

Managing the Ageing Workforce in the East and the West

THE CHANGING CONTEXT OF MANAGING PEOPLE

Edited by Professor Emma Parry, Cranfield School of Management, Swindon, UK

The past two decades have represented a time of unprecedented social, technological, and economic change that has required a transformation in human resource management (HRM). Shifts in demographics, continued increases of women in the workforce, and greater mobility across national borders have led to higher diversity in the workplace. Advances in technology, including social media, have enabled new ways of doing business through faster communications and vast amounts of data made available to all. Mobile technology with its ubiquitous connectivity has led to renewed concerns over work-life balance and extreme jobs. These and many other changes have seen evolving attitudes towards work and careers, leading to different expectations of the workplace and mean that existing ways of managing people may no longer be effective. This series examines in depth the changing context to identify its impact on the HRM and the workforce.

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Foreword

The ageing workforce is without a doubt one of the most significant issues facing society today. By 2050, all major areas of the world except Africa will have nearly a quarter or more of their populations aged 60 or over. This places pressure on governments, employers and individuals to find a way to support the older end of the population, extend working life and to manage increasing age diversity while maintaining organisational competitiveness and personal well being.

Despite the increasing academic interest that has focused on the management of the ageing workforce, most of the commentary to date has failed to recognise the importance of context in developing policy at both the organisational and societal level, preferring instead to take a universal approach. This means that the majority of the research that has been undertaken in this field is limited by its focus on a single geographical location and therefore is bound by its institutional and cultural environment.

It is because of the need for a more rigorous examination of managing an ageing workforce across different national contexts that I am delighted to include this book *Managing the Ageing Workforce in the East and the West* in this book series. This book provides a rare consideration of the differences between countries within Europe and Asia in relation to age and thus provides us with a more detailed understanding of how societies might manage the issues related to the ageing workforce and the role of context in driving these approaches. I am convinced that this book will provide a useful resource for both academics and practitioners working in this area.

Emma Parry
Series Editor

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CHAPTER

1

Managing Age in Asia and Europe: An Introduction

Matt Flynn, Yuxin Li and Anthony Chiva

ABSTRACT

There has been a growing interest amongst academics, researchers employers and governments/policymakers on ageing workplaces and workforces. As populations age and pension ages rise, older workers are finding themselves having to delay or postpone their retirement and organisations are looking for ways to enable them to do so in sustainable work. Workplace ageing is impacting both European and Asian societies and governments and employers are taking nationally specific approaches to age-related human resource management, social and public policies. In Europe, national governments are being led by the European Union in developing social and public policies to support older workers in maintaining employment through lifelong learning, flexible working, health management and job rotation. Tiger economies have focused on the ‘working pensioner’ pension rules which enable older workers to phase into retirement. China is facing rapid ageing but still maintains early retirement as a way to help older workers move out of physically and mentally demanding work. In addition to providing an outline for the remainder of the book, we also present a survey of older employees undertaken in the United Kingdom and

Hong Kong which explores experiences in work, workplace relationships, skills and retirement plans. The survey is used as a common resource for the remaining chapters.

Keywords: Workplace ageing; cross-national comparison; welfare states; institutionalism; human resource management

Introduction

Ageing workforces are affecting labour markets in most parts of the world, providing challenges to employers, governments and other stakeholders such as policy makers. It has been recognised by international institutions like the United Nations (UN) ([UN Political Declaration, 2002](#)), International Labour Organization (ILO) ([ILO, 2009](#)) and international financial institutions ([World Bank, 1994](#)) that employers globally will need to put in place human resource management (HRM) policies to encourage and facilitate longer working lives. Within the UN International Plan of Action on Ageing, there are commitments from national governments to support older workers in terms of learning and development; having a voice on workplace issues; balancing work and non-work activities including caring for relatives; and having opportunities to take part in all forms of economic and non-academic activity including self-employment. ILO Recommendation 162 was passed as far back as 1980 to ensure the equal treatment of workers regardless of age and to protect older workers in hazardous working conditions.

There are four reasons why work is central to managing ageing demographics. Firstly, as elderly populations increase, there are concerns over the sustainability of pension schemes and affordability of retirement. Twenty-seven of the thirty-seven OECD governments are reforming their state pension systems in order to either improve financial sustainability (e.g. raising pension ages or reducing entitlements); reduce pension inequalities (e.g. means testing benefits or introducing universal pension benefits) or both ([Bongaarts, 2016](#)). Governments are increasingly interested in 'working pensioner' policies such as those in place in Japan which expand the rights of pensioners to maintain or return to work

(Higo & Klassen, 2017). Secondly, whilst the elderly are less likely to be in be in poverty than younger people, falling into poverty is more likely to be permanent, especially in countries which lack comprehensive social welfare states which can support retired people. Sustainable work (i.e. economic activity which does not have a damaging impact on health and well-being) is therefore a way in which older people can avoid late-life poverty, although many also rely on families for support. Old-age poverty can be particularly acute amongst groups of people who have historically experienced precarious work, interrupted careers and lack of access to pension savings (Zaidi, Grech, & Fuchs, 2006). These include women (TUC, 2014), low-skilled workers (Lain, 2012) and economic migrants (Rhee, Chi, & Yi, 2013).

Thirdly, whilst longevity has been increasing globally, there remain significant inequalities as measured according to disability-free longevity. Within Europe, the difference is approximately 13 years between the healthiest (Denmark) and least healthy (Estonia) countries (Jagger et al., 2008). Globally, 43 countries now have employment regulations which prohibit workplace age discrimination (Kapp, 2013) and European Union employer and union federations have recently agreed a framework for promoting older workers' economic activity (ETUC, 2017). Nevertheless, ageism remains a significant factor leading to early labour market exit as employers perceive older people to be more expensive and less productive than younger ones (Collien, Sieben, & Müller-Camen, 2016). As older workers are pushed out of sustainable work, they are pushed either into physically demanding and/or precarious work or premature retirement (Kalleberg, 2009). Work is therefore a factor contributing to later life social inequalities or what Titmuss called 'two nations' (McNair, Flynn, Owen, Humphreys, & Woodfield, 2004). Fourthly, older workforce participation is increasingly being recognised as important to economic development, especially in countries with stagnant or declining populations (e.g. Germany; Hofäcker & Naumann, 2015); low fertility rates (e.g. Japan; Higo & Yamada, 2009 and Hong Kong; Flynn, 2016) and/or chronic skills shortages (e.g. the United Kingdom; Winterbotham, 2014). Whilst in the past, governments had pursued social welfare policies favouring the early retirement of older workers in order to create work opportunities for younger ones (Banks, Blundell, Bozio, & Emmerson, 2010), there is now a recognition by national governments that extended working lives is consistent with economic growth.

Although ageing is a widely recognised issue facing European and North American workplaces, there are also significant challenges facing Asian businesses. In 2016, for example, China passed the ‘demographic window’, after which the working age population will start to decline as a proportion of the overall population (Banister, Bloom, & Rosenberg, 2012), and according to the Chinese government’s Development Research Foundation (Smith, Strauss, & Zhao, 2014), raising participation rates of older workers is the only intervention which will have an immediate impact on the labour market so as to mitigate the impact of the reduction in the number of younger people entering the workforce. Further, with healthy and wealthy populations, the ‘Tiger’ economies are amongst the oldest in the World, with Hong Kong, South Korea and Singapore joining Japan as amongst the 20 populations worldwide with a life expectancy above 80 (Chow-Tan, Bosworth, & Kawai, 2015). Whilst there has been literature exploring work, age and retirement in Europe and Asia separately, there has been little insight into the extent to which and how age management HRM, public and social policies are developed and implemented on the two continents and how they have shaped societies. As populations age, there have been calls from academics (e.g. Taylor, Loretto, Marshall, Earl, & Phillipson, 2016) and practitioners (Cridland, 2016) alike for more international sharing of experiences of workplace ageing. This edited book aims to make a contribution by exploring ageing workforce issues within European and Asian contexts. We will briefly set out the context of workforce ageing in China, Europe and the Tiger economies followed by an outline of the rest of the book.

Ageing Workplaces in China

Increased longevity coupled with decreased fertility rates as a consequence of the One Child Policy have led to a rapid ageing process in China and at an accelerating pace. Population ageing in China has not only resulted in a large proportion of the elderly but also significantly decreased young workforce. Benefiting from its large demographic dividend, China experienced unprecedentedly high economic growth in the past two decades. However this will change as the labour supply reduces and dependency ratio increases. Unlike Western countries, China will step into an aged society characterised with ‘getting old before getting rich’

(Cai & Wang, 2006). Serious concerns about the economic and social consequences of the ageing population have been raised and population ageing poses some daunting economic and policy challenges to the Chinese government. Public and private policy reforms have been proposed which include changes in retirement policies; wider coverage of pensions; better provision of long-term care services and changes in human resource practices of businesses. The recent new Two Child Policy is one of these responses from the government to tackle population ageing. However, without a deep and fundamental reform, it is unlikely to be sufficient to tackle the challenges posed by a large old population like China.

The retirement policy in China can be traced back to 1951. It set the compulsory retirement age for men at 60 and for women at 50 (55 for women of senior government positions), both under the condition that they have worked for 25 years in total and in current job for 5 years (Manion, 2014). For certain occupations which pose serious health hazards, workers can retire five years before the compulsory retirement age. Reforms have been made since then on the retirement policy. However, the compulsory retirement age has remained the same for a long time. In 1983, the government extended the retirement age from one to ten years for researchers, professors and senior experts, that is, those whose expertise are highly demanded by the economic development of the country. Women, in particular, benefited from this change as more joined the labour market and higher education. Retirement age for others have been almost the same up to now, although the average life expectancy has increased from 40 and 42 for men and women in 1949 to 74 and 77, respectively, in 2016.

The economic structure in China has also changed. In 1949 when the People's Republic of China was founded, agriculture was the main sector and economic development was way behind other Western countries. The main industrial sector was raw material industry which is labour intensive and requires a large number of younger workers. Thus, a younger retirement age for men and women could guarantee a continuous supply of younger workers into such industries. However, with the present much-diversified industrial structure, early exit no longer conforms to the economic requirements of present China. Between 1995 and 1997, the government expenditure on early retirement pensions took a major proportion in total pensions in 13 provinces in China, such as Shandong, Shanghai and Guangdong which reported 16.5%, 25.2% and 27.7%, respectively (Guo, 2005).

Until now, government spending on early retirement pensions still takes a significant proportion of total pensions which poses a large burden on government finance.

In the Third Plenary Session of the 18th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China in 2013, the government specifically showcased the plan to develop phased retirement strategies. However, such reforms are fraught with political difficulties and complexity in structuring early retirements, and it has proven difficult for retirement policies to take place. Researchers have made various investigations into the influencing factors of early retirement, but consensus could not be reached. What has been agreed upon is that the vast difference in the factors determining early retirement behaviour in workplaces of different natures. For example, workers of public sectors are not willing to retire early due to better welfare and work conditions in public institutions and their low chances of getting re-employed elsewhere. Other individual characteristics, such as gender, education and health status, have also been proved to have significant influences on workers' early retirement decisions.

Although theoretically there are possibilities and potentials for reforms of the Chinese retirement policy, in reality, there is not much room for optimism. Long history and serious phenomenon of early retirements, as well as people who enjoy benefits from early exits and who are also unwilling to accept changes make it much more difficult to extend working life. [Zhang and Zhao \(2014\)](#) compared the employment rate of people between 55 and 65 in 1990 and 2010, and found that the employment rate dropped by 2% points, indicating that the proportion of early retirement increased during these 20 years. Legitimate early retirement defines conditions for people conducting specific dangerous jobs or people with disability of serious illness to take early retirement, however, such policies are often misused and provide an early exit routes for a large number of people ([Zhao & Xu, 2001](#)). Businesses and individuals take early retirements mostly for their own benefits with only a few who retire for health reasons. During the reform of state-owned enterprises to private-owned enterprises in the 1990s, firms were the main drivers of early retirement. Inefficient and heavily burdened enterprises encouraged early retirement in order to reduce their workforce to increase productivity ([Guo, 2005](#)). Individual factors, on the other hand, have overtaken firms and become the main reasons in recent years. For example, for many workers, early retirement will not reduce their pensions dramatically and

thus choose to exit labour market early to enjoy life (Peng, 2012; Yang, 2013a, 2013b). For others, early retirements do not mean exiting labour market. Instead, they receive more income from being re-employed elsewhere or self-employed, and this takes over 33% of the total retirements (Jiang, 2009). Overall, early retirement presents various forms in China and destroys the financial integrity of pension and health-care systems. Thus understanding the determinants of them can help to make effective policies tackling the challenges from both ageing and financial burdens.

Population ageing raises serious concerns about the economic security of older people, health spending, labour supply, savings and growth of the economy. Due to an uneven and incomplete social security system in China, this issue appears to be more pressing. Pension coverage, although increased, is not sufficient particularly in rural areas. The increasing degree of ageing in rural areas calls for extra attention. With the flow of young labour force to cities, the rural areas are left with the so-called 'empty nests' – young children and the elderly are the only residence in many villages. The main long-term care form in China is still family based with children support their parents in old age. Consequently, pension system reforms together with retirement policies' changes are both key issues when addressing the ageing challenges in China.

Ageing Workplaces in Europe

In Europe, changing demographic profiles and an ageing workforce are creating challenges for its economy and world competitiveness. The decline in the younger (15–24) age group, together with an increased proportion of over 50s, indicates that there will be significant and growing skills' gaps and shortages (Campanella, 2015). Baby boomers (those born in the decade after the Second World War) heading towards retirement will exacerbate the situation. These are likely to have negative consequences for the competitiveness of EU businesses, and important implications for the sustainability of pension systems. The policy emphasis of the European Commission, therefore, is on longer working lives and reversal of the trend towards early retirement, and EU countries are considering approaches to flexible working (High Level Group chaired by Wim Kok, 2004).

As part of the European Employment Strategy, the Lisbon Council in 2000 (European Commission, 2001) set a strategy for increasing older worker participation in the workforce from 38.8% to 50% by 2010. The Stockholm Council (European Commission, 2004) called for clearer strategies for extending working lives and reducing early exit of workers. Although the aim is to increase the employability of people aged between 55 and 64, the Council adopted a strategy which targets all generations of employable age, with the objectives of encouraging and facilitating people to extend their working lives. The Council's strategy rests on six pillars:

1. Adopting a life-cycle approach to active ageing by helping employees avoid early exit from the labour market
2. Enabling older workers to work longer through better-tailored job design
3. Improving the incentive for active ageing through reform of member states' tax-benefit systems
4. Enabling workers to increase and renew their skills and adaptability, thereby enabling fuller participation in the labour market
5. Improving access to the labour market for older workers through the mitigation of direct and indirect forms of discrimination
6. Developing a social partnership with employers and employee representatives to facilitate longer working lives.

In 2003, the revised European Employment Strategy reinforced its active ageing policies and strategies for delaying retirement by including recommendations to reform tax and benefit systems and encourage the participation of underrepresented and disadvantaged groups including women and older workers. The employment rate of older workers varies widely across Europe. Whilst some states (Iceland, Norway, Switzerland, West Germany, Estonia, Netherlands, Lithuania, Latvia, Denmark, Sweden and the United Kingdom) have over 50% participation for 60–64 year olds, others (Romania, Serbia, Turkey, France, Malta, Slovakia, Austria, Croatia, Belgium, Greece, Slovenia and Luxembourg) have a rate of below 30%. The average across the present EU states is 40.5% according to EUROSTAT figures.¹

¹<http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/submitViewTableAction.do>

Retirement ages vary dramatically across Europe. Underpinning these strategies is the EU Directive that requires member states to combat discrimination in employment by 2006 and to develop active ageing policies.

Within Europe, there have been a variety of responses to ageing demographics by governments and employers. In the North Western continental European economies, public and HRM policies have been largely shaped through social dialogue and codified in collective agreements as negotiated between unions and employers (Hofäcker & Naumann, 2015). In Germany, for example, collective agreements in the Chemical, Steel and Retail sectors have been negotiated and agreed to in order to create and maintain healthy workplaces (Flynn, Upchurch, Muller-Camen, & Schroder, 2013). Within these contexts, social partners are transitioning from an early retirement model (favoured by governments, employers and unions as a tool for reducing unemployment amongst younger workers) towards one supporting longer working lives through sectoral level initiatives on health, skills and flexibility. Liberal market economies have focused on public policies on removing barriers to work for older people through comprehensive approaches to tackling workplace age discrimination (including legislation on multiple forms of discrimination) and abolishing mandatory retirement (Muller-Camen, Croucher, Flynn, & Schröder, 2011). In Scandinavian countries, government has taken a more active involvement in providing support through health programmes like the Finnish Workability Model designed and implemented by the Finnish Institute for Occupational Health (Tuomi et al., 1997) and state support for older workers in Denmark in making job transitions (Vulkan, Salonemi, Svalund, & Väisänen, 2015). Although EU member states are working within a common set of employment frameworks, there remain distinct approaches to age and work reflective of the historical, cultural and institutional structures as that have evolved at the national levels.

Workplaces in the Tiger Economies

In addition to China and Europe, many of the chapters also explore age and retirement management in the so-called Tiger economies: the cluster of South East Asian economies which developed rapidly through a combination of export-oriented industrial policies and government planning (Heller, 1998). There are two important institutional features of Tiger economies

which have set them apart from Western ones. Firstly, they are, for the most part, developmentalist states in which government takes on a central role in managing the economy either in collusion with or through the suppression of other stakeholders like employers and trade unions (Lee, Lee, & Chan, 2007). The exception to this could be Hong Kong where governments (both colonial and post-colonial) have taken a non-interventionist but business-friendly approach to employment regulations (Cheung, 2000). Secondly, welfare states in these economies have been described as ‘productivist’, meaning that welfare systems have been used by the state as instruments for intervention in the national economy (Holliday, 2000), either by financially supporting industrial planning (Yang, 2013a, 2013b) or favouring groups of workers whose labour force participation is considered critical to economic development like public sector workers (Kuo, 2012). Productivist welfare regimes have been described as fragmented (Shi, 2010) offering non-universal pension entitlements.

Unlike Europe, Tiger economies lack a history of institutionalised early retirement. However, a common feature of many of the economies is age-based seniority pay systems which render older workers more expensive than younger ones (Budhwar & Varma, 2013). Firm-based mandatory retirement ages are therefore a common feature of Asian economies as a tool for employers to externalise high-cost older workers. In some cases, such as Japan (Higo & Yamada, 2009) and Singapore (Soon & Tin, 1997), government may directly subsidise employers in maintaining older workers’ employment.

At the same time, pension systems in Asian productivist welfare states have lower replacement rates than most of their Western equivalents (Aaron, 2013) even though overall family savings rates are higher (Gough, 2000). Phased retirement is facilitated in some economies through pension arrangements which allow workers to draw their pensions whilst remaining economically active (Duval, 2003). In Japan, for example, workers can draw their state pension entitlement whilst transitioning to work with fewer hours and less responsibility (Sato, 2014). In Singapore and Hong Kong, the central pillar of pension regimes are mandatory second tier pensions based on defined contribution individual savings. Although such systems place the risk of retirement savings on the individual worker (Flynn, Schröder, & Chan, 2017), workers have flexibility on when and how they draw down their pension savings.

The aim of this book is to bridge the gap between academics, employers and other stakeholders in Europe, North America and Asia in a dialogue on how public, social and HRM are being shaped by ageing demographics. In so doing, we are aiming to compare and contrast approaches to age diversity in a variety of economies and welfare states.

In both the East and the West, employment and pension systems are going through transitions. For example, the Japanese old-age employment regime is anchored on the lifetime employment model (Casey, 2005). However, as employers have sought to shed older workers, government has stepped in by heavily investing in programmes to support older unemployed people back into work (Flynn, Schroder, Higo, & Yamada, 2014). In Europe, social activation programmes like the UK Mid-Career Review (McNair, 2015) is also individualising support for older workers to move between jobs and employers in order to avoid early retirement. Pension systems are also changing, with OECD countries expanding mandatory pension coverage; shifting pension provision towards defined contribution schemes; raising pension ages and reducing entitlements (Bongaarts, 2016). Given the convergence of both pension and employment regimes within the contexts of ageing populations and reduced welfare states, there have been calls for more international comparisons to share experiences of public and social policy changes between countries (Cridland, 2016). This book therefore seeks to identify areas of comparability between Eastern and Western countries.

A Common Dataset for Exploring Older Workers' Experiences of Work and Expectations of Retirement

Many of the chapters in this book draw on an employer survey which was carried out in 2014 as part of a research project undertaken for the UK Economic and Social Research Council on age diversity in the United Kingdom and Hong Kong (two economies with minimal public pensions). The data is a bespoke survey of 1,600 people in work in each of the economies. The survey explored the experiences of people 45+ in work and their plans for retirement. Questions which the survey asked include at what age employees are planning to retire; the proximity of

workers' retirement dates (and therefore the amount of time the employer has to prepare for turnover); what skills employees bring to their work (and therefore what skills will be lost once they retire); risk factors which could lead to early retirement and what workplace adjustments could encourage older employees to delay retirement. Questions about work include skills and abilities; attitudes towards work and their workplaces and retirement plans can be generated through the collection of anonymised data of all respondents. The survey is based on Amartya Sen's Capability Approach (Sen, 2003) which posits that for individuals to be able to live fulfilling lives, macro-level actors have a duty to provide support to enable them to use their skills and abilities to exercise 'positive rights'. In addition to questions on demographics, the survey contains the following questions in relation to work, careers and retirements:

- Choices in work: The degree of control and autonomy the respondent has over her/his work and career including the ability to make work adjustments to enable a longer and more fulfilling working life. Capabilities is a function of two factors:
- Skills: The skills and abilities which the older worker uses in her/his job as well as managing her/his career. These can be grouped into three clusters: job specific skills; social skills and employability skills
- Work environments: Factors in the workplace which can facilitate or inhibit older workers' agency in the workplace: relationships with managers (e.g. ability to discuss work and retirement issues); age inclusiveness of senior management team; relationship with colleagues; as well as understanding of workplace rights, HR policies and pension
- Work context: These questions relate to actual outcomes in relation to work (whether they are in high quality work; whether work fulfils their prime motivation); health (general as well as health relative to physical and mental demands of the job) and retirement (planned retirement age; reason chose age; as well as pension expectations)
- Quality of life: Finally, we have a set of questions on how respondents rank their quality of life in relation to work, health, career and general.

The survey provides insight into the relationship between experiences in work and retirement expectations, for example

how working for an organisation with age-inclusive managers influences retirement plans or overall quality of life. In this book, contributors have used the survey to explore how work experience influences planned retirement ages; the experiences of older people with caring responsibilities; whether and how union and non-union workers experience work and retirement and how older people financially plan for retirement. It is important to note that we do not claim that the United Kingdom and Hong Kong represent ideal type European and Asian economies, and contributing authors have been careful to contextualise their findings. However, the survey is illustrative of older workers' experiences on the two continents.

In the appendix, we have presented demographic data for both the United Kingdom and Hong Kong along with the headline figures for the survey. For comparative purposes, questions were drawn from Labour Force Surveys in the United Kingdom and Hong Kong; European Social Survey; European Working Conditions Survey; International Social Survey Project and National Adult Learning Survey. The survey data is available by contacting Professor Flynn.

About the Book

In this book, we explore how organisations, governments, unions and older workers themselves are responding to ageing workplaces. As we set out below, each chapter discusses a specific issue around HRM, public policy and industrial relations. In chapter 2, Kohlbacher, Mollenhauer and Warwas discuss 'productive ageing' (defined as economic activity – whether paid or unpaid – in Japan and Poland). Their comparison focuses on differences between the former which, in policy terms has developed a model of working pensioners, with the latter, a post-Communist economy in which employers and government are struggling to manage a generation of workers who have been conditioned to expect early retirement. In the next chapter, Hofacker, Braun and Flynn explore the planned retirement ages of people in work in Germany (a country with a state funded second tier pension system), the United Kingdom and Hong Kong (two economies with minimal public pensions). Using the above-mentioned survey combined with the German Ageing Survey, they show differences in retirement expectations, especially amongst low income workers. Khan also explores retirement

planning but focuses on pension access and financial awareness. He finds that in the United Kingdom and Hong Kong, education, income and union membership are correlating factors to pension awareness and retirement plans.

Next, Weyman, Klassen and Schroder discuss workforce planning in the United Kingdom and South Korea with a focus on how regulations in both contexts encourage employers support. In both countries, governments are raising pension ages but also restricting employers' ability to dismiss workers solely on the basis of age (i.e. mandatory retirement). They find that although extended working life is a way in which government seeks to mitigate old-age poverty, employers in both countries are still not focusing on age as a factor for workforce planning. Flynn looks at the impact of union membership on retirement plans in Europe and Asia. He shows that in Europe, union organisation is based on class solidarity, whilst in Asia, unions are organised according to enterprise. He shows that in Europe, union membership is associated with influence over public policy and the 'right to retire', whilst in Asia, it is centred on organisational rights and maintaining employment rights to the exclusion of those outside the workplace. Hanley, Davies, Jenkins and Chan look at lifelong learning in the United Kingdom and Hong Kong. They discuss workplace- and community-based learning in the two contexts and avenues for learning like the Hong Kong Elderly Academy. Crawford, Davis, Minhat and Mohr discuss healthy workplaces in Europe, especially Finland and Malaysia. They focus on the Finnish Workability Model as a framework for lifelong health management to avoid early retirement. Whilst Malaysian health and safety regulations are focused on preventing injury and acute health problems, they suggest that the Workability Model can be useful for Malaysian stakeholders in managing ageing populations. Wang, Abbott and Butcher discuss the experiences of workers with eldercare responsibilities in the United Kingdom and China. China is facing a rapidly ageing population and there is a heavy reliance on the family to care for the elderly. They make the case that the United Kingdom 'right to request' flexible working may be a model, but it also shows that carers may be reluctant to ask for support from their employers. We close the book with the perspective of the business community through Vernon, Beazley and Ball, representatives of three employer networks. They set an agenda for further research which can help employers on both continents in managing changing age demographics.

Most of the contributors to this book have undertaken comparative reviews between countries, and many for the first time. The chapters show the potential for cross-national collaboration within the context on an issue facing the international community.

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