Can Working Lives be Extended? Problems and Prospects for Older Workers

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Areas for discussion

• Changes to work-ending

• Factors driving current debates on work & retirement

• Extending working life (EWL): the role of training and lifelong learning

• Reforming working life

• Agendas, issues and questions
Debate on work & retirement driven by changes in life expectancy and time in retirement

- Concern about doubling of adult time in retirement: ~17 years in 1950; 30 years early-2000s (Pensions Commission, 2004)

- ‘Live Longer, Work Longer’ (OECD, 2006)

- Increases in pension ages underway or planned in 28 of the 34 OECD countries.

- Progressive increases in SPA in the UK: 68 by mid-2030s; **target of increasing average age of retirement by 6 months every year** (currently 64.7 men/63.1 women)

- Abolition of mandatory retirement age in the UK
Extending working life

- Mayhew and Rijkers, in a review for the OECD, stressed the importance of ‘continuous learning during the whole of working life as a means of reducing the dangers of labour market disadvantage in later years’.

- In the UK, the Business Champion for older workers has argued that: ‘[We] need to develop a cross-Governmental national strategy to address adult skills gaps and ongoing retraining requirements’ (Altmann 2015).

- What evidence is there for older workers gaining access to lifelong learning and training in the workplace?
Participation in formal and informal lifelong learning activities in Europe in 2011

Formal education and training

Non-formal education and training

Luxembourg
Switzerland
Sweden
Norway
Netherlands
Denmark
Finland
France
Germany
Estonia
Austria
Cyprus
Portugal
Slovakia
Hungary
EU
Czech Rep
Slovenia
Italy
Malta
Spain
Belgium
Latvia
Lithuania
Bulgaria
UK
Poland
Ireland
Turkey
Serbia
Greece
Romania
Proportion of people who say that their health or age prevents them from participating in learning

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UK not included
Proportion who say high costs prevent them from participating in learning

UK not included
Proportion who say that lack of employer's support or public services support prevents them from participating in learning
Proportion who report that work schedule conflicts or inconvenient timing prevents them from participating in learning

[Graph showing the proportion of individuals in various countries reporting work schedule conflicts or inconvenient timing as a barrier to learning. The countries are listed along the x-axis, and the proportion is shown on the y-axis. The countries are ordered from bottom to top based on the proportion, with Portugal having the lowest proportion and Switzerland having the highest.]

The University of Manchester
Proportion who report that family responsibilities prevent them from participating in learning

[Bar chart showing varying proportions across different countries, with the highest proportion in Greece and the lowest in Portugal, spanning from 0 to 45% in increments of 5%.]
Relationship between lifelong learning and labour force participation in later life in Europe

Proportion who are engaged in formal and informal learning

Labour force participation rates 50-64yrs
Percentage of people reporting doing some learning* by age group (UK) (1997-2010)

Source: NALS 1997-2010. * formal, non-formal and informal learning
Proportion reporting taking part in formal education or training in the last 12 months (50 plus)

Source: ELSA w1-w5
Study description

- Data are from the 4th wave of Understanding Society

- A large, nationally representative survey of the UK population (N = 47,157)

- Analyses restricted to those aged 50-64 who were in paid employment or self-employed (N = 6782)

- Socio-demographics
  - Sex, age, class

- Workplace characteristics
  - Job sector, workplace size

- Training
  - Wants workplace training
  - Expects workplace training
  - Received employer provided training in the last 12 months
Age groups differences in training

Wants work-related training
Expects work-related training
Received employer provided training
Gender and training 50-64 years

- Wants work-related training
- Expects work-related training
- Received employer provided training

Male | Female
--- | ---
Wants work-related training | 30 | 35
Expects work-related training | 25 | 30
Received employer provided training | 20 | 25
Employment status and training 50-64 years

- Wants work-related training
- Expects work-related training
- Received employer provided training

F/t employee | P/t employee | Self employed
---|---|---

Wants work-related training

Expects work-related training

Received employer provided training
Social class and training 50-64 years

Wants work-related training
- Management & professional
- Intermediate
- Small employers & own account
- Lower supervisory & technical
- Semi-routine & routine

Expects work-related training

Received employer provided training
Sector and training 50-64 years

![Bar chart showing the comparison between Private sector and Public/Third Sector for workers wanting, expecting, and receiving work-related training.](chart.png)
Workplace size and training 50-64 years

- Wants work-related training
- Expects work-related training
- Received employer provided training

- Fewer than 25 employees
- 25 or more employees
Prospects for Extending Working Life

• Shift the debate from ‘extending working life’ to a ‘fuller working life’
  • i.e. good quality/ secure employment should be basis for encouragement for people to say in workforce

• ‘Fuller’ may be seen in quantitative terms but ‘qualitative’ dimension more important
  i.e. quality of work environment (Bianco et al. 2015)
Conclusions

• If the government is serious about extending working lives then it is crucial that it creates opportunities and resources for learning and reskilling across the lifecourse

• Wide variation in the proportions of those who engage in lifelong learning throughout Europe and the different obstacles faced

• Evidence of a positive association between lifelong learning and labour market participation at the national level

• Falling rates of participation in the UK – particularly steep over the past few years

• Socio-economic inequalities in the proportions of older workers who want, expect and receive training and learning in the UK

• These will need to be tackled to ensure that we can all benefit from fuller working lives
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How can lifelong learning, including continuous training within the labour market, be enabled and who will pay for this? Looking forward to 2025 and 2040 how might this evolve?