Exploring views on retirement policy in Higher Education in South Africa: Case of the University of KwaZulu-Natal

By

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DECLARATION

Submitted in / partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Masters in Development Studies, in the Graduate Programme in the School of Development Studies, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban, South Africa.

I declare that this dissertation is my own unaided work. All citations, references and borrowed ideas have been duly acknowledged. It is being submitted for the degree of Masters in Development Studies in the Faculty of Humanities, Development and Social Science, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban, South Africa. None of the present work has been submitted previously for any degree or examination in any other University.

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<u>Abstract</u>

Retirement from work can be viewed from a number of standpoints: economic; medical; administrative and social. In South Africa research has mainly focused on social and economic factors with a strong bias towards state old age pensions and how retired people are more vulnerable to poverty as they are forced to share their pensions with their families and look after HIV/AIDS orphans (Noumbissi and Zuberi, 2001:45). This research will fill a gap by exploring the administrative aspect, the various policies that regulate retirement, and how these affect decisions to retire on individuals and the perceived effect on the performance of an organization. Gustman and Steinmeier (1991:98) argue that exits through retirement are one of the important labor market flows that shape the age structure of faculty, and help to determine the quality and costs of higher education thus it is worth investigating the policies that regulate this labor flow.

Acknowledgements

List of acronyms

AA   Affirmative Action

AARP   American Association of Retired People

ADEA   Age and Discrimination in Employment Act

AIDS   Acquired immune deficiency Syndrome

AUCC   Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada

EE   Employment Equity

EU   European Union

HIV   Human Immunodeficiency Virus.

HR   Human Resources

IOM   International Organisation of Migration

NRF   National Research Foundation

NTESU   National Tertiary Education Staff Union

OECD   Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development

UKZN   University of KwaZulu-Natal

UCT   University of Cape Town

UJ   University of Johannesburg

UN   United Nations

WHO   World Health Organisation

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Research on population ageing remains marginal in Africa due to the strong focus on high levels of fertility and mortality (Heath, 1998:4). With an ageing population along with high rates of HIV infection in the economically active age group, understanding the nature of ageing, and in particular retirement is important in this context (Noumbissi and Zuberi, 2001:45). Most research on ageing and retirement has been conducted in developed nations and these are mainly based on the assumption of an individual motivation and that people want to retire early (Vickerstaff, 2006: 456).Despite the relatively greater interest in the topic in developed contexts, Vickerstaff (2006) notes that there is little understanding of the role of the employer and their development of retirement policy in determining retirement decisions. Describing the role of the employer in determining retirement through organizational policies and their implementation is one of the objectives of this research.

Research on retirement in developing countries has focused mainly on the impact of pension policies and other social and economic benefits or constraints that accrue after retirement as evidenced by existing literature. In South Africa, research has mainly focused on the state old age pension and how retired people are more vulnerable to poverty as they are forced to share their pensions with families and look after HIV/AIDS orphans (Noumbissi and Zuberi, 2001:45). These studies have focused on the poor and how they get assistance from state programs.

However, this research focuses more on the 'advantaged' looking specifically at a sector where loss of skills has the potential to damage higher education in South Africa. It is imperative that measures are taken to recognize that elderly people who are prime for retirement can continue to actively participate in the economy and can mentor those who take over to ensure continuity and improvements in organizational performance.

Retirement policy in developed countries

The international trend is that people work longer as they are now living longer, thus retaining the expertise in older and experienced workers (Manpower Inc, 2003). In developed countries, recognizing a shift in the distribution of the working population in the framework of the Lisbon Strategy, the Member States of the European Union set targets to increase the participation of older people in the labor market. Spokus (2002) states that the European Union wants to increase the participation rate of older workers (55-64) from the current 38.8% to 50% by 2010. This was because of the realisation that people were living longer, healthy and productive lives and thus it was important to keep them in employment to avoid a pension bubble and an unnecessary loss of skills (Gunderson and Pesando: 1980).

The Ontario Human Rights Commission noted that someone who is 64-years, 364-days-old does not become disposable just because a calendar page flips. It gives the examples of Sir John Macdonald who was 76 when he was elected prime minister for a final term in 1891, Nelson Mandela who became president of South Africa at age 77, and American astronaut John Glenn who was orbiting the Earth aboard the space shuttle *Discovery* in 1998 at the age of 77 (Gunderson and Pesando: 1980). All these people made significant contributions to society despite being over the stipulated retirement age.

Retirement policy in overseas universities

In the United States the compulsory retirement age of university professors was raised from 65 to 70 in 1986, and in 1993 forced exit in academia was abolished (Hammond and Morgan, 1991). As a consequence, the American system allows unhindered discourse between academic generations. At age 65 an American professor might be contemplating career moves and new avenues of research. Research in the United States indicates that senior professors are highly productive, hard-working, and deeply committed to their institutions. This allows American universities to take advantage of older professors to attract and supervise top graduate students according to MacGregor and Klassen (2005)

who also note that many United States institutions have already embarked on a learner-centred approach to teaching that relies on established faculty with more time for students than younger faculty who must concentrate on research and publications.

However, Canadian universities, according to Gunderson and Pesando (1980), have maintained mandatory retirement for tenured staff in a bid to create room for new recruitment exercises. Conley (2007:3) states that this great purge in Canadian Universities will take away 20,000 professors by 2011, replacing the positions lost in the 1990s alone raises this estimate by about 13,000. Even to restore the student/teacher ratios of the early 1990s, universities would have to hire an additional 10,000 to 20,000 faculty members, perhaps more, and this would require doubling the whole system within five or six years (Conley 2007:3).

In a Today's newspaper article (October 30: 2004:A7), it was reported that a few months before he vaulted into academic superstardom by winning the Nobel Prize in economics for research on business cycle fluctuations and the design of public economic policy, economist Finn Kydland moved to Vancouver in Canada in the hope of teaching at the University of British Columbia (UBC). The offer from UBC collapsed because its employees must retire at 65, and the Professor, whose research was reported to have an influence on public monetary policies in dozens of countries, said he wanted to work beyond that age 'I am not ready to retire,' was the Professor's explanation. The Newspaper reported that Kydland eventually accepted a chair in economics at the University of California, Santa Barbara which has no mandatory retirement policy. The article also reported that early in 2004, 60-year-old University of Toronto political scientist Thomas Pangle left his job and country for a position at the University of Texas because he wanted to work beyond age 65. The Newspaper also reported that Pangle is regarded as one of North America's leading historians of political thought.

Retirement and government acts in South Africa

The South African government has, like many other governments in the developing world, adopted a mandatory retirement age policy. The South African Government has a mandatory retirement age policy provision. Section 187 (2) (b) of the Labour Relations Act: Act 66 of 1995 acknowledges a fixed retirement age. Women are supposed to retire at 60 and men at 65. This is based on the notion that women age faster than men and should thus retire earlier. It is also tied to the patriarchal belief that women should leave work early and tend to domestic chores while the man continues to provide for the family. Since the retirement age is entrenched in the law, an employee suing an employer for dismissal on attainment of the stated age is not permissible in court. The situation is different according to sectors. In unskilled or semi-skilled professions where labour is plentiful, employers use mandatory retirement as a way of replacing older staff out and new younger people into the system. Getting older workers out of the system also advantages the employer economically as it means that the new younger employee will start with a basic salary that is lower that what the company was paying their predecessor, who got a lot more because of experience (Graham: 1992).

The situation is different in highly skilled or professional occupations, where qualified individuals are relatively scarce. For example, due to the shortage of health personnel in South Africa, the Health Ministry does not adhere to the mandatory retirement age policy and allows its personnel to continue in employment and they do not have follow the laid down age limit of 65, this has lessened the burden of care work on nurses and doctors (Noumbissi and Zuberi: 2001).

Retirement policy in other South African universities

Retirement ages differ with employers and are dictated mainly by local practices and circumstances. Most Universities, for example the University of Cape Town (UCT), retain a retirement age of 65 (UCTRF:2006). According to the UCT Retirement Fund document (2006), normal retirement is whereby the employment contract ends at the end

of the year in which the staff member turns 65, with continued service being based on negotiations based upon affordability, scarcity of new employees and expertise as stipulated in the rules of the UCT Retirement Fund.

Some organizations, such as the UKZN (UKZN), have lowered the retirement age to 60 from 65 (for men and women) with a superannuation option (UKZN policy; 2007). In a bid to entice academics, the University of Johannesburg (UJ) also has a retirement age policy of 65, but the provisions are so flexible that academics performing well are guaranteed of employment well after the contractual retirement date (University of Johannesburg website). As UCT and UJ are the some of the leading universities in the country, for UKZN to have a lower age of retirement places it at a unique position that needs enquiry mostly into why such a policy exists and the sentiments of the affected staff.

Retirement policy at the UKZN
What is the current policy regulating retirement?
Who determines what policy is used (decision making)?

The UKZN, which is the focus of this study, at a Council meeting held on 29 April 2005, resolved to retain a retirement age of 60 years which is a lower age than the age of 65 recommended by the State as stated in the Labour Relations Act. This was approved by the University Council which is the high authority governing the Institution. In one sense this policy is a positive deviation from the Government's Act which is gender discriminatory because it states that women retire earlier (age 60) than men (age 65). The University policy acknowledged the need for a retirement age based inter alia on its "commitment to transformation, the need for renewal, financial and legal imperatives" (UKZN Council Report 2005).

The University acknowledged the need to retain certain exceptional, highly skilled and productive staff. Accordingly, the University may re-employ a staff member who has

reached normal retirement age on a non-pensionable basis, for a period of up to three years, in the first instance, with the possibility of a further extension for up to two years taking the person to the State endorsed age of 65 (UKZN Council Report 2005). These extensions are not automatic; they are based on the staff member's motivation and the Faculty Dean's opinion of the usefulness of the particular applicant. There is a chance applications will get turned down. The UKZN authorities defended the mandatory retirement policy, noting that the university tenure system, in which selected faculty members have job guarantees for their full professional careers, does not leave room to hire young staff (UKZN Council Report, 2005). Mandatory retirement creates job openings and is a way to refresh the faculty and bring new blood and new ideas to the university (UKZN Council Report, 2005).

UKZN contextual history

Merger, transformation and equity

The issue of an agreed retirement age for staff at the UKZN has been a contentious one since the 1 January 2004 merger. The merger saw the union between two main Universities, the University of Natal, which previously had been a white dominated institution and the University of Durban Westville which had been an Indian campus. After extensive consultation with staff of the Universities, the Council-mandated Working Group on Retirement proposed that the UKZN retain a retirement age of 60 for a two year period commencing in 2005 and this age was inherited from the two Universities of Durban Westville and Natal (UKZN Department of Equity). The two year period would ensure that there was creation of vacancies to cater for the staff from the amalgamated colleges and after those two years the retirement age would be reviewed upwards to 65 as was the norm in other South African Universities (UKZN Council Report, 2005). On 29 April 2005 the University Council resolved that the UKZN's retirement age was at the end of the year in which a member of staff turns 60, in the 57th year the affected member may apply for continuation of employment after superannuation (UKZN Retirement Fund) and such continuation will be on non

pensionable contracts and must satisfy several criteria ranging from academic contribution to equity considerations. Re-employment following retirement would be on a contract non pensionable basis. The most critical concerns that were crucial were that the University gets the demographics right in light of the National Employment Equity Act and the University's own equity policies (UKZN Department of Equity). Fixing the retirement age at 60 was supposed to facilitate such a change in staff composition.

Scope of the research

The formally employed have not been subject to much study. Research in South Africa has focused mainly on the recipients of pensions and not specifically on how the formally employed are also affected by having a mandatory retirement age. Stewart (1991: 206) states that mandatory retirement age policies enshrined in the South African Constitution are retrogressive as they siphon away human skills, expertise and knowledge. This research will aim to fill a gap by exploring the organizational role in determining retirement, the various policies that regulate retirement, and how these affect decisions by individuals to retire and the perceived effect this has on the performance of an organization. The study will address a gap in the understanding of retirement policy and decision to retire at organizational and individual levels in the tertiary education sector of a country which shares characteristics with developed and developing countries.

This research will weigh the advantages of retiring a skilled and experienced worker for the sake of employing a new worker, possibly to the detriment of organizational standards. The study will assess whether older academics can maintain existing roles as well as train the new recruitments to take over in their field of study.

The research will focus on exploring a case with a mandatory policy and will focus on the tensions between factors which motivate the different stakeholders, who are the University Administration and the workers affected by the policy. The research will also assess how organizations view the importance of the older worker and try to understand if the organizational environment enables these workers to continue in employment. Central

will be the organization's view of the productivity of the older worker declining with age and is it beneficial to the organization to retire the worker? The constraints to continued work for the older worker will be explored from both the organization and the individual's point of view to establish policy recommendations.

The UKZN was chosen for the study due to its low retirement age. A majority of institutions have 65 as the retiring date and this age has been considered 'normal' in a sense. The University's main thrust on equity and transformation are also unique for an academic institution that prides itself on being the Premier in African Scholarship and it is important to research how the institution balances out the two and whether there are successes and how this all impacts on the worker.

Research Questions

Core questions

What are different positions on retirement age policy?
How do these influence views toward the existing policy?

Policy questions

What is the current UKZN policy regulating retirement?
Who determines what policy is used (decision making) at UKZN?

Organizational and individual perspectives:

What is the different stakeholders' position on mandatory retirement policy?
Do the stakeholders perceive current policy as discriminatory?
How do the stakeholders perceive effect of retirement policy on productivity and skills retention?
How do the stakeholders perceive effect of retirement policy on transformation?
What is the effect of retirement policy on future economic wellbeing?

Do stakeholders have an alternative career path in mind because of the retirement policy? What are stakeholder ideas for alternative policy?

Structure Of Dissertation

Literature Review – This section will include a description and debate of existing knowledge on retirement age policies, from developed and developing contexts. This chapter will also describe and critique research that has been done on retirement age policies in South Africa.

Research Methods This section will describe the methodology and methods used in the study. This chapter explains how the subjects are to be sampled, how the data is to be collected, and how the data will be analysed and interpreted. The strengths and limitations will also be discussed in this chapter as the Researcher seeks to maximize validity of results and reliability of data.

Findings and discussion: This chapter will present the results of the field study answering the research questions posed in Chapter 1, including respondents' views on whether a mandatory retirement age is discriminatory or not and whether organizational performance declines due to the retirement of older work force. The chapter will also critically assess the findings in relation to the theoretical framework.

Recommendations and conclusion
Conclusions and policy recommendations will be made in this chapter.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter key concepts are defined and the theoretical framework is presented in the first section. Legislation and policy comparisons are drawn with other countries. The merits and demerits of the mandatory age policy are discussed in the last section which ends with a general summary.

2.1. Definitions and theoretical framework

2.1.1. Definitions and explanation of terms

Retirement

As noted in Chapter One, the transitional nature of retirement makes it difficult to pin down a single definition as retirement has different meanings to different people depending on the nature of their employment. According to the American Heritage Dictionary (2000), retirement is the withdrawal from one's occupation, business *or* office, having finished one's active working life. Lazear (1979:67) defines it as an act of withdrawal from active work life and involvement with society, a time to let go of one's working identity and participation in the economy. However, this term can have different meanings to different people. For some, retirement may mean reducing the amount of work hours per week from full-time to part-time status, while for others it may mean working on a voluntary basis. For others it may mean ceasing from all work activity, paid or unpaid, formally or informally employed. Objectively, retirement can be defined simply as disengagement from business or public life, a phase in the latter part of life that comes after many years of employment (Atchley, 1976). For this project a definition of retirement as a shift from employment to unregulated employment or in some case leisure would seem appropriate because the research deals with workers in the formal economy, specifically in the tertiary education sector. However, many academics continue to work

after retirement age suggesting the apt definition is not a distinct transition from work to leisure.

Mandatory retirement age

Ashenfelter and Card (2002:958) state that mandatory retirement refers to that particular age where the employee has no choice but to leave employment according to the dictates entrenched in the employment contract. Lazear (1979) argues that mandatory retirement is based on two basic assumptions, first, there is a definite date when a contract either explicitly or implicitly ends, second, at that date there will be some workers who will wish to remain with the firm at their previous wage rates, but whom the firm will not choose to employ. The first and most important fact is that mandatory retirement is more likely to be found where job tenure is long. That is, it is portrayed as the result of a long-term contract between a worker and firm. Gunderson and Pesando (1980) argue that contrary to some popular misconceptions, there is no legislative enforcement that forces employers to have a mandatory retirement age. Rather, the mandatory retirement provisions arise as the result of employer personnel policies, or negotiated collective agreements. Thus the mandatory retirement age, of which 65 appears to be the usual age of retirement in most countries, is not a legislated reality in all countries, and employers cannot be sued for keeping mature workers in service.

Where mandatory retirement ages are enshrined in public law, they serve as a guide to employers' policy leaving the employer with the leeway to either adhere to the stated age or alter it as it fits the particular organisation. Some institutions may opt for 65 as a retirement age while others increase it to 70 as conditions dictate. The State may introduce mandatory retirement legislations as a way of addressing social problems like unemployment and equity issues, as has been the case in many of the former colonies in Africa. In the developed world mandatory retirement policy is out of favour because states have recognized the present age of retirement is not sustainable because of aging populations; in many Western countries the working population will not be able to support the pensioners in years to come because the number of retirees threatens to outweigh the working population (Gunderson and Pesando, 2003). The result will be a

'pension bubble' that will effect a significant cost to a system with a shrinking and relatively productive workforce as more people claim pensions and less contribute to the fund. (Hammond and Morgan 1981:32). Mandatory retirement age policies are also on the decline due to the informalisation of work where most jobs are on contract basis and of short tenure (Hammond and Morgan 1981:32). The result is that individuals can work for longer and are flexible in choosing their retirement date. The dynamics of retirement can be more complex, the prevailing difficult economic circumstances and uncertainty of securing reliable employment with benefits can force people to continue working after retirement (Gunderson and Pesando, 2003).

Voluntary early retirement

Brennan et al (1980) define voluntary early retirement as an individual decision that is made to leave employment before the mandated retirement age. It is a personal decision that is made shaped by income or non-income related reasons. Some people may want to retire early as they will have amassed enough wealth and hence feel that there would be no reason to continue in employment. Some may retire early due to ill health, a desire to change employers or a need to work part time on flexible contracts. Employers can also influence voluntary early retirement. As stated by Brennan et al (1980) retirement incentives can be put in place to encourage workers to retire and make way for new recruits and this would include rehiring on a lesser workload with full pension. In the education sector, Clark and Hammond (2001:66) state that early retirement plans are the product of staffing challenges, which include departments out of balance with enrolment needs and a shortage of financial resources. Incentives would then be offered to willing faculty to be phased out of the institution. The issue of incentives to entice one to make a voluntary application to retire distinguishes voluntary retirement from redundancy. In contrast, involuntary redundancy is a decision made by management on behalf of staff with no room for negotiation in contrast to voluntary redundancy where an employee opts to retire early in return for a package (Clark and Hammond (2001). Involuntary retirement may come as a result of overstaffing and under-performance or when a

company is not making a profit and wishes to cut overheads and cannot afford any incentives for the exercise.

Decision to retire

The retirement choice is one of the more prominent manifestations of life cycle behavior according to Gustman and Steinmeyer (1986:559). The decision is the result of an interchange between an individual's preferences and a set of incentives that change in complicated ways as the individual progresses through his or her late 50's and 60's (Gustman and Steinmeyer, 1986). These changes in later life restrict the individual's preferences on whether to stay at work or retire. Little research has addressed how older workers determine themselves ready to retire. Spokus (2002:1) argues that the usual age to retire may vary across occupations, highly skilled jobs like the technology and hard sciences sector have a high retirement age as opposed to low skilled jobs. Due to the divisive policies of apartheid government in South Africa which marginalized blacks and women from economic participation, whites and men may be better prepared to retire than, for example, blacks.

Reasons for retiring

Decisions, guided by financial planning sessions and other sources, address the economic conditions of retirement. Spokus (2002:1) argues that decisions to leave the workplace are based primarily on economics. Workers are concerned with having enough social security benefits, pensions and savings. In addition to the economic changes that retirees face, current self-reported data show that older workers, who remain in the workplace, rather than retiring, make their decisions based on several factors other than income alone (AARP Work and Career Study, 2002). The latter study demonstrated that social, mental and physical well-being play a significant role in determining whether people will retire or remain in the workplace. Ehrenberg (2004), notes that studies have focused more on health status as a decision-making influence. Underlying this body of research is that as a worker gets older they experience more health problems and these prove to be a strong reason influencing early retirement. Whatever the reason, retirement is a transitional stage of life that can be a pleasant experience for some and traumatic for others as it is

influenced by different forces that are beyond the control of the affected individual as noted.

2.1.2. Theoretical framework

The study will draw on Vickerstaff's concepts of retirement zone and deinstitutionalization to understand retirement policy and how it influences formulation of policy and decisions to retire. The productive lifestyle or continuity theory is also useful as it explains how aging and employment are correlated.

Retirement zone

Vickerstaff (2006:467) defines a retirement zone as the period in which an employee has to consider retiring and this falls under the five years before the mandatory retirement age and five years after, in formal employment settings. Normally the retirement zone is taken to be from 55 to 70 years using 65 as the retirement age. Vickerstaff (2006) coined this concept for a study based in the United Kingdom on the decisions behind retirement. The research looked at retirement decisions from an organizational perspective and it was a major departure from previous studies that focused on the individual's decision to retire and explores the management of retirement and how individual employees experience these processes. The concept of retirement zone was employed to demonstrate how the interaction of individual attributes and organisational practices produces retirement outcomes. The concept of retirement zone, though in Vickerstaff's case was used in a developed world context, is applicable to the developing world as the retirement zone and the work life process is the same. It is relevant to this study as the role of the organization will be explored to demonstrate how the interaction of individual attributes and organizational policies produces retirement decisions and outcomes.

Deinstitutionalisation

Vickerstaff (2006:468) defines deinstitutionalization as the way in which many aspects of life are becoming less determined by chronological age markers that are institutionalized

in policy. Instead, individuals face a greater range of choices or possibilities, for example they can choose to retire early or go into contract employment. Vickerstaff (2006) concluded from her study that the organisation plays an integral role in retirement decision making and individual choices are limited.

Disengagement and continuity theories

Cumming and Henry's "disengagement theory" (1961) posits that in the normal course of aging, people gradually withdraw or disengage from social roles as a natural response to lessened capabilities because of change in technology and diminished interest, and to societal disincentives for participation. In this scenario, the successfully aging person willingly retires from work or family life and contentedly takes to a rocking chair, or pursues other private, activities while preparing for death (Marshall 2003:28). This theory was promulgated in the 1960s due to the baby boom in the industrialized world and there were more people so it was assumed that in order to have jobs for the boomers, the current workforce had to retire and leave room for the young work force (Marshall 2003:2.8). This position goes in line with the mandatory retirement policies as it advocates for the older workers disengaging from work as they will be in a perceived state of decline.

The continuity theory proposes that the people who age most successfully are those who carry forward the habits, preferences, lifestyles and relationships from midlife into late life (Atchley, 1972). This is in line with anti mandatory retirement policy advocacy. For most people, late life does not represent a radical break with the past; changes often occur gradually and sometimes imperceptibly except when imposed by for example mandatory retirement policies. In a study on productive engagement and health wellbeing it was found that productive aging provided significant benefits for individuals, families and communities and it showed improved health and functioning for the older adult (Hinterlong et al, 1997).

In reviewing retirement policy and in exploring perceptions of the retirement process, the relevance and importance attributed to these two theories will be monitored and discussed.

2.3. Debating the policy of mandatory retirement

Arguments in favour of mandatory policy

Reducing unemployment rate

South Africa faces a problem of unemployment that contributes much to the high crime rate in the country. The main argument for mandatory retirement in South Africa as argued by Frye (2006:3) is the need to address the unemployment problem in the country. The number of working age people in March 2005 was estimated to be 29.5 million people (Labour Force Survey 2005). Of the total of 22.8 million black South Africans of working age, just over half (11.8 million) were economically active with 15% approaching retirement. Eight million of the economically active were working and 3.8 million people were unemployed. One way to ameliorate this situation is to encourage those over 60 to retire. Reasons for adopting a mandatory retirement policy therefore are to address high unemployment levels as a cost-saving economic strategy as it is cheaper to employ a younger person who will be started at a lower salary than an older employee. Most of the unemployed, 70% according to Frye (2006:3) are in the unskilled and semi skilled category and a further 20% are in the social sciences where competition for jobs is very high. Therefore, only 10% of the unemployed would be eligible for highly skilled or professional positions. As such mandatory retirement in this category may not be a useful strategy for reducing unemployment levels as there may be a limited pool of waiting candidates to take over the retired people positions. This is particularly in the case in the public sector which is already less attractive in terms of incentives than the private sector which pays more and has better benefits.

Institutional Transformation

The other strong argument posed in favour of mandatory retirement is the need to redress historical political imbalances brought by apartheid. The Labour Force Survey in 2005 March recorded that there was a total of 2.1 million economically active white South Africans out of a total of 3 million (that is, two thirds of the white population are economically active compared with about half of black South Africans), 2 million were working, and 107 000 of these were unemployed.

Hall (2007:182) notes that the transformation agenda of universities in South Africa has particular characteristics that are part of the broader processes of social and economic reconstruction after apartheid; within this framework is the setting and achievement of appropriate objectives for employment equity and ensuring balances in racial makeup. As such transformation and retention of expertise are both required in the higher education institution as argued by Hall (2007), transformation on one hand is important to create a unique, African University and on the other hand retention of expertise is crucial in guiding the institution through the process of change. Attention should be paid in both processes to ensure that carrying out one does not destabilise the other.

Renewal and age productivity

Gustman and Steinmeier (1991:98) argue that exits through retirement is an important labor market flow that shapes the age structure of a faculty, and helps to determine the quality and costs of higher education. Thus it is worth investigating the policies that regulate this labor flow.

Teffords (1986) claims that the argument for mandatory retirement hinges on the fact that older faculty members may, due to the aging process, experience decrements in performance but tenure will prevent their removal. This in turn would prevent the influx of new ideas and new ways of thinking, making it difficult to develop academic

departments that reflect emerging fields because they are saddled with possibly outdated practices associated with older workers (Teffords: 1986). McPherson and Schapiro (1999) state that an increasing proportion of faculty members over age 70 or of older faculty in general could have adverse effects on colleges and universities for two reasons: Older faculty members could be less productive in scholarship, teaching, and service because of the effects of aging, and even if older faculty members continue to teach and engage in scholarship, reduced turnover because of postponed retirements could limit an institution's ability to hire faculty in new research and teaching fields. As claimed by Hammond and Morgan (1991) this was the major reason why academics were left out of the Age and Discrimination in Employment Act (ADEA) 1986 amendment which prohibited mandatory retirement for all the other fields except tertiary education. It was argued that postponed faculty retirement would prevent colleges and Universities from hiring new faculties who are traditionally believed to be a source of new ideas. The older academics would be irremovable even in the face of reduced performance due to the tenure system that provides life employment.

Arguments against mandatory policy

Fallacy that mandatory retirement provides economic opportunity for younger workers

An argument in favour of mandatory retirement is that it creates promotion possibilities for younger workers (Gunderson and Pesando, 1980). This explanation ignores at least two factors according to Lazear (1979). Firstly, young workers know that they will become old workers at some date in the future. Although they would prefer to be promoted while young, they also would, if their retirement were mandatory, prefer to continue working when older so they will not stay in an organization that has low aged mandatory retirement (Lazear: 1979). This is the case where different institutions have different retirement ages as in South Africa where some Universities have 65 as their retirement age and the UKZN has a low 60. Secondly, promotion may be interpreted as an increase in one's wage rate that occurs as one's productivity rises over the life cycle (Lazear:1979). In a competitive market, the firm will pay the worker his marginal product

irrespective of how old he is. Thus, there would be no incentive for a firm to subject a worker to mandatory retirement if his/her marginal product was equal to or greater than his/her wage rate to "promote" a younger worker (Gunderson and Pesando, 1980).

Need to retain skills to protect against brain drain of young academics

Tettey (2002:67) stresses that a significant number of African professionals in the Diaspora leave their home-countries. Young professionals, in particular, are forced to leave partly because of constraints on those who are approaching retirement age. This problem is sometimes caused by the economic insecurity and anxiety that characterizes retirement in much of Africa. Some of the young people in the economically active group migrate to Australia and other developed countries for search of better opportunities leaving a gap in highly skilled researchers. There is need therefore to come up with countermeasures that will see that education and training which are the major sectors of the economy do not suffer a major setback by retaining some of the expertise and skills in retirees. Manpower Inc (2003) in their study concluded that national governments and institutions needed to focus their attention on skills development and utilization strategy if they want to have a competitive labor market that will help to strengthen the country's economy for the future.

Skills retention

Stewart (1991: 206) aptly states that the Professorate in education is responsible for the educating of the future leaders of nations and they produce, synthesize and diffuse ideas that can make or break nations' economies and therefore to allow such important human resources to deteriorate and languish because of stringent retirement age policies is both wasteful and counter productive. There is a need to find ways of re-channeling these skills and expertise back into mainstream production to safeguard a new wave of brain drain due to stringent retirement age policies.

Gershenburg (2003:98) states that in as much as technology is the engine for the 21st century economy, human capital is the fuel that moves the machine. Human capital,

according to the Heath (1998:35) can be defined as "the knowledge, skills, competencies and other attributes embodied in individuals that are relevant to economic activity". As such human capital is an ingredient in production functions. Organisations lose a lot of skills and competent personnel due to the mandatory retirement age of 60 for women and 65 for men without due regard to the adverse effect on the economy. Policies are promulgated by Organisations to redress human resource imbalances for example the ill effects of apartheid in South Africa where whites benefited on the job market more than blacks, and this research seeks to find out if this siphoning of skilled manpower is not regressive and find ways of redressing historical imbalances without losing relevant skills.

Economic necessity

Typical South Africans now facing retirement will have to gear themselves for more economic hardships than previous retirees. Frye (2006) states that more than 40% of households headed by someone between the ages of 47 and 64 will not be able to replace even half of their pre-retirement income once they stop working. Nearly 20% will have retirement income below the poverty line according to the South African Treasury Report on Social Security and Retirement Reform (2007: 19). According to a new MetLife Mature Market Institute study (2006:2), 37% of those aged 66-70 in America were either working or looking for work. Mature workers were found to be struggling to balance the conflicting pressures of income security, post-retirement-age employment as they look for a sense of security and meaning during their retirement years. The ratio of current salary to future retirement benefits shows the tradeoff that faces an elder worker making a retirement decision, the higher is the wage relative to amount of pension, the lower is willingness to retire (Antolin and Scarpetta, 1998).

Age Discrimination

The argument that mandatory retirement age policies are the easiest and non discriminatory way by human resources departments of getting workers out of the system to pave way for new recruitments has been found wanting by Lazear (1979). He states

that employers discriminate between employees at every level: some are promoted, others are terminated, others experience wage gains while others do not, and the existence of differences between workers is dealt with in many ways rather than to mandatorily retire workers (Lazear 1979). Tan (1999:3) argues that mandatory retirement age policies discriminate against the older workers who have a right to continue contributing to society. Shultz, Morton and Weckerle (1998:52) define age discrimination as denying a job or promotion or terminating a contract of a worker solely on the basis of age and this normally affects workers over 40 years. Tan (1999:4) states that since age is not necessarily an indication of inferior ability or potential, treating a person less favourably purely on the basis of their age is just as unreasonable and unfair as doing so on the basis of his race or religion, it would also be inconsistent with the principles of equal treatment and non discrimination, which are at the heart of the notion of individual rights. Tan (1999:5) further argues that age discrimination reduces productivity because job and advancement opportunities are inefficiently matched to workers and talent is wasted. Gunderson and Pesando (1980) state that the human rights of some workers are adversely affected with serious consequences as a result of mandatory retirement, and that whether they or some other parties are responsible for their plight, the problem is sufficiently serious to society that the human rights of older workers should be regarded as a prime argument in favour of eliminating the mandatory retirement age. Being considered old due to physical appearance was a stigma that the participants in a research carried out by Berger (2006) felt they had trouble overcoming. The respondents in that study felt that they were judged and marginalized on the basis of their age and not their capabilities, employers failed to see past the date on the birth certificate. This leads to loss of roles and the related meanings assigned to these experiences by the participants lead to the degradation of their identities.

Older workers are often the first to be made redundant, with employers arguing that seniority makes them more expensive but this is mainly because of stereotypes about their productivity and ability to learn new skills (Cooke 2006:391) The productivity myth according to Kinney and Smith (1992) is based on the faulty assumption that work is tied to physical strength and endurance. This assumption was true closely 30 years ago, when

a large proportion of jobs were in the resource extraction and manufacturing sectors unlike the present day where almost 80% of jobs are in the service sector, and the largest rate of job growth is in the knowledge-intensive industries (Kinney and Smith, 1992). Even to the extent that job productivity relies on healthy workers, today's seniors are much healthier, live longer, and have more years of disability-free living than did previous generations.

Ageing population

Due to the high levels of fertility and mortality, research on population ageing remains marginal in Africa (Martin and Kinsella 1994). However, ageing is becoming an important problem in Southern African countries. For example out of 40,584,000 South Africans counted in 1996, 1,114,693 men (5.7 % of men population) and 1,745,322 women (8.3 % of the female population) were aged 60 or older (Noumbissi 2003). With these figures, South Africa appears to have a higher proportion of elderly than other countries in Africa where, overall, less than 5 % of the population is aged 60 or more (United Nations 2001a). Even though Africa still has the lowest population of the elderly, this continent has the highest elderly population growth rate of the world (United Nations 2001a). Ageing is becoming one of the concerns in Africa and it is imperative that corrective measures are taken that these elderly people continue to earn a living and reduce the burden on tax payers through state old age pensions. The other compounding problem is that there are high proportions of workers in informal economy and agriculture and these present a strong reliance on state pension. Many developing countries cannot afford to have these pensions and this contributes greatly to old age poverty.

Ben Porath (1967:356) states that a growing percentage of households in Africa will be headed by workers at the middle and near the end of their careers, when saving reaches a lifetime peak. As the process of population aging continues, this trend in private saving was found to be recessive as a growing fraction of households begin to draw down their retirement savings. Ben Porath (1967:356) argue that declining household saving rates will thus be accompanied by greater pressure on public budgets because of increased spending on public pensions and medical insurance for the aged. Additional public

spending requirements may push government budgets toward deficit, reducing public saving in an era when private saving will also be shrinking. Further compounding the problem Africa faces a problem with brain drain. where the economically active group migrate to developed countries thus leaving the local job scene without a pool of young people ready to replace the retired mature workers.

3   Summary

This chapter presented the existing body of knowledge on retirement and what affects decision-making. Retirement is not easy to define as a single concept as it brings in aspects of formal and informal employment but in essence, it refers to a break from one's day to day economic activities and is normally taken to mean that point at which one ceases to work be it because of organizational policies or by personal choice. The concept of the retirement zone and deinstitutionalization will thus be used in the study to explore how decisions are made by the people in the retirement zone that is taken to be between 55 and 70 and the factors and forces that influence the decisions assessing whether workers have more choices to remain in service. In Europe the general trend is that the Government and the employers are putting mechanisms in place to keep mature workers in service as they are living longer, healthier lives and should be kept on for economic development. On the other hand the developing world still implements mandatory retirement age policies due to the need to address transformation, equity issues and unemployment problems. This position has been attacked as being retrogressive especially in higher education as it does not address skills retention, organizational performance and the individual's financial security. The focus now turns to the methodology used in retirement studies and for the current research.

CHAPTER 3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

A summary of the methodology and methods used in retirement research is presented in the first section of this chapter. This review is followed by a description of the methodology used in this study. The chapter details the research strategy used and the strengths and weaknesses of the methods employed. Steps taken to increase validity and eliminate possible bias in the results are outlined.

3.1. Review of methodology and methods used in retirement research

Finch, in Burgess (1986), argues that there are problems in finding a method which will be appropriate for age-related social research. This is because it is difficult to specifically define being "old" as the word is a social construct divorced from physical and biological realities, For example, in Britain women reach retirement five years before men (sixty and sixty-five respectively). This disregards any research which treats people past retirement age as 'old' in the biological sense, since there is no basis for assuming that women experience the physical effects of ageing five years earlier than men (Finch in Burgess 1986:2). Retirement has thus been used as a measure for assigning people to the category 'old' (Finch, 1986). Research on retirement in developed countries has used both quantitative and qualitative methods, but with a strong leaning towards surveys. Cooke (2006) used a life course survey to compare, for six countries, different retirement policy changes and the participation of older workers. Farkas and O'Rand (1998) used national longitudinal surveys to assess the effects of employment and labor market characteristics on the probability of pension participation and on type of pension coverage for two cohorts of working women in middle and late life. In essence the methods used in developed countries have derived from existing research on retirement and aging and much of this research was survey- and questionnaire-based.

Present study methodology

This study draws on qualitative research methods. Qualitative research has been defined as a type of research involving the interpretation of non-numerical data (Welman and Kruger, 2003). According to Babbie and Mouton (2001) qualitative research gives a more in-depth description and understanding of events or actions and this helps the researcher to gain insight into why and how these events or actions take place rather than just presenting a phenomenon or the what, where, and when of quantitative research. Kvale, (1996:43) defines qualitative research interviews as 'attempts to understand the world from the subjects' point of view, to unfold the meaning of peoples' experiences and to uncover their lived world prior to scientific explanations'. The researcher preferred this method as it would allow for much more detailed investigation of issues and answering questions of meaning. For example: Who is affected by the issue by retirement policies and why?; What factors are involved in making policies?; and do individuals react or respond differently to these policies? The qualitative methodology is the most useful for this kind of research as the data comes from many different sources including documents and interviews (Yin 1994).

3.2. The case study methodology

For this study the objective was to obtain views and perceptions on mandatory retirement in higher education and the case study approach is an appropriate methodology to address this objective. The case study methodology was chosen as the research is exploratory; very little research has been done in Africa on retirement policies. Instruments used in the United Kingdom, America and Canada on the same issue may not be appropriate as they were designed for a different context and were meant to build on already existing body of research. This researcher needed to concentrate on a single institution of South Africa's higher education. The case study approach was chosen because it facilitates intensive study of the subject in question focusing on the real implications of retirement to livelihoods and to the quality of education. Yin (2003:7) in support of the justification of the case study approach states that the approach is an empirical inquiry that investigates a phenomenon within a real-life context.

The case study used in this research as an example of a tertiary education institution adopting a mandatory retirement policy was the UKZN. This Institution was selected because it has a mandatory retirement age of 60 for both males and females which is lower than that of other South African Universities. This University has also used the retirement exit as an integral way of redressing past apartheid negative policies and push for equity. It was the purpose of the research to establish key stakeholder views on this policy. A second reason for the choice of UKZN as the case study was because it provided a convenient research site.

Case studies focus on one or multiple instances of a particular phenomenon with a view to providing an 'in-depth account of events, relationships, experiences or processes occurring in that particular instance' (Denscombe, 1998:35). A spotlight is focused on individual instances rather than on a wider spectrum (Denscombe, 1998:35). The main logic is that there may be insights to be gained from looking at the individual case that can have wider implications and most importantly that would not have come to light through the use of a strategy, like the survey approach, that attempts to cover a large number of instances (Denscombe, 1998:35). The end point is to illuminate the general by looking at the specific.

 The major advantage of a case study is that the 'case' that forms the basis of the investigation already exists which, makes it an analysis of a real life phenomenon unlike an experiment where the research design is dedicated to imposing controls on the variables (Yin, 1994). The case in this study will continue to exist even after the present research and this has an advantage that follow up interviews can be made in the event that further investigations on the topic need to be done. The case study approach was also favoured for this study as it allowed the researcher to use a variety of types of data and research methods as part of investigation. In-depth interviews and a review of secondary data were used together for the case study.

The major disadvantage that has been highlighted on the use of the case study as a research method is the issue of generalization. It is a frequent criticism that the results of the case study are not widely applicable in real life, that it is not feasible to apply the results from one case to the rest of the field (Denscombe 1998:35). In this case it will not be practical to apply the results the researcher would get from The UKZN to the rest of South African higher education institutions because the UKZN retirement policy is unique. However, Yin (1994) pointed out that generalization of results, from either single or multiple designs, is made to theory and not to populations, thus the results can provide a general trend that can explain the scenario, for example if retirement at 60 negatively affects quality of education then this fact is widely applicable to different settings with the same policy regardless of the population.

Blaikie (1993) refers to the case study strategy as inductive research as it involves rigorous analysis of the data obtained from interviews hence producing new discoveries or theories. My own personal opinions will be excluded from this process in order to arrive at what can be regarded as true knowledge. Generalisations can be inferred from the true statements.

3.2.1. Population and sampling

It is not possible, nor necessary, to collect information from the total population at UKZN. Instead, a smaller subgroup of the target population which is those in the retirement zone of 55-70 were selected. Sampling is the strategy of selecting a smaller section of the population that will accurately represent the patterns of the target population at large. Non-probability purposive sampling and referral were used to identify participants for the study. The primary difference between probability methods of sampling and non-probability methods is that in the latter one cannot know the likelihood that any element of a population will be selected for study.

Purposive sampling was used to target a specific population, who fitted the purpose of the study. Purposive sampling is a well established method of sampling and, as stated by

Dane (1990), it groups participants according to pre-selected criteria relevant to a particular research question, For example, people in the 'retirement zone' and those who make retirement policies were purposively selected in this study. Purposive sample sizes are often determined on the basis of theoretical saturation which is the point in data collection when new data no longer brings additional insights to the research questions (Dane, 1990). In this case interviews were conducted until this point of saturation was reached. The point of saturation was reached when no new information could be added from the respondents in each category of interviews. Dane (1990) points out the advantage of purposive sampling is that it allows the researcher to zone in on people or events, who have good grounds in what they believe which will be critical for the research. Instead of going for the typical instances, a cross-section or a balanced choice, the researcher will be able to concentrate on instances which display wide variety possible even focus on extreme cases to illuminate the research question at hand (Dane 1990).

To understand the administrative view of retirement two University Administration Managers, two union executive members drawn from the different unions, and three Heads of School (with staff in the retirement zone) were interviewed. One head of school was replaced as they could not be interviewed as they were too busy. In order to understand the effects of retirement from the individual perspective the research focused on staff in academic, technical and administrative posts. Ten academics and five technical and administrative staff in the retirement zone were interviewed. Among those already retired only two were interviewed face to face and while a third person could not make time for the interview, he supplied answers to the major interview questions via email.

3.2.2. Source of data: In-depth interviews

The main source of data was from in-depth interviews administered at the UKZN. These interviews were administered to union and management representatives and individuals representing the abovementioned work categories. The questions for the interviews covered three broad areas, that is, policy, skills retention and transformation, and economic impact (for the organization and the individual).

An in-depth interview is a qualitative research method that is open-ended, discovery-oriented aimed at obtaining detailed information about a topic from a stakeholder (Lofland and Lofland, 1995). The goal is to explore in greater details a respondent's point of view, experiences, feelings, and perspectives. An in-depth interview is a dialogue between an interviewer and an interviewee and its goal is to elicit rich, detailed material that can be used in analysis (Lofland and Lofland, 1995). The interviews were conducted face to face with staff on campus and, in the case of staff having retired or moved from this institution to other areas because of retirement, the researcher conducted interviews over the phone. This method is most suitable when one wants to get in-depth information from key people and allows for different information that is targeted for specific individuals.

In-depth interviews were best suited for this research as they are characterized by extensive probing and open-ended questions which solicit information that is richer in detail, than closed questions in a questionnaire (Lofland and Lofland, 1995). As this was exploratory research and the researcher had no idea of what people's perceptions were, the qualitative in-depth interview was deemed to more appropriate as a data collection tool than the structured questionnaire. The researcher prepared an interview guide that included a list of questions or issues that were to be explored as well as potential probes for following up on key topics. As described by Lofland and Lofland (1995), the guide helped the interviewer (researcher) pace the interview and made the interviewing process more systematic and comprehensive (Lofland and Lofland, 1995). This method also allowed the interviewer to explain or help clarify questions, and increased the likelihood of useful responses (unlike a structured questionnaire which is viewed by some as being 'blind' and gives no chances of explanations especially when the respondent fills them out in the absence of the interviewer (Lofland and Lofland, 1995). A further advantage of the interview method was that it allowed the researcher flexibility in administering the interview as there was choice over when to schedule the interviews and the interviews could be conducted in a location convenient to both parties.

Another major advantage of the in-depth interview is that questions could be tailored for each key informant. As the informants had different roles in the institution there was an inherent need to word and structure questions differently to suit the individual and capture their particular position, experience and sentiments. On the spot in-depth interviews give room for spontaneous responses that are not premeditated and reflect individual perspective and thus provide uncensored data (Patton 1980). Due to ethical considerations, interviews were only carried out 'on the spot' at the request of the respondent. Having face to face interviews had the advantage of putting respondents at ease and they will be more willing to answer questions that they could not have answered in a group setting, such as with focus group discussions.

There are disadvantages to the use of in-depth interviews ranging from exaggeration, misunderstanding, interpretation bias and the researcher leading the respondent. In presenting their case, a respondent might exaggerate his/her accomplishments in the academic field to make them appear valuable to the institution and to the academic scene. The researcher was alerted to and noted any inconsistencies arising and asked follow up questions for clarification. Another problem is that if understanding is not developed sufficiently, the respondent may be unwilling to respond or fail to give sufficient attention or consideration to the questions asked, and if the respondent does not understand a question properly they may give inappropriate answers. The researcher attempted to ensure the respondent fully understood the questions being asked and was responding accordingly. Some respondents may perceive the purpose of the research to be an input into the policy on retirement to precipitate a policy change. They would therefore give responses that they assume to be in their best interest such that the policy changes would benefit them without being objective. To avoid such problems from arising, it was important to carefully explain the objectives of the research as well as the agenda of the interviewer and what was required of the respondent, prior to the interview.

In interview situations, it is quite possible that one will come across the problem of courtesy bias, i.e. the tendency for respondents to give answers that they think the interviewer wants to hear, rather than what they really feel. The respondents may not

wish to be impolite or to offend the interviewer, and may therefore endeavour to give polite answers. This courtesy bias can be an obstacle to obtaining useful and reliable data and therefore needs to be minimized (Patton, 1980). In this case white respondents may feel that because the researcher is black it will be rude for them to disagree with the need for transformation as a reason for mandatory retirement age policies. The researcher attempted to eliminate this problem by including black academics in the sample.

'Leading' is when the researcher tries to clarify the questions so much that they end up putting responses in the respondent's mouth. The researcher guarded against leading the respondent by giving respondents room to think and respond and avoided pre-empting the respondent's words.

Interview data was recorded on tape (when participants had given permission to tape) and the researcher took notes during the interview as well, specifically to capture the key issues from the interviews. Notes from the interview were used to identify speakers or to recall comments that will be jumbled or unclear on the tape. As with observations, detailed recording is a necessary component of interviews since it forms the basis for analyzing the data (Patton 1990). The major advantages of recording interviews are its completeness and the opportunity it affords for the interviewer to remain attentive and focused during the interview. The tape recorder enabled the interviewer to give the respondent his/her full attention during the interview and avoid the need to be constantly scribbling notes. It also allowed for data to be left until such time as analysis could be applied more thoroughly and in a more relaxed way. Patton (1980) notes that the major disadvantage is the inhibitory impact tape recording has on some respondents, some respondents may not feel comfortable being recorded. The researcher obtained permission to tape and ensured that that the participants were reminded their answers were being recorded but that they are assured confidentiality. Informed consent forms were prepared and emailed them to the interviewees, in cases where it was not possible to do this, the form was read before each interview.

3.2.3. Analysis of interviews

Thematic analysis was used to analyze the data collected in the interviews, Aronson (1994:1) states that from the conversations that take place in a researching process, ideas emerge that can be better understood under the control of thematic analysis. Thematic analysis focuses on identifiable themes (Aronson 1994:1). The first step is to collect the data. Audiotapes should be collected to study the talk of a session or of an interview (Aronson 1994:1). From the transcribed conversations, patterns of experiences can be listed and this can come from direct quotes or paraphrasing common ideas. Themes that emerge from the informants' stories are pieced together to form a comprehensive picture from which conclusions can be drawn. This analysis was implemented using the qualitative analysis software, NVIVO. For this study the main themes were skills retention and retirement age, transformation and economic well-being. The next step to a thematic analysis is to identify all data that relate to the already classified patterns; the identified patterns are then expounded on (Aronson, 1992). All of the data that fits under a specific pattern is identified and placed with the corresponding pattern (Aronson, 1992). For example, each respondent's attitude towards policies and towards work on superannuation were placed under feelings and all sentiments on the need for transformation were placed under the category 'transformation'.

The next step to a thematic analysis is to combine and catalogue related patterns into sub-themes. The themes were identified by "bringing together components or fragments of ideas or experiences, which often are meaningless when viewed alone" (Leininger, 1985, p. 60). Themes that emerge from the informants' stories were pieced together to form a comprehensive picture of their collective experience. This can be done by asking the informants to give feedback and clarifications from the transcribed conversations (Aronson, 1992). In this research feedback was sought only once and I was seeking clarification on a major point raised by a respondent concerning her publication list.

The last step in this analysis of data is to build a valid argument for choosing the themes and this is done by referring to the literature. Aronson (1992) argues that by referring back to the literature, the interviewer gains information that allows him or herself to

make inferences from the interview. Once the themes have been collected and the literature has been studied, the researcher was better equipped to formulate theme statements to develop conclusions and recommendations. When the literature is interwoven with the findings, the story that the interviewer constructs is one that stands with merit and a developed story line helps the reader to comprehend the process, understanding, and motivation of the interviewer (Aronson, 1992).

3.2.4. Sources of data: documents

Lincoln and Guba (1985:45) defined a document as "any written or recorded material" not prepared for the purposes of the evaluation or at the request of the inquirer. Existing records often provide insights into a setting and/or group of people that cannot be observed or noted in another way. Documents can be divided into two major categories: public records, and personal documents (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Internal documents can help the researcher understand the institution's resources, values, processes, priorities, and concerns. Furthermore, they provide a record or history not subject to recall bias like with interviews.

In order to get more information on the framework that guides retirement age at the chosen institution, an analysis of existing retirement age policies was carried out. The researcher did not confine the sample of documents to UKZN only but covered documents from other institutions of higher learning as well. Minutes from meetings and unions' literature pertaining to retirement were utilized where permission was granted.

For the evaluation of educational policies, internal records were utilized. These included documents such as performance records, institutional mission statements, annual reports, minutes of meetings, internal memoranda, policy manuals and institutional histories. These were particularly useful in describing institutional characteristics, such as staff turnover and in identifying institutional policies strengths and weaknesses.

3.3. Ethical Considerations

Informed consent forms were given to all the respondents as part of the requirements for ethical research. The participants were informed about a range of matters relating to the study, namely: the purpose of the study, how respondents were selected, identity of the researcher, and how the information obtained would be made available to them. According to Scheyvens et al (2003, 142) informed consent is essential as it ensures people's freedom not to participate in the research if they are not comfortable with it. The researcher ensured that confidentiality, anonymity and privacy were strictly observed. In order to protect the privacy of the respondents, the researcher used basic generic descriptions when quoting the respondents in the thesis. The tapes and the thesis will be stored and disposed of according to Faculty of Humanities, Development and Social Sciences ethics procedures.

3.4. Limitations and delimitations of the study

As mentioned by Denscombe (1998) the use of a case study brings in generalization problems. UKZN cannot be really representative of the South African higher education sector and some findings can therefore not be generalized across the board. There is also the issue of selection bias. If more respondents are drawn from the social sciences and humanities section the researcher may get positive response about working longer because less post-retirement opportunities exist for people in that field of study whereas technical subjects' academics would actually prefer to retire early and find work in the highly rewarding private sector . Access to Official documents like crucial University Council minutes and policy documents may be problematic due to the institution's need to uphold confidentiality.

In thematic analysis, the three variables, descriptive validity, interpretive validity, and theoretical validity will be upheld. Maxwell (1992) states that descriptive validity refers to the degree to which an account is accurate, interpretive validity relates to the accuracy of the analysis of information by the researcher, if the data would be given to a different person, they should come up with the same conclusions, theoretical validity on the other

hand refers to the truthfulness of the final findings and conclusions, they should correctly depict the prevailing situation and its impact. This is important in qualitative research because description of what is observed and interpretation of participants' thoughts are two primary research activities. In order to improve on validity, the researcher endeavored to disregard neutral responses that do not add value to the data collected. The clarity and applicability of the findings, however, depend on the analytic abilities of the researcher. The dependence on the researcher can be the greatest strength or the greatest weakness of a qualitative research study. The researcher endeavored to report and document the processes and procedures for easy evaluation and understanding of the study. Consistency in observing, labeling and interpreting data was exercised with the same weights being used for all the emerging themes whether they support or refute the research hypothesis as this enhances reliability. Furthermore the high number of interviewees assisted in increasing reliability. The researcher increased the number of the interviewed people to increase reliability.

Winter's definition of validity was utilized. He defined validity as a way of ensuring that that one builds into the research sufficient robustness in order to have the confidence to make generalizations (Winter 2000:3). In order to maximize validity, the researcher carefully constructed definitions of concepts, hypotheses and propositions so that they can be translated clearly and predictably into detailed operational methods. Variables that affect the concept were identified and eliminated, for example, early retirement due to ill health, which is independent from mandatory retirement age, which is the variable under study.

3.5. Conclusion

In this chapter the research methodology was described from the description of the case study to the analysis of the data. This exploratory study will be the first to understand retirement patterns and what influences the decision to retire and how the organisation plays a critical role in ending the working lives of individuals in South Africa's higher

education sector. Using probing in depth interviews, the research will explore the views of both the individuals and the organization on retirement policies. The merits and demerits of the methods chosen for the study have been discussed together with the various ways the researcher will try and minimize bias and increase reliability and validity of information. The next chapter will provide a brief contextualization of the case, explaining the scenario that existed in South Africa in higher education and the history of retirement policies both in the country and on comparative basis with other institutions in the developed world.

CHAPTER 4 FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

"I am not ready to be put out to pasture" (academic, Black, male)

"These guys have been here for years and they don't know what else to do when they leave so they do not want to go."(Human Resources Respondent)

Introduction

The findings for the research project as partly represented by the opposing perspectives above are presented and discussed in this chapter. These highly contrasting views represent the different sentiments that the respondents had with regards to the mandatory retirement age. Workers were strongly against it while management thought it was a necessary tool to inject new blood into the University system. The data was collected mainly from in-depth interviews, policy document analysis and desktop research. The age structure of the participants in this study ranged from 55 to 75. This age range includes people who are facing retirement and those who have already gone through the retirement process. Younger respondents, those below 55 years of age, were representatives of the Workers Unions and the Human Resources Department. The latter were important in getting an institutional view of the retirement policies at the University. The two groups of respondents were drawn from academic, non academic staff and members of the University Administration including the Human Resources Department and the Workers' Unions in order to get different perspectives on the retirement policy.

Contextualising Mandatory Retirement Policy at UKZN

In 1994, there were significantly fewer blacks in academia than whites or Indians according to a human Resources Department employee interviewed for this research. To redress this situation, UKZN embraced the transformation agenda which is in line with the equity policy. Gordon (2007) argues that, in this context transformation is the process of altering the demographic profile created by the white dominated and oriented apartheid system. At UKZN this meant developing policies that addressed the inequality amongst

staff. The research focused on the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal because it has the lowest retirement age in South Africa. Other Universities, for example the University of Cape Town in the University of Witwatersrand, have adopted a retirement age of 65.

Competing criteria for staff recruitment

Recruitment at most universities has historically been fashioned around the notion of employing the best person for the job, regardless of race, age or gender. However some posts require a certain level of experience. This assessment readily works against blacks who are often relatively new in their fields, having been previously excluded from some careers. It can also be an arbitrary measure of competence. Affirmative action was intended to describe programmes designed to open opportunities for women and blacks, who had been systematically excluded from workplaces and educational institutions. The South African Employment Equity Act does not prescribe quotas and only advocates affirmative action in relation to people who are suitably qualified. The institution's employment equity policy acknowledges affirmative action as a means of achieving equal opportunity. The policy also endorses merit and professionalism as part of its vision and mission and prohibits tokenism. The policy makes it mandatory for committees to engage with the minimum criteria for posts to ensure they are linked to job performance and that they are culturally and normatively neutral. The University recognizes that certain actions are required in order to create a platform from which equal opportunities can be legitimately and effectively practiced, and from which the race and gender imbalances in the staffing structures can be addressed. This is as a consequence of previous apartheid policies that, in denying or restricting opportunities, placed groups and individuals in South Africa at a disadvantage relative to others. The University accepts that a policy based exclusively on equal opportunity will simply perpetuate these disadvantages.

General view of mandatory retirement policy

What are the views of different stakeholders on mandatory retirement policy?

The views of the various stakeholders on the mandatory retirement policy were different. The union representatives and non-management employees did not favour the mandatory retirement policy. On the other side representatives of the University management structures had a more positive view of the policy. A major strike at UKZN in 2006 highlighted the fact that staff was dissatisfied with conditions and governance at the University and the issue of the early mandatory retirement age featured as one of the prime reasons for discontent according to the workers Union representative interviewed for this research. Members of staff at UKZN have expressed mixed views on the current retirement age of 60 years. Generally, support staff interviewed while not necessarily agreeing with it, were reconciled to the retirement age. Academic staff were far more divided on the issue citing the following perceived downsides: scarcity of senior academics to lead the academic endeavour; an aging researcher profile which meant there would be no one to carry the research done by the older professorate; and the policy inconsistency with that of other comparable Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in South Africa, thus denying UKZN a competitive advantage in recruitment and retention.

Loss of experienced and skilled staff

How does the stakeholder perceive the effect of the retirement policy on productivity and skills retention?

The majority of the respondents identified the retirement age at UKZN as being the lowest in the country comparing it with other tertiary institutions such as the University of Witwatersrand and the University of Cape Town where the retirement age is 65. As a result, academics were moving to other universities with late retirement ages. One respondents' close relative had left to work at another institution because she was close to reaching 60 years. As soon as an individual reaches the late 40s or early 50s s/he starts thinking of their future in terms of job security and satisfaction and staying at UKZN becomes a less attractive option. A respondent noted that 'T*he University is shooting itself with its gun, it's losing a lot of talented academics. Even the young ones in the*

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*system are leaving because they understand that one day the policy shall also catch up with them, so they leave for other universities that have a longer tenure. (*Retired female, black*).* Another respondent, (around 60s, female on superannuation) noted that "*current retirement policies will see the total collapse of significant research output by UKZN within the next 15-20 years if such departure trends continue'.* This trend does not only affect the staff and research output, it also affects the students the University seeks to serve. One respondent, retired, white male lamented the fact that he reached the retirement age while he was in the middle of supervising a PhD student, his superannuation application was turned down and the Department had problems finding a suitable replacement for him to carry on with the student. The student was as a result passed on from one Professor to the other before the Head of Department decided to take him on. In the opinion of this respondent, the Head of School did not take on the student because he understood the subject matter, but because there was no other option to the detriment of the affected student.

The table below analysis UKZN academics staff turnover from 2003 from the Human Resources archives.

Table 1. Number of academics leaving UKZN in 2003

	20-29	30-39	40-49	50-54	55-59	60-65	Total
White	6	26	34	22	16	18	122
Coloured			1				1
Indian	2	6	3	1			12
Black African	4	5	3		1		13
Total	12	37	41	23	17	18	148

The table above shows the number of academics who left the institution in 2003 by race and age. This shows that blacks are also leaving the institution therefore it will be hard to increase the number of blacks as those already in the system are also leaving moving to other sectors like the private which offer competitive packages. The highest number of resignations is of the middle aged academics, those the institution would want to keep in the system. There is a need to have exit interviews to ascertain why they leave in their prime academic work days. The Human Resources respondent pointed out that in as

much as the UKZN policy stipulates that there should be such interviews, they rarely take place and there is no follow up on the feedback from the departing employee.

Limited recruitment pool

The recruitment and retention of academic staff is a critical issue for universities in an increasingly competitive and global higher education (HE) sector. The remuneration, benefits and conditions for academic staff are an important factor in the ability of institutions to successfully recruit and retain good quality staff at their institutions. *The University offers 120 000 rand a year which is a far cry from what the market offers and the bad news is that we are all fishing in the same pool and our bait is rotten."* The same respondent also noted that *people earn much more in the private sector which makes it difficult to have a pool of young black academics rushing to fill in positions left by the retired staff. There are positions that were advertised more than 3 times without any takers."(*academic, male, black*)* Moreover, as academics become more mobile and institutions look to develop their international standing for teaching and research, institutions are more inclined to broaden their search for academic staff across national boundaries. However, this strategy is followed after it has been established there are no appropriate South African candidates because the University is mandated to employ a citizen first before taking a non- South African, the University has to go through the added burden of motivating why they had to take in a non citizen. One interviewed head of school noted that *"We advertised post doctoral fellowships, there were 26 responses there was only one black applicant, from Zimbabwe."*

Within this context the international comparative standing of remuneration and conditions is a key issue for higher education staff and policy makers. The 2006 industrial action by staff is an example of their dissatisfaction with remuneration and other working conditions. There is little financial gain or incentive for young top class scholars to remain in academia: *"Being an academic is not about the compensation, it does not pay much that is why the pension is so little."* There are other pull factors into the University, like intellectual stimulation and work flexibility.

The brain drain that has affected many other sectors has also impacted on the university's ability to retain staff. Thousands of skilled young South Africans are continuing to emigrate in search of a better life, draining the country of much-needed human resources. Young people leave the country in search of jobs that pay much higher salaries and offer better working conditions than South Africa. This has robbed employers of a pool of educated young black South Africans to fill the positions of those retiring. One respondent stated: 'T*he problem is not on firing the mature worker, the problem is getting the young blacks in"* and *"We are blind to the fact that there is a problem of recruitment – look at job markes trends and look at salaries that are competitive and attract the blacks."*

Skills shortage

Skills shortage is a problem which is faced by many African Universities as they attempt a racial balance in recruitment. Posts are advertised but the problem is there is a general lack of skilled personnel in the country to take over. One respondent, a black academic, soon to retire pointed out that the main problem in South Africa is that fewer black nationals make it past Matric as they can get employment in the industries at that level and even fewer make it past the first degree. This makes it difficult to have people with the necessary skills and education to supervise students at Masters or PhD level. *"The Department of Science and Technology realised that South Africa has so few PhDs let alone among the black population. National Research Foundation has introduced a new PhD project to increase the number of doctoral graduates from the current graduation rate of 1,200 to 6,000 in order to keep MA students in the system. But who is going to supervise them? You give the students more money but forget the staff, there is need to increase the resource base to incentivise staff to supervise them." (*Academic, 63, female*)*

The following communiqué from UKZN also highlights the critical skills shortage at the Institution (and other African tertiary institutions).

4 April 2008

VICE-CHANCELLOR'S COMMUNIQUÉ

Dear Students and Staff

The article below from University world news is self explanatory. Nigeria has taken a decisive approach on how to address the critical issue of low qualification and mediocrity at its Universities. The Government is very concerned that 30% of its academic staff at Universities have no PhDs. The Government is so concerned it is proposing a programme of action against this finding. The national average of University staff in South Africa without PhDs is estimated to be 60% (NRF) and we South Africans do not seem to be overly concerned nor appreciative of the profound long-term impact on the quality and competitiveness of University education and research.

At UKZN it is estimated that 63% (IRMA) of academic staff do not have PhDs. This state of affairs contributes profoundly to our research productivity and quality of teaching. It is imperative that a concerted programme of action is required at UKZN in order to salvage and restore the ideals of a University.

Let us work together positively to address this major challenge.

Professor Malegapuru W Makgoba
Vice-Chancellor & Principal   VC communiqué # 006/2008

Transformation and equity

In order to rectify past political imbalances of apartheid, UKZN embraced the transformation agenda which is in line with the equity policy. The business dictionary defines transformation as a process of profound and radical change that orients an organization in a new direction and takes it to an entirely different level of effectiveness it implies a basic change of character and little or no resemblance to the past configuration or structure. The Equity Policy endorses the principle of equal opportunity which requires that all individuals should be treated fairly, equally and with dignity in the workplace, in recruitment processes, in training, promotion and advancement, regardless

of race, gender or disability status. According to the Equity Policy, the University recognizes that more action is required in order to create a platform from which equal opportunity can be legitimately and effectively practised, and from which the race and gender imbalances in staffing structures can be addressed. In line with the Equity Policy the University practices affirmative action as a means of overcoming barriers to equal opportunity and of redressing the aforementioned disadvantages, inequities and imbalances of the past (UKZN Equity policy 2007:2). The transformation debate is important, what professors are doing in their work of higher degrees supervision is mainly to train, grooming the next generation of researchers with the vision and mission of transformation, to bring a new generation of scholars into the academic world through the equity policy.

It is imperative that due analysis be given to how much the transformation agenda has been achieved at UKZN as it appears that it was the cornerstone on which the retirement age was hinged. An Employment Equity report on the racial representation of staff at UKZN stated that the institution was dominated by white and Indian academic staff, while staff from the African and coloured groups were outnumbered and not actively attracted or retained by the institution. The report reflected racial representation of academic and support staff from January 2004 to December 2005 and noted that there were 3 421 permanent academic and support staff at the university as at December 31 2004, of these, 1 237 were Indian, 1 170 were white, 896 African and 118 coloured. As at December 31 2005, there were 3 304 permanent (including long, fixed-term) staff at the university, of these 1 205 were Indian, 1 109 were white, 871 African and 119 coloured. The Report also commented on the gains of the equity and transformation policies in redressing the demographic imbalance. It noted that in the College of Humanities, which includes the Faculties of Education and Social Science reflected little progress in increasing African representation, and a two percent decline in white numbers had been compensated by a two percent increase in Indian staff. The Faculty of Humanities, Development and Social Science remained dominated by white academics, the latter making up 61 percent and 60 percent of the population in 2004 and 2005 respectively. In

the Faculty of Education, the African staff dropped by one percent in favour of Indians. From the above analysis it can be seen that there has been no effect on demographics.

The idea of redressing past imbalances is noble and commendable and throughout the research, all the interviewees pointed out that the negative influence and impact of past apartheid policies needed to be reversed. However, there are limiting factors that hamper the goal of transformation. One respondent noted that *"If it could work I would support it because the racial discrepancies of the past need to be addressed but it simply can't work because there is no pool of middle black academics coming into the field".* Some respondents acknowledged the important role of transformation but lamented the fact that the University is forced to rehire the same people it retires at a higher cost in some instances. The re hired staff are of any race and this does not help the transformation agenda. This is linked to the above concern that there are no candidates waiting to fill up the vacancies hence the re hiring of retired personnel. A white female academic noted *"Transformation is critically important, but the silliest thing that is happening is when people are retired and are hired back to fill the skills gap at a higher salary."*

Other respondents strongly felt that while the goal of transformation was commendable, it should not come at the expense of the standards of education. A female academic, white indicated that there is need to carry out the transformation agenda in a manner that does not jeopardize the quality of education.   UKZN is a University that prides itself on being the Premier in African education; therefore, even in pursuit of the goal of transformation, they felt that, care should be given to qualifications and ability to deliver. One respondent, a retired academic emotionally stated *"I strongly support all measures taken to mentor and develop staff from previously disadvantaged groups but not at the expense of the quality of learning, I think excellence should be the major criterion of all appointments. Where considerations other than academic excellence begin to dictate appointments, I think we run the risk of running down the Institution, compromising our international standing and letting down our students.* A female and white academic, soon to retire, also attacked the transformation agenda as being short sighted and losing sight of the main goal of a University, *"They are going about it the wrong way, by trying to get*

people in on purely racial terms they miss the mark. The central role of an academic institution is to produce great results regardless of the race of the Professoriate".

In a nutshell, the issue that can be raised on the topic of transformation is that even though there is a pool of black young people interested in academia would the University want them if they did not have a PhD as raised by one respondent who had already retired. The vice chancellor communiqué above set high standards for qualifying to be an academic at UKZN. It would seem that there is a contradiction because there are limited black PhD candidates to fill the posts as the National Research Foundation study of 2005 noted. Even with a PhD young academics are not likely to have strong research or teaching experience sought by UKZN. However, given the Universities mission to attain academic excellence the chances are the University would want to replace the retiring academic with a high profile academic with a good research and teaching track record and such a person is likely to be older. This tends to contradict the argument that UKZN is using early retirement age to bring about transformation while retaining high quality research and teaching.

Racism

 The issue of transformation has sparked controversy at various levels. Some respondents argued that there is a tendency to constrict the meaning of transformation to racial representation. One respondent, a white female on superannuation, stated that the tendency of restricting the meaning of transformation to race, misses the point, is divisive, has the effect of marginalising other aspects of transformation, and promotes anti-democratic practices. She argued the real challenge of changing the demographic makeup and including the formerly marginalised population which truly holds out hope for the future of South Africa is exchanged for a narrow-based, instrumental politics of group advancement of a chosen few. According to another respondent, a retired white male, although there were some exceptions, such as the Research Office, non-African senior academics were no longer called upon for their opinions or participation. This respondent suggested that a system had emerged in the recent period, either intentionally

or unintentionally, where the experience those senior academics have to offer was no longer drawn on. In short, the charge of racism was viewed as being used in a highly manipulative way to act against non-African staff members. As one respondent, a white male close to retirement, emotionally stated *"The University is equating transformation with the Africanisation of the University"* and *"Those who stand against transformation are labelled 'die-hards' from the old order".* According to this respondent there seems to be a very narrow understanding of transformation – as 'getting the numbers right' or about increasing the proportion of African staff members – rather than a broader interpretation of transformation, *"We are feeling targeted and victimized in the name of transformation; Deans and members of the Executive have publicly stated that it is a problem for white men to be occupying senior or managerial positions such as Heads of School".*

Getting the racial composition right is an important part of transformation but not the only aspect of transformation. Another part of transformation relates to making the UKZN the 'premier University of African scholarship' and ensuring that racist policies of the apartheid regime are eliminated. The danger is that it is quite possible for a functioning university to be transformed into a "*non-functioning, unhappy and useless institution*" (academic, male, and white). For this not to happen debate has to be encouraged and staff have to be included. According to this respondent, currently, there is a situation where debate is being stifled, staff members are not being appreciated for the excellent work that they do and are being made to feel defensive because they are non-African. An active black male academic stated that the administration has also responded in the media and different fora by attacking all those who criticise the way the transformation agenda by labelling them 'racists' who are not yet prepared to share space with the emerging black academics. According to this respondent, this mudslinging has not helped at all, both the administration and the staff have to find common ground and find ways of redressing past racial injustices without compromising the quality of education. For this to happen, debate has to take place in an open and free platform.

When one respondent was asked what her vision for transformation at UKZN was, she stated that she would like:

> *'To develop a culture of tolerance, non-racialism, excellence and collegiality at the University where staff members feel happy, appreciated and loyal. Such staff members, I believe, will be productive in their teaching and research and bring positive energy to the institution.'(Close to retirement, female, white)*

Inadequate pensions

Members contribute to the retirement fund every month and the investments returns after a member's normal retirement date comprise up to 40% of the total benefit paid out. According to Alexander Forbes approximately 75% South Africans have historically followed on investment strategy that provides no protection if one lives longer than the targeted life expectancy used to calculate pensions. The remaining 25% have made investments that provide little or no inflation protection. When it comes to having enough money in retirement, many older academics fit into this norm: *"I wish I had saved more and spent less over my entire working life" (retired academic, male, white).* All of the interviewees expressed concern over whether they would have enough money to live comfortably past their 80s. One female respondent who was taken on superannuation stated that *"If I had retired at 60 I would have done that with a third of my income, if they had not taken me on for other 3 years I would be a pauper now"* Another respondent, a female close to retirement, admitted that she was beginning to panic, *"I thought that by now I would have saved much more for my retirement. The cost of living does not match the amount of saving I thought I would need."* For years, retirement experts have predicted serious repercussions as retirees' lack of retirement assets collides with their increased longevity to create widespread economic hardship.

As the financial shocks and crisis erode the pensions accrued over the working years there is a fear that retirees, who are living longer and healthier lives will outlive their pensions and turn to the public system for support hence further burdening the already

over stretched state pension system. A female respondent soon to retire stated *"I expect to work longer; I expect my contemporaries should work longer. I have already adjusted to finding meaningful work that provides flexibility, which I think might become a new definition of retirement."* Some academics start earning a decent salary and make meaningful contributions to their pensions fund so late in their careers and retiring at 60 robs an individual of more years of contributions and limits the amount one can draw on in retirement.

An important point made by the National Tertiary Education Staff Union (NTESU) in contesting the mandatory retirement age of 60 is that most academic staff increasingly begin their pension earning careers relatively late in their lives while academic pay may be reasonably good compared to other civil servants like Teachers and nurses, it is not sufficient for adequate pension provision to be made over what, under the retirement at 60 provision, is a relatively short pension-earning working life (NTESU, 2002). Those who start late do not to enjoy the compound growth effect on pension fund capital as is enjoyed by those whose pension earning careers start early. The nature of an academic career is different from a career in business, the professions or the corporate world. It tends to be much more continual, and to put a retirement date that is stringent is to cut short a beneficial academic journey to the detriment of the students (NTESU: 2002). The downside of it is that if one has to retire at 60 then they would not have worked long enough to save for their retirement years. The problem is the same even in the private sector but there, the salaries are higher hence the contributions to the pension fund are also higher. From the research this was argued to be one of the reasons behind resignations of people around 50 years of age. Staying on at UKZN would mean that they would lose five years of pensionable salary. The obvious solution to all this would be to allow individuals to work longer thus continue to be productive and contribute more to their savings for retirement years.

Extended family and HIV/AIDS burden

All the individuals interviewed were breadwinners for their families, supporting dependents; some had extended families while some had only their immediate families. The majority of the respondents, 8 out of 10, favoured extending the retirement age to 65, one of the respondents, a white woman lamented the fact that she takes care of her grandchildren from her children in the Diaspora and after retirement she could not afford to continue offering them the same lifestyle they had when she was still working. Another respondent, a white female who is about to retire, stated that *"I am scared of not earning a salary. I have belonged to the pension fund for 24 years but when it turned into rands and cents it is not much. It works out to 25 percent of my salary. I look after my grandchildren and it is going to be hectic."* The majority also agreed that even the 65 age mark should not be a '*firing*' date. As one respondent who had been retired put it "Those academics who are able should be allowed to proceed until they have begun a decline in their research and teaching capacities a state which can be reached by even those who are not even close to retirement." Some of those who favoured extension also pointed out the fact that early voluntary retirement should be allowed for those who do not want to continue in employment.

"It is important to note that, depending on personal circumstances, the benefits from the UKZN Retirement Fund might be inadequate to finance the retirement of some members. In such cases, it would be prudent for the members to make additional provisions for retirement, and it is suggested that members consult their personal financial planners in this regard."

In South Africa older people are increasingly finding themselves in a situation in which they have to provide for their families. South Africa like the rest of Sub-Saharan Africa reels under the ill effects of HIV and AIDS. The number of AIDS orphans is set to rise as South Africa's high HIV prevalence rate among adults translates into a higher prevalence of AIDS and then AIDS deaths. UNAIDS estimates that as of the end of 1999, there were around 371 000 living AIDS orphans in South Africa (UNAIDS/WHO, 2000, p3), while 50 000 AIDS orphans have already died. The Metropolitan Life model estimates that by 2005 there will be 920 000 AIDS orphans in South Africa, and by 2010 there will be

roughly two million, Noumbissi (2003, p67). The economic effects on the AIDS sufferer and his or her family can be devastating (Health Systems Trust, 2000).

According to the Treasury Social Security and retirement discussion paper (2003:47) the impact of the virus is most felt among the economically active group and this has drastically contributed to the low life expectancy that is currently pegged at 49. Noumbissi (2003 67) states that the rapid increase in the number of the elderly coupled with the devastating effects of HIV/AIDS is certainly affecting the living conditions and the well being of the elderly in Africa. The deficiencies of social security in many developing countries, the weakening of the traditional role of the extended family safety net due to modernization and changes in living standards has also severe consequences on the well being of the aged. In order not to compound the problem by releasing those who were employed into this stream of dependency, ways have to be found of balancing maintenance of livelihood and economic participation. Noumbissi (2001: 43) states that in light of this it becomes imperative for policy makers to be progressive and start planning for the future when a large percentage of the working population will not be able to take up appointments and subsequent negative implications for the economy.

Age discrimination

It became apparent during the course of this study that all of the respondents who were past retirement whether they were kept on or left the Institution felt that they had been discriminated against on the basis of their age. One of the respondents was in her early 70s and she argued that as she matured in the field she was also improving in her analysis and depth of publications and removing her from active duty would be to rob her of contribution at a time when she felt she was in her prime and it would be mean that humanity would not benefit from her contributions to the development debate. One respondent who had returned on superannuation stated that she has performed quite well despite her age *"I have published more in these last three years than I have in my whole career."* A female and black respondent who is interesting in that she doubles as an academic and is part of administration surprisingly echoed the same sentiments and said

that *"I feel they are getting rid of me at a time when I feel I am at the top of my professional career and feel I have another 10 years of prime contribution."*

In literature, age discrimination in employment refers to the use of age in personnel decisions relating to hiring, firing, promotion, re-training and, most notably, mandatory retirement (Butler 1997). Butler (1997) concluded that ageism was a process of systematic stereotyping and discrimination against people because they are old, just as racism and sexism accomplish this for skin colour and gender. Older people are characterised as senile, inflexible in thought and approach, and old-fashioned in principles and skills. He argued that ageism derives partly from ignorance stereotyping and myths surrounding old age are explicable 'by a lack of knowledge and insufficient contact with a wide variety of older people' – and partly from 'a deep and profound dread of growing old' (Butler, 1997: 35). This form of discrimination wrongly assumes that when a person reaches a certain age they cease to make any significant contribution and hence should be laid off but as one of the respondents pointed out "60 is an age not an expiry date". This issue is so sensitive that a former lecturer wrote to the University Administration asking to be removed from the University list server *"Hi, having turned 60 last year and being officially fired for that sin, I see little point in continuing with this link, and would be grateful if you could take me off your mailing list."* His choice of words was interesting in that he equated mandatory retirement with being fired.

Article 2 of the elimination of unfair discrimination & harassment policy and procedure of the UKZN, states that discrimination means "any act or omission, including a policy, rule, practice, condition or situation which directly or indirectly imposes burdens, obligations or disadvantage on: or withholds benefits, opportunities or advantages from, any person on one or more of the prohibited grounds" (UKZN Policy document 2007). This includes any "acts or threats that interfere with the performance at work or in study of any individual or group on account of race, gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status, family responsibility, ethnic or social origin, colour, sexual orientation, HIV Aids status, *age*, disability, religion, conscience, belief, political opinion, culture, language or birth"

(UKZN Policy document 2007). The inclusion of age has conditions attached due to the mandatory retirement policy.

Support staff

From the Human Resources Respondent, it was noted that in as much as academic and support staff suffer from the economic and social hardships associated with retiring early, the latter group has lesser chances of having their retirement age extended as there was no shortage of skills in the sector. The respondents in the non academic sector disagreed with the matching and placing process undertaken after the merger. This process was aimed at getting the right person in the right position and retiring those who will not have gotten positions that suit their qualifications. Respondents argued that there were major flaws and loopholes in how the whole process was carried out as it was done on paper only. The junior academics who were supposed to get the jobs were frustrated as they suddenly found themselves on contract basis having worked for a period that they expect to be part of the permanent staff of the University and they left for other jobs. In many instances replacements were not found and a retired official found herself back at the desk for more than three years. This heavily affected morale and ultimately quality of work, as one respondent said:

> *"I feel that my 25 years on campus are worth something. It is quite strange that they refused point blank to give me an extra year but now I have been here for two additional years. They are simply failing to get someone with my level of experience and competency. It is hard to just replace a person who was solely responsible for the smooth running of a whole Department."* (non academic , white*)*

For the support staff interviewed, they felt that they were only kept on as the administration could not find any people experienced enough to take their positions. The

down side was that after being allowed to stay on, the staff were stripped of their former status and they began to feel marginalised and out of the picture. As respondents noted:

"If the policy was not there I would have stayed working and I would have functioned better if I knew l was a fully integrated staff. Now I am in the periphery and that affects me emotionally." The issue of being at the periphery was also raised by one non academic who stated that *"The fact that I am at the periphery I have sort of developed an "I don't care attitude" as I tell myself that anyway very soon it won't be my problem."(*non-academic, female, white) *Another respondent* also noted *"After I turned 60 and they were forced to take me back I was relegated a back seat. Before my retirement date I used to sit with the Heads to discuss issues but this is no longer happening. I feel I am no longer part of the furniture, I am not a player in the team anymore."*

Management perspective

Succession planning

In spite of the academic's representation of productivity and value, The Human Resources Department at UKZN felt that the retirement age of 60 was justified and necessary. The Human Resources representative stated *"The issue has been debated at Senate and Council level, it is a way of injecting new blood into the system and to review the human resources component."* The HR representative argued that such a lower age was imperative if succession planning was to take place. Succession planning involves an integrated, systematic approach to identify, develop, and retain talent and skills for key positions and areas in line with current and projected University requirements. This was the main thrust especially after the Universities merger in 2005 and affected mainly the non academic staff. Another consideration in line with that is that as a newly integrated institution still trying to standardize staffing, the retirement policy allows management to evaluate the need for certain posts and to disestablish those that are unnecessary to operational needs in the current context once the incumbent reaches retirement. The University had to find a way to get people out of the system and match and place employees in positions where they could reach their optimal performance. Issues around equity also principally drive this policy.

Bringing in new blood

The other major argument presented by the Human Resources Department was that the retirement age facilitated the bringing in of new ideas, skills and blood into the academic system as the representative noted that *"It's a way to refresh the faculty and bring new blood and new ideas to the university,"* It was felt that in as much as the older academics have the necessary and important skills and experience, the world was changing and at times they fail to grasp the new technological innovations and systems in learning and in order to keep up with the international standards new blood has to be injected into the Institution.

In line with injecting new blood it was argued that the existing policy is also a much needed mechanism to weed out 'dead wood' or non productive academics, many of whom wind down even further after the age of 60 years. It was felt that these academics had nothing new to add to the body of knowledge and to revitalise the Institution. Arguably this aspect of the management of human resources should be dealt with through Performance Management. In reality, even universities with Performance Management have difficulty in addressing underperformance due to the nature of the academia which makes it more difficult to assess individual performance.

One of the ways in which the University introduces new blood is the Leadership and Equity Advancement Programme (LEAP) where the University recruits and nurtures black and woman academics and integrates them into the establishment academic staff. The young academic will be given enough time to build a research career over a three-year period. During this time they will participate in a formal mentoring programme and

go through planned professional development with Mentors chosen from amongst the University's best researchers and teachers. As a university committed to excellence, a fresh injection of new skills and experience is absolutely critical for its continued existence. However, this is the vision of what should happen, and a representative of Human Resources at UKZN, acknowledged the difficulties they are facing in getting interested young candidates for the program and the high turnover in the trainees. Retiring seasoned academics also poses the threat that there will be lack of mentors for the inspiring academics.

Alternatives to Mandatory Retirement

Superannuation

Productive staff will be kept

An interviewee representing the University executive argued that contrary to what staff may believe, in the academic sector, productive, highly skilled academics and technical staff are not at risk of being expected to retire at 60. For this category of staff, retirement at age 65 is almost a given. The retirement age should therefore not influence this category of outstanding staff to leave the University. The Representative of Human Resources quoted statistics from an annual Report (2006) that stated that the vulnerability of staff in the 55-60 years category is also not borne out by the facts. The turnover in this category of staff has remained at approximately 2% of total turnover since 2004. Total turnover has ranged between 5.6 to 7.8% over the last three years and this is considered to be healthy. In the year that one turns 60 a motivation can go to the superannuation committee to keep the person on board beyond 60 but not beyond 65. Superannuation is on a non pensionable basis. Superannuation is usually given to academics that have proved to be beneficial to the institution and it is the responsibility of the Board to decide whom to retain. The Respondent noted that in the past three years, all applicants for superannuation at the level of professor were successful. In 2006, five out of the nine academics who applied for superannuation were supported. Those rejected were because of a combination of poor/no income generation track record, inadequate performance in teaching and postgraduate supervision, insufficient research productivity and lack of

recognised professional standing. It is only academic staff who is not performing at the requisite level or those whose posts are no longer needed that are vulnerable to being rejected for post-retirement employment. A larger number of applications are received each year from the support sector and the success rate is lower. The reason being that there is the large pool of available candidates to replace the retired and correct race based distortions and the need for rejuvenation and improvement of the skills base.

The superannuation process is degrading

The superannuation policy has been regarded in negative terms by the majority of the respondents. One academic who had been denied superannuation felt that *"It is an emotional and traumatic experience when the superannuation application is turned down, one feels so useless and all the previous years of hard work lose value and meaning."* The interviewed academics felt that the process reduced full academics into first time applicants for jobs regardless of what they have accomplished during their term of employment. They felt that those who are worthy of superannuation should not be asked to motivate why they should be kept on in their jobs as the administration knows well how each lecturer performs. It was found to be demeaning and emotionally traumatising. Respondents indicated that it was emotionally taxing and was even worse for one who has his/her motivation turned down. One respondent had his application turned down and he was emotional even during the interview, he indicated that:

"It was the worst time of my life" and he felt *"...useless, as if all the years I had put into the academia were useless. They in fact were telling me that I was inefficient and did not warrant getting a contract and it was so painful after all the hard work and the successes, it was a low blow"(*academic, retired, male*)*

Another mentioned that:

*"Superannuation is an uncomfortable word. It affects morale, you are a professor, with a reputation nationally and internationally and now you are forced to beg for your job by motivating why you should be kept in employment."(*academic, working, female*)*

The other major contentious issue was that even when the University argued that older Professors were too expensive, the superannuation was at times denied to people who came from technical areas that were hard to find replacements and finding alternatives cost even more. An academic form a scarce skills department interviewed noted *"The staffing committee makes decisions on superannuation. I was aghast at some of the decisions made, there was a guy who didn't get it though he came from computing which is a scarce resource base. It was a real loss and now we use consultants who charge much more."*

Effect of the retirement policy

Research output

In research done by the National Research Foundation (NRF: 2005) it was found out that mature academics produce more in terms of research than the younger groups. The two age groups which showed significant and steady increases in publications since 2002 outputs was the 50-59 group and the 60 and over category. The 60 and over group were at a lower level because several academics in the retirement zone probably left the tertiary sector to supplement an inadequate pension elsewhere. In contrast the 30-39 cohort revealed an alarming decline in publication output, and the under 30s declined from 5% in 1992 to a dismal 1% in 1994. In contrast, in 1990 researchers in the age group 30-50 were responsible for 75% of publications, in 2001 the 40-60 year olds were responsible for 76% of publications (NRF:2005).

Mentoring and supervision

MA and PhD programmes do not appear to be producing sufficient numbers of academics. It is therefore imperative to put in place people who can mentor others. Given the ageing of the productive research population, there are seriously negative implications of researchers having to retire from the institution as mature researchers are failing to

reproduce themselves in young generations. According to an HR representative the Vice Chancellor has stated that the average turnover of staff of 6.4% was within the norm of 5-10% found in industry, and that the age group 50-55 has the lowest turnover in the institution, challenging suggestions that there will be a flight of staff in this group to other institutions where the retirement age is 65 (Human Resources personnel officer, female.) The respondent suggested that in the event of duplication of duties and overstaffing, staff that are not performing above par should be allowed to go.

Summary

National Tertiary Education Staff Union (NTESU) attacked the UKZN lowering of the retirement age as being retrogressive (NTESU: 2002). In its 2002 website document NTESU argued that increasing the retirement age would do away with a cumbersome, sometimes contentious and probably, transactions-cost heavy superannuation process. It would be a morale booster for the many staff who have devoted a lifetime of service to the University or to academic life more generally (NTESU: 2002). Lessening academics anxieties about post-retirement provision will allow them enhanced focus on the important tasks of teaching, research and administration (NTESU, 2002) thus making them less likely to look for employment elsewhere or to otherwise defect by losing interest in the institution or pursuing consultancy or other work. Maintaining high levels of morale is crucial as it encourages people to invest time and energy in building the future strength of the institution. It would signal that the University values the services of its most experienced staff and that it recognizes the huge benefit that that experience brings (NTESU, 2002). In the same vein the NTESU document (2002) also stated that many probably most present employees would have inadequate pension provision at 60. This leads to anxiety and feelings of insecurity that have potentially detrimental effects for the institution as well as the individuals concerned.

The Leadership and Equity Advancement Programme (LEAP) is the University's key mechanism for recruiting and nurturing Black and woman academics and integrating them into the institution academic staff. The programme addresses capacity building at

every level- from the Graduate Scholarship Scheme at entry level to the LEAP Residential Workshops aimed at middle to senior level academics at the higher end of the spectrum (University document). Growing competition from the private sector and government is making it increasingly difficult for the university to attract and retain quality staff members, particularly young academic staff, prompting concern over the source of the next generation of academics in South African universities and in this vein the LEAP lectureship scheme aims to create a pool of Black and female academics to spearhead future research.

Of all the people interviewed only the Human Resources Official was ready to retire. Even she acknowledged that this might be due to the fact that she still had some time before she could start to concern herself about retiring and that when the time draws closer she might have concerns over her financial wellbeing. The current global financial crisis means that inflation will soar and savings will be eroded and pensions are not spared. This presents a great challenge in terms of the number of people who will need assistance to make ends meet. There is growing danger that retirees will outlive their pensions at a time when the younger generation is also reeling from the HIV\AIDS pandemic thus straining state resources. However what was apparent was that if transformation is high on the agenda then there should be a difference in how black and white academics are considered. As it stands the mandatory retirement age is also affecting the few black academics that also have to retire and are rarely replaced by young black academics.

The International Organization for Migration recently estimated that Africa lost one-third of its professionals to the developed world between 1960 and 1987, and that up to 23,000 academics and 50,000 middle and senior managers leave the continent each year. A report in the Mail and Guardian on the 26th of July 2009 argued that while policymakers have argued that lowering the retirement age for men to match the women's retirement age of 60 opens up employment opportunities for younger people studies have shown that there is a positive correlation between employment and higher retirement ages. Examples of countries such as the United States, Britain and Ireland, demonstrate that

where the retirement age is higher, the levels of unemployment are among the lowest in the world. By comparison countries such as France, Belgium and Italy, which have low retirement ages, have lower employment rates (Mail and Guardian, 26 July 2009). The challenge to the UKZN administration would then be to come up with a progressive policy that addresses the transformation and equity agenda without necessarily compromising the quality of teaching and prejudicing the same students to who it should be liable.

Chapter 5

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

Introduction

The Manpower Inc (2003) carried out a study on the retirement age and the work place. It was found that the first priority of today's employers should be forecasting and workforce planning for the future, when much of the present skills and expertise will retire and there will be few available candidates to replace them as sectors like education suffer from brain drain. This research has shown that UKZN has not been spared from this trend as academics leave for greener pastures in the private sector. In this vein, Marshall (2003:90) warns that without critical analysis and planning, it is likely that many companies will find that they will be incapable of growing their businesses and meeting needs because of unexpected and pervasive skills shortages in critical roles. Two of the key reasons that employers are not doing more to try and recruit or retain older workers as part of their skills management strategies are simply that they neither understand how to do so effectively, nor grasp why this should be a high priority for them now. The administration at UKZN do not seriously take into consideration exit interviews though that could effectively point to why middle aged academics leave the institution as they feel threatened by their age. Keeping older workers in the system is certainly not a priority for the administration. Kilpatrick (2007:120) states that as skills become more difficult to find and retain, it will be essential for employers to optimize skills flow by ensuring alignment of employees' skills with the needs of the business over the course of each individual's career which Delong (2003: 76) points out that this requires strategic recruitment; ongoing assessment of skills, interests and abilities at regular intervals; alignment of abilities with the current and future needs of the organization and making lifelong learning a high priority. The LEAP programme could achieve this if it specific to particular skills and the older workers are given the chance to mentor the young Lecturers and pass over their expertise and skills.

The findings from this research have shown the intrinsic importance of succession planning and sound human resource management practices. The education sector in South Africa has been hard hit by brain drain as qualified personnel leave the country in search of better opportunities (National Research Foundation Report:2005). UKZN's noble goal of transformation and equity has hit a stumbling block in that the few black academics are also enticed by the higher salaries in the private sector and those who remain also leave the Institution for others in the Country due to the low retirement age.

The one thing all the parties interviewed, the affected or soon to be affected workers and the University Administration, seemed to agree on is that Black Africans, making up only 17% of UKZN's academic staff, are significantly under-represented in the institution. What they did not agree on was the modus operandi of getting more in and balancing the demographics. While the University Administration felt that age was an appropriate criterion on which to base transformation policy, the academics felt that they were being retired while in their prime. This research showed that there are a number of academics who are forced to retire at the age of 60 when they still feel that they have a lot to offer. Far from deteriorating, growing older meant that they will have established themselves in the field and will be better positioned to get published. Retiring them at 60 means that despite their good health, both mental and physical fitness they are deemed 'obsolete'. Many would be in fact be capable of continuing for a significant number of years. The research also found out that in some cases the University struggles to replace such academics and end up re-employing them, wasting valuable time and resources, or hiring consultants who charge much more. Each such departure is a loss to the University, both of the staff members own intellectual capital and also of the driving force behind the research and teaching programmes.

The main reasons that were identified for extending retirement age were loss of expertise, knowledge, skills and experience. This was seen through the quality of research output from newly recruited staff, the need for costly mentoring and constant surveillance. This

was further compounded by lack of recruiting pool that makes it difficult for replacing the retired staff. The inadequacy of pension funding, usually prevalent in institutions of higher learning as most academics enter their careers late in their lives, results in emotional trauma because of a dramatic decrease in available income and sometimes the burden of HIV/AIDS. Other reasons that were given for an extension of retirement age were age discrimination, skills shortage in South Africa and transformation agenda. Proposals to keep the mandatory age as it was, were based on the following reasons: the financial drain of higher paid mature academics, succession planning, getting the demographics right, the need to create space for new blood with fresh ideas and new angles.

Theoretical backing

As discussed in the first chapter, the continuity theory proposes that the people who age most successfully are those who carry forward the habits, preferences, lifestyles and relationships from midlife into late life. For most people, late life does not represent a radical break with the past; changes often occur gradually and sometimes imperceptibly. Atchley (1972) stated that most people ride over or navigate around the bumps and potholes of later life using well-practiced coping skills acquired earlier in life. This theory was supported by the findings of this research. The respondents all agreed that continuing with what one knows best makes the transition into old age smoother. This is in contrast to the disengagement theory which was also supported by quite a few of the respondents. Many respondents felt that the with the onset of old age, one cannot start new careers and to disengage from what one was used to for long presents a problem that many retirees have problems dealing with. This can result in psychological problems as one loses a sense of identity, what used to occupy them and also their sources of income. This is the reason why many employers usually hire retirement experts to assist the affected employees accept that their careers have come to an end.

Recommendations from the research.

Although this research makes a case from one institution and a small number of interviews, a number of recommendations can be derived. A respondent suggested that the University continues the employment of the senior academic. The funding of the re-employed staff would be dependent upon them continuing to generate income from fees, student supervision subsidy, publications subsidy and contract research income against which their salary could be drawn. This would be an incentive for the Senior academics to remain in service as this will be additional income to their inadequate pensions and they will continue doing what they know best. The University thus stands to reap the benefits from highly productive researchers under this arrangement.

Academics with appropriate teaching and research track records should be encouraged to continue on a permanent pensionable beyond the age of 60 in the first instance of course with due regard to their performance. The criteria for continuation would be the same as those governing promotion as well as a willingness to concentrate on working with young and new academics in developing their research expertise. The kinds of mentoring relationships will then be varied, depending on the needs of the students. To lessen the burden, upon reaching 60, academics who are eligible to continue until 65 should be relived of administrative and committee tasks and be encouraged to apply full time talents to research, research capacity building, mentoring and graduate supervision. Amongst these duties would be to attract research funds for the institution and to constitute and manage research teams.

Another way to engage post retirement academics at no additional cost was suggested by an interviewee who suggested that they be a creation of an extra Professorial seat in each department. This will be aimed at allowing the University to continue to gain from the experience of suitable and targeted academics even beyond 65 years without the University incurring any additional costs. The academics appointed will not be paid a fixed salary but will be paid a fixed proportion of the income derived directly from their fee and subsidy earning research activities.

Another class of respondents recommended that on reaching 65, competent researchers and teachers should not be put out to pasture but be offered the opportunity to be re appointed. The Institution should tie up retirement plans with succession and not retire someone without getting the replacement first to avoid rehiring that same person as a consultant at a much higher price. They further recommended the Institution to look at employees individually. If a person performs well he should be allowed to stay on even after the 60 age mark without having to go through the motivation process. There are those who are young and they remain in the system while they contribute nothing. Age does not mean inability.

Management practices will need to adapt to a stretched and ageing labour market, placing a premium or innovative strategies which retain and reintegrate older workers while at the same time increasing efficiency.

The introduction into national pension schemes of a flexible mix between work and retirement was identified as one of the key ways of keeping older people employed longer. The success of labor market reforms will depend largely on successful reforms in pension systems.

Exit interviews should be taken seriously and use them to address key reasons for staff exodus. The strengthening of LEAP was mentioned as the better way of addressing the transformation process without rocking the skills boat.

In a discipline or area where it is difficult to find suitable black replacement staff it may be better to extend the service of a 60 year old academic for another 5 years than replacing them with a young person from the wrong designated group who would take long to replace to get the equity process right. The following were also recommended in line with the need to strike an equitable process on racial grounds ,pensionable retirement age at 65 as the norm in other universities, performance review at the age of 60 with the possibility of the University motivating against continuation after the age of 65 for non performers, Option of retirement with full benefits from age 55 to 65 and academic staff

after the age of 65 should retire from all decision making portfolios and concentrate on research and teaching. In order to preserve the international status of the University, a balance should be struck between new staff and experienced staff particularly in terms of curriculum development, post graduate supervision and research output.

The University should have workshops to develop research capacity so that graduates can understand research and grow to like the academia as a form of employment. This should be done to all graduate students in all faculties; the University should also create networks with other universities in other countries to show the joy of academic work.

Conclusion

From this research it became apparent that there is a lack of popularity of the mandatory policy amongst non-executive staff and unions and that the policy represents a threat to smooth transition to retirement. All respondents concurred that over the years staff have raised various concerns in relation to this policy. On the one hand some staff have argued that a retirement age is a form of age discrimination which is unconstitutional, that performance not age should be the benchmark for any institution of learning while on the other others have argued that there should be an agreed retirement age but that the retirement age should be increased to varying levels between 65 and 70. It was found out the retirement at 60 betray an unskilled workers mentality that is not synchronous with the approach of other major universities in South Africa and globally as education needs special skills and those who have them should be treasured. In the United States and recently in Canada, performance not age is the yardstick. The United Kingdom exempted academics from being affected by the reduction in the mandatory age policy. It is recognised that academic careers begin relatively late as most staff secure their permanent posts only in their thirties and can yield the finest most mature work after the age of 50 through to their 70s. It is at this premium age that staff at the UKZN begins to panic about their professional future and suffer loss of morale. They will be faced with a doomed future because even though a contract may be secured, it will come with a drastic

cut in benefits, the loss of pensionable contribution from the institution to which staff members may have devoted a great deal of their careers. For a University system that prides itself on international benchmarking, the UKZN administration does not seem to understand the intellectual trajectory or environment of university productivity and achievement.

It is academically desirable to have productive, high quality experienced senior staff within academic disciplines. Senior staff is a source of advice and knowledge and guidance to younger staff as well as being productive researchers in their own right. They are well known internationally and thus contribute to the standing of the institution. Their existing track record attracts post graduate students and they are generally able to attract funding for research and they can only do so while they are employees of the University. It is also academically desirable to have younger staff that will develop into the highly productive researches in the medium term future. This development is best achieved by working in a team led by a senior researcher who has been well established and has the experience to mentor the young people. The declining appeal of the public service as a rewarding employer and the competition with the private sector for talent together with the lower retirement eligibility criteria of the Institution all work against the competence of the University as the Premier in African Scholarship. There is need for a holistic human resources planning mechanism that seeks to groom young academics and utilize the vast experience of older professionals for the good of the Institution and the students.

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Guide to interview questions

<u>Core questions</u>

What is the University's policy on retirement age?

Who makes decisions around this retirement age policy?

What are key stakeholder views on this retirement policy?

How does the retirement of staff impact the organization?

How does the retirement policy impact on individual decision making around retirement?

The organisational perspective (Questions for Human Resources Manager, Unions, Heads of School)

What is the current policy regulating retirement?

Is there any flexibility over retirement decisions?

Who determines what policy is used (decision making)?

Who decides which staff member receives superannuation?

What percentage of your workforce is expected to retire in the next five to 10 years?

What impact are these retirements expected to have on the organization's/school's performance?

How do you perceive effect of retirement policy on skills retention?

How do you perceive the effect of the retirement policy on transformation?

Are retired professors eligible to mentor new staff, supervise student dissertations, and/or chair pertinent committees?

The individual perspective (questions for workers in the retirement zone)

What is your view of mandatory retirement policy?

What are your ideas for alternative policy?

Do you perceive current policy as discriminatory?

How do you perceive effect of retirement policy on skills retention?

How do you perceive the effect of the retirement policy on transformation?

Does productivity decline when an employee is on superannuation?

Do you have an alternative career path in mind because of the retirement policy?

Will retiring affect your economic well being?