission and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) (Taylor, 2002). The national programme on ageing workers was introduced in the 1990s. Many pathways were available to retire early, such as unemployment benefits, and unemployment, disability or early retirement pensions (OECD, 2010a). More recently, the OECD (2010b, p. 3) took a less optimistic view of Finland, recommending less generous support for the unemployed and restricting early retirement schemes. Participation rates of older workers are lower than in the other Nordic countries (Denmark, Norway and Sweden) and the OECD recommends a multifaceted approach to address

this and future high old-age dependency. Incentives for taking up the old age pension usually by 63, have left low employment numbers of 65-69 year olds. Recommended is an increase in the maximum retirement age to 65, improvement of incentives to stay employed, lower accrual rates during unemployment and other periods of non-work. Other recommendations are that employers be encouraged to hire and retain older workers, and active labour programmes and vocational rehabilitation be used to change attitudes of older workers (OECD, 2010a).

With only 53% of over 50s in employment, the French government has restricted access to early retirement schemes, introduced bonuses for those working beyond standard retirement age, and raised the age of access to pensions after long-term unemployment. In 2001, a law against discrimination in employment, including age discrimination was passed and in 2005, a social cohesion plan and health-at-work plan were put in place (OECD, 2005a; 2005b).

With many workers having left the country in the early 1990s, Romania faces an imminent workforce shortfall. There has been an uneasy shift by older workers from government to private employment. Interestingly in Romania, with life expectancy for men at 69.2 (OECD, 2010d, p. 27) the mandatory retirement age is to be implemented gradually, and has been increased to 65 years for men, 62 for women. Surveys have indicated that older workers were less willing to learn new skills, or to take initiative and were less productive than younger workers. In Romania, older workers in State-owned businesses have access to retraining options. The government is therefore encouraging workers who had migrated to return and encouraging older workers to invest in new skills although this is counterbalanced by there still being a supply of younger workers (Atwater and Pop, 2008, p. 1-2).

In Denmark from the late 1990s, an active labour-market model is combined with high mobility between jobs and a comprehensive safety net for the unemployed. Flexibility is referred to as ‘meaning mechanisms of adjustment in the labour market’ leading to change if shocks occur, and in contrast to public regulation (Bredgaard et al., 2005, p. 8). This ‘flexicurity’ model brings together the free market economy and social security (Bredgaard et al., 2005, p. 9). Flexicurity can be defined as a policy strategy to improve, at the same time and deliberately, flexibility of labour markets, work organisations and labour relations; and employment and income security (⁽³⁸⁾).

⁽³⁸⁾ <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=102&langId=en>.

Denmark achieved high rates of employment and low unemployment with a quarter of workers changing employers annually. ‘Flexicurity’ brings together flexibility and security as supportive rather than contradictory to the concept.

In considering the needs of organisations, employers will relate policies and practice understandably to financial viability. Small and medium-sized businesses in particular may not readily implement policies and regulations to support older workers, for example access to training and promotion. Initial recruitment may exclude them as well. However, employers find that stable employment relations and retention of loyal and well-qualified employees can be positive, and employees can be interested in more flexible ways of organising work, such as balancing work and family (Bredgaard et al., 2005, p. 19). It is an alternative to the ‘(male) full-time, lifelong employment security with the same employer, but is instead a “floating equilibrium” of a 30-hour working week over a lifetime, for both men and women.’ (Bredgaard et al., 2005, p. 23).

Such flexibility and high mobility raise challenges for education and training. Training providers requiring a cohort, a critical mass of learners for financially viable delivery to, for example, a class may find that part-time work schedules, job-sharing, support or lack thereof from management, workers moving between jobs presenting difficulties.

Within this innovative approach to the labour market in Denmark, there is no special attention to older workers. With this approach encouraging frequent job changes, groups of workers can become isolated. In this scenario, people retire later than the EU average, at 61.8 years, and older workers have an employment rate of 58% and higher participation rate. Older workers, however, can find it more difficult to get a new job if unemployed, and tend to have less adult vocational training (Bredgaard et al., 2005, p. 26).

8.4. Training

Being older can mean less access to vocational education and training. Older workers receive less adult vocational training than younger workers (Bredgaard et al., 2005, p. 26). According to Cedefop (2010) trends in Europe indicate that older workers (55-64) miss out on training for reasons such as conflicts with work schedule, family responsibilities, or training being too costly for them to afford. Employers are able easily to hire and fire workers and not provide training, so more vulnerable groups of employees such as older workers need public-sector support (Bredgaard et al., 2005, p. 26). The Danish

'flexicurity' model is challenged by global competition and financial crises. This leads to reconsideration of the generous safety net and unemployment benefits. Nevertheless, this model is an alternative to the others presented in the European arena.

Workers of all ages need to keep up with new developments, technology, and innovations. Preferences on how to learn need to be considered. Fuller and Unwin (2005) identified that older workers prefer learning on the job, from colleagues, learning that is relevant to their work, and formal training linked to career goals. Practice-based learning is important. People are staying on in their jobs but need to have recognition of their individual and generational needs. This means they need 'equal access to training programmes which focus on specific needs of the individual and what interests them' to maintain their skills, including for instance, computer skills and train-the-trainer skills. Dawe argues that education and training needs to be 'learner centric' (2009, p. 6) while others prefer the term 'learner centred'.

Harris and Chisholm (2011; Harris, 2008, p. 1) provide an encompassing definition of lifelong learning as 'learning that encompasses knowledge, skills, behaviour and attitude acquired, being acquired or to be acquired throughout life, irrespective of when, where, why and how it was, is or will be learned'. This view of lifelong learning provides for all age groups, and learning for work and for life. Such a positive and all-embracing view of learning ideally should inform policies and practice in relation to older workers. The model is one of continuous learning with skills gained through various experiences and types of learning which can be recognised and valued. People need information and support to access the formal recognition processes for qualifications in education and training. While perhaps representing an ideal model for learning in the lifespan, it would be a positive way forward for all workers.

8.5. Examples of practice

While not necessarily ideal, a range of approaches are used to address employment of older workers and several studies have been undertaken of older workers from a range of perspectives and from many European locations. Based on research into 130 case studies across Europe, Naegele and Walker (2011) argue that investing in the skills and qualifications of older workers is positive in meeting an organisation's skill needs. Job recruitment, learning, training and lifelong learning and career development, flexible working practices, health protection and promotion and workplace design,

redeployment, flexible employment exit and transition to retirement, and comprehensive approaches are all aspects of good practice regarding older workers. Training and career development are important for older workers. With flexibility and sensitivity to contributions and needs of both workers and organisations, more positive outcomes are possible for both. Knowledge of individual skills, capacities and capability is essential. Focus on the whole working life and all age groups is needed. Individual and organisational attitudes and practices and national policies and practices need to change.

France is reported as coming more slowly to pay attention to older workers, having an approach of 'premature exclusion' accompanied by discrimination in relation to access to jobs and training, in a context of high unemployment and industrial restructuring (Gendron, 2006, p. 1). Gendron provides the examples of case studies of organisations tackling the issue of older workers positively and proactively.

The first study reported is that of the France 3 television station which undertook strategies to encourage older workers to stay on in the company. As reported in a survey they could opt to withdraw, distancing themselves from the company, others preferred preservation and the largest number chose to leave the organisation. The company wanted to improve career opportunities for all workers, with development of new roles and opportunities to work as mentors and trainers. The organisation is aiming at recreating dynamic energy.

The second case study was Lionet Décor, a decoration business with 50 employees of whom 25% are over 50, which introduced intergenerational sharing of knowledge into communication processes and competence development and transfer. Tutoring younger workers by older ones encouraged intergenerational trust and positive sharing. A reference guide for each occupation was developed and efforts overall were satisfying.

The third study was on a milk factory Cedilac, with 200 employees of whom 50% are over 45 years, introducing a 'training for all ages' programme, with workers involved in its development. Intergenerational sharing was encouraged at this workplace as well, with younger workers' IT skills informed by older workers to assist in developing a database of diagnostic tools, for example, to solve problems and carry out checks. Knowledge management and experience were valued and seen to be valued by the company. France has come to a policy approach supporting incremental changes, for example helping people over 50 to return to work, and for improved working conditions for older workers (Gendron, 2006). A mind shift is required, and 'ageing, living and working well together' has become a goal. The image of older workers needs to change. Policy directions, Gendron (2006, p. 5) highlights, include:

[...] change in employment practices and behaviours; emphasis on job placement; expansion of sources of employment; targeted, motivated training in an individualised programme and local management based on partnership. A proactive policy must guide public authorities, enterprises, unions, and workers.'

'Learning at any age' is important. Skills gained throughout all stages of life can be used, accreditation of experience, lifelong learning emphasised, and tutoring and mentoring valued, for learning across generations. For such values and approaches to be supported human resources managers and departments need to think differently about all workers, with concern for working conditions, and health and wellbeing.

These positive initiatives are a start but, as noted by the OECD, 'the government is clearly set on addressing the problem, but for reforms to work, attitudes must also change. Companies and workers have not yet risen to the challenge. France cannot afford to continue retiring early for much longer. The price of inaction would be too great' (OECD, 2010c, p. 2).

Using cultural historical activity theory, Migliore (2009) argues that older workers need to keep learning to cope with challenges in their work. In research into two case studies of enterprises in Turin, Italy, older workers are reported as finding that experience could assist in adapting procedures to changed conditions and in achieving engagement. She argues that apprenticeship programmes could benefit from involvement of older workers in sharing their knowledge. Intergenerational learning can be positive for individuals and the organisation.

Simonazzi (2009, p. 25-26) describes the UrbAct project, which is an active age project involving nine European cities with a range of plans for active involvement of older workers, supporting an integrated life course, with transitions throughout. Flexibility and communication are key aspects of the project; for example, Edinburgh is promoting flexible work practices for older people and is involving older people in policy discussions. Thessaloniki is focusing on strengthening information between employers and employees to create more awareness of training and services opportunities for older workers.

This resonates with Pärnänen's (2006, p. 2) identification of examples of good practice from a qualitative study of 10 Finnish case study companies, particularly manufacturing companies, which included: efforts to encourage older workers to stay longer in their work through courses to maintain work ability, not having to do night work, part-time retirement an option, and lighter tasks for those with reduced physical ability.

Nordic countries have long traditions in lifewide and lifelong educational opportunities and participation for all. The problem of an ageing workforce and population was identified early in Finland and the challenge has been met by means of extensive cooperation and a comprehensive policy agenda, although one of the challenges is that the population is ageing faster than in the EU on average. Finland has been described as a model country in ageing policy with a particularly strong focus on workability, at all ages and with a perspective embracing the total population.

The major working life development programme, Tykes, deals with workability with emphasis on a preventative perspective (Sørensen and Wathne, 2007). Researchers also studied older workers and their management at the workplace. For example, Ilmarinen (2006) from the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health (FIOCH) defined the approach of older workers as age-management which focuses on management's crucial role and responsibility. Another government programme (NOSTE) aims to increase adults' educational level. There is a high prevalence of liberal adult education, as offered by public high-schools and full-time municipal adult education, as well as through active labour-market policies for the unemployed and work-related education and training (Tuijnman, 2003).

From such examples of good practice come ideas for development of models and recommendations to inform practice more widely.

8.6. Perspectives of older workers

From this brief consideration of national and organisational developments, focus shifts to the individual worker. A picture of their diversity of experiences and situations, needs and concerns is emerging from literature. Perceptions of older workers are mixed, they have lower energy, are less healthy and resist change; positives include experience, loyalty and good social skills (Pärnänen, 2006, p. 1). Perceptions as to value and misconceptions of older workers as to productivity also need to be debunked. There are stereotypes which reinforce negative images of older workers, however these should be refuted. Productivity can increase with age, and older workers demonstrate experience, stability, and reliability (Simonazzi, 2009, p. 24).

Patterns emerge which can contribute to plans of action for individuals, employer and human resources policies and practices and national policy development. In a paper analysing literature on older workers in the UK, Flynn explored factors influencing older people's work patterns and predisposition to

different forms of retirement (2010, p. 309). He identifies 24 types of older worker, and two distinct patterns in what he describes as ‘two nations’; one group of older workers able to manage their careers to suit them financially and socially, and others less well placed to do so. Social class, gender, level of qualifications, autonomy in work all are factors impacting on the individual’s decision whether to stay in work. How people perceive themselves is also important, in that if work is seen as important personally and in making a contribution to society, they are likely to want to continue in work, paid or volunteer.

Staying in work is influenced by intrinsic and extrinsic factors (Flynn, 2010, p. 319). Incentives through taxation, opportunities for transition, opportunities to change careers, being challenged and valued are factors impacting on personal decisions about staying or leaving work. The worker is not necessarily in a position to ‘call the shots’ in relation to their employment, conditions and opportunities. Simonazzi (2009) subscribes the reasons for lower participation of older workers in the workforce as mainly due to lack of incentives for employers to hire them, the demand side, and disincentives for older workers to remain at work, the supply side (p. 24). There is also a gender aspect in relation to older workers, with women having a lower participation rate and a more discontinuous working career than men. Physical health, disability, job quality, working times can be negative (p. 25).

Workers’ experiences in the workplace and conditions of employment impact on their decisions to retire or to continue working. Analysing data between 1991 and 2004 on hours’ constraints on the UK labour market, Gielen found that a perception of ‘over employment’, that is wanting to work fewer hours, contributed to women leaving the workforce early while male workers perceiving themselves to be ‘over-employed’, tend to continue working, making a more gradual transition to retirement (Gielen, 2009, p. 251).

8.7. What do older workers want?

Given increasing emphasis on the ‘need’ to keep older workers at work, questions on what older workers want and would want to stay longer in working life, what employers would be willing to do to support and encourage this, and at systemic and legal levels, what frameworks need to be provided to support both the individual worker, their place of employment and the wider societal context, arise.

Dychtwald et al. (2006, p. 42-43) list general important elements for mature workers taken from the new employee/employer equation survey. The list

emphasises opportunities for personal contribution, enjoyment and growth, with pay and holidays less important. The list in order of priority consists of: comprehensive retirement package, comprehensive benefits package, work enabling the individual to learn and grow, work that is personally stimulating, workplace that is enjoyable, flexible work schedule, work that is worthwhile to society, 10% more in total compensation, flexible workplace, and two weeks' additional paid vacation. This American publication raises issues and challenges which are internationally applicable.

Flexible, individualised career paths, interest, and being valued are important. Flynn's (2010) analysis of literature concludes that older workers find that autonomy is important; workers who have this in their working lives can decide whether and when they continue to work or retire as compared to those forced to stay in working or to retire early (p. 314). There are positive and negative influences for when people retire, they may retire early because of financial incentives, such as advantageous pension schemes, or because of home commitments, or not feeling valued at work. Income, qualifications and job status are also influential. (p. 317). Older workers with high levels of job autonomy, secure pensions, positive experiences in job transitions can choose how they retire, while workers with insecurity in work, low wages, lack of occupational pension entitlements may have to work longer. If workers have the opportunity for flexibility, to reduce workload, feel valued and make a phased transition, they can be more inclined to continue working; while, workers feeling discrimination or being undervalued tend to leave early (2010, p.319).

Older workers may have embarked upon their working lives with expectations of long-term employment in one or few workplaces. They now face rapid changes in work status, redundancy, unemployment, geographic moves, career shifts and financial difficulties (Avedon, 1995). Counselling, therefore, could provide assistance and support for individual workers and at an organisational level, contribute to assessments to bring about improved approaches to health and work conditions and job demands (Jenschke, 1999). Guidance for skill development, updating technological skills, education and training and career planning provides opportunities for transition and adjustment. Jenschke (1999, p. 12) argues that it should be a whole life, continuous process. Healthy and happier people are in a stronger position to contribute to society, to remain independent longer and to live longer. This personal aspect is recognised as important, albeit within a wider context of national and international economic and financial difficulties.

8.8. Policy considerations

The baby-boomer post-World War Two generation is creating challenges at individual, national and international levels with responses aimed at increasing workforce participation of older workers. The European Commission has set quite demanding targets for the increase in economic activity (Flynn, 2010) and for employment of older workers (Simonazzi, 2009) with at least 50% of the 55-64 years of age population in employment. The Barcelona European Council in 2002 also determined that the age to stop working be raised by five years. These ambitious targets are however impacted upon by the overall economic and labour-market situation. Locally then, older workers tend to be less active (Gielen, 2009, p. 256).

Policies undertaken tend to follow a pattern of establishing a set age for retirement, decreasing access for older people to unemployment benefits, imposing penalties to retire early, focus on individual employers and their human resources policies and practices to be inclusive of older workers, and exhort the individual older worker to continue working irrespective of access to stimulating work, adequate training and career opportunities and reasonable working conditions. In some cases generous pension schemes especially for public servants are described as too generous and the State explores ways to reduce these. Employment equality laws, aiming to counter age discrimination laws have been introduced, for example in 2006 in the UK, but do not necessarily help; employers can decide not to employ older workers at all, and there is confusion over interpretation of the recommended age of departure (Heywood and Siebert, 2008). The example provided by Denmark with flexicurity meeting employer needs and supportive of a mobile workforce still does not cater completely to the needs of older workers. Such policies are not necessarily a blueprint for success.

As Gielen notes, 'the worker will choose the exit that yields the highest lifetime utility' (2009, p. 255). The individual worker makes decisions on whether to stay on in the workforce based on personal circumstances, enticed by generous pension schemes to leave early, influenced by opportunities to make a positive contribution to work and society. Negatives such as forced retirement, redundancy, ill health, carer responsibilities, and negative work experiences can lead to an earlier exit. Workers with higher levels of education and training tend to stay longer in the workforce, as do workers with greater autonomy. People with financial imperatives stay on working, despite negative experiences in their work. Older workers who leave work tend not to return (Flynn, 2010, Gielen, 2009).

Policies may be presented as a binary of extremes, acknowledging that between these there are many policy options open.

Table 8.2. Policy binary

Regulatory framework	More flexible regulatory framework
Generational divide	Across generations
Set retirement age	Individually adapted retirement age
Early leaving penalties	Transitional leaving
Lack of information	Communication
Limited access to learning	Access to learning opportunities
No career guidance support	Individual career guidance support
Problematising the individual worker	Valuing the individual worker

Source: Malloch, 2010.

Supportive, encouraging policies, with access to training and counselling appear to be more successful than policies based on a more restrictive approach. There is a case for gradual approaches to retirement, for phased changes in work patterns, and for transitions within supportive environments.

8.9. Concluding comments and recommendations

In considering options for recommendations for the needs of an older generation in relation to workforce participation, the examples of 'good practice' presented earlier in this chapter point us in a direction differing from general European policy directions.

The older generation needs to be considered in the context of all society. Simonazzi (2009) advocates that local labour-market policies should be implemented with consideration of other generations and 'be complemented by labour market reforms aiming at increasing demand' (p. 24). To retain older workers, (p. 25) part-time work, reduced hours and workplace reorganisation can help. As referred to above, her positive example is of the active age initiative, an UrbAct project, with implementation of policies targeting training, lifelong learning, employment, healthy working conditions, adaptation of the workplace and work organisation to the needs of older workers, curbing age discrimination, and fostering reconciliation and entrepreneurship.

Flexibility of options and pathways are important. Gielen (2009, p. 247) identifies different destinations of older workers as retirement, inactivity, hours reduction with current employer, changing employers with and changing employers without reducing working hours. Increasing hours flexibility is a way to increase older workers participation in the labour force, and particularly increasing flexibility allowing for gradual retirement with good quality part-time jobs could be effective in encouraging more older women to continue working (Gielen, 2009, p. 270).

Flexibility needs to extend to work itself. Workers require financial incentives, work to be attractive, and positive attitudes from employers (Simonazzi, 2009, p. 24). Employers should design job roles to suit the skills and experiences of older workers, and with consideration of lifestyle needs, and recognition of career change possibilities. This point is reinforced in the following: 'a qualitative case study, new age contract, which was carried out in 2001, emphasises that long working careers can only be built when working conditions are good and reasonable demands are made of people of all ages. Longer careers than currently the norm will not be possible unless consideration is given to older workers' work capacity and life situations. Practices must be established to encourage older workers to stay longer at work and to maintain high productivity levels' (Pärnänen, 2006).

Flynn (2010) concluded, from his analysis of literature on older workers, 'that the older workforce is a wide range of workers whose experience in work impacts on the attitudes toward and planning for retirement'. This diversity 'necessitates a variety of policy instruments for encouraging and extending working life.' There is no 'one size fits all' in 'designing incentives to delay retirement' (Flynn, 2010, p. 320). Taylor (2002) provides a list of recommendations for public policy targeting older workers which includes: 'removing previous incentives to early retirement, encouraging later retirement and flexible retirement, legislation to counter age discrimination, awareness raising campaigns among employers, guidance and training programmes targeting older workers, advice and guidance for employers, employment placements, support for labour-market intermediaries, and employment incentive schemes.'

As well as positive work situations, education and training can provide opportunities, therefore older workers need equal access to programmes tailored to meet their needs. For those not in work, additional consideration is required, and vocational education and training can assist in providing opportunities (Dawe, 2009, p. 7).

From literature and examples of 'good practice' referred to earlier several

principles emerge which could be used to improve individual, organisational and national approaches to inclusion of older workers in the workforce.

Policies and practice should be informed by the principles of communication, flexibility, ideally with all stakeholders in consultation, the State, employers and the workforce. Other important aspects for older workers, indeed all workers, are transition, phased transitions, lifelong learning, intergenerational mentoring, flexible phased pension benefits, and consideration of individual needs in the workplace. Pension and benefit laws can be simplified. Jobs can be designed and structured for work to be flexible. Human resource practices should be inclusive and respect diversity. Employers and workers both require access to information and training. Older workers would benefit from support through vocational education and training, which should incorporate counselling and career planning. Positive approaches to an ageing workforce, with consideration of individual, organisational and national needs will be of benefit to all.

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CHAPTER 9

Changing patterns of guidance, learning and careers of older workers in Europe

Alan Brown, Jenny Bimrose

This chapter draws on evidence from a pan-European study (2008-10) of the different patterns of guidance, learning and careers of almost 300 older workers aged over 45 as their careers and identities developed over time. Strategic biographies of these workers were traced, as they responded to the challenges of continuing to develop their work-related learning, careers and identities. The careers of many respondents demonstrated the value of learning while working as this helped individuals keep their skills, knowledge and competences up-to-date and maintain a positive disposition towards learning. The role of guidance for older workers is examined, particularly as it relates to successful transitions involving upskilling, reskilling, career change and an increased likelihood of remaining active in the labour market for longer. With changing expectations of how long many people will work, and as the workforce ages, there are challenges of supporting the continuing development of older workers, who may need to maintain a set of work-related competences and manage effective work transitions for much longer than has been customary in the past. This chapter gives indications of how these challenges may be met. For example, there could be cost-benefit advantages in offering mid-career workers career guidance which could extend the length of their careers. From a policy perspective access to career advice and guidance services for adults at times of transition appears crucial for positive outcomes both for the individual and smooth functioning of the labour market.

9.1. Introduction

9.1.1. Context of the research

In March 2010, a research team completed a major comparative study of changing patterns of work-related learning and career development in Europe (Brown et al., 2010). The research was funded by the European Commission in 2008 in light of a review of continuing vocational training (CVT) policy (European Commission, 2002) and the Council resolution on lifelong guidance (Council of the European Union, 2008). This chapter examines strategic biographies of almost 300 older workers aged over 45 who participated in that study, as they moved through different work and learning contexts as their careers and identities have developed over time. The older workers were a subgroup of a much larger sample. Data were collected using an online survey from over a thousand respondents drawn from 10 countries (France; Germany; Italy; Netherlands; Norway; Poland; Portugal; Romania; Turkey and the UK). Participants were mainly in full-time permanent employment in their mid-career (aged 30 to 55), having achieved skilled worker or graduate qualifications in engineering, ICT or health, working primarily in health, ICT, education or manufacturing. The sample included a small subset of participants with few qualifications and/or who worked in jobs requiring few qualifications.

The study sought to develop an understanding of the different ways individual careers unfold over time. This chapter examines how different types of learning, work and guidance interact across the life course and how they are linked to adaptability and mobility in the labour market. Many cases demonstrated the value of learning while working, as this helped individuals keep their skills, knowledge and competences up-to-date and maintain a positive disposition towards learning. Access to opportunities for learning and development is crucially important, though some individuals were much more proactive than others in taking advantage of these opportunities. The role of career guidance for older workers is also examined, particularly as it relates to successful transitions involving upskilling, reskilling, career change, perspective transformation and increased likelihood of remaining active in the labour market for longer.

9.1.2. Challenges for guidance of an ageing workforce

Older people are becoming an ever larger proportion of the population and recent employment legislation has been in part designed to encourage older workers to continue working. Proposals to increase or abolish fixed retirement ages mask the fact that distinctions between work and retirement are

becoming blurred by the notion of semi-retirement as a way of easing the transition from work to full retirement, with employees moving into self-employment, taking short-term contracts, reducing their working hours or moving away from their previous main line of work (Humphrey et al., 2003). Also, after retirement age many people are engaged in civic and social activities, such as caring and volunteering (McMunn et al., 2009). So, with changing expectations of how long people will work, there are challenges of supporting the continuing education and development of older workers, as workers may need to maintain a set of work-related competences and manage effective work transitions for much longer than has been customary in the past.

Personal agency is an important driver of individual work and learning trajectories, and there is an increased role for reflection and reflexivity as individuals shape their work trajectories. Individuals seek a degree of personal autonomy in how their careers develop (and the meaning attached to career) but, in parallel, they also seek opportunities to exchange experiences with peers, colleagues and guidance practitioners. There is an urgent need to support individuals in navigating their way through increasingly complex work and life contexts and, in particular, helping individuals become more reflective at individual level through provision of career guidance and counselling as a key component of a lifelong learning strategy; and introducing reflective strategies in organisations (in support of both individual empowerment and organisational development). Even within generally successful careers, anxieties were expressed about the risks connected to overall dynamics and change associated with career development and with organisational changes and structural constraints – people recognised that navigating a career path could be fraught with difficulties.

Personal agency (proactivity and responding to opportunities) is important but there is also value in helping individuals develop a coherent career narrative: where they have been; where they are; and where they are going. Many individuals are actively shaping their personal work biographies (but they also value help to do this) and older respondents were engaged in active career development in their 40s and 50s. However, a few had decided that they were not going to engage any further in substantive learning and development, above what was required to work effectively in their current job. This attitude was sometimes linked with a lack of reflexivity of individuals to think about their own skills, a reluctance to think in terms of skill sets – rather there was a tendency to rely upon an attachment to an occupational/organisational identity that may be vulnerable to change. In this context, coupled with the demographic shift towards an ageing workforce, there could be real cost-benefit advantages in offering mid-

career workers career guidance which could extend the length of their careers. One benefit could come from an increased willingness to continue working after a career shift for some, while others could also value the career guidance process for affirming them in their current path. Job mobility for some individuals in a range of contexts could act to support upskilling, reskilling, employability and integration of older workers for longer in the labour market. From a policy perspective access to career guidance services at times of transition appears crucial for positive outcomes for individuals and the labour market.

9.1.3. Changing understandings of career development

The nature of career development has changed and continues to change. Osipow and Fitzgerald distinguish between career choice as a point-in-time 'event' and a developmental 'process' over a longer period (1996, p. 54), while others emphasise career as 'the evolving sequence of a person's work experiences over time' (Arthur et al., 1989, p. 8). Young and Collin argue that 'overall, career can be seen as an overarching construct that gives meaning to the individual's life' (2000, p. 5). Differences in the interpretation of concepts and terminology in this area extend to cultural, linguistic and methodological differences (Van Esbroeck and Athanasou, 2008). Ball (1996) recognises that individuals are able to take responsibility for their own career choices and decisions and to achieve this effectively, individuals' ability to review and reflect upon their career transitions needs to be developed. Through a process of self-reflection and evaluation, individuals become more comfortable and confident in their decisions (Gati and Saka, 2001); aware of their particular skills (Boyatzis et al., 2000; Gati and Saka, 2001); and are able to identify preferred outcomes and goals (Boyatzis et al., 2000).

The process of self-reflective evaluation (sometimes prolonged), that is characteristic of this career decision-making style, is closely linked to development of greater levels of self-awareness and self-knowledge, with individuals using this as the basis for future action and decisions. However, individuals who take unexpected opportunities and tried (often successfully) to turn them to their advantage are described as engaged in a process of opportunistic career decision-making. These individuals exploit opportunities rather than make active choices about work (Banks et al., 1992; Bimrose et al., 2008). Clients' career plans could seem vague, undecided and uncertain. This resonates with the concept of 'planned happenstance' that encourages receptiveness to randomly occurring opportunities that could be critical in shaping careers (Mitchell et al., 1999) and the need for practitioners to place greater importance on context (Bright et al., 2005).

Other approaches to career development emphasise the importance of personal agency and the integrative process model explains mechanisms through which intrinsic motivation can influence career self-management and subsequent career success (Quigley and Tymon, 2006). One other relevant concept is career-related continuous learning (CRCL). A key assumption here is that individual and organisational learning are intertwined. Individuals learn as members of organisations, pursue their own interests and expect a personal benefit from engaging in learning activities. The concept of CRCL relates to a process of individual, self-initiated, discretionary, planned and proactive pattern of activities sustained over time for career development (London and Smither, 1999; Rowold and Schilling, 2006). This approach aligns with a challenge identified in the *Key competences for a changing world* of 'implementing lifelong learning through formal, non-formal and informal learning and increasing mobility' (European Commission, 2009, p. 3), by drawing attention to just how these different types of learning interact across the life course and how they may ease mobility in the labour market.

9.2. Findings from the 10 country European study

9.2.1. Older workers' changing patterns of guidance, learning and careers

The major comparative study of changing patterns of work-related learning and career development in Europe, the focus of this chapter, includes 1 148 respondents, of whom 902 gave details of their age, with 296 people identifiable as 46 or over (Table 9.1). The older workers in the 10 countries surveyed were mostly nationals, but some worked in other countries and 17 had dual or other nationalities. The older workers were mainly in permanent employment (224), although 72 had one or more of the following statuses: 20 part-time employed, 10 full-time temporary; 3 part-time temporary; 34 self-employed; 4 in full-time education; 6 unemployed and seeking work; 2 out of workforce and not seeking employment; 5 semi-retired and 6 engaged in voluntary or charity work. Most of the sample were in (highly) skilled employment, but they had a wide range of formal qualifications, so the most striking results were the breadth and depth of forms of learning and development in which they had engaged relevant to their work (Table 9.2).

Their initial skills and knowledge base has been developed in several ways, including through self-directed learning, formal training and learning from others, while the challenges inherent in their work are acting as a driver of

their continuing learning and development. That most of these older workers are thriving and meeting new challenges can be seen from their answers in Table 9.3; their skills are mostly either in alignment with current duties or such that they could cope with more demanding duties. Most older workers drew extensively upon their past work experience in performing their current work (Table 9.4). Formal qualifications were also seen as important (Table 9.5) and for many people learning from past work experience would seem to complement learning represented in formal qualifications.

This largely optimistic picture of (mainly skilled) older workers positively engaged in challenging work, substantive learning and development and interacting with a range of others in support of their own and others' learning and development is a timely response to those who overgeneralise the problems older workers face. Those older workers considering a career change were almost equally divided on whether or not they were likely to face difficulties in making a change (36 were likely to face difficulties, 34 were not). Most of the barriers (limited opportunities with employer or sector; financial issues; and caring commitments) were the same for younger groups, except for being 'too old', which was mentioned as a possible barrier by 11 of the older workers considering a career change.

Table 9.1. Age ranges of older workers in the sample by country (expressed as percentage of total sample)

Age (years)	Nationality of respondents											
	FR	DE	IT	NL	NO	PL	PT	RO	TR	UK	Other	Total
46-50	5.1	7.1	6.8	2.7	8.1	2.7	4.1	4.1	1.7	4.1	3.4	49.7
51-55	2.0	2.7	4.4	2.4	1.4	3.7	4.7	4.7	0.3	5.4	1.4	33.1
56-60	2.7	1.0	1.4	1.0	0.3	1.0	0.3	1.4	0.3	4.1	0.3	13.8
61-65	0.3	0.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.0	0.7	2.3
over 65	0.0	0.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.7	0	1.0
Percentage of sample by country	10.1	11.5	12.5	6.1	9.8	7.4	9.1	10.1	2.4	15.2	5.7	100
N	30	34	37	18	29	22	27	30	7	45	17	296

Source: Authors.

Table 9.2. How older workers acquired knowledge and skills to perform in current or last job (multiple answers possible)

	N	%
Studies or initial training	219	74
Additional training in current work	175	59
Self-directed/self-initiated learning, inside or outside workplace	193	65
Learning through work by carrying out challenging tasks	206	70
Learning through life experience	177	60
Learning from others at work	165	56
Learning from networks, working with clients	129	44
Other	23	8
N = 296		

Source: Authors.

Table 9.3. Matching of skills and duties in current or last job

	N	%
I need further training to cope well with my duties	40	14
My duties correspond well with my present skills	137	47
I have the skills to cope with more demanding duties	99	34
I am new to the job so I need some further training to learn new aspects of my duties	16	5
N=292	292	100

Source: Authors.

Table 9.4. Use of past work experience in current or last job

	N	%
Almost none	16	5
A little	37	12
A lot	123	42
Almost all	109	37
This is my first job	11	4
N=296	296	100

Source: Authors.

Table 9.5. Use of formal qualifications in current or last job

	N	%
Almost none	28	10
A little	70	24
A lot	108	36
Almost all	84	28
I have no formal qualifications	6	2
N=296	296	100

Source: Authors.

9.2.2. Importance of personal agency

Our sample of older workers was in the main well-qualified, in employment (often engaged in challenging work) and had opportunities for learning and development associated with their jobs. Most demonstrated very positive actions and attitudes towards learning in a wide variety of forms, including on-the-job training; self-directed learning inside or outside the workplace; learning from networks, working with clients; learning through life experience; learning through work by carrying out challenging tasks; learning from others at work; and learning through participating in seminars and conferences (Brown et al., 2010). The reasons they took part in training and learning activities were primarily related to skill development and personal development – many of

these individuals were driving their own development, liked learning new things related to their job and enjoyed new challenges at work, partly because they offered opportunities for learning. The career decision-making styles of respondents were mixed, but again emphasis on learning and development was strongly apparent, with learning from previous experience and needing to reflect, plan and analyse when thinking about career development all emphasised. Willingness to take opportunities as they arose also reflected proactiveness of most respondents (Brown et al., 2010).

Respondents, however, had varying degrees of success in the labour market over their life courses and relatively few had completely untroubled career histories. Their learning and work trajectories resonated with the structural conditions they faced. For example, in Romania and Poland workers over age 45 had to negotiate major shifts in societal and organisational structures and had to demonstrate ability to operate effectively in very different contexts. Personal agency is clearly an important driver of individual work and learning trajectories, but for many older workers their working lives had become more complex. Additionally, it was found that:

- (a) there is an increased role for reflection and reflexivity as individuals shape their work trajectories (choices and possibilities have expanded and structural, organisational and technological change have added complexity to work trajectories);
- (b) experience developed through engagement with challenging work is the main vehicle for professional growth, but this needs to be supplemented in various ways and individuals have choices in combining learning activities (formal, non-formal and informal) with which they engage;
- (c) individuals seek a degree of personal autonomy in how their careers develop (and the meaning attached to career) but, in parallel, they also seek opportunities to exchange experiences with peers, colleagues and experts.

The survey findings provide support for the idea that individuals are responsible actors in creating their own career pathways through learning and development linked to opportunities in education, training, employment and other contexts. However, at the same time, there is an urgent need to support individuals in navigating their way through increasingly complex work and life contexts and, in particular, by paying attention to the following factors:

- (a) reflection and guidance support: helping individuals become more reflective at individual level through provision of career guidance and counselling as a key component of a lifelong learning strategy, coupled with introducing reflective strategies in organisations (in support of both individual empowerment and organisational development). Even within

generally successful careers, anxieties were expressed about the risks connected to overall dynamics and change associated with career development and with organisational changes and structural constraints – people recognised that navigating a career path could be fraught with difficulties;

- (b) personal agency and career narratives: proactiveness and responding to opportunities is important but there is also value in helping individuals develop a coherent career narrative: where they have been; where they are; and where they are going). Many individuals are actively shaping their personal work biographies (but they also value help to do this);
- (c) engagement with CVT: individual traits can be influential here, but in any case a proactive approach to career development, self-management behaviour and experiences of learning influence engagement and persistence with CVT and lifelong learning. People can reinforce their satisfaction (and in some cases even overcome dissatisfaction) with work by engaging in CVET (which people often believe has value in itself – even when not strictly necessary for current or likely future job performance);
- (d) active career management: much continuous vocational learning is influenced by motivational factors (such as willingness to make the most of learning opportunities at work). By engaging with CVT, many individuals have learned how to manage their careers and progress their future plans (this could be either through self-directed learning or where formal CVT opens up other potential career pathways). One key factor in continued career success for older workers in a changed context is a positive disposition towards learning and development;
- (e) space for career development: a proactive approach to career development is associated with employees being given encouragement, time and space to engage in self-directed learning and critical reflection; learning from others and through networks; organisations that emphasise breadth of competence development; timely and appropriate feedback and support for development of employees' learner identities.

9.2.3. Structural constraints on personal agency

In transition economies such as Poland and Romania the shift towards personal responsibility for career development was a major turning point for older workers brought up under centrally-planned economies. In Romania one legacy of the earlier system was in some areas there was a feeling that school-based training resulting in formal certification was the most 'powerful' form of training. On the other hand, the emergent economy was making use of

different types of jobs, skills, companies, forms of work organisation and career patterns. In such circumstances older low-skilled workers could be part of a ‘fatalistic’ culture in which they viewed themselves as out of step with the way the economy was evolving, with immobility being linked to demography and getting employment depending on luck and contacts rather than individual merit. Two workers in their 40s exemplified how if they were in employment they were determined to hang on to their current jobs but saw no prospects of doing anything else.

The first person had worked in a large factory for 15 years but when that was restructured he was made redundant and then, after a spell unemployed, retrained to be a tram driver 10 years ago: ‘I am satisfied with my job because it is well paid and I can support my family, although it is difficult and stressful. I don’t have the formal qualifications to think of a better position in the company. I am fed up with training and courses.’

The second person was working as a chef: ‘I have no formal qualification. I learned cooking from my mother and I also learned a lot from my colleagues. I think it is a good job in that I can support my children growing up without any other support. The new colleagues that come have certificates but they still ask for my help. For the future, I am waiting for my pension time only.’

Similarly, seeking to make a labour-market transition at a time of high unemployment could be constraining. A library and information services manager in health care recalled how initially: ‘my career was blighted by the recession of the early 1980s. I could not find work after university for four months, and I found the experience of unemployment (and unsuccessful job interviews) very traumatic. Once I had found work (in the book trade) I stayed in that sector for too long, fearful of unemployment again, although I was not happy; it was 11 years before I found my present career as a librarian, in which I am much happier.’

Some qualified workers had made successful transitions or exhibited greater resilience in overcoming periods of unemployment, but the extent of overqualification compared to the jobs available meant that expressed interest in learning could be driven by personal development rather than being a tool for career progression. It may be that messages promoting learning through strongly emphasising employability are less effective than those which emphasise personal development, establishing social networks, meeting a wider range of people together with increasing the likelihood of getting employment. That is, messages should emphasise the immediate benefits from being a learner rather than seeing learning primarily being judged by where it might lead.

From an individual perspective, handling interplay between opportunity structures (Roberts, 2009) and personal agency (proactiveness) is not easy to achieve on your own. Being able to discuss such issues with a guidance practitioner could be useful at any time an individual is considering a major transition, but one interesting dimension for older individuals was that it was particularly valued because it could help make sense of their existing career narrative as an aid to projecting into the future.

9.2.4. Intensive periods of (substantive) learning across the life course

From a career guidance perspective, it was also interesting to consider implications of the finding that substantive learning for individuals tends to be episodic rather than lifelong in the sense of people being engaged continuously in substantive learning (Brown et al., 2010). Substantive learning in this context means learning which results in a significant change in values, attitudes or behaviour, rather than just learning a new technique, etc. Occasionally, an individual might engage in formal education and training for most of their working life, but it is much more common for workers to have bouts of intensive periods of (substantive) learning across the life course. These intensive periods of substantive learning, following initial vocational education and training or higher education studies, are typically concerned with either upskilling within recognised career pathways or reskilling associated with a significant career change. The upskilling or reskilling could comprise a formal educational programme, CVT, learning while working or a mixture of two or more of these components.

The career trajectory of one participant illustrated an intensive period of part-time formal learning (educational upskilling) followed by a later period of formal training coupled with more challenging work leading to further development, upskilling and reskilling. In 1989, Michelle started doing routine administrative work on benefits claims straight from leaving school at 18. From 1996 to 2000 she completed a skilled worker qualification and then a degree which led to career development: first, in becoming a trainer, then an operations manager before becoming a regional trainer. She then completed a range of specialist advanced level vocational qualifications from 2005 to 2009 which equipped her to take a job in a new sector (health) as a manager with responsibilities for business change based upon IT systemic change and for measuring the benefits of such deployments.

How learning at work is coupled with career progression influences how individuals engage in continuing learning (in some contexts after initial recruitment, promotion is almost wholly dependent upon performance at work,

which is itself linked to learning through challenging work, interactions and networks at work. In other cases, some form of formal continuing professional development would be expected, such as taking *Meister* qualifications in Germany, as a prelude to promotion). Another participant provided an example of upskilling through initial hospital-based (subdegree higher education equivalent) vocational training coupled with completion of two intensive mid-career post-graduate diploma programmes as well as learning while working and through career progression. Karen qualified as a radiographer in 1984; in 1991 she completed a diploma in management studies and in 2004 a postgraduate diploma in advanced practice (imaging) as she progressed through linked progression pathways as an advanced practitioner, clinical tutor and then a research radiographer recruiting patients to clinical trials, promoting and active involvement in radiotherapy research from 2004.

Rather than engaging in continuous learning at an even pace year after year, people are likely to have periods of more and less intensive learning. The key here is to make a distinction between learning which fits into an individual's current set of values, attitudes, competences, networks, behaviour and identities and learning which leads to significant personal development or transformation. Respondents to the survey had little difficulty in identifying the role of learning and development in making significant work-related transitions and periods of intensive learning could be decisive for individuals' career direction. Most people with successful careers display episodic learning: periods of intensive learning interspersed with 'quieter' times (which nevertheless can involve learning through challenging work, etc.).

This finding is really important for career guidance for older workers in countering the view that 'I am not a lifelong learner – it is a long time since I engaged in substantive learning associated with education and training or learning a new role at work, etc.' Almost everyone across their life course engages in episodic learning – at some periods making a conscious effort at learning compared to other times when other aspects of their lives may take priority. This type of dialogue would seem much more empowering – this line of argument was often used by 'women returners': 'now it is my turn.' It is not a deficit model but rather a positive one: in a lifetime there will be several times when a person makes learning a priority – would now be a good time to do so?

9.2.5. Skill development for workers in low-skilled work by changing jobs
Brynin and Longhi, in their summary of findings from a major European project (on work organisation and restructuring in the knowledge society – WORKS project) reported on individual-level change using panel data and found that

both ‘dissatisfaction with work and skill mismatches are widespread, and while tending to be overcome through career switches, thereby contribute to the overall prevalence of work flexibility’ (Brynin and Longhi, 2007, p. 7). So job mobility can be viewed as positive for individuals where it leads to progression, greater satisfaction and personal development or negative if it is considered forced, unrewarding and involves a ‘sense of loss’ rather than development.

In nearly all European countries the most common way for people in low-skilled employment to update their skills was by changing their jobs. This finding is important in two respects. First, it means that public policy should encourage people to find more challenging work if they are in undemanding work – guidance and counselling could play a key role in this respect. Second, it resonates with several ‘case histories’ of people in our research study where their personal development took off as they passed through ‘low-skilled employment’ with the switch to other forms of work opening up opportunities for learning and development whether these were related to training and/or more challenging work. For example, in Portugal and Poland some people worked in assistant or junior positions before finding more challenging work in the same sector or in a different field altogether (after transferring from work in for example hotel and catering).

In some cases a shift between different forms of low-skilled work could allow for greater development within work, improving adaptability and ability to apply skills, knowledge and understanding in different contexts. For example, one respondent started out over 40 years ago without any formal qualifications as an apprentice painter and decorator and then moved through several low-level jobs in construction and retail and progressed to managing a mobile shop, travelling to remote communities, then a small travel agency, before becoming self-employed as a grocery shop owner. Apart from some training and minor qualifications related to work in a travel agency the driver for development was always self-directed learning, inside or outside the workplace.

Being able to apply your skills, knowledge and understanding in several contexts can itself act as a considerable spur to development. Again this has profound implications for career guidance of older workers – it is possible that individuals in their early 40s have made considerable progress with their skill development since entry into employment and now need a slightly different approach to enable them to make a career transition. It is at this point that they would value support in helping them make that transition. For some respondents, career possibilities had broadened since they first entered the labour market. Helping such individuals to make these changes often seemed to reenergise their work and learning trajectories.

9.2.6. Older workers' careers: dynamic or stable

Many of our older respondents were engaged in active career development in their 40s and 50s. However, a few had decided they were not going to engage any further in substantive learning and development above what was required to work effectively in their current job: one respondent represented this as 'coasting' (doing the minimum possible) while waiting for (preferably early) retirement. One respondent did recognise that there dangers associated with 'coasting' in that employability becomes dependent almost solely upon the current job. This attitude was sometimes also linked with lack of reflexivity of individuals to think about their own skills, a reluctance to think in terms of skill sets – rather there was a tendency to rely on attachment to an occupational or organisational identity that may be vulnerable to change. In this context, coupled with the demographic shift towards an ageing workforce, there could be real cost-benefit advantages in offering mid-career workers guidance which could extend the length of their careers. One benefit could come from an increased willingness to continue working after a career shift for some, while others could also value the guidance process for affirming them in their current path.

Available evidence including our research survey and the associated literature review, together with the policy challenges outlined above all highlight the importance of job mobility for individuals in a range of contexts to support upskilling, reskilling, employability and integration of older workers for longer in the labour market. The literature review and the survey also highlighted how individuals often valued support in making career decisions. This support could take various forms, but from a policy perspective access to career advice and guidance services for adults at times of transition appears crucial for positive outcomes both for the individual and smooth functioning of the labour market.

9.2.7. Guidance for (re)engaging older workers in learning and development

While career guidance services for adults at times of transition has positive outcomes for individuals and the labour market, issues of access to such provision remain a challenge. Indications from the research are that differentiated needs-based services would be the most cost-effective way of ensuring that the career development support needs of individuals are appropriate or relevant to particular phases and stages of their career trajectories. For example, workers in undemanding jobs (low-skilled employment), those wishing to change sectors or seeking to change intensity

of work because of changed responsibilities and older workers seeking a career change are all groups which could benefit from improved access to career information, advice and guidance. Additionally, policy could give greater emphasis to the value of career guidance in helping individuals articulate and possibly align goals, expectations, development strategies and outcomes in relation to learning and career development.

Many older workers in our sample were committed to learning and development, so a lack of engagement with learning is not a function of age per se. It is partly about access to opportunities to learn and partly about motivation, so for those who have not engaged in learning for some time then involving them in identifying the type of learning with which they want to engage is critical. This approach underpins both union learning provision and some State-funded CVT provision. Older workers could also be encouraged to become coaches, mentors or trainers.

9.3. Conclusions and recommendations: career guidance for older workers

Policy-makers and practitioners should consider the following points of leverage in trying to engage more older workers in learning and development and to keep them in the labour market for longer. It is important to recognise the importance of the personal dimension in generating commitment to continuing learning; consider the idea of using key transition points to help target provision; and to acknowledge the significance of networks in supporting skill development at work. These points could be aligned with the four priority areas of the Council of the European Union resolution on lifelong guidance (2008). The key priorities of the resolution are: developing career management skills; easing access to guidance services for all citizens; improving quality assurance mechanisms in guidance delivery; and supporting guidance policy coordination and cooperation in Member States.

In this study most of the sample was in (highly) skilled employment and, although many had undertaken lower-skilled work at some point in their career, they still remain a particular segment of this age cohort. They are, however, a significant group in that their experience of continuing substantive learning and development underlines the need to adopt a differentiated approach to the needs of this cohort. They do not fit the stereotype of older workers reluctant to engage in learning and development and a deficit model of support for engagement in learning and development would be inappropriate. It would

nevertheless be helpful to conduct similar research with other segments of this age group: the unemployed or those in less-skilled work.

This more highly-skilled segment of older workers can contribute ideas for constructing a model of how to support effective learning and development for older workers. Career guidance practitioners and others supporting learning and development could consider the following characteristics in developing or evaluating appropriate provision:

- (a) individual engagement: is it personally meaningful for individuals in relation to development in their current occupation or career progression and/or is it personally rewarding, for example, resulting in an increase in self-esteem, confidence as a learner or self-efficacy? Does it resonate with an individual's motivation, where the individual feels a clear drive for achievement and development? Does it require active engagement of participants – is it sufficiently demanding (does it challenge or extend current ideas, assumptions, attitudes, constructs, knowledge and understanding)? Does it require engagement with particular ways of thinking and practising (including how individuals are connected to particular knowledge cultures)? This might include development of particular approaches to critical analysis, evaluation, problem-solving, etc.;
- (b) personal development: does it provide opportunities for a significant shift in personal perspective (whether this was values-based or interest-based)? Does provision help individuals develop greater opportunity awareness, especially because much continuing learning is at least partly dependent on an individual being aware of and then taking advantage of opportunities for learning and development? Does it help individuals' develop judgement, for example in the ability to make choices in relation to values, goals, plans and aspirations; make decisions; self-motivate; and display resilience. Does it use reflection upon experience (including reflections on prior learning) as a driver of further learning;
- (c) collaboration: does it support collaboration between learners: for example, are learners engaged in a collective enterprise (in relation to performance improvement activities or as a member of a group engaged in a formal programme of study, etc.) or, if the learning activity is predominantly individual, does it draw on the support of significant others in other ways, for example to help consolidate their learning;
- (d) progression: is it relevant for vocational progression (either as part of an established progression pathway or through establishing an improved personal base from which to seek further career development – for example, through completion of a substantive further qualification);

- (e) career orientation: is provision linked to a clear career orientation in that it is linked to an individual's career goals directly or else was helpful in developing skills which were also helpful for career management purposes and does it fit with an individual's clear career narrative (about 'becoming')?

Career guidance practitioners should also recognise complementarity of different forms of learning in support of skill development. Our research findings provided a strong endorsement for complementarity of learning through engaging with challenging work and institutionalised learning which is able to help individuals look beyond their immediate context. Such complementary learning has underpinned many apprenticeship systems, sandwich degrees and much professional training. However, we found many examples of the value for individuals when they applied such modes of alternance learning across the life course: that is, where learning was predominantly work-based but with periods of institutionalised learning interspersed. Learning through challenging work alone may be insufficient and other forms of learning may be necessary to help the employee make a quantum leap in their broader understanding of a particular field.

Quality of work remains a key factor in determining the extent of continuing learning and skills development. Where individuals are engaged in challenging work they are likely to have opportunities for significant development from learning while working. However, a company's field of operation, future horizons, product market strategy and organisation of work may all place constraints on the extent to which workplaces offer 'expansive learning environments.' Where a company offers only limited opportunities for substantive learning while working efforts to encourage employers to offer additional training have had only limited success, not least because employers may think employees would then be more likely to leave. Therefore, public policy should perhaps focus on giving workers entitlements to career guidance and further learning opportunities.

Continuing vocational training development could also be linked to the notion developed by Sen (1999) of the importance of developing individual capabilities in a broader sense. Applying this idea to skill development the ultimate goal is to increase the freedom for individuals to exercise greater control over their own lives (in relation to what they value being or doing): this includes expanding opportunities to access knowledge, meaningful work, significant relationships and exercise self-direction. Other capabilities (ways of being and doing) could benefit from engagement with other forms of education and training.

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CHAPTER 10

Career development in later working life: implications for career guidance with older workers

Lyn Barham

Recent evidence suggests that older people are less satisfied with career guidance services than younger adults. This chapter explores reasons for this through three themes which appear characteristic of many older people. First, future time perspective is considered as an aspect of present life-space and decision-making. Second, the psychological contract of the workplace is seen as a site of expectation by older workers of a complex and respectful mutual exchange with employers. Third, generativity, or 'giving something back' is argued to extend beyond its social altruistic sense, and to include the 'giving back' of work skills and work attitudes which reflect specific work interests. The conclusions of this chapter suggest that further research, specifically focused on the 50 to 70 age group, should examine the differences within that age group both between sexes and for individuals as they progress through two decades. To satisfy career support needs of older workers, career advisers need to develop conceptual frameworks reflecting age-related changes, alongside respect for the great diversity that experience has added to individual differences. This challenging work requires an appropriate workforce with additional specialised training.

10.1. Introduction

Many groups of professional workers are concerned with the wellbeing of older people in the long period from when aspects of age discrimination start to become evident (from 45 or 50 years of age) through to oldest age. With extending life expectancy, negative impacts of age stereotyping may apply for almost half of the total lifespan. Careers advisers will most commonly be

actively involved with older people from the beginning of the older years (age 45 plus) to around 70 years, but the potential impact of these decades in working and learning extends for the rest of the lifespan. This chapter focuses specifically on the role of careers advisers: those whose primary responsibility is to help people to make personally satisfying choices about work and learning at all stages of their lives.

Career guidance refers to services intended to assist people, of any age and at any point throughout their lives to make educational, training and occupational choices and to manage their careers. Career guidance helps people to reflect on their ambitions, interests, qualifications and abilities. It helps them to understand the labour market and education systems, and to relate this to what they know about themselves (OECD, 2004, p. 19).

Much policy attention has been focused on the role of the careers adviser in relation to knowledge and understanding of opportunity structures and labour-market information, and sometimes perception of the role extends little beyond this. Hirsch (2005) comments on the UK situation: 'over the past few years, the government has promoted provision of guidance to adults, in particular through the establishment of local information, advice and guidance partnerships. As Geoff Ford (³⁹) spells out, 'this has had a limited impact, particularly for older adults, partly because of low take-up and partly because such services are better designed to provide relatively low-level advice and information rather than potentially life-changing guidance' (Hirsch, 2005, p. 8).

Life-changing guidance, as implied too in the OECD description of career guidance, requires the careers adviser to have considerable understanding of the individual person, and to support self-reflection undertaken by the individual. At one level, understanding relies on the skill to unpick the 'real' need that underpins the presenting problem. At another level, it is ability to understand both the presenting and the underlying needs within the circumstances of the life of that individual.

Considerable literature examines the impact on employment choices of the social circumstances of the individual (Bates, 1993; Evans, 2002; Roberts, 1971, 2009; Willis, 1977). Most of such work relates to the transitional period, often quite lengthy, between the end of statutory education and full adulthood (roughly the ages from 16 to 25 years). Within growing sociological literature on older people, comparable examination of disengagement from, as opposed to entry to, the workforce largely confines itself to issues of finance and (ill)

⁽³⁹⁾ The late Geoff Ford, a pioneer in promoting the career development needs of older people, undertook many related studies. Particular reference here is to *Am I still needed?* (Ford, 2005).

health. But people in the last decade or two of what might be recognised as 'working life' (which may take many forms) have different concerns from those embarking on a career. This chapter seeks to examine some of these differences, to propose some of the priorities for a much-needed research agenda, and to suggest inputs to professional training that would help careers advisers in their task.

10.2. Research interest

In 2007, evaluation of the UK's new telephone guidance service found differences in response to the service among older adults compared with younger people (Page et al., 2007); a finding which reinforced an earlier study by Tyers and Sinclair (2005). The differences related particularly to 'soft outcomes' (attitudinal change, opportunity awareness, insight, sense of direction, and capacity building) and led to the recommendation that 'research into older people's expectations of guidance, and the types of issue that they would like help with would be beneficial' (Page et al., 2007, p 81). This recommendation was addressed through funding of two linked research projects conducted by the National Institute for Career Education and Counselling (NICEC) in 2007-08. One project examined the extent to which distance methods of accessing career support (telephone and Internet) were viewed differently by older adults. The other explored career management skills reported and needed by older people (Barham and Hawthorn, 2009; 2010). The latter used a narrative interview technique, inviting people to tell the story of their current learning and work situation, the events and circumstances of the previous 10 years that brought them to that situation, and their hopes and plans for the coming few years. Throughout the interviews, the research team used a prompt question inviting reflection on how that is different from being younger (Barham, 2008).

The report of the study fulfilled its intended purpose of making recommendations about approaches to career guidance with older adults. However, experience of the research raised several topics for researchers which this chapter seeks to develop through recourse to wider literature.

These unresolved topics collect into three broad themes reflected in many personal stories. One relates to a concern with time, another to an expectation of some regard for experience accumulated through both work and life in general, and the third to the desire to 'give something back' to society. Cutting across all three themes is evidence of considerable diversity in experiences,

circumstances, needs and demands of older people. This reflects the 'choosers', 'jugglers' and 'survivors' identified by Flynn and McNair (2004), and the dimensions of emotional and financial wellbeing portrayed in an orthogonal relationship in the New Zealand Department of Labour's (2006) study of motivators and inhibitors to working.

10.2.1. Time

Time is a complex concept. That single word encompasses meanings that stretch from the aeons of universal time, to human life-spans, to the time pressures of each day. There is shared human realisation across cultures that life is short and time is precious, but the meaning attributed to this realisation is both individually and culturally shaped.

Zimbardo and Boyd (1999) demonstrate that, at individual level, people have their own personal time perception towards past, present or future, and that such perception may have a positive or negative aspect. For example, a person with a 'past' orientation, a tendency to draw on the past more than look to the future, may tend towards a 'past-positive' (nostalgic) or 'past-negative' (bitterness) view. Similarly, those with a 'present' orientation may bring a hedonistic (positive) or a fatalistic (negative) approach to their present experience.

Western individualistic worldviews create an emphasis on linear lifespaces from infancy to old age. Progression along this line is perceived through a dualism of cognition and affect, with strong negative connotations of old age in some cultures. Non-western cultures may 'create an impression about time experimentally rather than purely cognitively' (Abi-Hashem, 2000, p. 342). Connections between life cycles and generations lead to a perception that is more global and cyclical, leading Abi-Hashem to argue that non-western people 'seem to be more relaxed in time' (2000, p. 343) rather than constrained by it. By contrast, Zimbardo and Boyd (1999) found that people of Asian background were disproportionately represented in the 'present-fatalistic' category, with a helpless and hopeless feeling that life is controlled by forces greater than the individual can influence. These contrasting views emphasise the need for careers advisers to be attuned to individual existential endeavours, understanding these to be shaped both culturally (Western, Eastern, etc.) and situationally (including those of eastern ethnic origin now located in western society, as in Zimbardo and Boyd's (1999) study).

Despite these differing viewpoints, both Abi-Hashem (2000) and Zimbardo and Boyd (1999) share the view that future time perspective alters with age. For Abi-Hashem: 'as physical health and career decline, people normally become more reflective and more existential in nature. They long to make a

contribution to the lives of others and desire to leave a legacy. [...] Virtues, families, friends, faith, and worthy human causes become more emphasised' (Abi-Hashem, 2000, p. 342).

This is echoed in earlier work by Gonzales and Zimbardo (1985) where the future concerns of older research participants included their children, retirement, legacy, and other long-term factors not common in the thoughts of college students. They contrast this with the college student sample group (Zimbardo and Boyd, 1999) where the future factor was less complex and did not divide into subfactors.

Future time perspective has been identified as playing a part in the way that people relate to many changes as they age, but only limited attention has been paid to the part it plays in people's attitudes to and decisions about work, learning and employment (Bal et al., 2010). Future time perspective is a subjective view of time, reflecting highly individualised beliefs about how much time people have available to them in the future. Lewin (1939) argues that an individual's life-space is constituted of geographical, social and time elements, asserting that 'time perspective is one of the most fundamental facts of development' (Lewin, 1939, p. 879). His proposition that 'time ahead which influences present behavior [...] is [...] to be regarded as a part of the present life-space' (p. 879) holds true throughout life, and needs to be addressed in career support in later years of life as it already is in career education provision in the early years of schooling.

Between early childhood and adolescence, future time perspective increases from days or months into years (Lewin, 1939). After the adolescent period, it is negatively correlated with chronological age: anticipation of future time available reduces with increasing years, though individual differences in future time perspective may be considerable.

Cate and John (2007) bring another question to future time perspective: whether it is the unidimensional bipolar construct assumed in most research to date. Future time perspective has so far been conceptualised as a single construct, representing a bipolar continuum from expansive (feeling there is plenty of time to do what one wants to do) to limited (feeling time is running out; Fung et al., 2001; Lang and Carstensen, 2002) (Cate and John, 2007).

Cate and John (2007) identify two main aspects of change with maturity, which occur at different paces: an opportunity dimension which may show reduction from early adulthood into middle age, but then stabilise; and a limitation dimension which may only occur from middle age, but will increase with subsequent years. It could be argued that a perception of reduced opportunities in earlier adulthood (those aged in their 30s and 40s) may reflect

the normative circumstantial constraints associated with a life stage dominated for many by providing for and nurturing a family. Traditionally financial provision has been predominantly a male concern, while nurturance fell more to women, although in economically advanced societies roles have become blurred in recent decades. Limitation, by contrast, may arise from within the individual, and became an apparent concern for respondents to the Barham (2008) study, even when health issues and lower energy levels were not reported as a constraining factor.

The possible dimensions of future time perspective, and how time perception relates to other social opportunities and constraints, need further research. Cate and John (2007) have however drawn attention to two aspects of concern for careers advisers working with clients of any age: their clients' awareness and perception of opportunities available to them, and their self-perception of limitations with regard to accessing opportunities. Both dimensions are recognisable in the interviews conducted in our study.

Janet, a former teacher who left because of unsatisfactory work conditions, and then coped with a period of caring, bereavement and personal ill-health, comments at age 55 that 'time is going on'. Although financially secure through her husband, she explores tentative ideas for work activities, wanting to find a 'real sense of satisfaction, something fulfilling, achievement', and emphasises that this is 'from inside, more for myself than others' (Barham, 2008, p. 16).

Possible dimensions of future time perspective are complexly intertwined in the case of Doreen, aged 49, who quickly obtained a new job after redundancy. She left the job (better paid than her previous one) after a week because there was very little to do. Her comments to the researcher include 'I can't hang about like that' and 'I've got better things to do at home'. Explicit here is an awareness that time is a valuable commodity, and not one to be traded lightly, even for good pay. Behind the precipitate departure from the new job, one could hypothesise an assumption that other opportunities exist, but that was not articulated within the space of the research interview.

Limitations are also expressed in terms of specific health issues, often minor, but that would be aggravated by physical or mental stress, and an acceptance of tiring more easily than in younger days. It was particularly notable among research respondents that older people who had taken a break from full-time work doubted their capacity to return to a full-time job, whereas this was not noted as a limitation by those of a similar age with a continuous full-time work history. This suggests that neither social circumstance alone nor time perspective alone offers sufficient explanation: study of the interaction between factors may reveal the complexity as experienced by individuals.

Nor will chronological age serve as a standardised benchmark for studies. As with all aspects of ageing, people will have different perspectives built through a whole range of experiences from the highly personal (such as life-spans of parents, siblings and friends) to views in common currency in the media and social settings. More research is needed to fill existing gaps, which include: age-group (many studies of future time perspective are with much younger or much older age cohorts than the 50-70 year age range that covers the period up to and after conventional retirement age, when most people disengage from the workforce); gender, allowing for different family and career paths of adult men and women; how careers advisers specifically can best frame these issues to address them in their work with their clients.

Addressing these issues in work with clients raises ethical questions about the role of the careers adviser. Clients may have beliefs about the time and opportunities likely to be available to them. Is it ethically right for the careers adviser to understand and support within the limitations of such personal beliefs (even when they are at odds with objective information), or should the careers adviser challenge and seek to change personal beliefs? The latter action may accord with policy pressures in many countries where demographic changes are leading to a move towards longer working lives.

10.2.2. Respect for experience

Experience featured more strongly in respondents' stories than formal qualification, reflecting McNair's comment that 'formal qualifications, which are often used as a proxy for skill, provide a very approximate measure of the skills required for any given job' (McNair, 2010, p. 19). Those with limited formal learning were well aware that they had learned, even if this was not appreciated by potential employers. Doreen, without any formal qualifications, commented 'I must have learnt because I knew how to do things'. Anne (age 52, an unemployed administrator) commented on the wealth of information 'in my head and in my life'.

Values too become clearer, and are more clearly articulated, with age: 'you know more about yourself when you are older. When you are younger you have an instinct for what you like and could do. As you get older you're more willing to say to yourself, 'I really don't want [...]' (Molly, participant in Barham's [2008] study). Anne shares this view, commenting that as people get older they become more adaptable, based on experiencing and having coped with pressures, but that they are also more inclined to stick to their values: 'my ideals haven't changed since I was a teenager.' Colin (age 59, employed as a team leader in manufacturing) demonstrated both flexibility and a strong

sense of personal values as he gave a sharp critique of top-down management that did not allow for respect for individual workers and awareness of the eventualities of 'real life'. In his case this stretched from flexible planning of his team's work to cope both with late delivery of components and with his team's need for social interaction while working – the need to discuss the big football match of the previous evening.

The research produced a picture of some ordinary workpeople who valued the learning they had gained from experience, expressed a willingness to be flexible to meet workplace needs, but held a strong sense of their own values. But with values come sticking points. Janet described her reasons for leaving teaching: 'what am I doing if I don't see an outcome for children that is valuable in my eyes?' (Janet, participant in Barham's [2008] study).

People bring existing ideas, or schema (Rousseau, 2001), to a prospective psychological contract. These schema include beliefs about promises and obligations, and may include views of the employment contract as a complex relationship or a more simple transaction (Rousseau, 2001). There was little evidence of the latter among respondents to our study. Doreen exemplifies this in her unwillingness to 'hang around' despite good pay when the induction training which she believed to be due to her failed to materialise. Colin recounted that he had refused the offer of an otherwise attractive job because the journey to work would be extremely unreliable: 'It would be disloyal. If I take on a job, I should be there'. In both cases, the personal schema extends well beyond the transaction symbolised by the pay packet, and implies a mutual rather than a one-sided arrangement (Bal et al., 2010).

Within extensive literature on the psychological contract between employer and employee, little attention has been paid to age differences (Bal et al., 2008). Bal et al. (2010) find a difference in views on the psychological contract between those workers with greater or with more restricted future time perspectives (though again there are sample limitations, in that their study was conducted with people beyond conventional retirement age for their country, the Netherlands). Particularly for people with an expansive prospect in relation to the opportunity aspect of future time perspective, moving on to other opportunities may feel possible. Those with a more restricted view of future time perspective, in either of its aspects, may feel trapped by lack of alternative opportunity and/or by personal limitations. Bal et al. (2008) hypothesised that with increasing age and ability to regulate emotions, there would be a reduction in the emotional impact of a perceived breach of the psychological contract by their employer. While this held true for feelings of trust towards their employer, the opposite was found in relation to job

satisfaction: older workers showed a greater decrease in job satisfaction than younger workers. Can this be explained by older people being more likely to feel trapped within their jobs, or does it correlate with the more certain sense of one's own values, as expressed by our respondents?

What can be drawn from this to help careers advisers in their work with clients? A first requirement is for careers advisers to be familiar with these ideas so they can acknowledge and validate expressions of experience and personal values offered by their clients. The next step, and one articulated in the project report (Barham, 2008), is to help their clients in interpreting and conveying to others that these are positive attributes, and of relevance to employers.

10.2.3. Giving back: from ambition to generativity

Respondents to our study wanted to give something back. Molly, unemployed at age 57 but actively engaged in voluntary work, comments: 'I do it to feel wanted. It's a blow when society says "we don't need you any more"'. But finding a way to contribute is not easy. Paul, discovering painfully at 51 that the IT industry may be an ageist area of employment, is now looking more broadly. Advised long ago by his school that computer science would make good use of his maths ability, he now feels that he has never really made any big career decisions. He wants to 'put something back into society' but without a 'road to Damascus' moment, cannot work out what that might be or how to tackle the decision. (Barham, 2008, p. 16-17).

Kanfer and Ackerman (2004) examine age-related changes through four themes: loss; growth (particularly related to patterns of intellectual abilities), reorganisation and exchange. Reorganisation and exchange particularly apply to aspects of motivation which shift as time orientation shifts from 'life lived since birth' to 'life left until death' (Kanfer and Ackerman, 2004, p. 444). For many people, ambition gives way to a concern for giving something back, and is linked with a decline in work centrality for many (but not all) older people (Clark and Arnold, 2007).

Both Kanfer and Ackerman (2004) and Clark and Arnold (2010) draw upon Erikson's (1959; 1997) work on identity throughout the life cycle, which has received more attention for the concepts of identity formation and identity crisis in earlier life stages than for the notion of generativity which he argues to be a dominant concern of later adulthood. Generativity is explained by Kanfer and Ackerman as referring 'to a class of tendencies pertaining to caring for others, parenting, and helping the broader society and future generations' (2004, p. 445). Erikson's delineation of generativity includes its antithesis of

stagnation, which also appears as a distinct and real threat to the respondents in our study. Molly, quoted above, prefers unpaid work to stagnation in the kind of ‘MacJob’ that she fears the State benefits system may force her to take.

How should careers advisers think about generativity in their work with clients? Clark and Arnold argue that generativity is not a single, global construct; rather ‘it takes many forms, all evincing care, whether for people, things or ideas’ (2010, p. 31). The proposition that all jobs require workers to function, in varying degrees, in relation to data, people and things has underpinned various classifications of work roles, for example the *Dictionary of occupational titles* of the US Department of Labor. Clark and Arnold’s study of older men leads them to the proposition that generativity goals reflect work interests: engineers’ goals tending towards productivity and the goals of human resource practitioners inclining towards nurturance: ‘occupation was relevant to the character of individuals’ generativity’ (Clark and Arnold, 2010, p. 34). The ‘giving back’ might be in the form of passing on skills and modeling high standards, as well as discrete activities such as mentoring, which in fact did not feature as a goal for any of Clark and Arnold’s sample.

This mix of aspects is vividly captured in the case of Colin, who until shortly before the research interview was a team leader in a manufacturing workplace. He described his concern to manage the paperwork essential to his job in such a way that he could spend some part of each day on the manufacturing floor, where he and others engaged in an enjoyable competitive game – but ‘without winners’, he emphasised. The game is simply to produce the best quality and greatest number of ‘welds’ (the firm made metal cases for electronic components) and Colin combines pride in his skill as he comments ‘I wouldn’t allow myself to be beaten’ with an explanation that the workplace was ‘just like a family’.

Clark and Arnold propose that generativity may have ‘narcissistic or agentic motivations as well as communal or altruistic ones’ (2010, p. 33). That proposition reflects a comment made by an adviser who worked with some of the older people who were our respondents. (The study included discussions with a small number of such advisers.) This adviser particularly commented that career change in later working life gave the chance to follow personal interests, often of a more creative nature than previous work roles. The adviser based much of her initial discussion with older people around outside-of-work interests and hobbies that might be developed into some form of employment or self-employment. This could include creative use of ‘talents and interests that may until now have remained dormant’ (DfES, 2003).

Box 10.1. Choosers, survivors and jugglers

Choosers

- highly qualified (mostly graduates);
- professional/managerial;
- positive reasons for job change and retirement;
- high incomes;
- home owners;
- stay or retire from choice and for interest;
- two-thirds male.

Survivors

- unqualified (50% have no qualifications);
- routine/semi-routine work;
- most likely group to be divorced/separated;
- negative reasons for change and retirement;
- poor health;
- if home owners – working; if renting – retired;
- two-thirds male.

Jugglers

- qualified (below degree);
- spread across socioeconomic range;
- home owners;
- working part-time;
- work in SMEs;
- after retirement may take up voluntary work;
- almost all are married women.

Source: Adapted from McNair, 2004.

Generativity links with work adjustment for older people. It gives a continuing sense of momentum in the later stages of career, and contributes to a sense of personal growth and self-worth (Clark and Arnold, 2010). Conversely, ambition in the sense of gaining promotion and ‘climbing the ladder’ wanes, for most people, with passing years. Again, generalisation is a mistake. Clark (2007) finds that ambition and work centrality remain high for about one in seven of older male workers. But for six in seven, motivation moves with age from a competitive achievement focus to a more affiliative

approach, prioritising cooperation over competition (De Lange et al., 2010). In women's careers, 'career satisfaction, achievement and success, and their desires positively to impact others' (women aged 24-35) shifts to a focus 'on contributing to their organisations, their families and their communities' (women aged 46-60) (O'Neil and Bilimoria, 2005, p. 182-184).

Careers advisers need to understand the potential for generativity to increase motivation to work and enjoyment of work. They need to be able to discuss the various forms it may take, and frame 'giving back' in terms that resonate with the particular client. Further research is also needed to explore types of generativity, and development of generativity over the decades from mature adulthood to the final stages of working life.

A further pressing need is for research to examine possible differences between men and women in both regards. Flynn and McNair (2004) noted distinct gender distributions of their 'choosers, survivors and jugglers' (Box 10.1).

Are Flynn and McNair's (2004) 'jugglers' (predominantly married female) located in O'Neil and Bilimoria's (2005) 'pragmatic endurance phase', identified as a typical middle phase in their study of women's working lives? If so, will some or all of them progress to O'Neil and Bilimora's third stage of 'reinventive contribution'? What are the factors that contribute to such development, and is the notion of 'reinventive contribution' a different expression of the same notion as generativity?

10.3. Implications for career guidance and counselling

Career guidance has become an embattled profession in England, although an understanding of career guidance as an expansive professional role exists in some European countries. The reflections offered here on the professional role of careers advisers can only sit uneasily where authoritarian policy and management dictates constraint on the ways of performing the work role and narrow measurement of outcome 'targets'. An expansive view of professionalism, in career guidance as elsewhere, places value on reflective and reflexive practice. Careers advisers then can develop questioning of both their own and their employing organisation's skill and knowledge base.

Such reflection may address who offers career guidance as well as how they offer it.

Is guidance better provided by careers advisers who are themselves of an age to experience changes in time perspective and work motivation? Or can

these constructs be developed in training for careers advisers of all ages, to the extent that the adviser's age is not relevant? Research in the UK leading to the DfES's report on challenging age (DfES, 2003) concluded that older people welcomed the sight of some older staff, particularly on the 'front-line', but that respect, understanding and empathy from staff who were good listeners and client-centred was paramount. The report proposes 'third age champions' among career guidance staff, to 'act as sources of special expertise to other members' (DfES, 2003, p. 15).

'Third age champions' might then be the focus for identifying how to offer career guidance services. Such staff could develop expertise and bring knowledge of conceptual frameworks such as those explored in this chapter to management and delivery of career guidance service, cascading knowledge and skill as appropriate to other advisers.

10.4. A research agenda

Further research is needed to develop and evaluate careers advisers' practice and how it suits the needs of their older clients. There are broad indications of how those needs differ from the career needs of younger people, but a dearth of research addressing the specific group in the decade up to and the years following conventional retirement age. Few of the studies cited placed the age group 50-70 years at the centre of attention, and some excluded them completely (comparing younger with much older people). Many of the studies included only men or only women, although career patterns and career/life concerns are inevitably different.

Three strands relating to time, respect and 'giving back' have been reviewed here. Further research is needed into the interrelationships between future time perspective, the psychological contract, work motivation and generativity, both across the decades of later working life, and whether different between or common to women and men. O'Neil and Bilimoria (2005) review women's development psychology, and propose that distinctive aspects of women's development is relevant to their career development. This may have an impact additional to the impact of their child-bearing and family responsibilities. Almost all studies to date have been cross-sectional, so do not acknowledge age cohort differences, which are the subject of much comment as 'baby boomers' reach retirement age and generations X and Y constitute the younger adult workforce. None of the studies cited gave regard to change throughout the period from age 50 to age 70, although within any 20-year period of human

life, much will change. Cate and John (2007) recognise that viewing time as a bipolar construct may be a western perspective. Time may be perceived in a 'more multidimensional and fluid' way (p. 199) in non-western cultures, with implications for perspectives on career development.

At European level, attention is increasingly being focused on both the policy context and professional delivery of career guidance within the broader context of lifelong learning (Sultana, 2008; Cedefop, 2009). This chapter argues for a continued link between policy and practice in career guidance and the emerging policy concern with the ageing population, and particularly the older workforce. Experience of later working life is important in its own right, but it also has direct impacts on both health and financial wellbeing in oldest age.

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PART 3

Making it work – Successful guidance and counselling in EU countries

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CHAPTER 11

Maintaining senior employment: some lessons from best practices in France

Fabienne Caser

In 2009, ANACT (French national agency for the improvement of working conditions) carried out a study on companies' best practices as regards maintaining or bringing senior employees back to the workplace. Involving 40 French companies of varying sizes, status and business sectors, the study shows that action taken to foster senior employment concerns three complementary dimensions: preserving employee health; developing their skills; and fostering worker commitment. The practices identified cover a broad range of initiatives, focusing both on the work environment (working conditions, human resources management practices, management methods) and on employees (recruitment, training, etc.). They include vocational risk prevention and job development anticipation initiatives, designed not solely for senior employees, but for all company employees in general. Some of the practices involve employee guidance or counselling, in particular for employees who have reached career end, through various training, vocational review, preparation for sharing of experienced-based know-how or entrepreneur support systems. With regard to this type of action, the study shows that the basic features of such systems play as an important part in fostering job maintenance for seniors as do their consistency and interplay with the employees' work environment. It also shows that it is important, when designing and implementing such systems, to consider certain features specific to the senior audience, and to focus on the preliminary step, that is mobilisation of those who might benefit from the programme.

11.1. Introduction

In 2009, ANACT carried out a study on companies' best practices as regards maintaining or bringing senior employees back to the workplace, on behalf of the French General Commission on Employment and Vocational Training (DGEFP) and the French Labour Administration (DGT) (Bugand et al., 2009a).

The study was carried out in a distinct political and legislative setting, which gradually brought the topic of senior employment back to the fore, from end-2008 onwards. Readers will recall that, despite a degree of progress, France continues to post one of the lowest employment rates in the 55-64 age group (38.9% in 2009, Eurostat), with an average of 46.0% in EU-27 (Eurostat). Another significant indicator of recurring issues in maintaining employment for senior workers on the labour market in France is that the actual average age of work cessation has remained stable at around 59 for several years. At age 59, more than one of every two workers has exited the labour market.

For about 10 years, the French government has initiated several measures to support longer working lives, but the results have not been very encouraging. In 2009, a new step was taken. Companies with fewer than 50 employees were encouraged to set up an agreement or an action plan in favour of senior employment before 1 January 2010. Should they fail to institute it, they could face a financial penalty (1% of payroll).

Against this entirely new backdrop, the study shows that action in favour of senior workers is possible, also in smaller companies, and provides companies with concrete tools to assist them as they develop their action plans (Bugand et al., 2009b).

In the first part of the chapter, background information about the study, including the methodology and global results will be provided. In the second part, the aim is to analyse, in finer detail, several undertakings that echo guidance and counselling practices for ageing workers.

11.2. Study methodology and framework for analysis

In carrying out this study, a pragmatic approach to the concept of best practices was taken. First and foremost, these practices were considered local initiatives yielding favourable outcomes, as regards maintaining and bringing senior employees back to the workplace.

A total of 40 companies – of which 12 small and medium-sized companies (SMEs) – were examined. This is significant because SMEs usually claim to

have no capacity or ability to introduce measures for ageing workers. The study was conducted at two levels: first, collecting and analysing available general company documentation, human resources management methods, senior employment maintenance policies and practices; and second, interviewing those involved in the process (company leaders, human resources managers, worker representatives, employees), to gain a better understanding of their intentions and achievements and take stock of existing viewpoints today. The inquiry process, which lasted an average of one to two days, was then recorded in monographs, summing up the background information, issues at stake, intentions and achievements and actual outcomes. No specific size or business sector criteria were applied, when looking to capture, above all, the most significant initiatives and most diverse range of situations and practices.

Senior employment maintenance or return to the workplace is dependent on employability, which in turn results from dynamic interaction between:

- (a) characteristics of employees' work environments, which determine the extent to which they foster professional development;
- (b) employees' abilities and their development conditions, the way in which they are mobilised and the conditions of mobilisation.

This accepted meaning refers to a contemporary approach of the concept of employability, dynamic and interactive, combining individual and organisational, internal and external dimensions, that many authors embraced (Gazier, 1990; 2006; Finot, 2000; Hagekimana and Roger, 2002).

Cedefop defines employability as follows: a combination of factors which enable individuals to progress towards or get into employment, stay in employment and progress during their careers (Cedefop, 2008, p. 70). Finot (2000) points out two types of individual determinants of employability: characteristics (personality, potential, desires, values, network) and behaviours (responsiveness, capacity to work autonomously, difficulties, assumption of responsibility, adaptability). In a more recent article, Saint-Germe (2004) enumerates the ways human resources management can foster employability: conditions of completion of work fostering initiative and creativity, vocational training not only devoted to adapt oneself to the present job but also to develop broader skills, mobility opportunities conducive to learning, and recognition methods including helping employees elaborate new career plans. As far as ergonomics is concerned, Marquié (2010; Marquié and Delgoulet, 1996; Marquié and Ansiau, 2008) points out that the nature of the job activity itself can affect development of employees' cognitive resources. Firms fabricate employability or unemployability, especially when they stabilise employees in

a job, without giving them opportunities to change (Gazier, 2009).

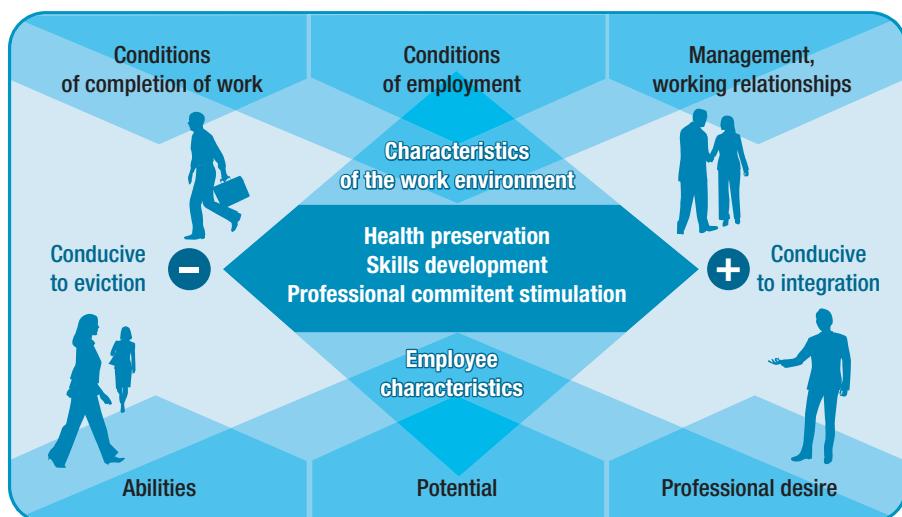
The wide range of situations possible, whether with respect to the characteristics of the work environment (employment conditions, conditions for carrying out work, in connection with management and recognition methods), or the individual's characteristics (abilities, potential, professional desire) necessarily entail complex and multifaceted interactions and, as a result, various practices.

In any case, in these interactions lies the core of worker employability (defined as exclusion versus integration), which will be described in the study as a combination of three broadly-spanning dimensions, as already developed in Savereux et al. (1999), namely:

- health: is there a risk that companies' practices deteriorate employee health or do they help preserve or even foster it;
- skills: do administration and management practices in place contribute to devaluing employee skills or do they foster skills development;
- professional commitment: do companies' practices cause employees to maintain a distance and thus also look to retire as early as possible, or do they foster employee commitment throughout careers?

Figure 11.1 depicts representation of employability, used as the matrix for analysing the approaches considered.

Figure 11.1. Representation of employability



Source: ANACT.

11.3. Key findings

Forty companies' practices were examined and described, with respect to:

- (a) areas of action covered and combination thereof, in accordance with their primary focus (health, skills or commitment);
- (b) types of practices, depending on whether they were more or less geared at the individual or/and the environment and depending on whether they were guided more by action in the field of human resources and/or the field of task accomplishment conditions;
- (c) action targets (individual versus group, seniors versus all ages);
- (d) action timeframes, depending on whether these were preventive and/or remedial;
- (e) implementation procedures (scope of initiative, types of players involved).

Based on the analysis, the first success factor identified in the initiatives taken appears to be the degree to which they are connected with the organisations' performance objectives. In this sense, the initial issue identified by companies does not necessarily pertain to the senior age group, even though features specific to that population can be uncovered along the way. Therefore, at the outset, the question is not so much determining how to keep seniors active in the workplace as understanding how seniors came to appear a beneficial resource – or a problem – for companies, as they strive towards their objectives.

The following two main models were identified:

- (a) defensive thinking (senior employment maintenance is approached as a problem): the challenge is to adapt skills or lower the costs arising from a decline in health indicators);
- (b) offensive thinking: (senior employment maintenance is a prerequisite to durability): the challenge is to retain skills, attract new resources and build loyalty in them.

Regardless of the question set out initially, many companies carried out (internally, or with assistance of an outside party) a diagnostic review prior to taking action. This review was used to set the process in motion, both by bringing out and spreading knowledge about the issues at stake in a senior employment plan, and by better delineating the company's particular situation and paving the way for mobilisation. This stage proved particularly important when creative action was to be taken, in which company members – and, first and foremost, members of management – were not accustomed to playing a part.

The practices observed varied greatly (no ‘one best way’) and were combined distinctly in each case, according to the situation and strategies of the actors. In accordance with the issues specific to each company and with the characteristics of the populations, the processes instituted generally sought to address three main issues, more or less as a priority: protecting senior health, developing and maximising their skills, and mobilising their commitment in the workplace. However, the study also showed that, in particular where time is concerned, the approaches aimed at protecting health can involve action to improve conditions of completion of work (ergonomic workstation arrangements, adjustments to work organisation or content – task allocation, workload, cooperation structures, etc.), as well as action on human resources management and management practices (setting out professional pathways to prevent extended exposure to difficult working conditions, mentorship assignments making it possible to alleviate duress in working conditions, flexible or reduced working hours at career-end, recognition of experienced-based knowledge, etc.). The various types of action are not closed off from one another: health and skills are both prerequisites for continued commitment in the workplace, and feeling competent and dedicated to one’s work can have positive effects on one’s physical and mental health, etc. Approaches will be all the more outcome-rich when all three dimensions are considered, even gradually.

The study also shows that action that has an effect on employment maintenance for senior workers is not necessarily aimed at older workers at the outset. In some cases, measures are taken for all employees: initiatives to prevent work constraints also applying to the young population, but more difficult to take onboard by older workers; general thinking about job and career path developments in the company, which can be used to contribute to assumptions about opportunities that can open up in the latter portion of employees’ careers, etc. In other cases, it can be appropriate to conduct initiatives specific to senior workers, due to certain features specific to them: tailored support during major redeployment in which previous experience is called into question, transition procedures between career and retirement, career-end incentives, etc. In other words, there is a balance to be struck between highly-focused and broader initiatives and it, too, varies with each company.

Lastly, a large part of ageing well in the workplace depends on everyday decisions on team organisation, work allocation, skills development, etc. Generally, it is important there is awareness among all actors in companies and in particular among management, in light of its key role, of the various aspects of ageing in the workplace.

None the less, while the range of action triggers to be used has been relatively well identified, avenues to progress can likely be found in relation to work organisation. Generally speaking, companies do not take on this task at the start, but once they do, often after having ‘used up’ the options that appear more natural to them such as individual workstation adjustment, it can turn out fruitful for both employment maintenance and company performance. Addressing senior employment in companies must be an opportunity for organisations to change their thinking about work organisation and business models. For the employment maintenance process to be effective, there must be willingness to see the principles established within the organisation shaken up and rebuilt on different foundations. This ability to learn, foresee situations and revise the operating mode generally contributes to company performance.

11.4. Guidance and counselling practices for ageing workers: lessons learned from the study

First an overview of the types of systems observed will be given, before describing in detail three significant approaches and explaining the lessons learned from them. As a conclusion, some recommendations will be outlined.

11.4.1. Types of practices observed

Almost one third of the approaches considered in the sample involved initiatives aimed, in various forms, to guide employees, particularly ageing workers, on possible directions for their careers, and/or supporting them in the change process. Table 11.1 offers an overview of the types of system observed, the background to their inception and the population targeted.

Approaches mainly focused on two of the three factors concerned: skills and professional commitment. In the approaches targeted on skills, the types of systems involved are mainly support programmes for redeployment and mobility, including career-reviews, training, or systems preparing experienced workers to pass on their knowledge. In the approaches focusing on professional commitment, the types of systems involved are career-end management systems, including for instance later career-reviews. In most cases, ageing workers were not the sole targeted population of the programmes used. In some cases, they were a priority. But they did constitute a large part of the measures’ benefactors.

Table 11.1. Types of system, background and target population

Company	Background	Type of system	Target population
• school • call centre • clothes producer • steel producer • pharmaceutical company	Major change in strategy and business lines, sometimes including restructuring Skills	Support programmes toward redeployment and mobility: career reviews, training	All workers Ageing workers = priority audience, in some cases
• granule mining company • plastic furniture producer • silk producer	Departure of skills deemed strategic to company Skills	Preparing employees to pass on experience-based knowledge	Experienced employees with key skills
• medical centre	Need to prevent professional wear and lower absenteeism Health	Support system aimed at internal redeployment	All employees
• research centre	Agreement signed for senior workers, following change in retirement terms Professional commitment	Career-end management (later-career reviews, foresight-based job and skill management and jobs reserved for seniors)	Ageing workers
• entrepreneur	Structure dedicated to entrepreneur support Professional commitment	Support programmes for entrepreneurs	Entrepreneurs

Source: Author.

In fact, the targeted population's distinguishing feature was not age, but the fact that they were either:

- (a) experienced workers with key skills; or
- (b) workers with seniority and one long-standing job in a changing environment.

Some systems were run solely by company resources (human resources management or departments carrying out late-career reviews at a research centre, a multidisciplinary group involving the occupational medical services in charge of fostering a return to the workplace for individuals after a long-term absence at a medical centre), while others were entrusted to outside service providers (preparation for skills transfer, some training initiatives). Still others were carried out jointly, as was the case at a pharmaceutical company, when it conducted its employee career reviews.

11.4.2. System features and outcomes

Ageing workers generally benefited from the programmes identified: they helped them to transfer their knowledge, redeploy into another job or gave them more confidence to start something new.

Key factors of success are closely connected to programme design, the work environment and individual characteristics of the ageing worker. Main difficulties companies had to cope with are the level of interest to commit to a programme of change. Enrolment was in some cases below expectations.

To illustrate, three types of system will be described more in depth:

- (a) a support system for those redeploying into new jobs;
- (b) a system to assist those developing internal or external job mobility plans;
- (c) a system to prepare those asked to pass on their experience.

It appears that these systems are significant, considering both their representativeness and wealth of lessons to be learned from them.

After a description of each system, components identified as key success factors by stakeholders involved or based on analysis, will be listed and classified in accordance with the following typology:

- (a) features inherent in the system itself;
- (b) features resulting from the environment in which it is carried out (organisational, human resource management, managerial).

Outcomes, issues encountered and the lessons learned will also be described and, where possible, areas requiring special attention with regard to the senior population will be highlighted. Where necessary, lessons learned from other similar systems observed as part of this study, or, in some cases, as part of other ANACT undertakings will complement the analysis.

11.4.2.1. The call centre example: guidance to redeploy into new jobs

The company and the programme

The number one in customer relations in France. Call centre was originally a 150-employee company, specialising in direct marketing. The company's businesses

are changing: virtual communications, through various IT media and call platforms, has taken over from more traditional paper-based customer relations. This meant that some 50 people, whose work involved use of lamination and document enclosure machines, found their jobs under threat. Some of these individuals were the oldest and most long-standing workers in the company.

The company instituted a *nouveau départ* (new beginning) programme, to work toward the following aims: convincing employees to redeploy into other jobs and support them to make this move successfully. It proceeded from a broader forecast-based jobs and skills management agreement (*gestion prévisionnelle des emplois et des compétences* – GPEC). To ensure appropriate job mobility management, the GPEC agreement calls for job mapping, interjob cross-bridges and job fact sheets. Interjob cross-bridges are used to outline possible pathways between different jobs, set out in terms of skills expected, as laid out in the job description sheets. The tools draw upon the job observatory, a labour dialogue and information and exploration body dealing with developments in the company and its activities.

The ‘new beginning’ system is a comprehensive programme. It includes communication, training and support, at all stages of the process, as well as mobilisation on the part of all employees and members of management in the originating and destination work sectors:

- (a) introduction to new job: tour and interaction with the employees, all team players mobilised to extend the best possible welcome;
- (b) support employee’s ability to integrate new skills: identification of skills already in place and aptitude tests in the workstation;
- (c) training: one month of external training in IT and the basics of telephone-based customer relations;
- (d) entry into new position and upskilling: one month of internal training on tools specific to the company, with a specially-trained mentor;
- (e) follow-up: a weekly appointment with the human resources manager to check progress throughout the training period. Return to the previous position if the training does not proceed well, or extend duration of the training period, where necessary;
- (f) recognition: certificate of completion awarded at public ceremony, to give recognition to employees who have taken the step to change jobs.

Key success factors

Success factors related to system design are:

- (a) flexibility in duration of training period: if some employees needed more time to learn, it was possible;

- (b) a process of reassuring employees upon entry into training period: the first step was to identify and acknowledge competences already acquired by trainees in their former jobs. This was to give them more self-confidence in their capacity to learn;
- (c) external IT training: employees took pride in doing this training, which very often helped them to keep pace with their children, as far as new technologies are concerned;
- (d) internal training based on work situations: trainees were guided during one month by a more experienced employee of the call centre, to give them confidence in their capacity to adapt to their new job situation;
- (e) regular individual monitoring: the human resources manager met trainees regularly to follow their progress.

Success factors related to environment are:

- (a) clear pathways between the business lines and transparent skill requirements: this was made possible by manpower planning;
- (b) secure mobility system, option to return: if employees changed their minds or did not complete the training programme, they had the possibility to go back to their former jobs;
- (c) steady managerial support: managers met newcomers in the call centre regularly to be sure their integration was successful;
- (d) acknowledgement of new skills: the company planned to organise a little event and deliver a certificate to the employees concerned, on completion of the programme.

Many of these success factors had already been identified earlier in research on ageing workers' capacity to adapt to new technologies (Marquié, 1995) or on ageing workers engaged in vocational training (Delgoulet et al, 1997).

Outcomes and steps requiring extra care with regard to the senior population

A long monolithic experience and a strong occupational identity directed adaptation of the training system. Nevertheless, at the time of the survey, the commitment of older workers to the mobility programme was generally below expectations, at approximately 30 employees of 53. But those employees were highly committed: only two who had volunteered for the programme did not complete the training.

Several types of barriers emerged, all of which related to attractiveness of the new job from the participants' perspective: image of working in a call centre, variable working hours, and loss of extra shift work compensation.

The population in question is distinctive for its extensive seniority in a relatively stable job up to that point, a professional identity structured over time and in line with the job's values, and a ratio between potential benefits and efforts required that can be less appealing to older workers. Thus the change process that must be triggered is complex and requires that employees must be ready to gain new skills, and the company provides support. It may be during the period just prior to embarking on a change process that more time should have been taken. However, the project's timeframe did not make this possible.

11.4.2.2. *The pharmaceutical company example: guidance to develop job mobility plans*

The company and the programme

This 2 200-employee division of a major pharmaceutical company, operating in a sector undergoing radical changes, has learned the lessons of a previous redundancy plan: particular issues arose in redeploying employees, most of whom were high-seniority and had often been in the same position for years. The division decided to implement a more strong-willed employability development policy. Deploying it through a GPEC agreement, the human resources department designed the Escale programme open to all employees, though priority was given to employees above age 45.

The first step for programme participants was to embark on a career review, carried out through alternating periods of personal and individual work, using materials provided by the company, and taking part in a series of interviews with the human resources manager in charge of support (three interviews minimum). During this time, employees were able to take stock officially of their skills, analyse their career paths and prospects, and adopt a position on current and future job activity. At each stage, employees were given the option to continue or exit the programme.

In some cases, the review gave rise to a new career plan. When the plan turned out complex or removed from the employee's job activities, the employee was taken into the second stage of the plan, during which more specific guidance was provided, alongside closer assessment of the prospective change to determine feasibility. During the process, human resources managers were able to mobilise an entire range of specific tools that made it possible to take the review further. There were extensive resources available: personality tests or image feedback (Quick Insight, 360°), external individual tracking by a specialist consultant, coaching, job exploration initiatives and referrals to internal or external professionals.

Key success factors

Success factors related to system design are:

- (a) strong human resources mobilisation: managers were able to devote time to communicate, and provide regular individual monitoring;
- (b) time allowance: most of the process took place during working hours;
- (c) review carried out by external third-party (corporate human resources or external consultant): this helped to distinguish it from the usual assessment process led by managers and to show a larger range of internal job offers;
- (d) impact of group sessions at start of process: these sessions, run by a consultant, helped to reassure colleagues about expressing similar fears, through group interaction between employees.

Success factors related to environment are:

- (a) clarity of pathways opened: this was made possible by manpower planning (job mapping, cross-bridges);
- (b) means of encouraging mobility: internal job marketplace opened, one-time assignments offered, corporate human resources dedicated to project;
- (c) management trained to support the approach: informed about the programme's objectives, they were more likely to provide steady managerial support for the relevant employees.

Outcomes and steps requiring extra care with regard to the senior population

Of employees above age 50, 51% took part in the programme and accounted for 32% of the Escale programme headcount, though they make up approximately 20% of the total headcount. Of older workers who chose to sign up for the Escale programme, 90% did so after the first interview. Slightly more than 26% of older workers who entered the programme reported it impacted on their career paths (internal assignment, internal or external mobility, development in current position, internal plan).

However, overall, ageing workers benefited less from the programme initiatives designed to foster employability or mobility. This outcome is likely to be due to the socioprofessional categories into which most seniors fall, namely manual workers or supervisors, who have limited internal development opportunities for the time being.

This illustration confirms:

- (a) the positive effects that an initial career review period can have in stirring an older population into action, when the population has experienced little change up to that point: this is a time dedicated to creating the confidence

and security needed to look ahead to a different future. It is also a sign of the company's recognition for the employee;

- (b) importance that needs to be given to the programme before signing on. With the pharmaceutical company, group information sessions instituted when the system was launched and offered to all participants at the first meeting, seem to have played an important part. Run by an external expert, they made it possible, through interaction between employees, to reassure and, in some cases, defuse their fears about the system;
- (c) importance of interaction between the programme and the work environment. In this case, lack of thinking about what kind of opportunities may be offered to manual workers might disappoint them and discredit the whole approach.

11.4.2.3. *The granule mining company example: guidance to pass on experience*

The company and the programme

A few years ago, this 70-employee granule mining company found itself facing many unforeseen departures in the ranks of its most experienced employees. Over a period of three years, 80% of the extraction staff changed, shaking the company to its foundations. In this industry, where there is little vocational training and where skills develop first and foremost through hands-on experience, know-how of senior staff was suddenly lacking and the company had trouble hiring and building loyalty in its new staff.

The company had an opportunity to set up a tailor-made system adapted to its characteristics. Spearheaded by a consultant, the approach was built around ensuring skills transfer from senior employees to less-experienced ones and new recruits. It gave priority to skills gained through experience, such as operating movements, sensitivity to the product, tips and pointers – all of which are difficult to consider in reference bases on employee activities and skills. It was built on a methodology involving several different stages:

- (a) opportunity diagnosis: broaching issues, measuring feasibility of embarking on a system easing transfer of experiential knowledge (conditions needed, prerequisites);
- (b) identifying critical experience-based know-how: identifying the activities where proficiency can only be achieved through experience, analysing their degree of criticality (strategic, influence of experience, risk of loss, lack of existing training), choosing tutors and identifying potential beneficiaries;
- (c) mobilising players in the system (mentors, trained personnel, management) and training those transferring knowledge: getting

employees with critical skills ready to become mentors, identifying situations conducive to effective transfer, drawing up an action plan, setting individuals in motion, providing support, creating a secure environment conducive to transfer;

- (d) implementing transfer and assessing knowledge gained: monitoring the transfer process to identify issues and help put together relevant responses, measuring impacts: skills gained, pathways, organisational changes;
- (e) formally instituting best practices: officially identifying the critical know-how passed on, and capitalising on the said know-how and the processes by which transfer is to take place.

Three people served as mentors at the granule mining company: an older worker aged 61, with 35 years' service; a 45-year old employee with 25 years on the job; and a young operations manager, who had already built up significant experience. Six newly recruited staff members were able to benefit from the transfer initiative.

The know-how identification stage was described as being particularly important. The process undertaken with management and older employees helped bring to light the experience-based know-how in the job (four types of strategic know-how were identified, giving rise to implementation of four transfer initiatives) and, more broadly speaking, the skills gained over the years, their nature and their value for the company: machine setting, tips and pointers for working safely, communicating information in a noisy environment, etc. Altogether, these focus areas showed all those involved that they were in fact employed in full-fledged professions.

Key success factors⁽⁴⁰⁾

Success factors related to the training process are:

- (a) identify, with experienced workers, critical work situations that put experiential knowledge to work, and appear conducive to learning;
- (b) ensure that the skills to be gained are actually experience-based and that they can only be learned on the job;
- (c) mobilise all internal transfer players: experienced worker(s), learner(s), work team(s), manager(s);
- (d) jointly draw up an action plan that identifies critical work situations, plans out work periods and time between employees, the resources and

⁽⁴⁰⁾ The granule mining company example, along with other examples in the industry, see Caser and Conjard, 2009.

conditions needed to enable training as well as the monitoring and assessment thereof;

- (e) provide employees with the conditions needed to overcome complex work situations together: this may require modification of work situations to help learning, to simulate them, in particular when real-life work situations do not enable knowledge transfer, due for instance to productivity constraints or quality requirements, or to analyse real-life work situations, to guarantee learning. These ways of doing refer to Barbier's (1992) typology on training through and in work.

Success factors related to work organisation and management are:

- (a) management practices that ease and encourage cooperation and sharing best practices in work teams (availability, ability to work as a team member, time spaces for talking about work and the difficulties it holds);
- (b) flexible and empowering work organisation, conducive to learning;
- (c) recognition of skills gained and transfer undertaking.

Outcomes and steps requiring extra care with regard to the senior population

The granule mining company, like most companies in the quarries and materials sector that have tested this approach, secured very positive results by providing support for the knowledge transfer process, in particular through support for mentors (new skills developed, apparently more quickly, in employees who benefited from the programme) and by employees (mentors felt more comfortable in performing their tasks).

For older employees selected to act as mentors, several effects were observed, which contributed to better self-image, greater motivation or less duress during this latter portion of their careers: the skills they had gained through experience were optimised, they saw it was important that they pass on their expertise before leaving, they were assigned to long-term mentoring projects, those with medical restrictions were able to enjoy tailored working conditions at career-end, intergenerational cooperation was improved and older workers were able to move to other jobs once their skills had been transferred.

This programme, which was not only open to older employees, none the less offers insight into the points to watch for when dealing with this population:

- (a) great importance needs to be attached to mobilisation of relevant employees: some processes almost failed because mentors, with retirement looming a few years ahead, wondered about what kind of future they might still have in the company following the transfer, or felt inadequately recognised by the company up to that point. Employees

need to find benefit in passing on their experience. For this reason, it is important to give consideration to the issues at stake for them, in particular the possibility of continuing to work under good conditions;

- (b) particular importance needs to be given to the experience-based knowledge identification stage. Philosophers, pedagogical experts, didacticians, psychologists and, more recently, managers, have long taken an interest in learning through experience. Piaget (1974) was one of the first to model the processes in experiential learning. According to him, most of the knowledge individuals use is unconscious and, to 'derive a lesson from an experience', the said experience must be explicit and subject to thought. The American psychologist Kolb later added to that model by developing an experiential learning cycle, *Kolb's learning circle* (1984), based on an alternating cycle of reflection and experimentation. Lastly, Dewey (1938), an American philosopher and teacher, focused in reflections on the ties between theoretical and practical knowledge. According to him, there are two ways for individuals to learn through experience: through trial and error, which improves their operational and emotional experience, and by reflecting on their own action. From that action, a theory will emerge which, in turn, will guide their action.

Recent professional didactics research on skills development in and through work provide further insight into these issues. According to Pastré (2005), 'there can be no action without building experience, and thus learning', though he still distinguishes between 'incidental learning', unintended and of which one is not necessarily aware, and 'intentional learning', which refers to action undertaken for educational purposes. This intentionality leads to a further distinction, between 'non-didactic' and 'didactic' situations. While rote learning, arising from situational chance, falls within the former category, setting up a mentoring system can meet, provided certain conditions (intentionality, mediation, time of reflectiveness, etc.), the definition of the latter.

The summary put together by Le Boterf (1997) based on the work carried out by Kolb and Piaget, suggests an experiential learning loop that emphasises the need for distance and reflective analysis on the part of subject, with regard to the practice in question. That reflectiveness, which he refers to as 'the third dimension of skill', comes in addition to the first two, namely, action and use of resources. It entails a stage of expression and retelling of the experience. For individuals to do this alone is difficult, so it is necessary for a mediator to guide them.

In highly-experienced employees, know-how is sometimes so deeply integrated, due to extensive practice, that they are all the harder to access

when the time comes to identify them. It is common knowledge that experience can trigger the appropriate movements or the right decisions, regardless of the complexity involved. This is particularly true with older workers. The knowledge-based experience identification and mentor training stages, which include articulating experience, putting it into words and shaping it into a story are decisive factors if such processes are to be a success. It is difficult for the individual to carry out this process alone, and a competent mediator needs to be appointed to show the way. The ‘intermediary’ role played by local bodies such as OPCAs², professional organisations (CPNEs³, observatories) and consultants, has proved decisive in raising companies’ awareness and supporting them as they consider and settle some aspects of gaining and passing on experiential knowledge (Caser and Conjard, 2009; Masingue, 2009).

11.5. Recommendations

Lessons learned from these three examples are very similar to lessons learned from other companies with guidance and counselling practices. It is as much the features intrinsic to these systems as well as their consistency and interaction with employees’ work environments that appear conducive to helping older individuals active in the workplace. Consequently, work on both of these aspects, whatever the setting, appears fundamental.

The approaches observed in the study, while rarely tagged as having been designed solely for senior workers, consider certain features specific to the senior population, not in general, but in specific situations: for example, a long-standing job in a changing environment, a strong job-specific identity, deeply integrated competences, calls for adaptation of systems. In the call centre case, a long monolithic experience and a strong job-specific identity can drive adaptation of the training system. Without this adaptation, it could be quite difficult for a worker with long tenure in a single job and not many opportunities to learn, to acquire new competences.

Where ageing workers have to transfer their experience-based knowledge, a key success factor is help of a mediator. The more experienced you are, the more this experience is integrated: people are not always conscious of why they do things in a particular way and sometimes simply cannot explain why they work the way they do. The role of the mediator is to help experienced workers to identify these specific deeply integrated competences they are not conscious of, and the critical work situations on which learning will have to be based.

Career-end management systems must consider that ageing workers usually see things differently from when they were young: they may have poorer health, they have a shorter professional view and may need to reorganise their priorities in and outside work. To set up a new vocational project during this life period means to be able to take all these dimensions into account.

The final recommendation focuses on attention to be paid to the period just prior to embarking on a programme, when designing it. Companies have to consider ageing workers' specific issues. For example, when asking ageing workers to pass on their knowledge, it must be done in a way from which they will benefit. If they do not see any advantage or if they fear being made redundant, or if they feel it is going to be much work and they are already tired of the job, they will not commit to the system.

In the call centre case, some ageing workers who were offered other jobs thought that it was not worth the effort, because the new job did not make sense to them, and they did not have much time left in their professional lives.

Older workers' commitment may be a delicate matter, because of substantial fears, lack of incentive, or difficulties to appreciate the benefits of further investment in their careers. These issues have to be fully discussed before committing to a system, which requires devoting some time to this step. It could involve individual monitoring, but in some cases, it appears that a more collective approach can also help. For instance, group information sessions, run by a consultant, can reassure colleagues by providing an interactive platform to express common fears and defuse them, which is very effective in removing a key barrier to career development later in life.

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CHAPTER 12

Guiding and counselling adults in Portugal: new opportunities for a qualification

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Portugal launched the ‘New opportunities initiative’ in 2005, to ensure 12 years of schooling as the minimum level of qualifications for young people and adults. Under this national programme, new opportunities centres were set up to act as entry doors to qualifications improvement and provide recognition, validation and certification of competences. Low-skilled adults are generally unaware of their own aptitudes, and badly informed of the qualification opportunities available. The centres are pivotal in clarifying their prospects of qualification and employability. Based on a holistic approach to adults’ abilities and expectations, this guidance and counselling method eases acquisition of knowledge, competences, and higher qualifications levels. Moreover, this method has been key in motivating adults to participate in other lifelong learning activities, as well as in encouraging their personal fulfilment, professional self-confidence, and self-esteem.

12.1. Adult education policies in Portugal

Qualification and schooling levels of Portuguese citizens is significantly lower than in most other European Union and OECD countries (Gomes and Capucha, 2010). Distribution of working population schooling levels is actually the inverse of average distribution in those countries; lifelong learning rates are one of the lowest in the European Union ⁽⁴²⁾. These data reveal the weak position of Portugal compared to other European partners, which is also an obstacle to economic and social development. Therefore, modernisation,

⁽⁴¹⁾ National Qualifications Agency (ANQ, IP), Portugal. The authors wish to thank Georgina Marques, Teresa Gaspar, and Fernanda Araújo for their collaboration.

⁽⁴²⁾ EU-27 average is 9.6%; Portugal has a lifelong learning rate of 5.3% (Eurostat, 2010).

competitiveness and social welfare of the country depend, to a great extent, on ability to tackle this structural weakness effectively.

However, despite the extent of this problem, for many years adult education policies did not face it systematically. Between 1974 – the year when half a century of dictatorship ended – and the 1990s, public policies for adult education were still characterised by:

- (a) a compensatory approach, namely second-chance education that repeated the curricula and methods of formal education;
- (b) occasional, intermittent policies or measures;
- (c) a lack of official expertise and financial investment (Freitas, 2009; Guimarães, 2009).

From the mid-1990s, public policies on adult education opened up to modern trends and approaches, and embraced the importance of adult education as a contributing factor to social and economic modernisation and development (Freitas, 2009). On the other hand, some lessons were learned from the past. A case in point was the method used in experimental adult education courses, designed by non-profit local organisations after the democratic revolution of 1974, based on prior knowledge and experiences of low-skilled adults (Guimarães, 2009). In the late 1990s, public policies began to implement a national system of recognition and validation of competences in partnership with these local organisations. The qualification pathway was based both on the adult's experience and development of skills needed in a more demanding and changing labour market, thus contributing to modernisation of the country.

In 2005, the recognition, validation and certification of competences (RVCC) system became a key element of the new opportunities initiative – a government programme aiming to adopt a massive and assertive adult education policy to address, as effectively and systematically as possible, serious low qualification levels in Portuguese society.

12.2. The new opportunities initiative and the national qualifications system

The new opportunities initiative (⁽⁴³⁾) is a governmental programme launched jointly by the Ministry of Labour and Social Solidarity and the Ministry of Education. It is a clear political commitment in budgetary, institutional,

⁽⁴³⁾ <http://www.novasopportunidades.gov.pt>.

instrumental and operational terms. To operate a programme of large scale and scope, it was necessary to congregate education and professional training policies, which were traditionally separated in Portugal. It was also crucial to place adult education and training at the centre of educational policies.

The programme is fully integrated into national educational and professional training structures, and benefits from financial support of the national strategic reference framework 2007-13⁽⁴⁴⁾. Its main goal is to overcome the structural qualifications deficit in Portugal, and establish secondary education as the minimum qualification level for all.

The initiative is based on two fundamental tenets. The first is that secondary level vocational training must be a valid option for young people, providing an effective answer to inadequate levels of educational attainment and high numbers of dropouts. The second tenet (which will be detailed later) is that adults must be given a new opportunity to complete and further their studies, raising qualification levels of the working population, especially those who entered the labour market with low educational levels.

Within the initiative framework, the aim of increasing adult qualification levels is approached through deployment of a flexible qualifications offer, which is specifically structured around an adult's existing competences. It endeavours to recognise and build on competences that adults have already acquired – through education, training, professional experience, or in non-formal learning situations – by structuring a qualification pathway tailored to the reality of each individual, and designed for both personal development and the needs of the labour market in a particularly demanding economic context and at a time of accelerating change.

The national qualifications system, created by decree-law in 2007, (Decree-Law 396, 31 December 2007), took on the objectives outlined in the Initiative, providing the institutional, technical and financial instruments necessary to achieving these objectives effectively. Consequently, the national qualifications system is structured so that all training activities are aimed at furthering both educational and professional qualification of adults. This may occur by means of a double-certified⁽⁴⁵⁾ training in areas included in the *National catalogue of qualifications*⁽⁴⁶⁾, or through the RVCC. Certification resulting from training

⁽⁴⁴⁾ Under the national strategic reference framework 2007-13, the mentioned policies are financed by the human potential thematic operational programme, which manages the European Structural Fund in Portugal.

⁽⁴⁵⁾ Low vocational training levels demand that the national qualification system envisage double certification, provision of both an academic and a professional qualification.

⁽⁴⁶⁾ <http://www.catalogo.anq.gov.pt>.

based on this catalogue and certification obtained through accreditation of prior learning have equal value at national level.

This integrated approach also demands that work carried out by educational operators should complement that of professional training operators. In this context, two important national qualifications system structures have emerged: new opportunities centres and training providers. Adults may directly access the education-training modality they require at a training provider, especially adult education and training courses (⁴⁷), and certified modular training. However, new opportunities centres remain, under the national qualifications system framework, the entry doors for those wishing to improve their formal qualifications (Gomes and Simões, 2007). Currently, there is a nationwide network of 453 centres, promoted by various organisations (private and public schools, professional schools, professional training centres, local authorities, companies and business associations, regional and local development associations, as well as other training providers).

The centres serve citizens who are aged 18 and over, and who have acquired knowledge and competences during their working lives but have not finished the 4th, 6th, 9th or 12th years of schooling, or have not obtained a professional qualification. The main lines of action for new opportunities centres are to guide and counsel adults on the most adequate qualification pathways, and to design and develop RVCC pathways.

12.3. Guidance and counselling towards a qualification

Throughout their lives, individuals pass through various transitions in the course of their qualification and occupation: from basic level to secondary and then to higher education, from education to vocational training, from education to employment, from one job to another, from employment to unemployment, from employment to retirement. Guidance and counselling plays a key role in supporting decisions, stressing the responsibility of the individual in setting goals and implementing strategies for successful career paths (Council of the EU, 2008).

(⁴⁷) EFA courses are currently one of the key tools in adult training strategy. Targeting low qualified adults over 18 years old, these courses are flexible, offering education and/or training pathways based on the learner's starting point.

Effective lifelong guidance provision is a crucial task of new opportunities centres. By encouraging and supporting individuals' participation in education and training they also support realistic and meaningful careers. The centres play a major role in helping adults design their academic and/or professional qualification pathways, through a somewhat extensive set of activities that aim to 'reveal' each candidates' individual profile – personal and sociographical characteristics, academic and professional histories, motivations, interests and expectations. All adults enrolled in these centres undergo diagnosis and guidance processes regarding their career and qualification pathways. Components of this stage are:

- (a) reception: welcoming and enrolment of adults, detailed presentation of several training paths in the national qualifications system where the adult lives or works;
- (b) diagnosis: analysis of the candidate's profile, involving more individualised activities such as reviewing the CV, supported by an interview. This interview is vital, as a form of individual support, in helping adults build a degree of self-knowledge. Its aim is to work with candidates to fit realistically their expectations to their pathway. The quality of the relationship between the adviser and the adult candidate supports a proper diagnosis that will result in an equally well-adjusted route;
- (c) guidance: provide candidates with all information to guide them towards the most appropriate qualification choice. Results from analysis of the candidate's characteristics and track record (including prior education and training, life experience, aspirations, motivations, needs and expectations), identified during the diagnosis process. In addition to guiding each adult to the most suitable qualification solution, this step also encourages each candidate to take responsibility for the choices made and for integrating into and pursuing their qualifications pathway.

The method used in these three intervention stages/dimensions is clearly defined in a specific document (Almeida et al., 2008). In the centres, guidance practices are implemented through diverse individual and group activities, seeking provision and collection of information, as well as forms of skills development to support decision-making and career management. Responsibility for carrying out each of the stages lies with the diagnosis and guiding counsellor. This advisor works directly with each candidate as well as their immediate environment. This involves seeking out relevant information for guiding and integrating adults into training offers that meet their needs and are available in the area where the adult lives or works, as well as researching the more pressing needs of the local labour market.

This method ensures that the national qualifications system is able to offer adult learners a range of qualification modalities that are convenient, flexible and adjustable to the personal and professional life of each individual, but also based on an organisational framework that allows for capitalisation of training through modularity and complementarity between the different education-training instruments. Guidance and counselling instruments and methods are crucial. Today it is possible for each person to discover and define their own best qualification pathway through adult life, with help from specialised technicians at new opportunities centres. Diagnosis and guidance lead to a negotiation process between advisors and candidates to ensure that each individual can truly find the best qualifications solution.

12.4. Recognition, validation and certification of competences

As a result of the diagnosis process described above, an adult may be referred to a skills and competences recognition, validation and certification process, or to an alternative qualification pathway. Skills and competences recognition, validation and certification processes are developed solely at new opportunities centres. Alternative qualification pathways are always developed outside the centre, considering local supply and access criteria. In these cases, guidance is defined by a personal qualification plan, which states the training path that must be followed. Processes adopted by the national qualifications system are based on tested models, while simultaneously anchored in the latest and most innovative lifelong learning processes discussed since around 2000 (Gomes and Capucha, 2010).

Validation of non-formal and informal learning becomes a pressing issue in a society with low levels of formal education, such as Portugal. Experience shows that low levels of formal education are not necessarily equivalent to a lack of knowledge and skills. This is why validation of formal and informal learning is high on the agenda, particularly in lifelong learning paradigms. During adulthood, there are multiple situations and contexts in which a person is creating and imagining ways of solving actual problems and thereby building knowledge (Paiva Couceiro, 2002). Such knowledge can – and should be – socially recognised and validated.

Validation models are relevant in rapidly ageing societies, such as the European. Older adults have a wider range of acquired experiences and knowledge that should be valued by society, and recognised in reference to

competence standards. This recognition may enable a longer stay or reintegration into the labour market, as it retrieves useful knowledge for current job requirements and identifies training needs. At the same time, ageing workers see their knowledge (and themselves) valued and are encouraged to greater participation in lifelong learning activities.

Adult participation in validation activities is not limited to seeing their skills identified, but is itself a formative process. Acknowledging strengths and weaknesses of their own learning results, adults recognise their skills and knowledge, and also identify their education and training needs. Formative assessment can also be a useful tool for guidance and counselling adults for lifelong learning pathways. This formative approach to validation (Cedefop, 2008) is thus crucial. However, in structured and demanding knowledge societies, validation must also be linked and aligned to formal systems, as it is not enough just to recognise skills. Formal valuation, a diploma or a concluding statement, officially certifying learning outcomes is needed – a summative approach (Cedefop, 2008).

As low Portuguese qualification levels demanded effective, large-scale solutions for large-scale problems (Gomes and Capucha, 2010), and more flexible and integrated education and training approaches, validation of non-formal and informal learning seemed the most appropriate strategy for the massive qualification needs of the population. Consequently, in the Portuguese context, it was essential to move from local validation practices through their integration into national systems of adult education and training, considering the effectiveness of these strategies in attracting specific target groups for lifelong learning activities, as well as developing ‘learning to learn’ skills that improve more active participation in learning activities throughout life.

Therefore, the recognition, validation and certification of competences (RVCC) model recovered previously proven practices of andragogy approaches (adapted to adults). It is based on diversity, through mobilisation of individual work, individual evaluation, and education-training methods integrated into social contexts (Gomes and Capucha, 2010). The philosophy inherent in RVCC processes is that candidates are able to extract maximum value from everything learned, in various contexts (formal, non-formal and informal), throughout their lives. The RVCC process is conducted according to a specific key-competences standard for adult education and training (Alonso et al., 2001, 2002; Gomes et al., 2006a; 2006b). Thus, candidates’ life experiences and skills are explored and highlighted by the national standard. The process can lead to full certification (if candidates validate and certify the skills necessary to obtain the complete qualification) or partial

certification (if candidates do not validate and certify all the skills necessary for qualification). Certification may lead to a school-based (or professional) qualification equivalent.

This process may be initiated at any time and its duration is variable, as it depends on the candidate's level of autonomy, skills and availability, among other factors. However, an average length of these processes is defined – the basic level lasting between three to six months, and the secondary from nine to 12 months (Gomes and Simões, 2007).

The validation process derives from activities adapted to the applicant's needs and profile, namely the balance between individual and group sessions. The axis of the validation and certification process is construction of a competences portfolio based on the applicant's life-story where key competence standards must be evident.

In case of partial certification, recognition of acquired competences also allows structuring complementary training pathways, fine-tuned on a case-by-case basis, as it offers a possibility of defining learners as a result of their prior learning achievements. Therefore, learners will see their key competences, acquired in non-formal and informal contexts, recognised and validated. They may, thus, position themselves on training pathways built only out of those competence units (modules) they lack (by taking up adult education and training courses, EFA, courses with flexible curricula or enrol in a modular training course, where units are capitalised and certified). These are essential principles for ensuring complementarity between competence recognition processes and acquisition of tailored training (shorter and modular) that some adults need.

A competence recognition process may also lead to full certification of competences, finalising the qualifications pathway with attribution of a diploma. In these circumstances, certified candidates are then invited, as part of their work with the team, to define a personal development plan designed to reinforce their involvement in lifelong learning activities as well as professional or other projects. The plan is, in this context, an important tool for lifelong guidance since it supports definition of lifelong learning and career projects, properly planned and scheduled.

Recognition of competences thus induces individual awareness of ability to learn and learning how to learn. This awareness promotes active engagement of the participant in seeking new qualifications and/or drawing up new life projects.

Methodological strategies used in these processes are a balance of competences and work on key competences (listed in specific reference

sources for adult education and training (⁴⁸) based on a candidate's life history.

In addition to a real increase in levels of qualification, RVCC processes have shown clear and notable gains (⁴⁹), in terms of acquisition of key competences, such as literacy skills (reading, writing and speaking), e-skills (computer and Internet use), learning to learn skills and critical thinking (⁵⁰) (Valente et al., 2009). Additionally, use of ICT tools has increased as a result of taking part in RVCC processes (Lopes et al., 2009). Finally, significant gains made in terms of aspects relating to the 'self' (Lopes et al., 2009) are highlighted, that is, self-esteem, self-confidence and motivating adults to participate in social life.

12.5. Guidance dynamics in new opportunities centres

Adherence to the measures laid down in the new opportunities initiative – 'Adult strand' has led to an unprecedented social movement in adult education and training in Portugal. As can be seen from Figure 12.1, whether through new opportunities centres, intended as true entry doors to the national qualifications system, or through direct access to an education or training offer, there were almost 1 700 enrolments in the initiative between 2006 and 2010 (⁵¹).

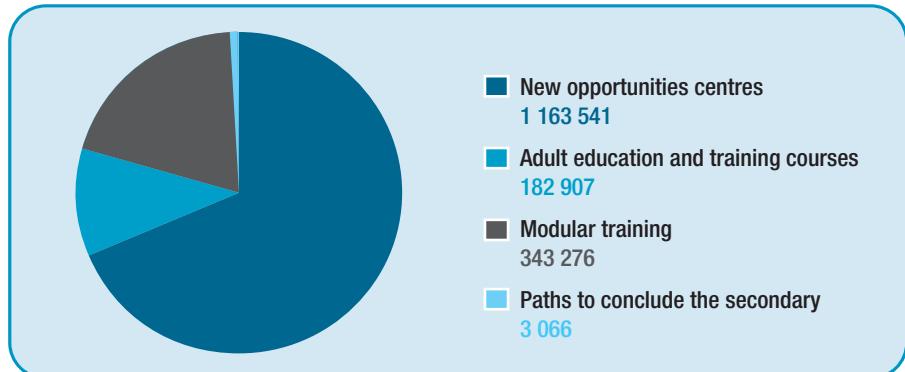
(⁴⁸) See Alonso et al (2001, 2002); Gomes et al. (2006a; 2006b). These key-competences standards were made considering the European Unions' directives on these issues.

(⁴⁹) Data collected via external assessment scheme of new opportunities initiative. Oversight of this large-scale educational measure is in the hands of a group of national and international experts who have developed an external, independent assessment scheme. This scheme involves collection of data on quality levels and impact of the initiative. It also seeks to support self-regulation of the system in future through application of permanent supervisory instruments.

(⁵⁰) The eight key competences assessed result from comparative analysis of the Portuguese key competences standards used for adult education (Alonso et al., 2001; 2002; Gomes et al., 2006a; 2006b) and the European key competences framework (European Commission, 2007).

(⁵¹) The number of enrolments is higher than the number of candidates enrolled, as some adults have enrolled several times, especially in modular training. Participation is, however, clear.

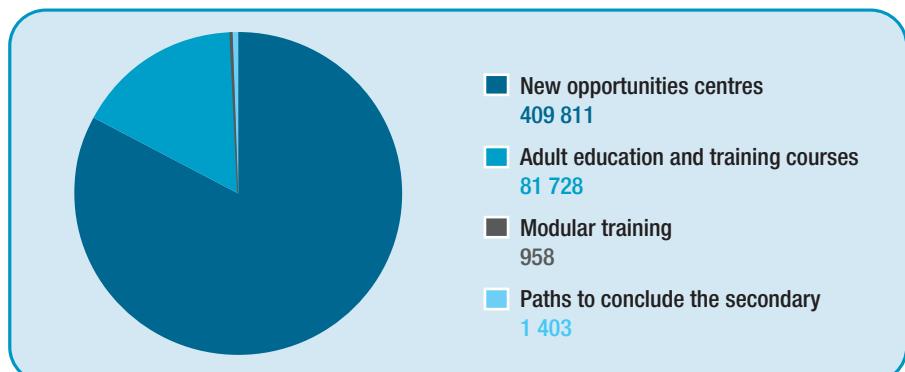
Figure 12.1. Enrolments in the new opportunities initiative, between 2006 and 2010⁽⁵²⁾



Source: SIGO online database, provisional data updated on 31 March 2011.

Considering cases where qualification pathways through one of the modalities of the national qualifications system were completed, there were more than 480 000 certifications between 2006 and 2010, as shown in Figure 12.2.

Figure 12.2. Certifications in the new opportunities initiative, between 2006 and 2010



Source: SIGO online database, provisional data updated on 31 March 2011.

⁽⁵²⁾ Paths to conclude secondary school are flexible qualification paths designed for those who attended, but did not finish, secondary level education at the proper age, or those who attended school under study plans that are already or nearly obsolete.

It is important to understand the types of guidance used and some of the dynamics of the current national qualifications system. The main activity indicators for new opportunities centres (as detailed in Table 12.1) show increasing take-up of the various offers under the national qualifications system that mirrors growth in the number of centres (from six in 2000 to 453 in 2010).

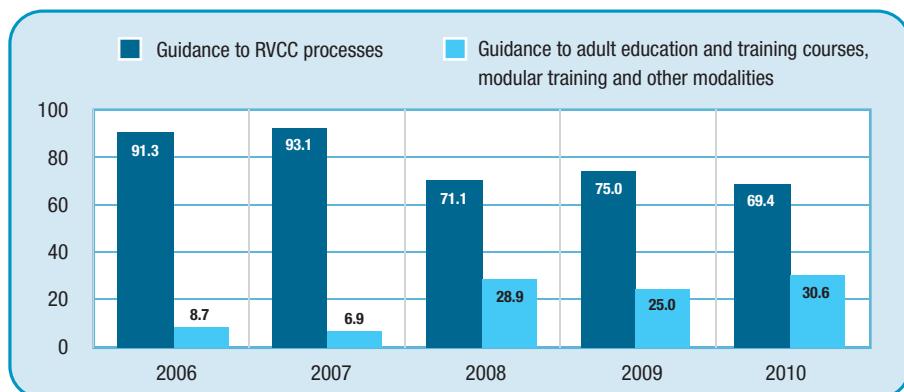
Table 12.1. Main activity indicators of new opportunities centres, between 2006 and 2010

Activity indicators	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	Total
Enrolments	77 246	282 005	283 500	277 554	243 236	1 163 541
Individuals enrolled	1 079 694					
Guidance to EFA courses, modular training and other modalities	4 883	8 369	64 429	62 462	67 769	207 912
Individuals guided	211 473					
Certifications	25 079	55 084	74 400	112 334	98 722	365 619
Individuals certificated	337 366					

Source: SIGO online database, provisional data updated on 31 March 2011.

These data and those shown in Figure 12.3 also reveal two important aspects of guiding adults.

Figure 12.3. Guidance in new opportunities centres since 2006, by type (%)



Source: SIGO online database, provisional data updated on 31 March 2011.

First, significant numbers of adults guided to RVCC processes accounted on average for almost 80% of candidates guided by new opportunities centres between 2006 and 2010. Initially (2001 to 2005) RVCC processes were the only activity carried out by the centres (the remainder being called at this time RVCC centres). Today, this qualification modality remains more sought after than the others, proving to be a suitable method for meeting expectations of low-qualified adults who seek out the centres. Messages of ‘my experience counts’ or ‘starting to study again without having to go back to square one’ (used as slogans in one of the first advertisement campaigns for the initiative) seem to have reached their target audience, while throwing up other challenges we address below.

Second, and despite take-up of RVCC processes, there has also been growth in guiding candidates to training modalities outside new opportunities centres, showing that demand for qualifications offers, through attendance of courses and education-training sessions, is a current reality, one that can be established during guidance defined in the centre or following a partial certification through a RVCC process.

These data also show some trends and challenges. First, adults tend to arrive at centres with very high expectations of RVCC processes, which can lead to resistance to accepting guidance proposals for another qualification modality. High expectations of RVCC processes are particularly linked to full certifications, also leading to resistance in accepting that, in some cases, evidence submitted by candidates only allows partial certification, which must then be followed by another qualification modality, of short duration, to complete the training pathway. It is important to reinforce initial guidance of candidates to training modalities outside centres, as well as RVCC processes with partial certification followed by guidance for adequate training modalities. Counselling activities are crucial.

Second, once a suitable qualification modality for a candidate’s profile has been identified and agreed, the centre’s team sometimes has difficulties in finding relevant training opportunities in the area where the adult lives or works. Strengthening networking practices among local operators is also essential to overcome these obstacles.

Among candidates guided to RVCC processes, statistical data show almost no gender difference, with a slight decrease of guidance targeted towards women (in 2010, data show 49.8% women against 50.2% men). Although a non-significant difference, low qualification rates, an important target of the new opportunities initiative, are higher among women than men (2001 census data – INE, 2009). These data point either to lower adherence of women to

qualification pathways, or low capability of the initiative to mobilise women.

In terms of age (Figure 12.4), there is a slight increase in the number of older adults among candidates guided to RVCC processes. This trend mirrors growth in the number of enrolments at new opportunities centres, showing that the work being done is reaching its target audience – the adult population of working age. It is in the group of over 44 that involvement of adults in the initiative has proportionally grown.

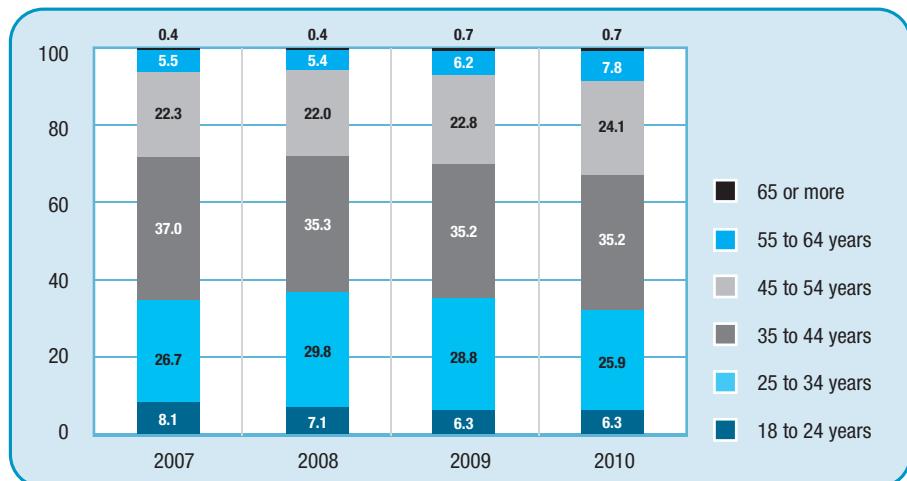
From analysis of guidance in terms of candidates' employment status (Figure 12.5), there has always been a greater tendency towards shorter training pathways (such as RVCC processes) among the employed. However, guidance of the unemployed towards this training modality is increasing. This change reflects, perhaps, increasing unemployment rates in Portugal which has resulted not only from sector-based reconversion of the Portuguese economy (which has been in effect since 2000), but also, over the past three years, from the ongoing international economic and financial crisis which has had repercussions in many countries around the world. This increase in RVCC processes has also been due to specific measures aimed at reintegrating the unemployed into the workplace by improving their educational and professional qualifications through coordinated qualification and employment measures. Data for enrolment rates at new opportunities centres show that these centres started off by mainly attracting those in work and that it was only later that the unemployed also began to enrol in increasing numbers.

These data also show a slight increase in the category 'others' among those guided to RVCC processes. Given that most are retired people, this training modality seems to be suitable to, and demanded by, adults outside the labour market.

Analysing both gender and age group (Figure 12.6), of particular note is the slight increase in the number of older women among candidates guided to RVCC processes. The 2001 census data (INE, 2009) show a higher number of low-qualified women among ageing groups, so accreditation of prior learning (via RVCC processes) can be seen as a suitable choice of ageing women to achieve higher levels of qualification.

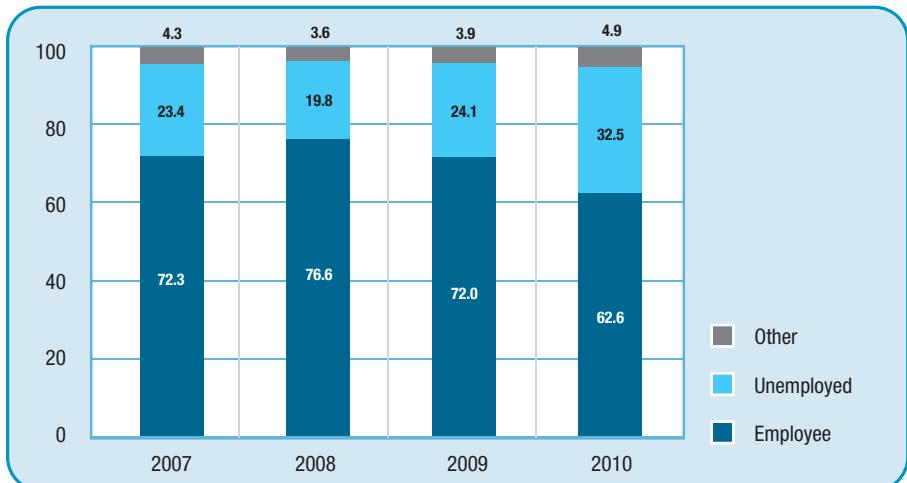
In terms of age, there is also a progressive increase in the number of older adults among candidates guided to training offers outside new opportunities centres (Figure 12.7). This trend mirrors growth in the number of enrolments at centres, and also shows growing preference of ageing workers for longer and more structured training pathways (such as EFA courses). These older workers are, in most cases, the least qualified, and therefore have to attend more structured and conventional training programmes.

Figure 12.4. Candidates guided to RVCC processes by new opportunities centres since 2007, by age group (%)



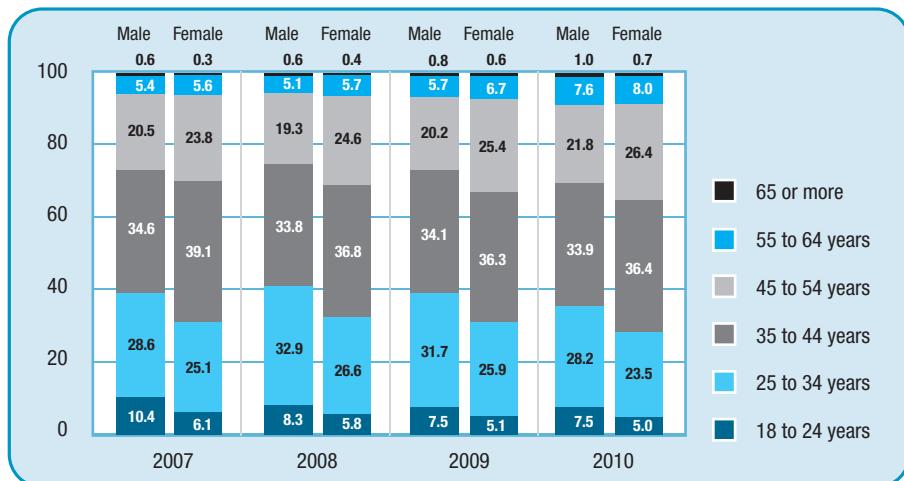
Source: SIGO online database, provisional data updated on 31 March 2011.

Figure 12.5. Candidates guided to RVCC processes by new opportunities centres since 2007, by employment status (%)



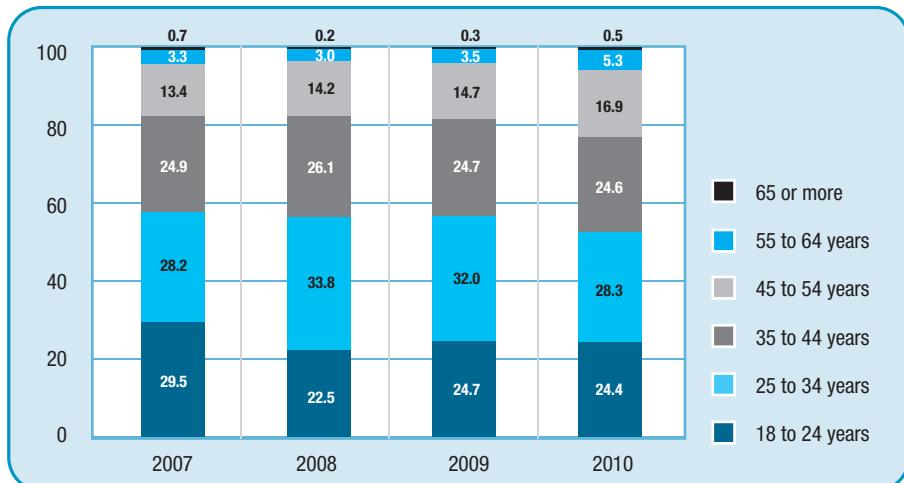
Source: SIGO online database, provisional data updated on 31 March 2011.

Figure 12.6. Candidates guided to RVCC processes by new opportunities centres since 2007, by age group and gender (%)



Source: SIGO online database, provisional data updated on 31 March 2011.

Figure 12.7. Candidates guided to training offers by new opportunities centres since 2007, by age group



Source: SIGO online database, provisional data updated on 31 March 2011.

12.6. Discussion and conclusions

Recent approaches to the concept of guidance (Council of the EU, 2008) retain its traditional elements such as the notion that competences, motivations and expectations of individuals are the basis for decision-making along the education-training-employment axis. However, it is, at the same time, an approach that has been broadened to include all citizens, of any age, at any stage of their lives and which aims at taking a decision to manage an individual pathway that may go beyond qualification and employability.

In Portugal, guidance and counselling for the adult population is provided in (and technically and financially supported by) existing services, like new opportunities centres. This measure places guidance and counselling in the centre of services provided to the adult population, being, by these means, more effective.

Methods adopted in centres specifically are, as mentioned before, centred on each individual candidate. They consider their sociographical characteristics, their motivations, expectations and abilities. Whether in the stages of reception, diagnosis and guidance, or in RVCC processes and drawing up personal development plans, adults are the main actors in the skills-recognition and supported and negotiated decision-making processes for embarking on qualifications pathways under the national qualifications system.

Particularly for ageing workers, RVCC processes can be seen as suitable for achieving higher qualification levels. On one hand, ageing workers are provided with an opportunity of accreditation of prior learning built on a lifelong experience. On the other hand, validation of informal and non-formal learning is based on national standards that are labour-market driven and updated, also providing higher levels of employability for these workers.

Work between candidates and guidance counsellors taken up both in diagnosis processes and RVCC also assists in developing lifelong learning skills, as well as motivation for learning, training and working activities and projects, which is vital for workers often marginalised in the labour market. Participation in RVCC processes is also developed in a group/social environment, increasing social (re)integration of ageing workers and widening their social networks. Finally, increasing use of ICT accompanying RVCC processes is also an important achievement, particularly for some ageing workers not used to dealing with it.

It is important to add that experiences gained under this national initiative are raising new issues and challenges for the Portuguese national

qualifications system. There are four main challenges for guidance of adults by new opportunities centres:

- (a) adults tend to arrive at centres with very high expectations of RVCC processes which can lead to resistance to accepting guidance proposals for other qualification modalities. High expectations of RVCC processes are particularly linked to full certifications, also leading to resistance accepting that sometimes evidence submitted only allows for partial certification, which should be followed by another qualification modality, of short duration, to complete the training pathway. Negotiation practices employed in the diagnosis and guidance stages need to be strengthened and fine-tuned;
- (b) once a suitable qualification modality for a candidate's profile has been identified and agreed, centre teams sometimes have difficulty in identifying relevant locally available training opportunities. This real difficulty questions the multidimensional and complementary approach between structures and systems that is assumed by the national qualifications system. Networking in the same area is of critical importance in seeking suitable solutions. Such work increasingly positions centres as key players in balancing the supply and demand for qualifications among the adult population;
- (c) this is a new challenge and a new field of improvement in this national initiative: to transform the current new opportunities centres into lifelong learning centres, improving their quality and efficiency patterns, strengthening their capacities of targeting individuals and employers' needs and boosting their local networking;
- (d) both the national qualifications system's operational teams and the stakeholders that regulate the various structures need to work together to maintain high levels of quality in a context of significant scaling-up of the system.

Despite these difficulties, the new opportunities initiative and its instruments have sought to offer a response to the issues inherent in the concept of lifelong guidance as presented here, as well as to the challenges of lifelong learning which is so highly valued in education and training policies within the European Union.

As regards the Portuguese experience, special mention of the fact that this initiative 'has enabled construction of a diversified network of operators (in education and training, from both public and private sectors), design of innovative modalities tuned to the poorly-qualified segment of the adult population and development of a set of instruments deployed and updated as

a function of new demands placed on the system and its operators' (Gomes and Capucha, 2010).

This reflects the ongoing challenge of lifelong learning, which has to be embraced in public policies designed to promote it and in strategies drawn up to support it, as is the case with guidance and counselling given to adults on qualification pathways.

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CHAPTER 13

A Swedish programme for phasing out older employees based on consent and social responsibility

Roland Kadefors, Marianne Blomsterberg

Redundancy following organisational downsizing puts those discharged in risky positions. Their chances to remain in the labour market depend to a major extent on their employability. This chapter aims to analyse the facilitating role an employer can play in supporting the continued employability of those to be made redundant. Lessons drawn from a case study imply that both organisational and personal factors must be considered concurrently. A clear competence profile supports employability and allows an element of consent in the downsizing process to be introduced. A successful career change for those made redundant is eased by individual counselling, offered and financed by the employer.

13.1. Introduction

There are many reports on organisational downsizing related to closure or reorganisation of workplaces (for an extensive review see Cedefop, 2010). Such processes invariably evoke discontent, insecurity and productivity loss in the organisation during the downsizing programme. For people made redundant, changes may mean new opportunities, but more often lengthy periods of unemployment, ill health, and/or marginalisation in the labour market. For the employer there is a risk of conflict or mistrust between management and unions. For society, chances are that some discharged persons will become an economical burden on social security systems.

It is self-evident that downsizing cannot always be avoided; at times it is necessary. Alternative models can reduce negative side-effects of stereotyped ways in which such processes are usually carried out.

Large-scale downsizing projects were carried out in the Swedish labour market, for instance in shipbuilding and the car industry, where parallel organisations were created and given sizeable resources to support those becoming redundant. However, the present chapter analyses a more ambitious model: restructuring personnel based on consent and simultaneous recruitment and discharge. The central question we address is under what conditions is it possible for an employer to reach legitimate goals set for downsizing, still maintaining good relationships with trade unions, and giving good opportunities for those discharged. We present a case study of a downsizing process carried out by the Swedish Armed Forces. Special emphasis is on the innovative model applied for career switching of military officers in danger of being made redundant. Analysis of the outcomes and comparison with a more successful, but similar, project carried out at Ericsson Microwave Systems follows. Finally, the results are interpreted in the light of current organisational theories.

13.2. Age and late career

There is a growing body of knowledge in contemporary academic literature with respect to conditions that influence possibilities of a late career for older persons. For Greller and Simpson (1999) the cognitive decline with age is not sufficient to impact work performance, and current perceptions assuming declining productivity are flawed. In principle, research indicates that there is much better potential for a sustained working life for many than is usually assumed.

However, important barriers have been identified. Older professionals are 'vulnerable to diminishing rewards, dwindling networks and outdated skills' (Platman, 2004, p. 592). According to Buyens et al. (2009), the generally negative image of older workers forms, 'a self-fulfilling prophecy due to the mechanisms of stereotype threat', and this tends to affect the preference for keeping on working negatively. There also seems to be an adverse age effect related to competence development: many employers are not inclined to invest in vocational education and training of older people (Taylor and Unwin, 2001). This poses a threat to their employability due to a competence base which is not sufficiently up to date and broad (Van der Heijde and Van der Heijden, 2006).

Organisational turnover has been defined as 'leaving any job of any duration, and is usually thought of as being followed by continued regular employment' (Feldman, 1994). The mechanisms behind voluntary

organisational turnover are partly different from those behind voluntary retirement; whereas turnover is predicted by the degree of organisational commitment, retirement is predicted by work centrality and leisure activities (Adams and Beehr, 1998; Schmidt and Lee, 2008). The push and pull effects (Knuth and Kalina, 2002; Gruber and Wise, 1999) come into play: the alternative to leave the organisation must be sufficiently attractive, for instance by offering generous economical security (pull effects), or the direct or indirect pressure executed at the workplace to leave (push effects) must be strong enough to motivate the person to take the decision to leave.

13.3. The case

In 2006, the Swedish Armed Forces decided to launch a three-year project aiming at phasing out older officers with a competence profile that did not comply with current and future demands. At the same time, young soldiers and sailors would be recruited to positions where willingness to participate in international peacekeeping forces would be required. Transferring older officers to civilian jobs would be based on consent, without formally discharging them. Their military competence plus some supplementary education would make them attractive in civilian trades – this was the idea. The aims of the project were to arrive at balance in personnel quantity and competences, and to recruit and wind up personnel concurrently.

The project started with a test trial encompassing a few units, before it was extended to the entire organisation. Officers older than 38 were encouraged to apply to a programme with up to one year's pay without job obligations and access to supplementary education and a personal external job coach. Conditions included that the supervisor of the unit – the commanding officer – must approve, and that the applicant had to resign before joining the programme; this could not be revoked. Unlike many other armed forces internationally, the pension age for Swedish officers is the same as in the labour market at large. This means that the model applied could be also relevant to other areas of business where a company may wish to shrink the organisation and phase out older employees without firing anybody.

The project ended in 2009. It was then changed to a permanent career switching programme, which is currently one of the tools employed by the army in its continued endeavours to rejuvenate the organisation.

The aim of the present study, carried out in 2009, is to document the strengths and weaknesses of the project, and to identify the reasons why it

did not reach the volumes anticipated. The lessons learned from this project can help future initiatives by providing a comprehensive review of factors and conditions contributing to or hampering effectiveness.

13.3.1. Organisational background

The median age in the organisation was 42 in 2008. There was a need to recruit about 1 500 military officers under the age of 35 and to wind up about the same number of older officers. New recruits were needed for operative tasks in units and international service. It was difficult to recruit older staff officers to such tasks, and unlike new recruits they were not obliged to accept such assignments.

A stated goal was that the share of female officers should reach 9.3% by 2012. It was a mere 4.7% in 2008. In the army's view, women officers are indispensable for international missions, and recruitment of women in the new organisation is a top priority.

In the past, three-year pay and special pension benefits were given to officers who agreed to resign at age 55. They could not be fired due to the agreements made. This scheme was very popular, but it was also very expensive for the employer. The present situation is totally different. The retirement age is now the same as for the rest of the labour market: you may retire at 61, but you can decide to stay on until 65 or 67. The longer you continue working, the better the pension benefits. An officer who is made redundant before age 61 can have support for one year from a government fund, a job security agreement for government employees, also providing support for competence development.

13.3.2. Method and material

Interview guides were developed for each category of stakeholders. Structured interviews were carried out with a set of stakeholders, including officers participating in the project, job coaches, and representatives of personnel departments (human resources) and trade unions. Commanding officers and representatives of the armed forces headquarters were interviewed. About 30 interviews were carried out in all, covering 10 different military units, representing army, navy and air force. The choice of units and professional groups was made in consultation with the armed forces headquarters. However, in the reporting, units as well as individuals were anonymous for reasons of integrity, in order not to suppress critical views.

Interviews were documented by means of a digital voice recorder and note-taking. Almost all interviews were carried out face-to-face; however, for

practical reasons (a very large geographical dispersion of respondents) few interviews were done by phone. The method for recording and processing was the same in both cases. The items to be covered in the interviews were identified and sent to respondents before the interview. This helped respondents to give well thought-out answers, and whenever necessary, to consult information sources available to them in advance, for instance with respect to statistics relevant to their own unit or operation. Each interview lasted for about one hour. There was no transcription; rather, by listening and marking highlights, we could go back to recordings and obtain exact wordings. Quotes were grouped in accordance with the main areas of concern (see Section 12.4). We tried to find elucidative quotes from different groups of respondents to assess if conflicting views for each area would appear.

13.4. Results

13.4.1. Organisational aspects

A general view of many respondents in the armed forces is that openness to change is low; it is difficult to bring about change in a large, complex organisation: ‘the armed forces are an ocean liner, manoeuvred slowly, with tough resistance forces in the organisation hampering movement’ (human resources).

There is high momentum in the organisation also visible in the career switching project. Over the years, the Swedish Armed Forces have accumulated problems linked to the age and competence structure of the organisation for provisions made in employment contracts, and general unwillingness to fire officers. In interviews there was an almost unanimous view that reform was necessary to change the age and competence structure. Many respondents believed that motivation of older officers was a problem. They are neither willing to, nor obliged to do foreign service. It is difficult to recruit staff officers to such assignments, and older officers, 55+, also have problems to fulfil physical demands in field service: ‘they did not join the armed forces to go to Afghanistan’ (human resources); ‘soldiers have to carry ever heavier burdens, and officers should be good examples’ (commanding officer).

It is often a specific unit and its situation that has priority, rather than the overriding problems of the armed forces at large. Commanding officers have a strong and dominant position; they may not be persuaded by personnel officers that a change is necessary: ‘the major problem was to make commanding officers agree that this was a problem; “this is not what it looks like in my unit” ’ (human resources).

In some units career switching has not been prioritised. Some personnel officers were not allowed to make personnel aware of the opportunity without the consent of the commanding officer or head of the personnel department: 'I have not taken any information initiative in my unit. It's the obligation of the personnel department. But information is available on the intranet. I assume everyone can see it there' (commanding officer).

Many human resources representatives believe that this reluctance was one reason for the low number of applicants to the programme. Another problem was a tempo loss in the second year of the project, when the budget for the project was curtailed without notice. Many stakeholders in units believed then that the project was cancelled, perhaps based on previous experience: 'we have a tradition in the armed forces that we launch projects, and then it is with pomp and circumstance and flags flying, but then it is ended, and when we have done it, something else comes up' (human resources).

If information about the project was non-existent there was a high risk that interest in the project would disappear.

Almost all respondents emphasise that the commanding officer has a key role. And sometimes it works well: 'I had whole-hearted support from my commanding officer. No one said "no, we need you". I believe that I was wanted, but my motivation was important. The goal was that "you should be content if you leave"' (career changer).

Shortcomings in knowledge about career switching possibilities in many units depend on lack of information provided internally by the unit management. The most common argument met is concern that those who may leave are competent officers who will be difficult to replace: 'it is absolutely a different situation if the commanding officer knows that he is authorised to recruit substitutes' (outplacement); 'are we going to phase out officers now that we lack competence?' (human resources).

It is not self-evident that career switching is seen positively and as something relevant in units, for the time being. It may be a good tool in the future, but the timing is not good: 'it is my understanding that career switching is intended to phase out personnel, but I don't have any use for it. In the future, yes, a tool among others. That will be important! So far we had no need for it. We lack personnel and try to handle the situation as competently as possible. In my leadership I prioritise on the basis of the current situation at hand. Now I have to make people stay, so I don't recommend them a career change' (commanding officer).

In future, commanding officers are requested to talk about the career switch option in development talks. Many respondents believe that this will be positive

for career switching: 'It is necessary that career change is mentioned in the personal appraisal discussion. This possibility must be highlighted!' (union); 'the information must be part of the appraisal discussion, to introduce the idea of career switching. That's not how it works today' (commanding officer).

There must be transparent organisation of career switching in units, and time for personnel to carry out the work: 'the managing board in the unit must agree internally that this is part of our personnel policy, this is the way it is. We take responsibility for this way of work. We are not going to fire you; this is an opportunity for you' (human resources).

13.4.2. The target group response: incitements and barriers

Many respondents express that career switching has not reached the primary target group as intended. Officers who were needed applied; they were highly motivated and their applications were approved too easily: 'we have lost competences that we needed' (commanding officer).

Competence has not had the same emphasis as age, even though competence was in focus for the entire project. The unions were critical: 'we have been against emphasising age, it is discriminatory. The competence is essential' (union).

Several respondents believe that it is difficult to make older people switch careers. Pension age is not too distant; there may still be career possibilities in the present situation, they may feel at home with the military environment, etc.: '50+ officers have a security they don't like to jeopardise. It would be better to focus on younger ones; they have a mental capacity to go for a new career' (commanding officer).

What happens to those who apply for career switching but are rejected? There is general consent that such cases must be followed up: 'if you are refused you are disappointed. But then there must be a personal development plan. There must be good reasons for refusal: for instance, investment in a competence development plan' (commanding officer); 'if you apply and are rejected; then you have shown that you want to leave, and then you may be worse off when it comes to promotion' (union).

It is generally believed that interest for career switching will increase dramatically in the 35-45 age group when it is clear to them what the new rules and regulations actually mean. So the present situation, however difficult it may be, will fade out as the old generation retires.

A negative trend in the statistics, which counteracts the policy of having more females in the army, is that there is overrepresentation of female officers among those applying for career switching.

Would more candidates apply for career switching if incentives were better? Not everybody: 'it was not that I was not content. It was my private life, it was tedious with 200 km every day. We tried once to move, but that didn't work out, [...] I continued to commute. Without career switching I would have still been there' (career switcher).

To allow for longer than 12 months in general was not considered very helpful: a more individualised and flexible approach was needed: 'studies, longer time at university, 12-18 months, should be supported, One. two, three or perhaps four semesters should be allowed, and an additional six months plus if you wish to start a new enterprise' (human resources); 'to achieve higher turnover of personnel, more alternatives are needed [...] there should be resources for 18 months or more, and paid leave for studies. More creativity is needed!' (commanding officer); 'you should be entitled to leave for trying another job as well as for joining career change. You should not have to resign' (union).

Trade unions believed that it would be possible for the employer to give more support, if alternatives are: early pension with pay, or continued employment and lack of meaningful work tasks, both very expensive. They also believed that perhaps there should be a provision for reemployment.

What are the real barriers? Many officers are inclined to wait and see: 'Many officers are used to think tactically about their careers, there are so many ways, so many scenarios, as long as the situation remains unclear you keep a cautious attitude' (human resources).

There is general mistrust among officers with respect to how sharply the new retirement scheme will be applied. There is widespread disappointment with the changes introduced: 'I get enquiries daily from 53 year-olds who ask expectantly if there is not going to be a new pension offer after all. Belief that you have a right to receive an early pension is deeply rooted' (human resources).

The job security agreement for government employees offers general security schemes if you are made redundant. They are well-known in the organisation, and the career switching offer is by many considered not as safe and attractive: 'the union doesn't probably believe that career switching is better than the alternatives. But voluntariness is essential, that you can choose yourself' (human resources); 'I believe that you feel safer by relying on the Job Security Foundation, you don't have to apply to the commanding officer' (human resources); 'a barrier hampering career switching is no guarantee for reemployment' (human resources).

Interest to seek and apply for career switching is affected by the identity held by military officers and their relationship with the armed forces. Many

have difficulties to see themselves in a civilian role: 'the only way to stop being a military officer honourably is to retire – or to die in combat' (human resources); 'in units there is enormous comradeship. Many people who have left miss this. Solidarity within the armed forces is large. Many who have left long to be back' (union).

There are mixed opinions on how attractive military competence in fact is in the civilian market. Respondents stress leadership, but there is some mistrust: is military leadership applicable outside the army?: 'officers have sometimes a competence that is in demand, particularly if they have good supplementary education. To have military competence alone doesn't suffice! Training in leadership is not enough, it is good, but it needs to be further developed, in particular for commercial jobs with budgetary responsibility' (commanding officer); 'it is said that officers are well received everywhere, but I feel that's not always the case, they are old fashioned, hierarchical' (human resources); 'civilians have a specific competence, but what do I know as an officer?' (human resources); 'many officers lack competence for civilian jobs, they have no academic background' (union); 'they match the civilian market, but you need to switch to another branch and then there is a need to develop some things, particularly in economic depression, for instance administrative systems' (outplacement).

Admittedly, the competence of officers is difficult to validate for civilian job profiles: 'it is [...] hard to get a picture of the leadership and the training we offer. Employment consultants run their models, and then military officers and their competence are left out' (commanding officer).

How to develop clarity when it comes to competence? It is suggested that education needs to be university-based to a larger extent. You may also develop an internal system for competence mapping: 'what is needed is adequate documentation of professional obligations. Job descriptions would help internally and externally' (commanding officer).

According to outplacement consultants, other typical characteristics for officers include: their communicativeness, sociability and flexibility, and that they can handle several tasks and obligations concurrently. This may however be valid more for those who apply and join the programme than for the population at large.

13.5. Discussion

The career switching project has met different reactions in different parts of the organisation. In some units – particularly those engaged in the test phase and close to the supreme commander – intentions have been implemented, and several persons joined the project successfully. In other units activity was very low, or completely absent, even with firm directives from the supreme commander.

13.5.1. Organisational barriers: role of commanding officers

Commanding officers in units have voiced opinions such as: ‘we don’t have this problem with the age structure in our unit. There are many other things to prioritise here than to worry about the future age profile’; ‘if we lose officers in the career switching project we may have difficulties to be allowed to find substitutes’.

There are good reasons to reflect on these types of reaction. Career switching is part of current reform of the Swedish Armed Forces and its way to relate to officers’ obligations, responsibilities, terms of employment and career planning in the future. All employees will be affected. These are facts that commanding officers must be aware of.

The armed forces may be described in part as a mechanistic organisation (Burns and Stalker, 1961). Such an organisation is characterised by, for example, existence of clear rules for what needs to be done, thoroughly specified responsibilities, and vertical communication. It is a form of organisation that can work well under stable conditions. However, a mechanistic organisation has drawbacks, in particular in times of change (Börnfeldt, 2009). Units are organised by function. They all strive for more resources; their first priority is for the unit to survive and even grow. Political conflicts tend to develop, in particular when the organisation is facing overriding changes.

Some aspects related to the relationship between central management and units in the armed forces organisation can be described according to the mechanistic organisation model. The impact of the career switching project is very different in different parts of the organisation. It is evident that there is reluctance in parts of the organisation to accept overriding political and strategic realities, manifested in the career switching project. The analysis is questioned: ‘the age structure is not a problem, at least not in my unit, and not now; there is no reason to prioritise the measures asked for by central management at this time’. Managers tend to feel solidarity in the first place

with their own unit rather than with the armed forces and certainly not, with new government policies.

It is also fruitful to discuss the reactions based on theories on organisational resistance. Management literature describes how resistance to change among employees can manifest itself and be overcome. Grey (2003) gives an example of a model in five phases:

- (a) denial: employees do not realise the need for change;
- (b) defence: employees realise that change is necessary, but try to avoid it;
- (c) discarding: routines and approaches start to modify;
- (d) adaptation: employees adapt to and in the new system;
- (e) internalisation: the new system becomes a routine.

Examples of all five phases of the career switching project, can be found, concurrently, within the armed forces. This is logical considering the different conditions in different parts of the organisation. It is a process that gradually leads to full acceptance in the entire organisation. Management can further the process by giving support, and by providing incentives and positive feedback. First, it has to do with influencing managers in the organisation so their units comply fully with given intentions: inform, develop incentives (also for managers), encourage employees from the target group to apply, create good examples of people who have carried through the process successfully.

It would be a mistake to believe it is easy. Military officers have a strong professional identity. Organisations with clear professional areas of responsibility can be characterised using theories on professional bureaucracy. 'Change in the professional bureaucracy does not sweep in from new administrators taking office to announce major reforms, nor from government technocracies intent on bringing the professionals under their control. Rather, change seeps in by the slow process of changing the professionals – changing who can enter the profession, what they learn in its professional schools (norms as well as skills and knowledge), and thereafter how willing they are to upgrade their skills' (Mintzberg, 1983, p. 213).

Insufficient information in many units on the opportunity of career switching is however not necessarily exclusively a manifestation of resistance to organisational change by unit management. There is concern that if you lose a valuable officer with special skills, it is not self-evident that you are allowed to recruit a substitute, and replacement might be very difficult.

13.5.2. Individual barriers related to employability

What is employability of military officers? The concept itself is not well-defined. According to the European Commission, employability is generally understood

as ‘the capacity for people to be employed’ and ‘it relates not only to adequacy of their knowledge and competences but also to the incentives and opportunities offered to individuals to seek employment’ (European Commission, 2001, p.33). It has mostly been used to characterise the resource of individuals, with respect to how attractive they might be on the labour market, from a social and psychological perspective (Garsten and Jacobsson, 2004; Berntson, 2008). According to this view, employability encompasses personal factors, competence, physical and mental health, availability of social networks, and life style. Van der Heijde and Van der Heijden (2005) proposed the following definition of the concept of employability: ‘the continuously fulfilling, acquiring or creating of work through the optimal use of competences’. There are also contextual factors that need to be considered (Holmer et al., 2010) when it comes to the possibility for a person to remain in, or to return to, the labour market, barriers that have a systemic character that individuals cannot easily overcome. Such barriers may be with the employer or society, and can be based on negative attitudes with respect to, for example, age, gender, ethnicity and professional background.

On the contextual employability of military officers, we saw that their competence is described in terms of leadership. Competence of officers is vague: what sort of leadership? Is it relevant in a civilian organisation? Some aspects affect contextual employability. Since many belonging to the prime target group are aged 50+, general negative attitudes towards older people must also be considered and overcome.

When it comes to the individual, employability, defined in a narrow sense is widely variable. The stereotype is that military officers take responsibility, are clear, outspoken, social and full of initiative. These characteristics tend to further employability. They must also possess a high degree of self-esteem. Perceived employability is essential for a person contemplating whether or not to apply for career switching, since the perception itself is important and has consequences for how a person reacts to events in the environment. ‘If I perceive that I am employable it leads to a higher degree of self-esteem, not the other way around’ (Berntson, 2008).

Perceived employability depends on level of education and to what extent people have participated in competence development at work. It is much higher in times of economic growth than in recession. It can be concluded that competence development for the civilian labour market is essential for to what extent persons from the present target group can be career switched voluntarily. The career switching option can in the first place be expected to attract persons with documented and well-validated competence.

13.5.3. Incentives

Those who have applied for career switching can be grouped in different categories:

- (a) those who have planned for a civilian career and who already have contacts with a prospective employer;
- (b) those who feel there is no way forward in the military context;
- (c) those tired of the armed forces.

So far, interest in applying for career switching was not based on a concern for imminent discharge, closure of military units, etc. It is common practice to wait and see, and not take any risks. If you are to be made redundant, the job security agreement for government employees is seen by many as an equally good or better alternative than career switching.

Let us reflect on the psychological driving forces and barriers related to career switching. The interviews indicate an outspoken esprit de corps, identification, even affection for the military context; a sentiment encompassing the armed forces at large, but particularly focusing on one's own unit. It counteracts switching to other jobs outside the military. It is relevant to discuss these conditions in terms of theories of 'commitment'. In research on work different degrees and types of commitment to work have been identified and labelled, for example employment commitment, work commitment and organisational commitment (Mowday et al., 1982). Relatively high degrees of work commitment among military officers, namely strong commitment to their own work, in their tasks, and to the occupation, could be a hypothesis. Is there also corresponding loyalty to the organisation where they work? Allen and Meyer (1996) defined the concept organisational commitment as a psychological contract between the employee and the employer or organisation. The degree of organisational commitment is likely to affect the decision whether or not to leave in a situation such as the one in this case study. Rich scientific literature applies operationalisations of the commitment concept to enlighten factors affecting labour force turnover.

There is also ample research literature on the concept of trust between the employee and the organisation. For instance, for Rousseau et al. (1998) there are always expectations of employees on the balance between obligations of the organisation and obligations of individual employees. When employees feel obligations of the organisation respond negatively to their expectations, it is likely that commitment, wellbeing and productivity are affected negatively. A balanced relationship would further confidence, loyalty and trust. Trust in an employment relationship is a result of the organisation's capacity to create a framework that promotes such development.

Our interviews indicate that military officers show a high degree of organisational commitment, while trust may be declining due to ongoing organisational changes, in particular among commanding officers. Planned restructuring in our case study may well in the near future mean to many officers in the organisation that it is their own environment and employment that is endangered; levels of commitment and trust may then fall dramatically, and interest in career switching will likely increase.

13.5.4. An alternative strategy: the case of Ericsson

Career change is not an entirely new concept in the Swedish labour market. For instance, it has been applied in public service when organisations need to downsize. There are consultants offering programmes in outplacement. However, voluntary downsizing of one age group combined with recruitment of another can be found in only one major project, the career change project, carried out at Ericsson Microwave Systems in Göteborg, Sweden, in 2003/04. Personnel were reduced (500 left voluntarily) in some technological areas, and replaced (100 recruited) with fresh staff in other areas. Managers were instructed to have eight coaching talks with every employee, who would reflect over the situation and their future career, and then decide whether or not to stay. Those who made the choice to leave were given one to two years' pay and personal coaching to find a new job. Older employees were offered paid leave. At the end, the company thought they had been successful at 25% lower cost than if they had fired employees right off, and they had preserved good relationships with trade unions (Bergström and Diedrich, 2006).

There were clear differences between the armed forces and Ericsson projects with respect to clarity and content of the offer, and how information was handled. In the armed forces, information was curtailed at unit level, due to down prioritising by commanding officers, while at Ericsson it appears no such resistance took place; middle management was directly involved and carried a main responsibility throughout the process. In the armed forces, career switching was introduced at the same time as major organisational changes dominated the discussion, while at Ericsson the project could be given maximal visibility. The project at Ericsson Microwave Systems was also carried out in a given time period, unlike the career switching project that already from the outset was seen as a long process. There was also confusion in the career switching project on what exactly it meant if you applied. Do I dare talk to my supervisors about career development? Perhaps I will then be switched. This was clear and unambiguous at Ericsson.

An important aspect in comparing the two cases is that in the Ericsson

target group competence was easier to identify, and the average age was lower. This made employability of the group higher. Competence related to market needs stands out as a key factor in the comparison.

13.6. Conclusions

The career switching model applied is innovative and may provide older employees with much better opportunities than if discharged according to normal labour market routines. Both the Swedish Armed Forces and Ericsson were eager to show they cared for their employees, and to retain good relationships with trade unions.

To apply career switching policies is an expression of the Swedish Armed Forces' ambition to be known as 'a good employer'. To fire older employees and, at the same time, recruit young ones, was not considered in line with this ambition. And it is, from a general societal point of view, of high interest to find ways to preserve employability of older people also when they are made redundant. To make career switching voluntary and combine it with ambitious career development programmes is to assume social responsibility. It is therefore essential to find out under what conditions such an approach might be successful. Career switching incentives for the target group were insufficient, while in the Ericsson case they were sufficient. However, incentives were not very different in the two cases: about the same time of paid leave and access to personal external coaching. Aspects that were different and can be assumed to be decisive for the degree of success were information strategies and perceived employability.

There was a lack of middle management support in the career switching project: commanding officers as well as personnel managers in many units did not publicise the project, so there was insufficient knowledge about and trust in the offer; this was totally different at Ericsson, where managers were deeply involved.

Lack of perceived employability of military officers that we met during interviews seems to be based primarily on uncertainty that military competence is recognised in the civilian market. It is a problem that military competence is to a large extent poorly documented and validated. At Ericsson, senior engineers in the target group had a much clearer competence profile.

Despite the bleak outcome of the career switching project, the Swedish Armed Forces decided recently to make permanent career switching a tool in its ongoing organisational restructuring. Results from our study emphasise

the need to address the key issues of information and employability in the programme design. This lesson should be of interest to any organisation launching a similar restructuring project.

A most important condition that must be met to achieve success in a programme for simultaneous discharge and recruitment based on consent and social responsibility is to support continued employability of employees. Individual competence development planning, implementation of lifelong learning principles, and validation of competences, are key factors. Access to professional coaching services supporting individual matching based on transparent competence records is an essential ingredient of career switching.

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CHAPTER 14

Realising the potential of older workers in Scotland

Graham Smith

Scotland's workforce is ageing, resulting in a greater number of adults aged 50 and over in employment or seeking employment than ever before. This presents significant challenges, particularly for older workers remaining in the workplace, with barriers such as employer attitudes and legislation often forcing individuals to reconsider their point of exit from the labour market. Financial circumstances dictate that, for many, early retirement may not be an option. The 'realising your potential' project encouraged older adults to reengage in lifelong learning to help improve employability in later life. It was designed, tested and evaluated by the University of Strathclyde's centre for lifelong learning. The project methodology was framed around double-loop learning theory and supported individuals through a series of stages to reflect on past experiences, build confidence and motivation for future planning and learning and encourage goal setting to achieve future aspirations. Project findings suggest participation in lifelong learning varies significantly depending on background and initial educational experiences. Coping with uncertainty and managing change are also key factors affecting older workers in the current economic climate, with issues such as job security, changing career trajectory and working beyond statutory retirement age areas of concern. Also, access to appropriate advice and guidance in Scotland, for older adults would appear to be a concern, and project findings will attempt to influence policy on information, advice and guidance to ensure Scotland's national 'all-age guidance' service considers the capacities, needs and aspirations of older adults.

14.1. Introduction

One of Europe's greatest challenges is its ageing population. With many EU Member States implementing policies and reforms that encourage older adults to work longer in later life, the employment rate of older adults aged 50+ is

expected to increase significantly over the next decade. Innovative programmes and interventions are required to support older adults update their skills and knowledge and help them reengage in learning to improve their employability and ensure both economic and personal needs are met. ‘Taking no action would weaken the EU’s ability to meet the future needs of an ageing population’ (European Commission, 2009, p. 3). Paradoxically, organisations in a time of economic austerity adopt strategies which adversely affect older workers, for example, through adopting and executing early retirement/redundancy programmes. The true value of the older worker, the tacit knowledge and hidden skills which often exist can often be lost to the labour market. Further, older adults who exit the labour market aged 50+ are less likely to reenter employment than their younger counterparts (TAEN, 2009).

This chapter analyses development and implementation of empirical work carried out by the University of Strathclyde’s centre for lifelong learning. It considers the context and challenges borne by an ageing workforce as well as the correlation between lifelong learning and employability in later life. The theoretical foundation is explained and the methodology of the action research project, ‘realising your potential’, is presented before concluding with initial findings drawn from project activity up to March 2011 and reflecting on the challenge faced by many older adults.

14.2. Context

Writers in the field often make reference to ‘the ageing workforce’, ‘older workers’ and ‘later life working’ (Taylor, 2002; Hollywood et al., 2003; Loretto et al., 2005; McNair et al., 2007). It is prudent, therefore, to clarify the context of these meanings. Older workers, the ageing workforce and later life are defined and relate to individuals aged 50 and over, whether in full-time, part-time or self-employment. No upper age limit is assumed as evidence collated from the empirical work carried out includes data from individuals above the current statutory retirement age of 65 for men and 60 for women.

Scotland has a unique demographic situation compared to the rest of the UK with three major contributing factors:

- (a) since the early 1970s total fertility rates have been below the recognised replacement level of 2.1 births per woman resulting in fewer young people;
- (b) at the same time, advances in medicine and health provision combined with changing attitudes towards healthier lifestyles have contributed to increasing life expectancy;

- (c) finally, net migration has, historically, been negative with more people leaving than moving to Scotland to live. Only in the past six years has this been positive, but Scotland is now competing for workers within an emerging Europe and will continue to face challenges in attracting skilled workers in the future.

The net result of these factors is that Scotland's population, and workforce, is ageing. The average age of individuals living and working in Scotland today is 40.5 years and projected to increase steadily over the next 20 years (General Register Office for Scotland, 2009).

Public policy in Scotland suggests that individuals will have to work longer and later in life due to increasing pressures on pension funds and other public services. But here lies the paradox. The government⁽⁵³⁾ plans to raise pension ages for women from 60 to 65 by 2018, then for both men and women to 66 by 2020; while, many, predominantly public sector organisations, have adopted strategies such as early voluntary retirement or redundancy schemes which actively target older workers. Moreover, the default retirement age currently in place allows organisations to force individuals out of employment at 65, although this is due to be abolished by the newly-elected coalition government from October 2011.

Strategic decision-making processes within organisations impact on the workforce, with older workers often being adversely affected. For example, the inconsistency and considerable flux in early retirement, retirement and pension provision are ubiquitous (Vickerstaff et al., 2003, p. 273). Many private sector organisations have long since closed the door on final salary pensions with public sector organisations scrambling for ways to manage ever increasing pension costs. A common solution of reducing the number of older workers is often taken.

A further area of disparity between older and younger workers is access to learning and development. Participation rates decline with age (Schuller and Watson, 2009) and almost all talent management programmes offered by organisations target younger staff (Hirsch, 2005).

As with most European countries, Scotland's demographic profile continues to change significantly and, already in some rural areas, one in three adults of working age are aged 50 and over. The ageing workforce phenomenon will most likely continue in the future, with fewer younger workers and an increasing number of older ones. This challenge requires a major shift in the

⁽⁵³⁾ While Scotland has certain devolved powers, pensions and retirement fall under the jurisdiction of the UK government, which impacts all countries within the UK.

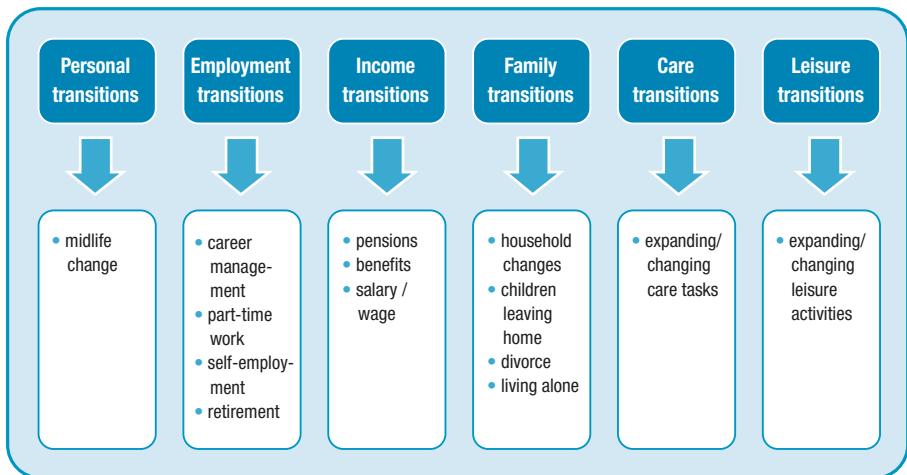
mindset of employer attitudes and perceptions of older workers, as well as changes in attitude towards working in later life by many older adults who possess a wealth of knowledge and experience and who may be forced, financially, to work beyond statutory retirement age.

14.3. The challenge

From the individual perspective, there are many reasons why older workers exit the labour market prior to retirement age. For some, the pull of retirement is strong and may have been aspirational from early on in working life. Many of the current generation of 50 to 65 year-olds observed parents and grandparents experience relatively short retirement periods, which has driven the desire to retire early and enjoy later life. This has led to a culture of early retirement which is now proving a difficult mindset to change. For others, the push towards retirement is forced upon them with many facing financial challenges that will ensure working in later life is a necessity rather than a choice. These push and pull factors can also be applied to learning participation. Bohlinger and van Loo (2010), citing the work of Shultz et al. (1998) highlight interconnectivity between factors that affect participation in learning later on in life and labour market participation. They argue that, to understand the extent to which older adults wish to participate in learning, the relationships between age, learning and work capacities must be examined.

It is also important to acknowledge the range of factors which influence an individual's capacity for working and learning in later life. McNair (2009) highlights the increasing challenge of unpaid caring responsibilities, whether for elderly parents, partners or grand-children. Declining personal health as well as changes in family circumstance such as children leaving home, bereavement and divorce can also be contributing factors. These transitions after 50 (Figure 14.1) are succinctly described by Phillipson (2002), who concludes that individuals who leave work early often experience growing disillusionment and exclusion from society.

Figure 14.1. **Transitions after 50**



Source: Phillipson, 2002.

From the organisational perspective, during a period of economic downturn, many organisations adopt early voluntary retirement/redundancy programmes, placing the older workforce, in particular, at risk of exiting the labour market. In addition, talent management programmes tend to be geared towards younger staff, with few opportunities to learn and develop available to older workers. It is important to note, however, that the extent to which the challenge of the ageing workforce is managed across the public, private and voluntary sectors varies significantly. One of the key findings of Loretto and White (2006), in their study of 40 employers across Scotland from both the public and private sectors, was the acknowledgement by employers that early redundancy programmes 'almost wholly targeted older workers' (Loretto and White, 2006, p. 322). They also suggest that older workers are more likely to remain in employment in smaller, private companies as there is often no financial incentive for the employee to retire early. This is an important point to consider when comparing workers across sectors and at different skill levels.

While popular conception among many authors (Loretto and White, 2006; Naegele and Walker, 2006; McNair et al., 2007) suggests that employers view older workers positively and recognise several desirable qualities such as reliability, experience and knowledge, the reality is that older workers are increasingly being deemed 'disposable' by many organisations. Scotland's largest local authority has recently adopted a strategy to cut 4 000 jobs held

by workers aged 50+ over a 12-month period, around 12% of the workforce (Braiden, 2009).

One of the key challenges facing both employers and individuals is changing mindsets. For employers, it is educating, informing and reinforcing key issues such as demographic change, the threat of losing valuable knowledge from the organisation and increasing competition in the future for younger workers with the necessary skills. For individuals, support and encouragement in planning and changing their career trajectory in later life is crucial as is appropriate advice and guidance on opportunities to reskill, retrain and access appropriate learning and career opportunities to help realise this goal and encourage individuals, where appropriate, to remain working longer and later in life.

14.4. The role of lifelong learning

The University of Strathclyde's centre for lifelong learning has developed and tested several projects designed to help older workers reengage in learning and explore their options in later life⁽⁵⁴⁾. Through combining 20 years of lifelong learning and employability experience, findings point towards older workers being keen to learn and develop, with many willing to explore new areas of interest. While some consider pursuing areas of personal interest, others actively explore the possibility of changing career direction and trajectory or are forced to reconsider the point at which they retire due to financial circumstances. Lifelong learning can be a crucial common denominator in both. Conclusions drawn from past studies carried out by the centre (Novotny, 2006) suggest that, as individuals age, the opportunity to participate in lifelong learning often reduces, with multiple barriers such as time, cost, low self-confidence and self-esteem. Further, encouragement and incentive to learn declines rapidly from age 45+, especially among those from more socially deprived backgrounds, and is particularly prevalent among those whose early experiences of 'formal' education have been negative. Schuller and Watson (2009) in their inquiry into the future of lifelong learning reinforce this with data provided by NIACE. Table 14.1 shows the percentage of current or recent participation in learning across the four life stages.

⁽⁵⁴⁾ OWL, older workers learning project; and AWE, advancing women's employability project.

Table 14.1. Current or recent participation in learning across the four life stages, 2008

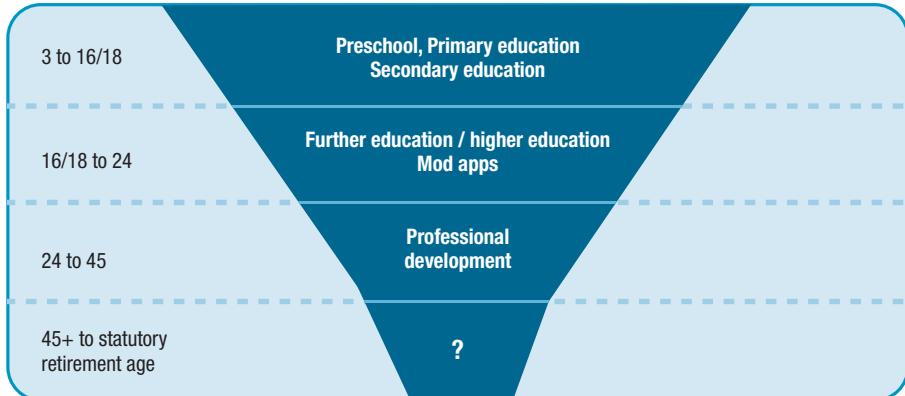
Age	18-24	25-49	50-74	75+
Percentage participation	65	45	27	11

Source: NIACE adult participation in learning survey, 2008 in Schuller and Watson (2009, p. 101).

Smith (2010) describes this as the ‘funnel’ theory of participation (Figure 14.2). In order for individuals, regardless of educational background and experience, to participate fully in lifelong learning activity, the ‘funnel’ phenomenon has to be addressed. Education in Scotland, as in most developed countries, begins at an early age with many children benefiting from preschooling before progressing onto primary and secondary education. For an increasing proportion of young people, further or higher education is seen as the norm around the ages of 16 to 18 with others continuing to participate via work-based learning. This is confirmed by data from the Scottish government showing that 57.5% of school leavers in 2009 progressed to university or college (Scottish government, 2010). At this stage though, a drop in participation levels can be observed with individuals exiting the learning system altogether. This narrows further with age, although a proportion of learning may take place through continuous professional development activity. For those unemployed engagement in learning is even less likely. On reaching age 45+, participation rates in learning drop significantly, particularly among those in low-skilled, low-paid jobs or who are unemployed.

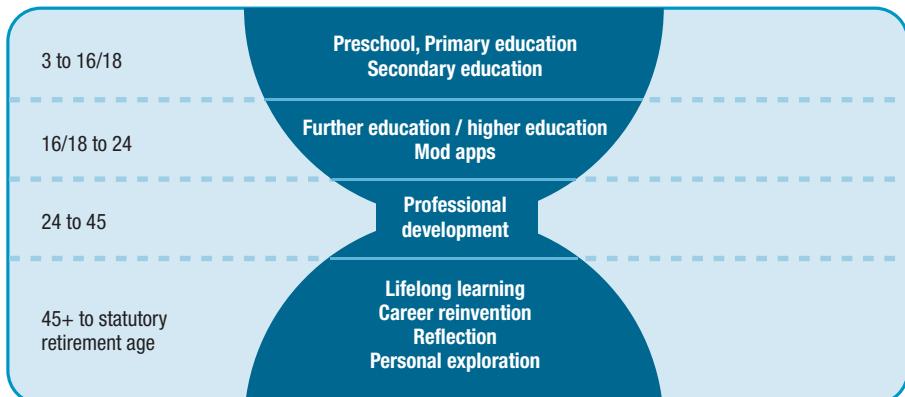
In contrast, Smith (2010) suggests a more participative and inclusive approach, one that engenders a culture of continuous learning throughout the lifecourse. The ‘hourglass’ theory of participation (Figure 14.3), while acknowledging the need for a robust and challenging educational system in early years, argues that it is equally important to open up opportunities in later life to pursue interests, improve employability prospects and explore potential. Through reflection and personal exploration, opportunities for reentering the labour market or embarking on a career change in later life can be improved. There is also an opportunity for providing a sense of direction for those who may be considering, or are already in, retirement. In essence, this model concurs with Barham and Hawthorn’s (2010) analysis of the support required for older adults to make informed career decisions. They conclude that quality careers guidance is equally important for the older part of the population as it is for those starting in working life.

Figure 14.2. ‘Funnel’ theory of participation



Source: Smith, 2010.

Figure 14.3. ‘Hourglass’ theory of participation



Source: Smith, 2010.

Building on this ethos, the centre for lifelong learning was invited to develop a pilot project in 2008 by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to address the high number of economically-inactive incapacity benefit claimants over the age of 50 in Glasgow (Smith, 2010). Analysis of DWP data for Glasgow showed that of the total number of 58 250 incapacity benefit claimants some 25 850 were aged between 50 and 64. Of these claimants, 22 900 aged over 50 had been claiming incapacity benefit for two years or more (DWP, 2006). The ‘realising your potential’ project methodology formed

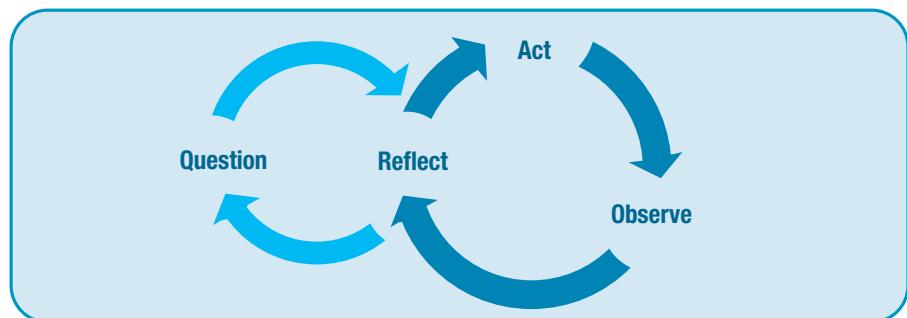
the foundations to test the model with older adults in full-time, part-time or self-employment and set key objectives for assisting older workers to:

- (a) reengage in learning;
- (b) update existing skills and develop new skills;
- (c) assess current work ability and explore future work potential;
- (d) improve employability in later life;
- (e) consider working longer and/or postponing retirement.

14.5. Theoretical foundation

Ideas proposed by Argyris and Schön's (1978) theory on organisational learning was taken and applied to lifelong learning. They believe that two models exist within organisations: single-loop and double-loop learning. The former has a natural focus on incremental change and is seen to be a reactive approach to addressing issues and problems as they arise. In single-loop learning, organisations and individuals, continue to operate in the same way. This failure of learning lessons from issues or problems often leads to a culture of inertia with little or no change taking place and can cause a lack of understanding of why problems arose in the first place. Double-loop learning (Figure 14.4) is more transformational and can ultimately lead to change. It encourages organisations to question what has happened in the past and seek new ways of operating in the future. Argyris and Schön believe this changes culture and challenges the status quo.

Figure 14.4. Double-loop learning



Source: Argyris and Schön (1978).

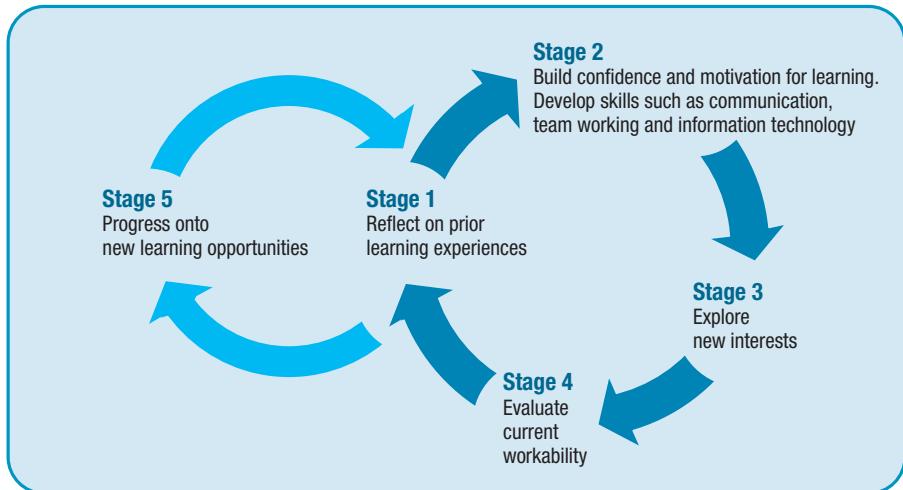
Many individuals find their experience of learning associated with the characteristics outlined in single-loop learning. A continuous cycle of reacting to life situations often prevails with little or no thought, or time, for learning. The ‘realising your potential’ methodology adopts the approach proposed by the double-loop learning model. Through providing a basis for individuals to reflect on past learning, work and life experiences, and taking time to explore what they would like to do in the future, meaningful information can be elicited and an understanding of factors that have affected learning can be identified.

14.6. Realising your potential: a five-stage approach

The ‘realising your potential’ model consists of five stages (Figure 14.5).

- Stage 1 encourages individuals, through semi-structured interviews, to reflect on past learning experiences and identify barriers which may have existed thus preventing participation in learning earlier on in life. This personal interaction is a crucial element in the programme forming trust between the individual and project staff.
- Stage 2 offers a bespoke learning programme delivered over a set period and designed to cover areas all of which are particularly relevant for individuals who have been disengaged from learning for a period.
- Stage 3 encourages individuals to explore areas of interest, understanding that they may have always wanted to learn something new, but never had the time, opportunity or encouragement to do so.
- Stage 4 provides an opportunity to evaluate current work ability and future work potential. Using a self-administered questionnaire, individuals can identify and assess key barriers that may affect their capacity to continue in the labour market in the future. These include areas such as health, education, motivation, family circumstances and financial challenges.
- Stage 5 encourages reflection on the programme and supports progression into new learning opportunities. The overall aim at this phase is, by having gone through the process, individuals are confident, energised and motivated to move on to new opportunities and take the next step to realising their goals and aspirations.

Figure 14.5. Realising your potential learning model adapted from Argyris and Schön (1978)



Source: Centre for lifelong learning, 2011.

14.7. Project implementation

Skills for Scotland, the Scottish government's framework for providing a comprehensive skills strategy states: 'this strategy sets out what our objectives need to be to develop a cohesive lifelong learning system centred upon the individual but responsive to employer needs' (Scottish government, 2007, p. 2). The 'realising your potential' project was funded⁽⁵⁵⁾ as part of a wider partnership⁽⁵⁶⁾ formed to support achievement of Scotland's skills strategy. One of the wider aims of the project was to influence Scottish government policy on information, advice and guidance (IAG) through presenting empirical data and case study examples on the challenges and issues faced by older adults.

This section presents each stage of the project in greater depth and how the project was implemented.

⁽⁵⁵⁾ Project funding, via the European structural Funds (ESF), commenced in June 2008 and concluded May 2011.

⁽⁵⁶⁾ Skills for Scotland: <http://www.skillsforscotland.org/>.

Stage 1.

Recruitment

A range of approaches was adopted to recruit individuals into the programme, including use of the press, through trusted intermediaries and directly with companies in partnership with human resource managers and union representatives. This stratified approach proved successful with no real challenge presented in recruiting participants and resulted in 134 individuals participating in the programme. However, this approach may not necessarily have reached those who most need support. This is discussed further in the following section.

Personal exploration

This phase was a crucial, individualised, part of the programme. The idea supporting this approach was that each person is unique and has different needs and aspirations. By providing an opportunity for individuals to discuss these in a more private setting, it was anticipated that they would be more open and receptive to sharing and discussing their ideas within a group environment further on in the project. Essentially, this was adopting an executive coaching approach whereby individuals were encouraged to plan ahead and begin the process of identifying goals.

The personal exploration phase consisted of project staff using a semi-structured questionnaire split into four sections. The first was reflective in nature and aimed to capture the individual's qualifications and learning experiences throughout their life. It also elicited any barriers to learning that may have existed and restricted participation. The second considered what the individual would like to learn in the future, covering areas such as learning for career progression or for leisure. The third reflected on employment experiences and whether the individual had changed career direction, taken a career break, either forced or voluntary, and discussed the likelihood of the individual working beyond statutory retirement age. The final section concluded by encouraging the individual to consider future aspirations, whether professional or personal.

The personalised approach taken at this stage achieved a greater insight into individuals' past and encouraged them to reflect on past experiences, which helped build a degree of confidence, particularly when remembering positive periods in their lives. It also provided a foundation for the learning programme and encouraged individuals to start thinking about the future.

Stage 2. Learning programme

A key element in the ‘realising your potential’ process was the learning programme. This was developed by project staff at the centre for lifelong learning who had extensive experience in working with older adults and lifelong learning, considering the preferred learning styles and environments of this particular client group. The programme purposely avoided use of ICT rejecting the temptation to adopt a blended approach as e-learning can be seen by many older adults as a barrier to learning due to poor levels of IT literacy.

Ultimately, the programme was designed to assist individuals explore their potential and identify future pathways, whether in their personal lives or related to their future working lives. This 18-hour programme consisted of six main areas:

- (a) change management and managing personal change;
- (b) confidence and motivation for learning;
- (c) learning styles;
- (d) decision-making;
- (e) health and wellbeing;
- (f) personal planning.

Individuals were encouraged to keep a reflective log, and although this was not a compulsory element, it proved a useful tool in the learning process.

A crucial element of the learning programme was use of peer-supported learning. Bringing together individuals of a similar age, who have faced similar life challenges and barriers, can provide a strong support network which, in turn, can improve the learning process. This principle was embedded through group discussions designed to explore set topics and questions. It encouraged contributions from everyone in the group and allowed individuals to share their diverse range of experiences and points of view. This sharing approach to learning helped individuals grow in confidence, particularly where there were similar shared experiences. Delivery of the programme moved away from traditional methods of teaching that most participants remembered or had experienced early on in life at school. A non-directive, participatory approach was consciously taken, with concepts embedded in the programme including the world café methodology to cross-pollinate ideas and build confidence through discussion. Mind mapping exercises also formed an integral part, increasing motivation and promoting discussion on various topics.

While the learning programme was delivered over the life course of the project as a six-week evening course, it was flexible in design and could be adapted to run over a series of full-days or half-days.

Box 14.1. Case study – Building confidence

Jane had successfully owned her own business, a café, for over 25 years and was actively involved in the day-to-day operations until a serious health issue was diagnosed. The condition was directly linked to years of working in a kitchen and she was advised that she could no longer continue working in this environment. Eventually, Jane was forced to sell her business and, having been divorced for several years and in her early fifties, her personal circumstances dictated that, financially, she would have to continue working.

Jane joined the programme during the transition of her business being sold. She initially felt that she had no skills or experience and was beginning to really worry about what employment opportunities were available to her. The programme encouraged her to look at the skills she used in running her own business and before long, she had a list that included dealing with the public, customer service, marketing and promotion, recruiting and managing staff, dealing with complaints, as well as an array of financial skills.

Through group discussions and personalised support, Jane's confidence increased and her motivation for moving forward positively emerged. She also started to think about what she enjoyed doing in her spare time and realised that the tourism sector was something she would be interested in exploring further.

She applied to work at a local hotel as a breakfast assistant; however, the employer was so impressed she was offered a supervisory position due to her wealth of experience and breadth of skills. Jane continued to learn and develop her personal interest, which was focused on becoming a tour guide, while she was working and eventually moved into the Tourism sector working with a national tourism organisation by the end of the programme.

Stage 3. Seminar programme

This stage was created as a result of feedback from previous project activity developed by the centre (Senior Studies Institute, 2006). Participant comments have always been positive, but one question which continually arose was 'what do I do now?' To address this issue, a seminar programme,

consisting of short two-hour sessions was designed and played an integral part, helping to bridge the gap between the centre's expert area of knowledge and support more widely through other, external organisations. A wide range of topics, informed by individuals participating in the project, were offered and included information sessions on:

- (a) business start-up;
- (b) volunteering;
- (c) changing career direction and employability support;
- (d) coaching, mentoring and counselling;
- (e) recognition of prior learning;
- (f) lifelong learning opportunities.

For individuals who may have lacked confidence or motivation in contacting organisations themselves to find out information, the added benefit of the seminar programme was that they came along with others they met through the programme who shared common areas of interest. It also provided a non-threatening way of finding out information on services available externally.

Stage 4. Work ability

The project also aimed to test the concept of work ability indexing (Ilmarinen, 2006). Where the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health and similar studies⁽⁵⁷⁾ consider the correlation between individual and work-related factors and their impact on a person's ability to continue working at a later stage in life, the 'realising your potential' project aimed to adapt existing models, by including areas other than health, and examine the impact of other barriers faced by individuals.

Using a self-administered questionnaire, individuals are encouraged to answer questions relating to five key areas that may impact on their employability currently, and in the future: competence; motivation; health; family; and finances.

Stage 5. Evaluation

Evaluation takes place through a series of focus groups. The decision to adopt this method of capturing feedback is driven by the rich source of information available from individuals and a genuine desire to capture the thoughts of older workers. Potentially, more valuable data could be collated, particularly from earlier groups of individuals who came through the programme 18 months previously. The ability to measure the impact of the programme

⁽⁵⁷⁾ Swinburne university project: redesigning work for an ageing society.

against individual experiences since completion is likely to be greater. Had paper evaluations been used immediately after the learning programme stage, data may have misrepresented the true impact of the programme on individuals.

To capture thoughts and views more comprehensively, a paper-based evaluation will also take place allowing individuals to contribute their personal views on the value and benefit of the programme.

14.8. Findings

Although the project concludes in May 2011, several findings can be drawn from work carried out to date. As of March 2011, 10 groups totalling 134 older workers from a wide range of backgrounds and industry sectors have participated and benefited from the programme. In terms of gender, the split between men and women is contrary to Schuller and Watson's (2009) findings that participation in learning is more or less equal above the age of 50 for both men and women. In this instance women (75%) were more participative in learning than men (25%). With the exception of one participant, all were white most being from the UK, and three participants were aged 65+. All other participants were aged 50 to 65.

Of the total number of participants 63% worked in the public sector, 34% came from the private sector and 3% from the voluntary sector. Of those who came from the private sector, 44% were self-employed.

14.8.1. Learning and qualifications

When initially scoping out the project, prior to the global recession and financial crisis, the general consensus among staff was that the content may lend itself more to individuals who fell into the category of low-skilled and low-paid. Evidence would suggest that this is unfounded, as 64% of participants were qualified to level 4 and above of the international standard classification of education (ISCED). Of participants, 19% could be considered to fall into the low skill category (level 2 and below). Even then, many held positions that, today, would demand a degree or equivalent. These individuals have acquired the necessary work skills through extensive experience. However, while a high percentage of participants were well qualified, future project activity may have to review the recruitment process to ensure those who are less skilled, and may have less confidence in participating in this type of programme, have the opportunity to do so.

At the personal exploration stage, data were captured on learning history and preferred modes of learning. In terms of involvement in any formal learning, it had been more than 10 years for 64% of participants with only 11% participating in formal learning over the previous two years. This changed significantly when asked how long it had been since participating in informal learning. Some 79% were actively engaged in learning or had been within the past two years compared with 11% who had not participated in informal learning for over 10 years. Table 14.2 shows this in more detail.

Table 14.2. Participation rates of individuals in formal and informal learning over time

Time-scale	< 2 years	2-5 years	5-10 years	10+ years
Formal	11%	10%	15%	64%
Informal	79%	7%	3%	11%

Source: Centre for lifelong learning, 2011.

A review of preferred learning styles also took place. All participants had experience of classroom-based learning with only 42% having experienced online learning, with the overwhelming response being it is not their preferred way of learning. Only 25% of participants had experienced distance learning with 35% having experienced workplace learning.

Individuals were also asked to consider the type of learning that would interest them most at this stage in their working lives. Some 60% indicated that career-related learning would be of interest and 81% responded that they would also like to learn for their own personal interest. Only 10% were interested in achieving any type of formal or vocational qualifications.

14.8.2. Accessing advice and guidance

In 2008, the Scottish government created Skills Development Scotland, a non-departmental public body which brought together the careers, skills, training and funding services of Careers Scotland, Scottish University for Industry (Learndirect Scotland) and the skills intervention arms of Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise. The organisation has 1 400 staff and a network of public access centres and offices across Scotland. It is an all-age guidance service open to everyone regardless of age. When individuals were asked if they knew of this service, 78% responded they had never heard of it. Once the background to the service had been explained, 80% indicated

they were unlikely to, or unsure of whether to, access the services offered. The main reason given for this was that the service was more tailored to, and appropriate for, younger people.

The seminar programme proved reasonably successful in linking individuals with areas of interest that may be of value in the future. However, only 44% of participants attended at least one of the 13 seminars that took place, with some attending more than one. This perhaps highlights that work is still required on finding a successful bridging solution between what the programme offered and what individuals wanted to move onto despite the content of seminars being driven by participants themselves.

14.8.3. Uncertainty

Many older adults experience significant barriers that affect participation in learning and these become more amplified with age. In addition to issues such as time, cost, perception of relevance and ability, one of the key issues identified is managing and coping with change in later life. This would appear to be exacerbated by the current economic situation with many facing increasing uncertainty around their employment situations.

One of the most significant findings relates to the level of uncertainty many individuals face when considering the point at which they retire, and the likelihood of working beyond statutory retirement age. Of participants, 61% stated that they are likely, or extremely likely, to work beyond retirement age, which in the UK is currently 65 for men and 60 for women. A further 30% were not sure whether they will work beyond this point with only 9% unlikely to.

14.8.4. Public sector observations

Two of the 10 groups consisted solely of individuals working in the public sector. The groups were set up in consultation with union representatives and human resource managers within the organisations, one from the civil service and the other a health authority. Both groups took place on the employer's premises and within separate organisations in different parts of Scotland. This is in contrast to the other eight groups, which took place within the university.

In the civil service, 95% left school with no formal qualifications and entered straight into employment, compared with 54% of participants in the other eight groups. These data were not captured for the health authority so no comparison can be made. Also, 94% of civil service participants had not been involved in learning for more than 10 years compared with 27% of participants from the health authority and 64% of the other eight groups. This shows wide variances and may also be explained by changing legislation that affected

health authority staff, particularly those involved in care disciplines (⁵⁸). Table 14.3 shows these results in more detail.

In contrast, experience of using online learning among civil service (83%) participants was significantly higher than among participants in health authority (40%) and the other eight groups (34%). Again, this may be explained by environmental differences, with civil service participants operating in a call centre environment.

Table 14.3. Participation rates of individuals in formal learning over time by group

Time-scale	< 2 years	2-5 years	5-10 years	10+ years
Civil service	6%	–	–	94%
Health authority	40%	13%	20%	27%
Other eight groups	8%	12%	16%	64%

Source: Centre for lifelong learning, 2011.

Finally, when comparing the likelihood of working beyond statutory retirement, both civil service (22%) and health authority (20%) participants indicated significantly higher that they were unlikely to work beyond statutory retirement age compared with participants from the other eight groups (4%). This would appear to support Loretto and White's (2006) findings that incentives provided in the public sector may influence retirement decisions.

14.8.5. Implications for policy

Scottish government policy on information, advice and guidance must consider the unique needs of older workers and provide a more appropriate and inclusive service. Currently, 78% of participants are unaware of the national all age guidance service and 80% are unlikely to, or unsure whether to, access the services offered. This poses serious challenges for policy-makers in ensuring that a growing section of the population is not excluded and isolated from accessing appropriate information, advice and guidance. The strategy adopted by the national skills agency is to invest heavily in an online guidance service to reduce the future cost of personalised one-to-one

(⁵⁸) Care sector regulations introduced in 2000 (Care Standards Act 2000) aimed to improve the quality of care and raise the standard of qualified staff working in the sector by ensuring staff were qualified to level 2 or above of the Scottish vocational qualifications/national vocational qualifications.

guidance. This will immediately disadvantage individuals reluctant to engage in this mode of communication whether it is through choice or through lack of confidence.

There would also appear to be a greater lack of awareness among older workers on the value of vocational education and training. This emerged through one of the exercises in the learning programme, which encouraged individuals to carry out a skills analysis and benchmark the level of skill and qualifications they had against the Scottish national qualifications framework. Most participants were unaware such a framework existed, suggesting greater work is required in including and educating older workers on the value and benefits of vocational education and training. Project findings will be of particular interest to the Scottish credit and qualifications framework, with future collaboration on how to address this challenge proposed.

14.9. Conclusion

Although the 'realising your potential' project is ongoing, conclusions can be drawn on the key issues emerging from the challenge of an ageing population. As healthy life expectancy continues to increase (Scottish Public Health Observatory, 2011), today's 50 to 65 year-olds are healthier and fitter than past generations and will almost certainly live considerably longer than their parents, grand-parents and great-grand parents. Given this situation, greater consideration must be given to supporting and encouraging older adults, many of whom have a great deal of capacity and desire to work and remain active in later life. Confidence and self-belief can be issues; however, they may be overcome by use of reflective learning techniques and recognition of past achievements, both of which can form a basis for increasing confidence and motivation levels.

The key for many individuals is unlocking the door of uncertainty and addressing the challenge of change. A famous scene from the film *Lawrence of Arabia* highlights a common human response to unknown variables and uncertain futures (Van der Heijden et al., 2002). As Lawrence and his companion are resting in the desert, a dot appears on the horizon growing larger as it approaches. The horizon seems so far away; they simply stand and stare, watching and waiting not knowing what to do. After a while, it becomes clear that the phenomenon is a man approaching on a camel. Still, the uncertainty continues until finally, Lawrence's companion suspects that something terrible is going to happen and, panicking, goes for his gun. Before

he can reach it, the unknown man shoots him, leaving Lawrence to ask the question: 'why?'

Having identified the 'dot on the horizon' the two men relate it to their known world, but their thought process is varied and they are unclear which response is appropriate for lack of data. As the 'dot' grows larger new theories emerge, but still the overwhelming sense of uncertainty increases until the situation evolves to a point where little time is left to develop or implement an effective solution and panic sets in.

Consider for a moment that the 'dot on the horizon' is retirement. For many individuals, this has always been in the distance with little or no planning made on how to live beyond their working life. For some, the financial reality is now beginning to come into focus and the reality of potentially working beyond statutory retirement age a real possibility. For others, their career is their life, with little or no outside interests. The trauma this uncertainty brings to many can be paralysing, with a real fear of the future and what lies ahead. The response by many is often to do nothing and hope for the best.

If attitudes of, and towards, older workers are to change, a much deeper transformation must take place involving all key stakeholders. Individuals should be better prepared to cope with the various employability challenges faced in later life. Central to this is appropriate information, advice and guidance in a suitable environment that older individuals are prepared to engage in. Here, partial responsibility lies with employers in helping workers to prepare and plan for the transition from work to retirement, considering that many may wish to work beyond statutory retirement age. For example, options such as flexibility and the opportunity to downshift, either through reduced hours or reduced levels of responsibility should be recognised as an important part of preretirement (Smeaton et al., 2009).

Government also has a responsibility to provide an accessible advice and guidance service that older adults are prepared to engage in and benefit from, tailoring the support required to suit the needs of this unique client group. There is also an onus to inform and encourage greater involvement in vocational education and training, and relevance to the older worker of the national qualifications framework, as well as opportunities for recognising prior learning. It is, therefore, crucial for governments and policy-makers to continue considering the challenges presented by an ageing society and provide suitable support and opportunity for those approaching, arguably, the greatest transitional period of their lives.

Lifelong learning has a key role to play and can be a major contributing factor to improve the quality of later life and the capacity and opportunity for

working longer. As this project has demonstrated, there is a desire among many older workers to continue learning and developing, both for work and pleasure. This should be embraced by organisations with commitment to widening access to learning opportunities and actively encouraging older worker participation. Adopting a culture of learning among organisations can only be a positive step, both in terms of the returns generated and the wider social responsibility of ensuring that transitions in later life are appropriately considered and managed effectively.

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CONCLUSIONS

Ageing Europe at work – Guidance to support longer careers of ageing workers

Mika Launikari, Christian Lettmayr, Jasper van Loo

Population ageing is one of the most profound trends in Europe but is also apparent in other continents. It offers serious challenges to today's economies and societies. This publication makes the case for guidance and counselling as a core concept to support ageing people in learning, career development and employability. Based on a structural analysis of the most important results and insights, this chapter presents and discusses in conclusion three principles which will be crucial for guidance and counselling for ageing people in Europe in the future. Results illustrate that, despite encouraging signs of progress, further actions are necessary to increase effectiveness and coverage of guidance and counselling as a core tool to deal with population ageing.

Introduction

The preceding chapters have highlighted the importance and potential of guidance and counselling in supporting longer and more satisfying careers in ageing societies in Europe. The first part of the publication reviews the factors contributing to active ageing from various angles, while the second part examines contemporary approaches to guidance and counselling. The third part gives several good examples of successful measures and practices launched in EU Member States.

The analysis and results presented indicate encouraging signs of progress. Successful integration of older workers in national labour markets calls for more comprehensive cross-sectoral policies and strategies and for harmonised all-age legislative frameworks across Member States. Guidance and counselling for ageing people is a key element to address trends of ageing, changing work and emerging skill needs which are closely related.

They are important for a holistic approach towards promoting longer careers which follow a different logic from current traditional career models.

Guidance and counselling in Europe: a synthesis

Successful approaches to guidance and counselling for ageing people are based on three principles: guidance and counselling should adopt a lifecycle approach; be comprehensive and responsive; be embraced by all stakeholders involved. These principles are discussed in more detail in the following subsections.

Towards a lifecycle approach

Guidance support is key to adapting employment opportunities to an ever more age-diverse workforce. Research indicates that efficient guidance and counselling requires a lifecycle approach, which is proactive and tailored to different stages of work life. Successful guidance and counselling models also stimulate motivation and learning ability and make people recognise the added value and relevance of investing in their careers. Approaches that help people to overcome concerns or reservations towards guidance and counselling appear to work particularly well.

Employers should take preventive action rather than only react to apparent age-related issues in the work place. Focus has to be on working life and on all age groups (not only older workers), and on flexible and age-friendly forms of work organisation that also allow older workers to integrate continuous learning into their careers.

Successful guidance requires a holistic approach incorporating common principles for age management and appropriate employment, education/training, guidance and health policies and related services. Moreover, it should entail various career development and management strategies such as further training and learning on their own, changing to a different occupation/job within the organisation, or becoming mentors to their younger colleagues. All of these issues seem to be especially beneficial.

Providing comprehensive and responsive guidance services

Guidance service provision should be easily accessible, comprehensive and systematic. Responsiveness to the needs of different groups of ageing

workers and recognition of diversity among the heterogeneous group of older adults are also crucial. Delivery mechanisms should consider individual work and learning goals and preferences and in a holistic perspective to age management combine appropriate tools to support active ageing and encourage effective learning and working. They should provide clients with reliable information to empower their decisions on when and how to retire. This requires tailoring services to the aspirations of older adults and timing actions and interventions in the right way.

In terms of action priorities, more individualised information, advice and guidance for older workers, supporting a good work-life balance and strengthening the role of employers to keep people at work longer were emphasised in several chapters. All these aspects have an impact on the content of guidance and counselling. Accompanying investments in skills need to be relevant within the confines of a single job, but also in the broader context of personal and career goals, which emphasises their strong links with career management. It should strike the right balance between investment in specific skills and knowledge and key competences improving individual employability. Further it should make use of the increasingly implemented recognition and validation schemes that give value to skills which may have been acquired in non-formal ways. This will increase options for the individual and help to avoid underutilisation of skills.

Guidance service providers are increasingly expected to be specialists in all relevant areas of working later in life and to be able to provide services that support the transition to retirement. This requires more specialised professional training and better opportunities for continuing professional development for guidance counsellors who work with older adults.

Encouraging support from all sides

Several chapters address the necessity of creating favourable conditions and incentives that encourage older workers to stay in employment rather than to make an early exit from the labour market. They also identify what prevents older people from staying longer in employment: a complex and intertwined set of barriers linked to context and practice such as low demand from employers, scarce opportunities for upskilling, insufficient reintegration and retraining provision after redundancy, difficulties in accessing information, advice and guidance services, and persistent stereotypes.

The available evidence suggests that sustainable results can be achieved when the overall context is sympathetic to ageing. Age management is not just a matter for employers and employees: it has to be embraced by all key

players. National governments, regional and local authorities, private and public employers, the social partners and others have a key role to play in establishing an environment that is conducive to active ageing and longer working lives and in abolishing age barriers to employment and skills development.

Age-specialised guidance services can provide support beyond career management and skill development, for instance, by improving motivation, personal fulfilment, self-confidence and self-esteem of individual clients. The work environment needs to be accommodating as well, in providing opportunities for skill development and reflection on working life and careers. A climate encouraging intergenerational learning at individual, group and organisational levels is another factor that can improve effectiveness of guidance and counselling. Support can also encompass different dimensions. For example, better understanding processes of cognitive decline enables better design of support measures and a more targeted approach towards people in different age cohorts.

Complexity of the issues and multitude of actors involved imply that exchange of experiences and knowledge becomes crucial at all levels of governance to eliminate obstacles to active ageing and to combat negative stereotypes associated with ageing workers. Some authors highlighted the crucial contribution of proactive and concerted efforts by various stakeholders to removing barriers to employment opportunities for older workers. By means of cross-sectoral and stakeholder cooperation and coordination, diverse needs of the (ageing) labour force can be better met. This contributes to older people working and living longer, with a better quality of life.

Implications for future research and policy analysis

As the impacts of ageing become increasingly visible, the long-term goal across Europe should be to promote an age-neutral approach to employment. This approach should encourage sustainable participation of ageing people on the labour market and in society by ensuring more favourable employment prospects and raising awareness about active ageing at work. A holistic approach to guidance and counselling will also benefit new entrants to the labour market, the young, and is an important aspect of better and faster adaptation of education and training provisions to changing labour-market needs.

In addition, policy and strategy action and concrete measures in the work place should aim at improving working conditions and providing more effective incentives for working longer (better access to lifelong guidance and lifelong learning for skills upgrading; adaptation of the work place to older workers' health status; financial benefits such as tax privileges, age management strategies at company level, etc.).

Analysis and evidence in this publication suggest to explore further how specific approaches to guidance can better support longer careers of ageing people (within the national framework of key policies in which ageing is a transversal element) and how private and public employers' strategies on active age management can contribute. Exploring efficiency of different approaches in national contexts across countries can maximise the potential for policy learning. Future research should include impact evaluations of guidance and counselling in a lifecycle perspective, to provide better evidence on the long-term impact of guidance and counselling on career success. Another important issue for future research is analysis of the role of guidance and counselling for ageing people who are either at risk of being made redundant or have to make transitions in times of restructuring. Initiatives aimed at assisting ageing people should correspond to realities of modern careers, which requires better evidence and further research.

Cedefop is committed to pursue research along these lines. The Centre will carry out a comparative study to investigate how lifelong guidance is embedded in the EU, national policies, strategies on active ageing, and in employer's age management strategies supporting older workers' (55+) lifelong learning and skills development. The planned study will explore to what extent various guidance services in real terms address the issue of staying longer in employment. Results of this study should be available in 2013.



Working and ageing

Guidance and counselling
for mature learners

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Population ageing is one of the most significant developments in Europe in the next decades. Guidance and counselling in supporting longer and more satisfying careers in ageing societies is important and has potential. This publication reviews factors contributing to successful active ageing from various angles. It examines contemporary approaches to guidance and counselling and presents several good practice examples of measures and practices launched in EU Member States. Successful approaches to guidance and counselling encompass a lifecycle perspective, are responsive and comprehensive and are supported by all stakeholders involved. The analysis and results reveal encouraging signs of progress, but at the same time indicate that much remains to be done to promote integration of ageing workers into the labour market and society.

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