

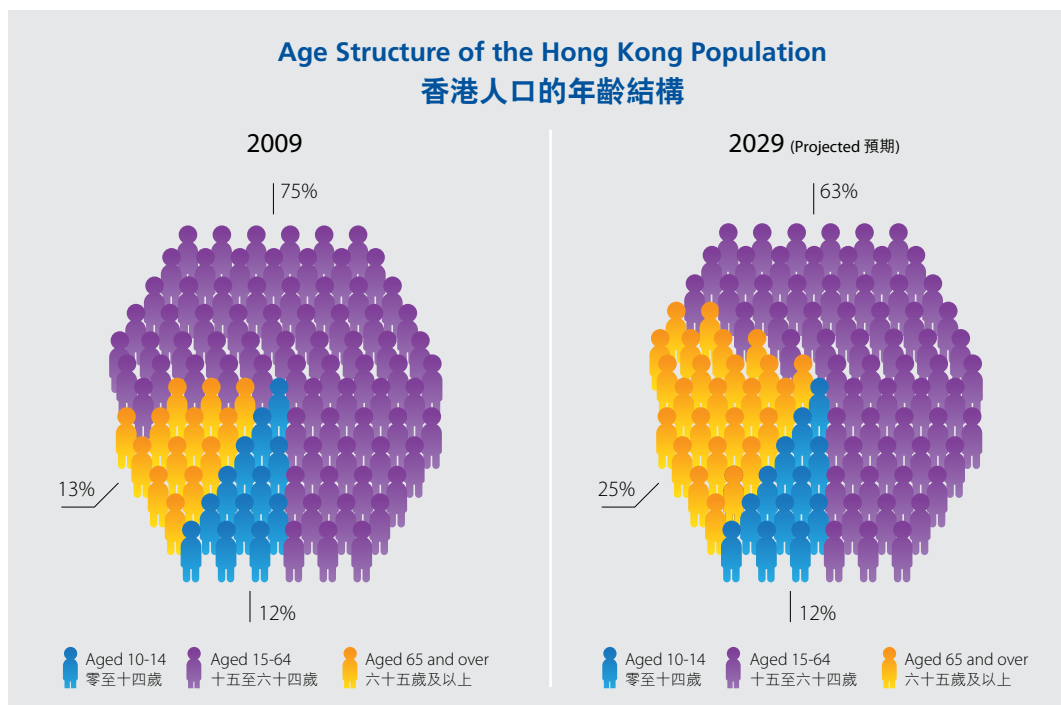
Valuing vintage:

Hong Kong's ageing workforce uncorked 資深僱員 人力市場瑰寶

Alarm bells have been ringing, warning Hong Kong that its rapidly ageing workforce spells doomsday for its economy. Companies in Hong Kong are already starting to feel the crunch with those born in the baby boomer years (1946 to 1964) headed for retirement and less young talent available due to the declining birth rates. However, our mature workforce might be a valuable resource we can capitalise on with the right strategies.

勞動人口迅速老化已為香港的經濟發展前景敲響警號。隨著嬰兒潮時代（一九四六至一九六四年）出生的人口步入退休期，而年輕人才則因出生率不斷下降而減少，本港不少企業開始面對青黃不接的問題。然而，只要策略得宜，這股成熟的勞動力或可成為我們的珍貴資源。





In May, the Centre for Human Resources Strategy and Development at HKBU organised a seminar on “Hong Kong’s Ageing Workforce: Managing Human Capital for Sustainability for 2020 and Beyond”. A number of experienced human resources (HR) experts shared their views on the current situation and strategies to handle the changing workforce demographics. A team from the Centre is also researching the impacts of the ageing workforce on business and society.

The statistics are stark. According to the Census and Statistics Department, the proportion of older persons aged 65 and over in the population is projected to increase from an estimated 13 per cent in 2009 to 25 per cent in 2029. The high life expectancy in Hong Kong coupled with the low fertility rate is giving our policymakers much to think about.

“Human resources are the only natural resources Hong Kong has,” points out Professor Randy Chiu, Director of the Centre and professor of the Department of Management. In this situation, he says, fixing the retirement age at 60 or 65 is a waste.

Fluid retirement age

The traditional rationales for fixing a retirement age do not apply in Hong Kong. Unlike underdeveloped countries where the majority of young people entering the workforce would be engaged in factory-line work or farming, Hong Kong is a knowledge economy which prides itself on a highly skilled workforce.

“We provide services – financial, management and personal services like healthcare, catering, and tourism – where most jobs are knowledge-related,” says Professor Chiu. “Those leaving the economy have the bulk of knowledge and experience. While the number of people who have university education is much higher than in the past, it doesn’t mean they are equipped with the knowledge and wisdom that their seniors have.”

浸大人力資源策略及發展研究中心於五月舉行了題為「勞動力老化：香港如何持續2020後的人才資本素質」研討會，多位經驗豐富的人力資源專家就社會現況表達見解，並分享應付勞動人口分佈轉變的策略。中心的一組研究人員亦正研究勞動力老化對企業和社會的影響。

統計數字是最可信的。根據香港統計處的資料，預期六十五歲以上人口佔總人口比例將由二零零九年的百分之十三，增加至二零二九年的百分之二十五。港人的預期壽命高，生育率則偏低，值得政策制訂者深思。

中心主任兼管理學系教授趙其琨教授說：「人力資源是香港唯一的天然資源。」他指面對勞動力老化，硬性規定六十歲或六十五歲退休，是浪費人力資源。

彈性設定退休年齡

定下退休年齡的傳統理據其實並不適用於香港。在落後國家，年輕的勞動力大部分投入在工廠生產線或農業中，但香港屬於知識型經濟，賴以成功的是高技能的勞動力。

趙教授說：「我們以服務業為主，如金融、管理和健康護理、飲食、旅遊等以人為本的服務行業，大部分工作均需要一定的專業知



Professor Randy Chiu
趙其琨教授

Since most jobs in a knowledge economy do not entail manual labour, people are physically capable of working way beyond the age of 60. "A person remains competent until their cognitive ability deteriorates, which begins to happen much later," says Professor Chiu.

It is often argued that a retirement age is necessary to give younger people a chance to move into senior positions. However, Professor Chiu says that this is not a concern in Hong Kong given the low fertility rate. "Asia-Pacific will be the centre of economic growth in this century. India and China will probably be the leading economies in 20 years. There will be ample

opportunities. Hong Kong can position itself as a human capital development hub and export people to other countries. If we don't export this resource, where will our revenue come from?"

Shifting focus

Given the wealth of experience that mature workers bring to the table, why do companies today tend to focus on Generation Y? "In the commercial sector, competent people do work beyond 65," says Professor Chiu. "But in general, people in Hong Kong tend to retire around that age. It's the culture and company policy that is overdue for change." Although there is no statutory retirement age in Hong Kong, civil servants retire at 60 and semi-public and non-government organisations tend to follow suit.

"Policymakers need to revisit the issue," says Professor Chiu. "When we are screaming about a shortage of talent, it is surprising that we are not looking into the retirement age. People tend to follow the wheel not realising that we are in a new era and need fresh thinking."

He adds: "We're not talking about attracting older people because they are older. It's about attracting and engaging talent regardless of age."

Family-friendly working environment

Postponing the retirement age would mean a new demographic in the workplace. Speaking at the seminar on Hong Kong's ageing workforce, Mr. Paul Munder, Talent Acquisition Director, Asia

識。現在陸續從經濟活動中退下來的都是知識和經驗豐富的資深人才。雖然現在具有大學學歷的人比以前多，但不一定表示他們的學識和智慧能及上前輩。」

趙教授認為在知識型經濟中，大部分工種均不涉及體力勞動，現代人即使年屆六十，仍有足夠體能應付工作。「一般人多在年紀再長一點才開始出現認知能力退化的現象，在此之前仍勝任有餘。」

有言論認為設定退休年齡是必需的，這樣年輕人才有機會升遷至高層位置，但趙教授認為由於香港的生育率偏低，不存在這種情況。「亞太區將成為本世紀的經濟增長中心，其中印度和中國市場很可能會在二十年內成為主要經濟體，帶來無窮機遇。香港大可作為人力資本發展樞紐，將人才出口到其他國家。倘非如此，我們的收入從何而來？」

重視年長員工

既然年長一輩的僱員能為企業帶來豐富的經驗，今天的企業為何傾向偏重於Y世代？趙教授說：「在商界，能幹的僱員一般工作至六十五歲以後，但香港大部分人在六十五歲都已退休，這種社會風氣和公司政策都已不合時宜，應該改變。」香港雖無法定的退休年齡，但公務員在六十歲退休，半公營和政府資助機構大多跟隨。



at Nike Hong Kong Ltd. who has over 20 years of experience in a variety of industries and countries across Asia, said that to create a culture which values inclusiveness and diversity, there should be awareness at the organisational level.

“You need to make sure you’re removing biases from your hiring process,” he says. “Managers need to be prepared to have multigenerational conversations and know the levers of different groups.” In addition, mature workers should also be encouraged to participate in training to upgrade their skills. Companies might have to make changes to the physical office environment to accommodate senior workers such as providing bigger monitors and adjustable furniture.

Mature workers might also prefer a more flexible employment mode and have different expectations of perks and benefits. A key driver for mature workers is recognition and respect. “This doesn’t cost money. It is as expensive as a smile or a handshake,” says Mr. Munder.

Professor Chiu says that young people generally need take-home cash and are not too concerned about fringe benefits. Mature workers with families might want insurance benefits. Those in the 40 to 50 age bracket are looking for prestige and status such as club memberships or an office with a view. Those above 60 might not want a fancy office but a more relaxed work schedule and a stable income. They are more concerned with being able to contribute, make a difference in the workplace and being respected.

“There are two ways to engage mature workers,” says Professor Chiu. “On the one hand, the seniors can be mentors to the younger workers. At the same time, the younger workers revitalise and help the mature workers to be more productive.”



Mr. Paul Munder
Paul Munder先生

趙教授表示：「決策者需重新研究這議題。我們一方面鬧人才荒，卻從沒有人提出要檢討退休年齡。人們傾向蕭規曹隨，沒有為意我們已進入新世代，需要新思維。」

他補充說：「我們並非鼓勵企業基於年長員工的年紀而設法吸引他們留下來，重點反而是如何留住和聘用優秀的人才，年齡並非考慮因素。」

家庭友善工作環境

假如把退休年齡延長，工作場所的人口分佈必然有所改變。Nike Hong Kong Ltd. 人才招聘總監 Paul Munder 先生在研討會上表示，要營造一個重視包容和多元的文化，機構上下都要對這種觀念有一定的認識。

Munder先生在亞洲不同國家和行業具有逾二十年的人才管理經驗。他說：「必須確保招聘過程不存在任何成見。管理人員需懂得與不同年代的僱員溝通，明白不同年齡組別各有不同的需要。」此外，企業可鼓勵年長員工參加培訓，提升技能。同時，企業或需為年長的員工調整辦公室環境，例如提供較大的屏幕和可調較的傢具。

年長員工也會選擇較靈活的僱用模式，對待遇和福利也有不同看法，重視和尊重反而是驅使他們投入工作的主要動力。Munder先生說：「這些都不費分文，簡單如一個微笑或握手已是很大的推動力。」



HKBU's Human Resources Management programmes are the only ones in Hong Kong that require students to study organisational and social psychology. "Dealing with people who are not similar to ourselves requires learning. Earlier managers had to deal with the post-80s generation. Now they may have to deal with mature workers. The logic is the same."

Professor Chiu observes that most employees today prize a good quality of life. Flexitime, compressed work hours and work-from-home arrangements are popular among workers of all ages. Given the population demographic, even younger workers will have older dependents at home to look after.

"Hong Kong HR specialists need to design a variety of working arrangements to suit different lifestyles," he says. "We're talking about a continuum from full-time to part-time. You might have mature workers coming in for 75 per cent of the time, making top decisions, supervising processes and mentoring the young. This allows them to spend more time with their grandkids and on their leisure."

Mr. Munder agrees. "Flexible work arrangements lead to a better work-life balance, whether you're 20 and want to go out motor racing or my age and want to play with your kids or older and have other interests. It's a healthy change for the entire office."

Happy companies

Professor Chiu adds that it is a misconception that family-friendly policies are expensive. "Family-friendly employment policies help to strengthen the overall wellbeing and quality of life of employees. It doesn't cost the employer much money but the result is that employees work better, last longer and are more productive."

In the past, employers might only have been concerned with employees fulfilling company obligations. "However, when employees are battered by family obligations, how can they concentrate on work?" questions Professor Chiu.

He cites the example of a study which found that the companies ranked as the 100 best workplaces by *Working Mothers* had stock values that exceeded those of Fortune 500 companies. "Caring about your employees does not mean losing money," he says.

Because HR systems are so developed, employers can calculate remuneration down to the dollar per second. Thus, designing a remuneration package for those who work flexible hours should not be difficult.



趙教授表示，年輕僱員大多需要實質的薪金，對福利反而不太重視。至於已成家立業的較年長僱員則會要求保險福利，四十至五十歲的會希望獲得尊重和地位，例如尊貴會所會籍或享有美麗風景的辦公室。六十歲以上的員工不一定需要華麗的辦公室，但就要求較輕鬆的上班時間和穩定的收入。他們會更重視能否對公司作出貢獻和帶來影響，並得到尊重。

當一支工作隊伍包含不同世代的員工，企業便需為此作出企劃，以便管理人員應付不同年齡、工作動力和作風相異的員工。趙教授說：「要令成熟的員工投入工作有兩種方法，一方面可請他們當年輕僱員的導師，另一方面年輕的員工亦可帶動年長員工保持活力，從而提高生產力。」


浸大的人才管理策略課程是全港唯一要求學生修讀社會心理學的課程。「與不同世代的人相處是一門學問，需要好好學習。管理人員早陣子忙於應付八十後世代的員工，同一道理，現在可能需要與年長的員工打交道。」

據趙教授觀察，現今的僱員大都追求優質生活，彈性和壓縮的工作時間、「在家工作」安排都受任何年齡的僱員歡迎。按照目前的人口統計，即使較年輕的員工亦需照顧家中的長輩。

他說：「香港的人力資源專家需制訂不同的工作安排，以適應不同的生活方式，例如讓年長

Professor Chiu says Hong Kong will catch up with the global trend towards performance-related pay. "We're talking about equity, with pay based on their contribution regardless of age. People will be paid based on having the wisdom and experience that works. If you don't perform, you're out regardless of age. That's equal opportunity."

While it is expected that the bigger firms will take the lead in implementing these practices, Professor Chiu says that informal arrangements catering to needs of their workers might already be in place in smaller firms. "We shouldn't see this as a luxury that small and medium-sized enterprises cannot cope with, though we expect bigger corporations and multinationals to have the 'muscle' and knowledge to do it first."

Family-friendly policies might also be seen as part of corporate social responsibility. "A company is a member of society. Happy employees are more productive and also better customers, thus spurring on the economy." 



的員工從全職轉為兼職，只工作原來的百分之七十五時間，主要負責決策、監督工作流程和指導年輕員工，以便他們有更多時間享受家庭和生活。」

Munder先生亦表示認同：「彈性工作安排的確可讓僱員在生活與工作之間作出更好的平衡，不論你是渴望賽車去的二十歲年輕小伙子，或是像我這樣的年紀希望有時間與子女玩樂，或是有意發展其他興趣的年長人士，彈性工作安排都能令整個工作團隊帶來健康的轉變。」

快樂企業

他補充說有些人誤解家庭友善政策代價高昂。「家庭友善僱用政策有助改善僱員整體的身心健康和生活質素，令僱員的工作表現、持久力和生產力均有所提高。」

過去僱主或只會關心員工有否履行職責，趙教授質疑：「如果僱員被家庭事務纏身，如何能集中精神工作？」

他引述一項研究顯示，獲著名雜誌《Working Mothers》選為一百家最佳職場的公司，其股值比「財富500」的企業股值更高。「關愛僱員不一定就會令企業虧本。」

隨著人力資源系統的發展日趨完善，僱主甚至可計算至每秒的工資，因此，要計算彈性工作時間的薪酬組合並非難事。

趙教授表示，香港將跟隨全球趨勢，按工作表現支薪。「現在鼓吹公平原則，薪酬由貢獻而非年齡決定，只要你有工作所需的智慧和經驗，便會獲得相應的報酬，如果表現欠佳，不論任何年齡，終究會被淘汰，這才是平等機會。」

一般人期望大企業會率先實施家庭友善措施，但趙教授指中小企可能已因應員工的需要作出一些非正式安排。「規模較大的企業和跨國公司固然更有實力和足夠的認識推行家庭友善措施，但中小企也絕非負擔不來。」

家庭友善政策亦可被視為社會企業責任一部分。「企業是社會一員，僱員工作愉快，生產力也更高，從而吸引更多顧客，促進整體經濟蓬勃發展。」 