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Transitional employment aspirations for bridging retirement: implications for training and development

Purpose: The aim of this study was to identify the transitional employment aspirations and training and development needs of older and younger workers at risk of early retirement due to limited education and/or employment in blue collar occupations.

Design/ Methodology/ Approach: A computer based methodology was used to evaluate the demographic effects of gender, education level and occupation group on aspirations pertaining to transitional employment and training and development in a sample of over 1000 Local Government employees.

Findings: Older blue collar, secondary school educated and younger workers were less interested in transitional employment than older workers with higher levels of education or from white collar backgrounds. The early retirement risk factors of blue collar work and secondary school education had a more limited effect on perceived training and development needs for older workers. However for younger workers, these risk factors provided the impetus to undertake training to move into less physically demanding or more challenging roles as their careers progressed.

Practical Implications: Via the identification of education level and occupation types groups' transitional employment aspirations and perceptions of preparatory training and development within younger and older cohorts, long term strategies to develop and retain staff may be formulated.

Originality/ Value: Past studies of transitional employment have rarely included younger workers or older workers at risk of early retirement. Preparatory training and development for transitional employment roles has not been considered in the literature.

Key Words: Older workers, Younger workers, Education level, Blue collar workers, Transitional employment, Retirement

Type of Paper: Research paper

Introduction

Australia is a prime example of a nation confronted with a rapidly aging population. Trends suggest that 13% of the population is currently aged over 65 years, which will increase to 26% by 2050 (OECD, 2006). The doubling of the ageing population is expected to have a larger impact on countries with a higher than average proportion of ageing citizens such as Italy, Japan and Spain, where approximately 36% of the population is expected to be aged over 65 years by 2050 (OECD, 2006). The ageing of the population is not a problem in itself but how this aging population participates in future workforce force will have to increase and early retirement options will require a review as the available recruitment pool shrinks. Currently, labour force participation for men and women starts to decline rapidly from the age of 55 years in the USA, UK and Australia despite having an official retirement age of 65 years in all three countries (OECD, 2006). According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS, 2007) and OECD (2006) early labour force exit is primarily due to older workers having financial security, suffering from ill health, or to a lesser extent retiring to fulfill care responsibilities. Thus, it is known why older workers exit the workforce, but it is currently unknown as to what will encourage them to remain in the workforce longer. As a result, the current study explores older and younger employees' aspirations for training and development that may encourage them to remain engaged in the workforce longer. The study adopts Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS, 2007) definition of younger and older workers, in that persons aged less than 45 years are described as "younger workers", while "older workers" are defined as aged 45 years or older.

In the context of changing demography, the notion of retirement needs to be reviewed as it forms a critical exit milestone for older workers. Feldman (1994) defined retirement as the departure from one's career job from middle age onwards, with the view of decreased

psychological attachment to paid work. The state of retirement need not involve a cessation of work altogether or the capacity of individuals to up-skill, rather it involves a reduction in time and psychological commitment to work. Feldman and Kim (1998) then proposed bridge employment, which they viewed as an incentive for staying employed until retirement. We propose that bridge employment has greater potential than just as a way to help employees adjust to retirement. It can be used as a 'transitional employment phase' that may help extend older workers' employment years well beyond the retirement age. As such, bridge employment may be more aptly described as transitional employment (TE), given that if TE is managed well and employees have a strategic human resource learning and development plan, opportunities may include alternate career paths, rather than gradual retirement. The rapidly ageing workforce has led to an uncertain future in terms of the availability of a skilled recruitment pool, and TE been posed as a solution to enable employers to retain skilled mature aged workers for a longer time (Adams & Rau, 2003).

Transitional Employment and Employee Demographics

In an attempt to understand how to develop and manage TE studies have focused on skilled white collar occupations (Davies, 2003; Kim & Devaney, 2005; Kim & Feldman, 2000). In part, this bias may be due to improved opportunities for TE in older workers from higher status occupations, as shown by Chen and Scott's (2006) analyses of population in the USA. Chen and Scott's (2006) found in the Health and Retirement Survey data, opportunities for participation in TE are more accessible to older workers who are white, highly educated, in good health, believe their jobs to be important, and would continue work despite having financial security. They also found that having financial security was a disincentive to continue work if the job was not perceived to be psychologically rewarding. Similarly, in the European Union, a 16

year longitudinal study of retirement transitions and well being amongst 3815 employees over 45 years of age in the European Union (Seitsamo, 2007), demonstrated that the likelihood of early retirement was increased by the number of diseases experienced by the employee, which was more common amongst blue collar workers, while factors conducive for late retirement were typical of higher status white collar work, such as opportunities for development and autonomy, and meaningful work (Seitsamo, 2007). In Australia, analysis of the 'Household Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia' survey data have shown that males aged 45 to 54 years opt for later retirement if they are able to access flexible work schedules, and perceive their jobs to be stress free (Knox, 2003).

It appears there is limited literature concerning transitional employment for older workers from lower skilled or blue collar settings, although the statistical data described would suggest that fewer opportunities are available for employees potentially disadvantaged by lower levels of education or physically demanding work. An example is Lundberg and Marshall's (2007) survey of 2026 Australian employees over the age of 45 years from the finance, construction and healthcare industries. Over eighty three percent of the participants from all three industries were prepared to undertake transitional employment; however the construction workers reported the greatest resistance to transitional employment. Construction and healthcare workers indicated greater financial security as the reason for seeking TE opportunities, possibly due to lower job security and pay in lower level occupations compared to professionals and managers (Millward & Brooke, 2007). Findings observed by Pillay, Kelly and Tones (2006; 2008), who surveyed older workers in Australian local government organizations showed that white collar workers preferred part time or flexible transitional employment, whilst blue collar workers indicated preferences to either cease full time work or source less physically demanding work. Similar

findings have been indicated in the European literature, in that lower level employees indicate less involvement and more stress and illness due to work compared to professionals and managers (Buyens, Dijk, Dewilde, & De Vos, 2009)

Retirement attitudes for different education and occupation groups were addressed by the Australian Social Attitudes survey, in which over 1000 Australians aged over 18 years participated (Millward & Brooke, 2007). They found that lower levels of formal education, such as non completion of secondary school, and lower occupational status, including low level clerical and sales occupations, production and transport workers, and unskilled workers, were associated with preferences for compulsory retirement ages. Furthermore, they also found that level of education was also related to anxiety regarding the cessation paid work and or seeking full time work after retirement from their current jobs due to financial obligations. By contrast, employees with a university level of education or high status employment in management, professional or administration positions were more likely to indicate a preference for gradually phasing their retirement via part time or casual employment. Millward and Brooke (2007) also explore differences in preferences for retirement transitions by education and occupation status for TE incentives. Employees with a lower level of formal education or occupational status were interested in continuing work provided that their physical health was good, and they earned a 'decent' income. By contrast, workers with a university level of education or high occupational status were encouraged to remain within the workforce if they felt valued or challenged.

Similar to the situation with older blue collar workers, limited research has been undertaken to explore aspirations for transitional employment amongst younger workers. While the mature aged workforce of the future may be expected to experience improved health and higher levels of formal education compared to the current mature aged workforce, these

socioeconomic benefits will only be useful if younger workers are willing to plan for a long term engagement (post retirement) in the workforce. Findings from Millward and Brooke's (2007) Australian Survey of Social Attitudes revealed that expectations for transitional employment remain consistent between the ages of 18 and 65 years. Preference for part time, casual or changing career paths were preferred by equally by the younger and the older workers. Pillay et al. (2006) found that younger workers were more likely to express an interest in either early retirement and seek alternative flexible working conditions. However, according to Millward and Brooke (2007) younger workers aged up to 49 years were more likely to report mental health problems, lack of support from management, and stressful or dangerous work environments as obstacles to continued employment. As a possible consequence of these issues, younger workers cited less stressful work as an incentive to continue employment after retirement.

Training and Development for Transitional Employment

While education and training is often concentrated at the beginning of careers as a pre-entry requirement (Livingstone & Stowe, 2007), continuous learning has become increasingly important for workers to remain employable throughout their working life (Armstrong-Stassen, 2008). The impetus for continuous and lifelong learning with a desire to prevent obsolescence, has been globalisation, technological innovations and multiple careers, which has significantly impacted on professional practices (Ilmarinen, 2006). As such, it has impacted on training and development to explore new options and attract and retain workers. This has supported the emergence of a demand for TE amongst both younger and older workers, albeit for different reasons.

However, as with transitional employment itself, training and development opportunities are more plentiful in higher status occupations, of which formal education beyond secondary

schooling is often a prerequisite (OECD, 2006). Findings from the European Working Conditions survey indicate that employees from low skilled occupations report fewer training needs and opportunities for personal growth in the jobs compared to workers in highly skilled occupations. The report also notes that the limited training and development opportunities offered by their employers prevents employee from development and career advancement in their work (Yrjanainen, 2008). The limited opportunities to learn and develop for low skilled workers creates a vicious cycle as this group of employees also have less ability to transfer to more demanding duties compared to employees from highly skilled jobs. In addition, many low skilled jobs also consist of manually demanding work in potentially hazardous environments that pose a risk to physical health, and subsequent early retirement (Ilmarinen, 2006). In a longitudinal study of over 1000 older Finnish workers by Tuomi, Huuhtanen, Nykyri and Ilmarinen (2001) an improvement in work ability amongst manual workers as a result of training and development was demonstrated. While training may enable workers to exit physically demanding work via the development of new skills for alternate jobs (eg. Lundberg & Marshallsay, 2007), it also has the potential to add a dimension of complexity and challenge to unskilled occupations and develop workers' competence and prevent injury so that employees may remain the workforce longer.

Aside from educational and occupational effects on opportunities for training and development, Villosio, Di Pierro, Giordanengo, Pasqua and Richiardi's (2008) analysis of the European Working Conditions survey found that mature aged workers were less likely to have access to on the job learning or training and development compared to younger workers. While younger workers with limited experience perceive a greater need for developing and furthering their qualifications and skills compared to older workers, Millward and Brooke (2007) and Pillay

et al. (2006) argue that in the current workforce shortage climate, all workers are required to engage with training and development to match changing job demands. According to Loretto and White (2006), negative stereotyping and age discrimination serve as one of the main barriers for mature workers to accessing training and development opportunities. However, age related constraints to training and development are compounded by low occupational status, such that older workers of low occupational status with limited formal qualifications experience greater disadvantage compared to older workers with higher levels of education or occupational status. For example, Tones and Pillay (2008) surveyed perceived training and development opportunities in the workplace in a sample of older and younger local government workers from blue and white collar occupations. Younger blue collar workers reported the most optimal training and development opportunities, which suggested that work and learning were strongly integrated via apprenticeships and on the job training schemes. Regardless of age, white collar workers reported the next highest level of training and development opportunities, while the poorest opportunities for training and development were reported amongst older blue collar workers. So the literature suggests that it is particularly important to foster training and development in workers who either possess limited formal qualifications or are employed in low skilled or physically demanding occupations to facilitate adequate health and motivation to participate in TE.

Current Study

Against the above backdrop the focus of the current study is to solicit workers aspirations regarding adopting a TE phase as an interim stage leading to full disengagement from paid work

and the implications this may have for learning and development. The current study¹ used a survey methodology to investigate the demographic determinants of preferences for TE and perceived training and development needs. An online survey was administered to employees of the Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) which queried a variety of TE issues. The focus on training and development served the two specific aims of the study, which were to: (i) determine TE aspirations for younger and older workers, and (ii) identify training and development needs and preferences to support continued employment up to and including TE. The above two issues were studied against the demographic variables of age, education level and job type. Identification of training and development preferences and needs for TE amongst younger and older workers at risk of early retirement will provide useful understanding of how to extend their participation in the workforce.

Method

Questionnaire development and rationale

The New Initiatives Survey (NIS) was informed by consultative interviews with local councils in Queensland and prior surveys administered by the research partners (see Pillay et al., 2006a; 2008; Pillay, Kelly, & Tones, 2006b). Although the NIS was designed to evaluate a wider range of individual and organisational factors pertaining to TE, as stated earlier, the focus for this paper was to develop an understanding of the expectations regarding training and development to support workers interested in TE. The questions on the NIS relevant to the current study can be described under four sections. Section one collected demographic data such

¹ This study is an Australian Research Council linkage research (Grant no. LP05615450) jointly conducted by the Queensland University of Technology and the Local Government Association of Queensland as the industry partners

as age, education level and occupation types; section 2 solicited workers perspective with regards to options that would encourage the worker to engage in TE; section 3 questioned the nature of training and development preferred by workers who considered TE and section 4 sought workers preferences of delivery mode, place and timing for training and development. A copy of the NIS in its entirety is available from the first author on request.

Procedure

An online survey consisted of a total of 31 questions with a forced choice response format, and was developed in consultation with the Training and Development department of the Local Government Association of Queensland (LGAQ). The survey was uploaded onto the LGAQ website and made accessible to its sister associations around Australia. Through the ALGA network, the LGAQ invited employees to participate in the survey. To encourage participants to complete the survey, reminders were sent via the LGAQ website and corporate emails, and followed up by training officers who visited local councils for other training activities. Participation was entirely voluntary and anonymous. Data was collected centrally by the LGAQ and coded for entry into SPSS for analysis.

Participant sample

As the peak body for all local councils in Australia (609 in total), the ALGA facilitated access to the participants through its member local councils. A total of 1,068 local government employees completed the NIS online. Table 1 provides a breakdown of demographic variables (education, age and occupation) characteristics of all participants who reported an interest in TE. Given that participation in the study was voluntary and dependent on self selection, adequate representation of the demographic profile of the ALGA was an issue. The analysis of the demographics of the sample was reflective of the changing workforce profile. Older workers

were more likely to possess secondary schooling only ($\chi^2=8.064, p<.05$), and less likely to be employed in administration positions ($\chi^2=10.281, p<.01$) than younger workers.

INSERT TABLE 1 HERE

Results

A series of two-way contingency table analyses were conducted to evaluate the effect of demographic variables of education level and occupation type within younger and older participant subgroups, as well as to compare younger and older workers' responses for each subgroup within education level and occupation type on aspirations regarding TE (Tables 2-3), and preferences for training and development (Tables 4-5) The more stringent significance level of $p<.01$ was selected to control type 1 error, due to the large number of tests conducted. Thus the data reported in the tables are all significant at $p<.01$ level.

INSERT TABLE 2 HERE

Table 2 presents the only question that revealed significant difference between education level and age with regards to aspirations for TE. The education levels were categorised as having secondary school only (SSO); vocational education and training (VET) and university level education (UNI). Older workers with a university (UNI) level of education were more likely to aspire to transitional employment than older workers with secondary schooling only (SSO) or

Vocational Education and Training (VET). A significant difference between the proportion of younger and older university educated workers aspiring to TE was also observed.

INSERT TABLE 3 HERE

The data summarised in Table 3 shows the occupational effects on workers' aspirations for TE. The categories of occupation level include administration (ADM), blue collar (BC) and professional /management (P/M). The data confirm previous research that older white collar workers, which are the ADM workers and P/M workers combined, were more likely to aspire to TE than older blue collar (BC) workers. Older white collar workers were also more likely to aspire to TE than their younger colleagues, although an age difference was not evident for older and younger BC workers. Younger ADM employees who aspired to TE were more likely to opt for a new career in transitional employment than older ADM employees. Younger P/M workers were also more likely to request training and development in the event of health or skill deficits preventing transitional employment than their older colleagues. The next series of tables presents data on the preferences for content, delivery model and timing of the training and development options.

INSERT TABLE 4 HERE

Data summarised in Table 4 shows that younger workers with a VET or SSO education were most likely to express a preference for training and development for TE. This aspiration is

evident by the education level differences within the younger cohort, and age differences for SSO and VET educated workers, which show that younger VET and SSO educated workers responded to this item more often than younger workers with a university level education, as well as older SSO and VET educated workers. In addition, younger workers with a VET level of education were more likely than their older colleagues to prefer their training to lead to accreditation. Significant differences for preferred training content emerged primarily for older workers. Within the older worker cohort, higher levels of education were associated with an interest in training in professional competencies, while the trend for workers with lower levels of education was a preference for labour conditions or administration training, which suggested that training preferences were aligned to current careers. An age difference emerged for UNI level cohort, as younger workers were more interested in management training than older workers. Online learning as a training method was more preferable to younger workers with SSO, compared to their older peers.

The data also shows that education level and age influenced the preference for timing of training and development for TE. The younger workers from SSO and VET backgrounds were more likely to indicate a preference for “throughout employment” than older workers of comparable levels of education. Preference for training providers tended to match workers’ educational backgrounds within each age group. Younger workers with lower levels of education would prefer to undertake TAFE provided training. By contrast, the older workers with UNI and VET levels of education were more likely to prefer university and TAFE providers respectively, compared to workers with other levels of education. There was also a trend for older SSO workers to prefer in-house training. The above pattern is expected as it reflects previous education experience.

INSERT TABLE 5 HERE

Data in Table 5 illustrated that younger ADM and BC workers have a higher preference for training and development for TE than older ADM and BC workers, which is supported by age differences for both occupation groups. In consideration of the nature of training, formal accreditation was more likely to be requested by younger white collar workers (ADM and P/M) compared to older white collar workers. However no age differences were observed for BC workers. Preference for content of training programs tended to match current work roles. The younger BC workers preferred technical training while younger ADM workers were more likely to indicate an interest in administration training, compared to other occupational groups within the younger. Older P/M workers were more likely than either older ADM or BC workers to request training in professional competencies. It is interesting to note that age difference emerged for P/M workers, with younger workers more likely to request management training than older workers.

Responses to preferences for the delivery modality of training showed that formal face-to-face training was a preferred training method for younger BC workers compared to their older colleagues. For all occupation groups, younger workers were more likely to prefer to undertake training and development throughout employment (continuous and workplace-based learning) than older workers. Finally, with respect to training providers, only one occupation group difference emerged for older workers. The P/M employees were more likely than B/C employees to prefer university provided training, which is again reflective of the effect of educational background on current preferences. Younger rather than older ADM workers preferred university

delivered training, whilst TAFE provided training was more likely to be requested by younger B/C workers compared to older B/C workers.

Discussion

In general, the employees in the ALGA have shown an interest in TE, which is a significant departure from the stereotypical view that older workers are not interested in remaining in the workforce. Partially comparable to previous findings within the local government (Pillay et al, 2006a) and other Australian literature (Millward & Brooke, 2007), older workers were more interested in securing TE than younger workers. This desire is more prevalent amongst the university educated and white collar occupation groups. By contrast, interest in TE was not affected by age in the secondary school or TAFE educated groups, or in blue collar workers. It is possible that across working life, white collar and highly educated workers' attachment to work increases, perhaps due to cumulative achievement, prestige and success, which in turn motivates interest in transitional employment to prolong working life. By contrast, employees from blue collar occupations or with low levels of formal education may not develop the same attachment to their work role, so their motivation to continue work may not increase across the lifespan to stimulate an interest in TE. As such, consistent with previous research by Pillay et al. (2008), older workers with lower levels of formal education and those employed in blue collar occupations were less likely to report an interest in TE than either university educated or white collar older workers.

Transitional Employment Aspirations

For TE, younger workers tended to aspire to a new career (possibly to broaden their work potential), although this difference was statistically significant for administrators only.

Furthermore, young professionals, managers and blue collar workers were more likely to indicate a preference to undergo training and development in the event of ill health. The perception of TE as a second chance at a career amongst younger workers is extremely positive and concurs with the portfolio and flexible workers concept. The findings suggest that if sound human resource development forward planning is considered, employers can assist in the delay of early exit from the work force by providing learning and development opportunities. It presents employers with an opportunity to develop new capacities with workers that are high risk of early retirement, particularly those in the physically demanding and low paying work susceptible to ill health and injury. While professionals and managers would not be considered at risk of ill health and early retirement, the perceptions of younger professional and managers in Millward and Brooke's (2007) survey suggests that mental health problems and occupational stress are of more significant concern to highly ambitious younger workers. As such, the reduction of stress and adequate training and management support may be of greater relevance to encourage continued employment in younger workers.

The findings from this section of the survey do not indicate any suggestions for supporting older workers in TE, although they do highlight at risk subgroups. Employment in an administrative role within the local government appears to buffer against the negative impact of secondary schooling on interest in transitional employment (Pillay et al, 2008). Perhaps, the access to information and being involved with employability discussions as part of their job may have allowed administrative workers to be more perceptive of the emerging skills shortage debate which in turn has influenced their responses. By contrast, the most occupationally disadvantaged older workers were blue collar employees. These workers tended to hold a VET level of education and were mainly involved in outdoor and physical work, which may limit

opportunity to have access to information about training available within the workplace. Most of them were reluctant to continue in their current employment as it often impacted on their physiological abilities. However, both of these at risk groups demonstrated unique profiles for training and development preferences. The preferences for training and development may provide a solution for preparing at risk workers for TE and delaying early retirement.

Training and development preferences for transitional employment

Several unique profiles for training and development preferences emerged for the younger and older workers. Younger workers indicated a preference for training and development throughout employment, as well as for university delivered training more often than older workers, a finding which was consistent across almost all education level and occupation type subgroups. Of interest was that the need for training and development to participate in TE was valued more by the younger worker (70%), despite having only secondary school education or being employed in a blue collar occupation. In addition, SSO and VET educated workers reported a preference for TAFE delivered training confirming the preferences for familiar approaches. Younger workers also seemed to be mindful of the potential in training and development to reduce risk of ill health in later years, and were probably better informed about occupation health and safety matters than older workers (OECD, 2006).

Lundberg and Marshallsay (2007) identified that older construction workers perceive limited scope to improve productivity in physically demanding work via training and development. As such, training and development may be more beneficial for older workers in physically demanding occupations if its purpose is to develop new skills (Tuomi et al, 2001). By contrast, university educated and professional and managerial older workers reported an interest in professional training delivered via university providers. This profile fits the other type of

older worker, in which transitional employment within one's current role is more feasible due to fewer physical demands in work (Pillay et al, 2008). The most preferred time for training and development for TE amongst older workers was at least five years prior to retirement. In other words, timing of training and development should be part of the human resource planning capacity as part of life span approach to training and development (Pillay & Tones, 2008).

Conclusions and Implications

The current study indicated that there was widespread interest in TE, and that workers were willing to undertake retraining and skill upgrades to prepare for TE. Unlike current practices of 'one size fits all' the preference for how the concept of TE and the associated training and development is further developed will be the key to its success. As noted above, there are certain profiles of preferences for different subgroups in the workforce which may require customised treatment, particularly for older workers. For instance, training and development for blue collar workers should consider their health and wellbeing as well as possible education and skill disadvantages when planning for transitions into less demanding and possibly more interesting roles. However, the reduced working years of older blue collar workers might limit the practicality of extended courses or compromise other social roles they wish to engage with, and therefore short courses or recognition of prior learning might present an opportunity for learning at a reduced time commitment.

While the differing demographic profiles observed in the current study may be of use to design training and development programs to facilitate TE, these profiles have the potential to become overly prescriptive and further segregate workers. As the findings illustrate, education and occupation subgroup differences tended to be more apparent amongst older workers

compared to younger workers. In addition, all workers tended to prefer training and development opportunities consistent with their educational background and occupation type. However upgrading skills and knowledge within current occupation areas may be impractical in instances where jobs pose health risks for older workers due to the work environment or job demands. As the current findings show, TE in blue collar roles may be very challenging due to the physical demands of work and as such training and development for job mobility would be more adaptive. In addition, employees with lower levels of formal education would benefit in the employment market from upgrading their qualifications (OECD, 2006). By facilitating the breakdown of such profiles and encouraging job mobility within the organisation, experienced workers may be retained rather than retired on disability pensions, or due to skill shortages.

The findings carry implications for organisational workforce planning for TE within and outside of local government. It cannot be assumed that older and younger workers with different demographic profiles are homogenous groups with similar TE aspirations and training preferences. In some cases education level and occupation type moderated age differences. For example, age was a factor in VET or university educated workers' willingness to undertake training for TE but not secondary school educated workers. Given the lower aspirations for TE in older SSO and BC workers and higher training and development needs of younger SSO and BC workers, training and development in these demographic groups is strongly recommended along with the creation of roles that enable reduced physical demands. Finally, in light of the above and as noted by Simpson, Greller and Stroh, (2002) and Tones and Pillay, (2008) it may be beneficial to adopt a lifespan approach to workforce planning with appropriate training and development to individual workers, rather than the adopting generic policies of "one size fits all" approach.

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Table 1

Responses to Section 1 of the New Initiatives Survey, ages 16-45 versus 46+

Demographic Variable	Younger Aged Workers 16-45 (N=280)	Older Aged Workers 46+ (N=788)
Education Level		
University	45.6%	39.3%
VET	39.8%	37.4%
Secondary School	14.6%	23.3%
Occupation Level		
Professional/management	46.4%	50.8%
Administration	36.8%	27.4%
Blue Collar	16.9%	21.8%

Table 2

Aspirations for career change and transitional employment: education effects

Questions	Younger workers (16-45)			Older workers (46-55+)			Significant χ^2 tests for education level, within each age group		Significant χ^2 tests for age, within each education level		
	SSO	VET	UNI	SSO	VET	UNI	Younger	Older	SSO	VET	UNI
• Aspire to securing transitional employment	70%	80%	81%	81%	85%	92%	NS	$\chi^2 = 12.198$	NS	NS	$\chi^2 = 9.678$

NB. All χ^2 tests significant at $p < .01$

Table 3

Aspirations for career change and transitional employment: occupation effects

Questions	Younger workers (16-45)			Older workers (46-55+)			Significant χ^2 tests for occupation group, within each age group		Significant χ^2 tests for age, within each occupation group		
	ADM	BC	P/M	ADM	BC	P/M	Younger	Older	ADM	BC	P/M
• Aspire to securing transitional employment	78%	80%	80%	89%	77%	90%	NS	$\chi^2=18.082$	$\chi^2=6.672$	NS	$\chi^2=8.720$
• Aspire to new career for transitional employment	18%	23%	11%	5.6%	9.7%	6.3%	NS	NS	$\chi^2=9.665$	NS	NS
• Prefer to undertake retraining if health/ skills prevented TE.	28%	43%	40%	27%	23%	24%	NS	NS	NS	NS	$\chi^2=9.936$

NB. All χ^2 tests significant at $p < .01$

Table 4

Preference to undertake training, and content and delivery methods: education effects

Question	Younger workers (16-45)			Older workers (46-55+)			Significant χ^2 tests for education level, within each age group		Significant χ^2 tests for age, within each education level		
	SSO	VET	UNI	SSO	VET	UNI	Younger	Older	SSO	VET	UNI
• Require training and development for TE	79%	58%	34%	36%	35%	32%	$\chi^2=21.325$	NS	$\chi^2=17.636$	$\chi^2=14.470$	NS
• Training should lead to formal qualifications	27%	64%	64%	39%	39%	46%	NS	NS	NS	$\chi^2=7.757$	NS
• Interested in training:											
• Professional	32%	40%	61%	14%	33%	50%	NS	$\chi^2=17.454$	NS	NS	NS
• Management	36%	42%	58%	16%	23%	32%	NS	NS	NS	NS	$\chi^2=6.611$
• Labour	0%	4%	3%	6%	0%	0%	NS	$\chi^2=10.184$	NS	NS	NS
• Administration	46%	36%	18%	39%	22%	11%	NS	$\chi^2=14.009$	NS	NS	NS
• Prefer to develop skills via:											
• Online learning	27%	14%	18%	4%	11%	18%	NS	NS	$\chi^2=8.167$	NS	NS
• T&D for TE should be available:											
• Throughout employment	64%	47%	37%	27%	28%	25%	NS	NS	$\chi^2=14.754$	$\chi^2=19.931$	NS
• T&D for TE should be delivered by:											
• University	18%	35%	43%	12%	18%	35%	NS	$\chi^2=31.243$	NS	$\chi^2=10.109$	NS
• TAFE	50%	56%	33%	26%	38%	24%	$\chi^2=10.001$	$\chi^2=13.583$	NS	NS	NS
• in-house staff	54%	42%	43%	61%	43%	41%	NS	$\chi^2=15.567$	NS	NS	NS

NB. All χ^2 tests significant at $p < .01$

Table 5

Preference to undertake training, and content and delivery methods: occupation effects

Question	Younger workers (16-45)			Older workers (46-55+)			Significant χ^2 tests for occupation group, within each age group		Significant χ^2 tests for age, within each occupation group		
	ADM	BC	P/M	ADM	BC	P/M	Younger	Older	ADM	BC	P/M
• Require training and development for TE	58%	71%	35%	44%	38%	31%	$\chi^2=17.234$	NS	$\chi^2=12.775$	$\chi^2=12.382$	NS
• Training should lead to formal qualifications	65%	60%	71%	36%	40%	45%	NS	NS	$\chi^2=9.351$	NS	$\chi^2=6.856$
• Interested in training:											
• Technical	13%	44%	12%	10%	26%	12%	$\chi^2=11.832$	NS	NS	NS	NS
• Professional	39%	40%	52%	19%	23%	50%	NS	$\chi^2=19.172$	NS	NS	NS
• Management	44%	36%	56%	29%	13%	27%	NS	NS	NS	NS	$\chi^2=9.976$
• Labour	7%	0%	0%	0%	6%	0%	NS	$\chi^2=10.811$	MS	NS	NS
• Administration	54%	20%	12%	53%	4%	11%	$\chi^2=18.488$	NS	NS	NS	NS
• Prefer to develop skills via:											
• Formal face-to-face	33%	52%	32%	29%	19%	33%	NS	NS	NS	$\chi^2=8.300$	NS
• T&D for TE should be available:											
• Throughout employment	51%	60%	42%	26%	29%	25%	NS	NS	$\chi^2=15.567$	$\chi^2=11.382$	$\chi^2=10.278$
• T&D for TE should be delivered by:											
• University	25%	37%	45%	11%	19%	32%	NS	$\chi^2=29.147$	$\chi^2=8.484$	NS	NS
• TAFE	43%	63%	38%	32%	31%	28%	NS	NS	NS	$\chi^2=12.054$	NS

NB. All χ^2 tests significant at $p < .01$