

COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

Copyright Regulations 1969

WARNING

This material has been reproduced and communicated to you by or on behalf of the Anglican Education Commission (Anglican EdComm) pursuant to Part VB of the *Copyright Act 1968* (the Act).

The material in this communication may be subject to copyright under the Act. Any further reproduction or communication of this material by you may be the subject of copyright protection under the Act.

Do not remove this notice.

Author: Warren Marks
Title of Article: Tapping the Resource of Late-career Principals
Title of Journal: Leading & Managing
Edition (Year):Page Vol. 18, No. 1 (2012), pp. 31-49

CAL LICENSED COPY. UNAUTHORISED COPYING PROHIBITED.

Tapping the Resource of Late-career Principals

WARREN MARKS

Macquarie University

Email: warren.f.marks@det.nsw.edu.au

ABSTRACT: Organisational psychologists Beehr and Bennett (2007) explain that 'as the baby-boomer population ages, the number of retirees and the proportion of the society they represent will almost certainly increase to levels never before seen. Thus it is now more important than ever to understand retirement' (p. 277). Internationally the baby boomer retirement bulge is creating significant succession and retention challenges for workforces. In the educational community the large number of impending principal retirements (due to the baby boomer effect) is presenting educational jurisdictions with similar workforce challenges: a shortage of principals and a loss of corporate knowledge¹.

Given this developing scenario it is timely to ask: can educational jurisdictions afford to lose large numbers of late-career baby boomer principals? Are these late-career principals² (as older workers) a dispensable cohort which has reached its 'use-by-date' or are late-career principals a valuable resource for extending the leadership capacity³ available for school systems? Are these experienced principals easily (and effectively) replaceable or will their departure expose inexperienced aspirants to the increasing challenges of current principalship?

Before exploring these issues this article first seeks to investigate the views of late-career principals themselves. Do late-career baby boomer principals wish to retire⁴ in the traditional model (moving from full-time work to full-time leisure as soon as possible) or do these principals represent a retirement dynamic which is more interested in the concepts of staying-on⁵ and/or refocusing⁶?

Introduction

There has been generic interest in the concept of *ageing and work* in sociology, career psychology and organisational studies (Schultz & Adams, 2007). However a recent search for

Definitions:

¹ *corporate knowledge transfer* (i.e. the systematic capturing and sharing of the knowledge of late-career principals with new/aspiring principals);

² *late-career principals* (i.e. principals in their final five years pending eligible retirement);

³ *leadership capacity* (i.e. the systemic expanding and deepening of the pool of accessible quality leaders);

⁴ *retirement age* (i.e. the specific *retirement age* under the New South Wales State Superannuation Scheme).

⁵ *staying-on principals* (i.e. principals who opt to stay in the principal role beyond their entitled retirement age);

⁶ *refocusing principals* (i.e. principals who retire and then re-enter the workforce).

articles centring specifically on late-career principalship yielded substantially fewer than 10 citations worldwide, leading Oplatka (2010) to conclude that ‘there remains a paucity of research on this period amongst ... school principals’ (p. 777). This current article derives from a larger research project being undertaken by the author which investigates and compares the aspirations and expectations of late-career principals with the experiences and reflections of recently-retired principals in New South Wales (NSW). The focus of this article is on late-career principals within the government system (the NSW Department of Education and Training: NSWDET) as they approach their retirement age of 55 years for women and 60 years for men; the pre-determined age at which their superannuation benefit reaches its maximum (with little or no financial incentive to work past these ages). Specifically this article aims to explore if late-career principals approaching retirement age: (1) are interested in staying-on full-time; (2) are interested in staying-on part-time through some form of job-sharing; (3) are keen to work in retirement (i.e. *refocus*); and (4) what are the effectiveness, motivation and satisfaction levels of principals in their late-career phase. The research is set against a conceptual framework of *change*: demographic; economic; retirement; workforce; and educational change. Much of this change is seen as a result of the baby boomer retirement bulge which politicians and economists claim is about to place extreme pressure upon the economic and social structures of the nation (Costello, 2002, 2007; Swan, 2010). Late-career (baby boomer) principals represent an educational leadership microcosm of this national landscape. Within this context the article explores what the late-career and transition to retirement phases mean for principals; and what implications there are for educational authorities.

Literature Review

Demographic change

Population growth

The Australian Government’s first Intergenerational Report (Costello, 2002) drew early attention to the looming difficulties associated with the nation’s growing population and the subsequent Intergenerational Reports (Costello, 2007; Swan, 2010) confirmed those initial concerns. The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Australian Social Trends report (ABS, 2009a), provided a clearer picture when it indicated that ‘Australia’s population is projected to grow from 21 million in 2006 to between 31 and 43 million in 2056’ (p. 1). Both the fertility and the net migration rates are stable, yet the nation’s population is projected to grow dramatically. The primary cause is the significant increase in the life expectancy of baby boomers (and subsequent generations). To give some relativity to the potential impact of this national population growth, a 2056 population of 36 million (a conservative projection) represents a 200% increase on the 1966 population of 12 million.

Population ageing

The ageing of the population is projected to result in an upward shift in the nation’s age structure. This problem is international. Gibbs (2008) reports that from 2005 to 2025 the

percentage of people over 65 in the United States of America (USA) and in England will rise from 13% to 20%; and in Japan, Sweden, Denmark and Germany from 18% to 25%. The situation is similar for Australia. As the proportion of younger people declines, the proportion of older people increases. By 2040, the proportion of the population which will be over 64 years old will be 25%. This is double the figure at present (ABS, 2007). This rise in the ageing population (64+ years of age) will be accompanied by a corresponding decline in the working-age population (15-64 years as defined by Australian Bureau of Statistics) from 67% of the national population in 2007 to 58% by 2056. As a consequence the *old age dependency ratio* (i.e. the ratio of the aged population who are supported from the tax-paying working-age population), is set to more than double from 20% to 42% by 2056 (ABS, 2009b). As the ABS (2009a) notes, 'put another way, for each older person in 2007, there were five working-age people, while in 2056 there will be less than three working-age people for every older person' (p. 2). These figures stand in stark comparison to the 1970 figures when there were 7.5 working aged people to support each aged person. The ageing of the national population is one of the government's core economic concerns.

Economic change

The economics of ageing

An ageing population brings with it a new set of social and economic challenges for a nation. Harding (2006) points out that previously 'the problem of funding decades of retirement on the age pension did not really exist as, on average, Australians died before they reached aged pension age' (p. 15). The picture is very different today. An Australian female born in 2010 is projected (on average) to live to 84 years; meaning that she may be looking to access the aged pension for almost 20 years longer than her parents or grandparents. The financial pressure exerted on government funds by this change presents as a serious challenge for economic planning, unless older workers can be encouraged to work longer.

Working longer

There is consistent acceptance from governments that one of the most important factors in averting an economic crisis is to improve economic growth through increasing productivity; which in turn is dependent upon increasing the workforce participation rates (Swan, 2010). In 2008 Australia ranked 10th highest amongst OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) countries in relation to workforce participation rates for working-age people. One strategy to improve this situation is to have *older workers* work longer so that the economy can produce more goods and services (Demark et al., 2007; Mackay, 2007).

The crucial question then becomes: Do older people want to work longer (stay-on); to retire; or to re-enter the workforce? The international trend for baby boomers to re-enter the workforce following retirement is termed 'refocusing' in Australia (Mackay, 2007; Salt, 2007) and Canada (Cooper, 2008); and 'bridge employment' in the USA (Dendinger, Adams & Jacobson, 2005; Johnson, 2001; Mor-Barak, 1995). Both staying-on and refocusing appear to be the two key strategies. Governments are providing encouragement in the form of economic incentives (e.g. liberalisation of superannuation and taxation legislation) and emotional

incentives (e.g. status and value being attached to older workers making a contribution to the common good). But are these incentives enough to convince baby boomers to work longer?

Generation-driven retirement change

Changing values

Government economic incentives to entice older workers to stay connected to the workforce may have found an ally in the baby boomer generational values which appear to be driving a changing attitude towards retirement. Gibbs (2008) points out that in old age, the previous generations used to be ‘those well-behaved, neatly dressed maiden aunts and bachelor uncles – asexual, passive, kindly looking and ready to disappear quietly like the fluff on a dandelion if you were to blow gently’ (p. 29). The baby boomers are replacing that previous image with one more aligned to their generational values: fashionably well-dressed, physically energetic, emotionally adventurous, sexually alive, intellectually engaged and career-wise ambitious. Boomers fear losing their intellectual and physical faculties as they grow older, so they perceive that retirement should be an active period of life involving a mix of work and leisure activities (Winston & Barnes, 2007). Boomers have a deep generational need to maintain a sense of purpose and a feeling of being valued (or needed) by making a meaningful contribution to the society (Mackay, 2007).

The new retirement

The baby boomer attitude towards retirement seems to be that although ageing is mandatory, growing old is optional. As a more highly educated group with a longer life expectancy than their predecessors they want to push back old age as long as possible (Winston & Barnes, 2007). The developing notion of *retirement* would appear to be quite fluid and Gibbs (2008) predicts that ‘retirement will continue to morph into something new and different’ (p. 24).

The findings of the New Retirement Survey (Harris Interactive & Dychtwald/Age Wave, 2005) in the United States (USA) indicated that baby boomers have forged a new model for retirement with 76% of the respondents intending to keep working and earning in retirement. Most plan to retire around 64, and re-enter the workforce in an entirely new job or career, as part-time workers (Winston & Barnes, 2007). In Australia early figures indicate a similar trend. In 2007, 30% of working baby boomers indicated they didn’t plan to retire at all; whilst 50% of those who did plan to retire indicated they would then return to work (ABS, 2007).

Thus the ‘new retirement’ is not seen as an ending but a beginning and rests on circular rather than a linear notion of retirement. Work is central to the ‘new retirement’ (Johnson, 2001). Boomers do not want to be without work for 20 years or more, so an increasing percentage will develop new careers, start new businesses or engage in meaningful and demanding work. Cooper (2008) believes that ‘as a group, boomers will redefine retirement, just as they have been changing societal and cultural norms since they reached pubescence’ (p. 11).

Workforce change

Late-career workers

Research (and conventional wisdom) has characterised late-career workers as posing problems for employers by being on a plateau path to retirement (Rosen & Jerdee, 1990) characterised by a loss of processing speed in relation to declining intellectual performance (Schaie, 1996); a resistance to change (Lahn, 2003); and an aversion to taking risks (Oshagbemi, 2004).

However an alternative picture emerges from other studies which suggest there is no significant difference between the job performance of older and younger employees. These findings indicate that older workers have a high capacity for accommodating change (Greller & Simpson, 1999); display a deepening expertise and problem-solving capacity (Kabacoff, 2000; Lahn, 2003); and express substantial satisfaction with their job and career (Greller & Stroh, 2004; Kakabadse, Kakabadse & Myers, 1998). In the USA Greller and Simpson (1999) found that ‘the overall effect of chronological age on cognition and performance are not nearly so strong and pervasive as widely assumed’ (p. 313). Tests conducted to measure the performance of workers aged from 20-75 years showed that whilst the oldest quantitatively did the least amount of work, when the quality of the work was measured there was ‘no significant difference in performance’ (Greller & Simpson, 1999, p. 330). This alternative perspective also presents late-career workers as being wiser and more tolerant (Hall & Mirvis, 1995) and in possession of ‘know-how’ expertise (Hall, 2002).

The changing nature of work

Since the 1960s the physical nature of work culture has been significantly replaced (typically in modernised nations like Australia), by a knowledge-based work model (Howard, 1995; Johnson, Mermin & Ressiger, 2008). This movement, which is often referred to as ‘the changing nature of work’ (Howard, 1995), has basically paralleled the baby boomers’ working life from the mid 1960s to the start of the baby boomer retirements in 2010. With ever expanding technology, the movement towards cognitively demanding work continues to gather pace. In the 21st century, workers increasingly need to be able to demonstrate advanced cognitive, interpersonal and technological skills to solve complex problems. These changes favour those workers with higher levels of education or the willingness/capacity to re-train. Charness, Czaja and Sharit (2007) challenge as a myth the view that older workers are unwilling and unable to learn new technology, as the research literature ‘indicates that older workers are in fact able to learn new forms of technology’ (p. 232).

Personal benefits of working longer

Recent research (Calvo, 2006) also suggests that working longer may make people happier and healthier. Therefore the list of potential benefits for working longer would now seem to include: intrinsic reward; community status; personal self-esteem; financial security; personal happiness; and better health outcomes. Some work (as opposed to full-time leisure) is increasingly being seen as an attractive alternative to what was traditionally a work-free retirement.

Educational change

Principal retirements

A recent Australian survey (ABS, 2009b) investigating the retirement intention of various workforce sectors found that the 'education and training' sector registered the largest proportion of workers who intended to retire within the next 10 years. This would indicate that the education sector is facing an imminent and significant loss of experience and corporate knowledge. When focusing solely on the leadership in schools (i.e. principals) education systems across the nation (Barty et al., 2005; Lacey & Gronn, 2006) and internationally (Fink, 2010; Pont, Nusche & Hopkins, 2008) are experiencing a high level of principal retirements.

In 2002 NSWDET conducted a detailed workforce planning review aimed at quantifying the looming retirements of baby boomer principals and other senior executives. This review indicated that by 2013, 74% of current secondary school principals and 59% of current primary school principals will have separated from the system (Scott, 2003). Not only was this seen as a significantly high number but 40% to 50% of the current deputy-principals, (the logical replacements for these principals), also indicated that they would be retired by 2013. The deputy-principal ranks contain the same generational cohort (i.e. baby boomers) as the principals' ranks and so a large percentage of the entire leadership cohort (principals plus deputy-principals) are intending to retire at approximately the same time.

If principals are encouraged to stay-on or refocus through pro-active transition and retention policies, this might alleviate the education sector's loss of experience and corporate knowledge.

Principal shortages

High rates of retirements are creating principal shortages. Internationally, Hargreaves, Halasz and Pont (2008) confirm that 'in many countries, almost half of the current generation of school leaders is due to retire within the next five years, creating significant challenges to leadership recruitment, stability and effective continuity' (p. 71). National research would suggest that the shortage of principals in Australia is also real (d'Arbon, Duignan & Duncan, 2002; Lacey & Gronn 2006, 2007). This shortage would seem to be exacerbated by the reluctance of middle management to aspire to leadership positions. In the UK, Fink (2010) found that, 'rather than a supply problem...the real dilemma seems to be the unwillingness of deputy heads, middle leaders and teacher leaders to aspire and to seek headship' (p. 30). Similar research in Australia showed that middle management was not interested in applying for the principalship (d'Arbon, Duignan & Duncan 2002; Lacey & Gronn, 2006) whilst Mulford (2008a) concluded that, 'finding the next generation to succeed those soon to retire is proving a challenge, not only because of the demographics, but because there are some who do not like the look of the leadership pressures' (p. 5).

There would appear to be two strategies which might alleviate the issue of a principal shortage: (1) the attraction of aspiring principals; and (2) the retention of existing principals. So far the failure of systems to 'attract' aspirants to the principalship has dominated the debate around principal shortages, but as Lacey and Gronn (2005) conclude 'retention is as much an issue in the succession planning mosaic as is attraction' (p. 44). *Retention* challenges

employing jurisdictions to develop policies which will extend the working-life of principals who have reached their retirement age.

Late-career principalship

Oplatka (2010) has distilled four key consistent stages of the principalship: the introduction stage; the induction stage; the maintenance and renewal stage; and the disenchantment stage. This final stage (i.e. disenchantment) characterises late-career principals as being tired, trapped, autocratic and resistant. This concept was highlighted in research conducted in the United Kingdom from 1999-2006 (Earley & Weindling, 2007) and Canada from 1996-1998 (McMillan, 1998) as an issue of significance for educational jurisdictions. The concept of late-career principal disengagement and disenchantment aligned with the traditional generic view that late-career workers pose problems due to career obsolescence.

However more recent educational leadership research would seem to challenge the 'plateau path' concept and presents an alternate view (Oplatka, 2010). In the United Kingdom when late-career principals were looking for a professional development challenge they were offered involvement in the National College of School Leadership's (NCSL) Consultant Principals Program (2002-2005). Early and Weindling (2007) reported that as a result 'their enthusiasm was rejuvenated and rekindled and "plateauing out" avoided' (p. 82). In Israel, Oplatka (2007) found that late-career principals 'perceived themselves to be...energetic and work-focused...not burnt-out or stagnated...and expressing high work commitment' (p. 362). In fact these late-career principals indicated 'a high sense of professional competence and expertise...high level of efficiency...and personal savvy subjectively related to their long years of professional experience' (Oplatka 2007, p. 363). In Australia Mulford et al. (2008b) noted that whilst stereotypes suggest that late-career may be characterised by withdrawal from work, slowness, lack of interest in professional development, rigidness, and unwillingness to change, the research actually indicated that compared with other principals, late-career principals appear to be no different in terms of: willingness to change; initiation of new projects; commitment; passion; determination; courage; optimism; collaboration; power sharing and accountability (Mulford et al., 2008b).

These recent findings would appear to present a consistently positive theme: that late-career principals (who have often been overlooked as being 'older workers' embodying the traditionally-accepted traits of late-career obsolescence), present as being enthusiastic; energetic; keen to learn; open to change; collaborative; and in possession of the accumulated wisdom and experience to effectively function as high-level school leaders, consultants, coaches and mentors.

Two core questions then arise: (1) Do educational jurisdictions realise the potential leadership capacity within this cohort? and (2) Have educational jurisdictions developed staying-on and retention strategies to tap into (i.e. capture) the corporate knowledge and capacity of late-career principals? Before examining the attitudes and policies of employing authorities, the expectations and aspirations of late-career principals themselves need to be more thoroughly explored. This is the primary focus of this article.

What do (baby boomer) late-career principals think?

In a major Australian literature review of the intentions and expectations of baby boomers in the areas of health, housing, work and income, Quine and Carter (2006) found that the literature was primarily based on policy makers' and researchers' opinions and projections of baby boomer expectations, rather than on the baby boomers' own opinions, intentions and expectations. This vacuum in the research was also exposed by the then Federal Minister for Ageing who believed that what has been missing from much of the debate was a deeper appreciation of the values, aspirations and attitudes of the baby boomers themselves (Bishop, 2005). Quine and Carter (2006) concluded that 'research that targets baby boomer expectations and action is urgently needed. If policies in this area are to be effective empirical research obtaining information directly from baby boomers is required' (p. 3). This research is aimed at addressing that vacuum. An overview of the methodology employed to conduct this investigation follows.

Methodology

Research stance

Discussing retirement plans and aspirations is, for many, a very personal and sensitive issue. It follows that research in this area should be grounded in a trusting relationship between the researcher and the participants. The fact that the researcher was well-known and respected among principal groups within NSWDET facilitated this engagement. However given the potential closeness of the researcher to the participants and the phenomena being investigated, the researcher was also extremely conscious of the need to retain distance, objectivity, impartiality and neutrality. The research findings are solely based on the data collected directly from baby boomer principals in NSW; and not on the researcher's personal experiences, opinions or projections.

Mixed methods

The methodology selected to best meet the research goal was a mixed methods paradigm: Phase 1 was an online quantitative questionnaire; Phase 2 was individual qualitative interviews. Johnson and Christensen (2008) believe that 'it is wise to collect multiple sets of data using different research methods and approaches in such a way that the resulting mixture or combination has complementary strengths and non-overlapping weaknesses' (p. 51).

It was the considered judgement of the researcher that the sequential model (questionnaire followed by interviews) would allow the questionnaire findings to better inform the interview content; and to facilitate deeper continuous engagement with the data. Tashakkori and Teddlie (2003) believe that sequential methods are 'useful as they provide better opportunities for answering our research questions' (p. 14).

Data analysis

The Phase 1 questionnaire data were analysed using descriptive and comparative statistics. The methods of correlation, factor analysis and multivariate analysis were used to analyse the mean scores. The software used for the management, indexing and searching of the data was the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS 12.0 for Windows, 2003). The Phase 2 interview data were analysed following the four stages as described by Marshall and Rossman (1989): organising the data; generating categories, themes and patterns; testing any emergent hypothesis; and searching for alternative explanations. As Oplatka (2010) describes ‘this analysis aims at identifying central themes in the data, searching for recurrent experiences, feelings and attitudes, so as to be able to code, reduce, and connect different categories into central themes’ (p. 798). The coding was guided by the principles of ‘comparative analysis’ (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990, 1998), which includes the comparison of any coded element in terms of emergent categories and subcategories.

Sampling

To develop the sample group, the researcher placed advertisements in the newsletters of the two NSW principals’ professional associations (NSW Secondary Principals’ Council, and NSW Primary Principals’ Association) during 2008. The researcher also spoke at the state-wide meetings of each association to advertise the research. Principals who fitted the definition of ‘late-career’ could volunteer to participate in the research. The late-career principals in this study were selected using criterion sampling (i.e. they planned and expected to retire between 1st January, 2009 and 31st December, 2012). A total of 105 late-career principals volunteered and participated in the Phase 1 questionnaire. From the analysed data, thirty (30) of these principals were purposively selected (to maintain the percentage distribution of gender, geographical location, school level and item-response from the Phase 1 questionnaire) to participate in the Phase 2 interviews. The percentage distribution of the gender, location and school level variables for each phase of the research, compared with the total NSWDET principal population, is displayed in Table 1.

TABLE 1: DISTRIBUTION OF LATE-CAREER PRINCIPAL VARIABLES (GENDER, LOCATION AND SCHOOL LEVEL)

	NSWDET total principal population (N=2106)	Phase 1 questionnaire Late-career principals (N=105)	Phase 2 interviews Late-career principals (N=30)
Male	52.6%	61.0%	60.0%
Female	47.4%	39.0%	40.0%
Metropolitan	53.2%	55.0%	40.0%
Rural	46.8%	45.0%	60.0%
Primary	79.0%	72.2%	73.3%
Secondary	21.0%	27.6%	26.7%

The Phase 1 online questionnaire was distributed and completed in December 2008. The data were analysed in early 2009. The interview cohort was selected in mid-2009 and interviewed in late 2009. The Phase 2 semi-structured interviews were conducted in the principals' offices using an interview guide sheet. With the permission of the interviewee, all interviews were recorded and later transcribed. Each interview took approximately 90 minutes. This represented a total of approximately 45 hours of interviews. All participants were guaranteed anonymity and confidentiality with their school name excluded and each principal being referred to by an allocated code system.

Findings

Staying-on

Interest in staying-on

The Phase 1 questionnaire sought to establish late-career principals' interest in *staying-on* past their superannuation retirement age. Based on a scenario where there would be no superannuation financial disadvantage to keep working, respondents were given seven options in order to explore this cohort's interest in staying-on: interest in staying-on full-time and collecting superannuation now or later; interest in staying-on to job-share part-time and collecting superannuation now or later; and not interested in these staying-on options. As Table 2 indicates, 27.3% of respondents indicated that they 'would not stay-on for any reason', meaning that 72.7% of this late-career cohort indicated they would be interested in staying-on past their anticipated retirement age for one of the options given.

TABLE 2: LATE-CAREER PRINCIPALS INTERESTED IN STAYING-ON PAST THEIR RETIREMENT AGE.

Interested in staying-on full-time	40.1%
Interested in staying-on part-time/job-share	32.6%
Would not stay-on for any reason/option	27.3 %

In the Phase 2 interviews 63.3% of the late-career principals were in favour of staying-on through the job-share/part-time (co-principal) option and commented accordingly:

Having the talents of two people, with special skills, would be a great advantage. This scheme would allow the experiences and the energies of two leaders to benefit the school. (Primary male)

I believe that at present there is far too much loss of expertise as the baby boomers retire and 'walk out the door' with all that knowledge. This scheme therefore would stop that and assist school communities and students by providing strong, experienced leadership teams. (Primary female)

Specific models for staying-on

Within the staying-on options the late-career principals were asked to respond to two specific models (which were the two models suggested by the respondents in the comments sections of the Phase 1 questionnaire): (1) a part-time coaching/mentoring model; and (2) a job/share Transitional Co-principalship Model (TCM) where the late-career principal reduces to part-time and job-shares with the deputy-principal. The findings indicated that: 10% were not interested in any co-principalship model; 20% were interested in a mentor/coach model; and 70% were in favour of the Transitional Co-principalship Model.

Principals who preferred the mentoring/coaching model commented that:

A principal mentor role, where I would support new principals on a part-time basis, is the one which offers the best solutions. (Primary female)

My ideal would be co-principals who are employed for their expertise in late-career or retirement to mentor/coach new and aspiring principals. (Primary male)

Principals who supported the TCM as a job-sharing model which captured expertise, provided leadership development, and allowed ramping-off, commented that:

This Transitional Co-principal Model would allow ramping off for the principal; plus a transition plan and a succession plan for the school. Such a scheme would provide an excellent leadership preparation plan. (Primary male)

The Transitional Co-principalship Model would be excellent to stop expertise from 'walking out the door'. Ramping off would be a great way for a principal to finish. (Primary female)

Comment

These late-career principals indicated a high level of interest (72.7%) in staying-on (past their retirement age) especially if that included a part-time or job-share model. Personal and professional reasons to stay-on rated higher than financial incentives. It would seem that late-career principals who are interested in staying-on might be able to offer educational jurisdictions successful succession planning and knowledge transfer strategies by being retained either as full-time principals; or as part-time coaches/mentors; or in a part-time/job-share co-principals.

Refocusing

Interest in refocusing

The current regulations governing membership of the NSW State Superannuation Scheme are a strong disincentive for late-career principals to stay-on past their superannuation retirement age (as members can only access those entitlements by taking retirement from their full-time work). In this research just 13 (12.3%) of the late-career cohort (N=105) had actually taken the deliberate option to stay-on. Accordingly the late-career cohort was asked about the other most likely option: to retire at their superannuation age; to collect their superannuation entitlements; and then to *refocus* back into the workforce. The interest in refocusing is shown in Table 3.

TABLE 3: LATE-CAREER PRINCIPALS INTERESTED IN REFOCUSING IN RETIREMENT

I am interested in work in retirement	93.6%
I do not wish to work in retirement	6.4%

Only 6.4% of late-career principals indicated that they *do not wish to work* in retirement. This meant that a very high percentage of 93.6% of late-career principals indicated they are interested in refocusing into the workforce following retirement.

Preferred refocused work-type

The Phase 1 questionnaire also explored the favoured type of work for those late-career principals looking to refocus in retirement (Table 4).

TABLE 4: LATE-CAREER PRINCIPALS PREFERRED REFOCUSED TYPE OF WORK

Full time	4.4 %
Regular part-time	70.2 %
Self-employed	4.4 %
Voluntary	21.0 %

Whilst 21.0% are interested in voluntary work, for those principals interested in refocusing into paid work, the part-time model was clearly the preferred option with a 70.2% rating.

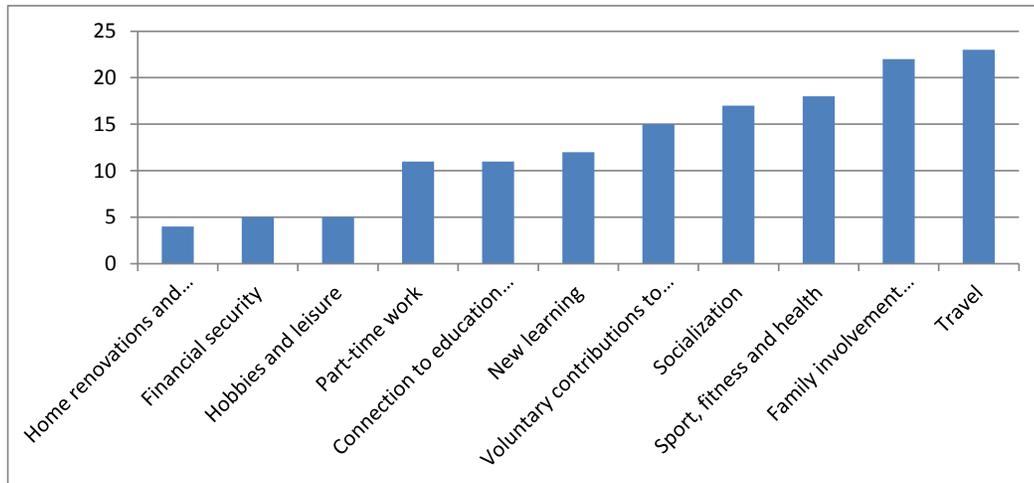
Refocusing as a component of retirement

In the Phase 2 interviews late-career principals were asked: *What is your perfect picture of life in retirement?* This item was purposively selected to encourage respondents to articulate how they visualised their retired life. All respondents identified a mixture of activities. The frequency of each activity is shown in Figure 1.

The combination of these activities produced what is termed a *portfolio retirement* (Salt, 2007); a retirement with multiple interests. The majority of this cohort indicated that they anticipated *work* to be a component of their ‘new retirement’:

In my perfect picture I would spend great times with my grandchildren. I would be heavily involved in part-time paid work and some time in voluntary community work also. I will be undertaking some personal new learning such as through a university program. (Secondary female)

The perfect picture for me will involve some part-time work in education; some extended and deepened family time; some personal hobbies; some travel; plenty of socialisation; and some leisure activities. (Primary male)

FIGURE 1: COMPONENTS OF LATE-CAREER PRINCIPALS' PERFECT-PICTURE RETIREMENT*Comment*

Late-career principals indicated a high level of interest (93.6%) in refocusing. The favourite mode of work was part-time (70.2%), whilst there was a spread of personal, professional and financial motivators for refocusing. These late-career principals see *work* as an important component (plank) in the ideal *portfolio retirement*. It would seem that late-career principals moving into retirement are potentially a large, willing and experienced workforce resource which could be utilised to solve knowledge transfer concerns and succession planning anxieties.

Late-career principals and the 'plateau path' syndrome: Myth or fact?*Levels of effectiveness, motivation and satisfaction*

In the Phase 1 questionnaire late-career principals were asked to self-assess their levels of effectiveness, motivation and satisfaction. This item was consciously *self-assessment* only, as it was judged that some form of triangulation (or 360-degree assessment) including a line supervisor would result in the loss of anonymity which had been guaranteed to all participants. Whilst acknowledging the limitations of this approach, the purpose of this item was to establish to what extent this cohort saw *themselves* as being on the traditional 'plateau path' to retirement (i.e. tired, trapped, unmotivated, with low morale and loss of efficiency); or to what extent this cohort saw *themselves* as being more like the emerging alternative picture of late-career principals: highly energetic, motivated and effective. The findings are shown in Table 5.

TABLE 5: LATE-CAREER PRINCIPALS' SELF-ASSESSED LEVELS OF EFFECTIVENESS, MOTIVATION AND SATISFACTION

	Effectiveness	Motivation	Satisfaction
Highly	46.9%	34.7%	32.7%
Strongly	43.9%	49.0%	33.7%
Moderately	8.2%	13.2%	23.5%
Marginally	1.0%	3.1%	10.1%

These late-career principals saw themselves as highly effective and highly motivated and obviously not on a 'plateau path' to retirement. It should be noted that these findings are from participants' self-assessment. Further research might consider additional assessment in a 360-degree format with input from both principals' supervisors and school staff.

Lower satisfaction level

Using the responses as shown in Table 5 (above) these late-career principals indicated that their satisfaction level was lower than their effectiveness and motivation levels. In the Phase 2 interviews the principals attributed the lower levels of satisfaction to the following factors:

1. poor systems communication practices;
2. politically-driven educational agenda;
3. excessive administrative demands for the principal;
4. expanding role for the principal as a site-based manager; and
5. the principal's lack of control over staffing appointments.

Late-career principals explained how these factors resulted in lower satisfaction levels:

There is a growing frustration coming from schools being 'used' as part of the political landscape (no embarrassment to government of the day is the prevailing philosophy). This is an unethical use of schools and eats away at the principal's sense of 'satisfaction'.... This diminishes a sense of 'satisfaction'. (Secondary male)

The main reason is the desk-bound administrative demands of the role. This means that it is harder to find time to professionally develop staff, which is always one of the more satisfying components of a job. (Secondary male)

I find that maintenance issues which see the principal as the site manager and not the educational leader produce high levels of frustration in my colleagues. Probably the greatest deterrent to high satisfaction is the lack of control over staffing which leads to increasing frustration and lowers satisfaction. (Secondary female)

Comment

This cohort of late-career principals indicated that they felt highly effective and highly motivated. This finding would align with research which reports positively on late-career workers generically (Greller & Simpson, 1999; Greller & Stroh, 2004; Hall, 2002; Hall &

Mirvis, 1995; Kabacoff, 2002; Kakabadse, Kakabadse & Myers, 1998; Lahn, 2003); and with research which reports positively on late-career principals specifically (Early & Weindling, 2007; Mulford et al., 2009; Oplatka 2007, 2010).

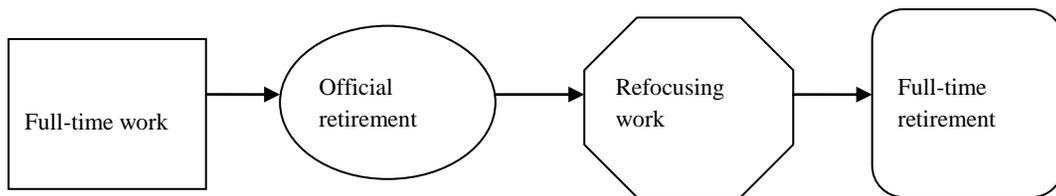
The lower levels of satisfaction recorded by this late-career cohort raises a point of potential interest. In a recent survey of the attitudes towards retirement for public sector workers in NSW, Hesketh and Griffin (2010) found that ‘at least 40% of those with extensive experience are intending to retire within the next five years, representing a significant loss of organizational knowledge’ (p. 12). Furthermore the research indicated that ‘the analysis showed a significant relationship between attitudes at work and intended retirement age: the less satisfied at work ... the younger their intended retirement age’ (p. 23). If lower satisfaction levels are influencing principals to retire earlier (rather than later) then this decision could be exacerbating the already identified significant loss of corporate knowledge through baby boomer retirements. The potential for retirements due to low satisfaction levels requires closer investigation.

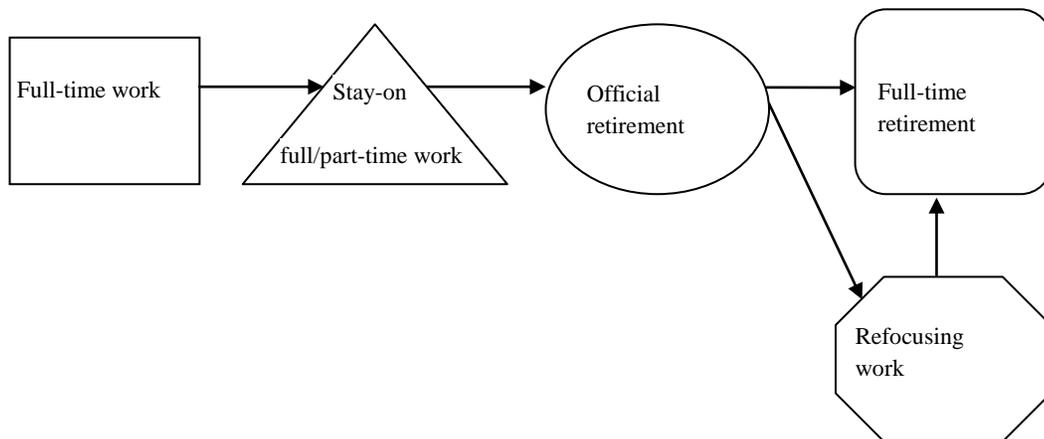
Conclusions

New models for capturing capacity

Late-career principals in this research assessed themselves as being highly effective, highly motivated and highly energised. They also presented as being highly interested in *staying-on* or *refocusing* in a part-time/job-share co-principalship or a coach/mentor role within education. These findings are totally consistent with the generational movements away from the traditional retirement models to the ‘new retirement’ model involving staying connected to the workforce (Cooper, 2008; Mackay, 2007; McCrindle, 2009; Salt, 2007). This cohort of late-career principals is indicating two preferred models for the next phase of their life.

MODEL 1



MODEL 2

Tapping the Resource of Late-career Principals

Late-career principals may well prove to be an extremely valuable resource for educational jurisdictions at a time when a combination of high levels of retirements and low levels of aspirants is creating succession and knowledge transfer challenges. This finding potentially provides educational jurisdictions with an additional source of previously untapped leadership capacity. Educational systems which can interrogate the retirement landscape with the shifting generational values of baby boomer retirees; which can pro-actively adjust current practices to implement effective retention policies and allow more flexible work options; and which genuinely value the commitment, effectiveness, experience and energy of late-career principals may stand to reap substantial returns for a moderate investment in ‘older workers’.

References

- AUSTRALIAN BUREAU OF STATISTICS (ABS). (2007) Retirement and retirement intentions, *ABS Australian Social Trends*, ABS Catalogue No. 4102.0 (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Services).
- AUSTRALIAN BUREAU OF STATISTICS (ABS). (2009a) Future population growth and ageing, *ABS Australian Social Trends*, ABS Catalogue No. 4102.0 (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Services).
- AUSTRALIAN BUREAU OF STATISTICS (ABS). (2009b) Retirement and retirement intentions, *ABS Australian Social Trends*, ABS Catalogue No. 4102.0 (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Services).
- BARTY, K., THOMSON, P., BLACKMORE, J. & SACHS, J. (2005) Shortage of school principals in two states in Australia, *Australian Educational Researcher*, 32(3), pp.1-18.
- BEEHR, T. & BENNETT, M. (2007) Examining retirement from a multi-level perspective, in K. SCHULTZ & G. ADAMS (Eds), *Aging and Work in the 21st Century* (New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum), pp. 277-302.
- BISHOP, J. (2005) *Opening Address to the 2nd International Conference on Health, Ageing and Longevity* (New South Wales: International Research Centre for Health, Ageing and Longevity).
- BOYD, C. (2008) *Baby Boomers are Turning Retirement Upside Down which is Just as Well for Employers Facing a Skills Shortage*. Retrieved February 27, 2010 from <www.cpaaustralia.com.au/cps/rde/xchg>.

- CALVO, E. (2006) *Does Working Longer Make People Healthier and Happier?* (Chestnut Hill, MA: Centre for Retirement Research at Boston College).
- CHARNESS, N., CZAJA, S. & SHARIT, J. (2007) Age and technology for work, in K. SCHULTZ & G. ADAMS (Eds), *Aging and Work in the 21st Century* (New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum), pp. 225-248.
- COOPER, S. (2008) *The New Retirement* (Ontario, CA: Penguin Group).
- COSTELLO, P. (2002) *Intergenerational Report 2002-03. Commonwealth of Australia Budget Papers, 2002-2003* (Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia).
- COSTELLO, P. (2007) *Intergenerational Report 2006-07. Commonwealth of Australia Budget Papers, 2006-2007* (Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia).
- D'ARBON, T., DUIGNAN, P. & DUNCAN, D. (2002) Planning for future leadership of schools: An Australian study, *Journal of Educational Administration*, 40(5), pp: 468-485.
- DENDINGER, V., ADAMS, G. & JACOBSON, J. (2005) Reasons for working and their relationship to retirement attitudes, job satisfaction and self-efficacy of bridge employees, *The Journal of Aging and Human Development*, 61(1), pp. 21-35.
- DENMARK, D., MEAGHER, G., WILSON, S., WESTERN, M. & PHILLIPS, T. (2007) *Australian Social Attitudes 2* (Sydney: University of New South Wales).
- EARLEY, P. & WEINDLING, D. (2006) Consultant leadership—a new role for head teachers, *School Leadership and Management*, 26(1), pp. 37-53.
- EARLEY, P. & WEINDLING, D. (2007) Do school leaders have a shelf life? Career stages and headteacher performance, *Educational Management Administration Leadership*, 35(1), pp: 73-88.
- FINK, D. (2010) *The Succession Challenge: Building leadership capacity through succession management* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications).
- FULLAN, M. (2005) *Leadership and Sustainability: System thinkers in action* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press).
- GIBBS, D. (2008) *When I'm 64: The new retirement* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press).
- GLASER, G. & STRAUSS, A. (1967) *The Discovery of Grounded Theory* (Chicago, IL: Aldine).
- GRELLER, M. & SIMPSON, P. (1999) In search of late career: A review of contemporary social science research applicable to the understanding of late career, *Human Resource Management Review*, 9(3), pp. 309-347.
- GRELLER, M. & STROH, L. (2004) Making the most of late-career for employers and workers themselves, *Organizational Dynamics*, 33(2), pp. 202-214.
- HALL, D. (2002) *Careers In and Out of Organizations* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications).
- HALL, D. & MIRVIS, P. (1995) The new career contract: Developing the whole person at midlife and beyond, *Journal of Vocational Behaviour*, 47(3), pp. 269-289.
- HARGREAVES, A. & FINK, D. (2006) *Sustainable Leadership* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Jossey-Bass).
- HARGREAVES, A., HALASZ, D.G. & PONT, B. (2008) The Finnish approach to systems leadership, in B. PONT, D. NUSCHE & D. HOPKINS (Eds) *Improving School Leadership, Volume 2: Case studies in systems leadership* (Paris, France: OECD Publications), pp. 69-109.
- HARRIS INTERACTIVE & DYCHTOWALD, K., /AGE WAVE (2005) *The Merrill Lynch New Retirement Survey: A perspective from the baby boomer generation* (USA: Merrill Lynch, Pierce, Fenner & Smith Incorporated).
- HARDING, A. (2006) Population ageing and our future, *Business Review Weekly*, 27(48), pp. 8-14.
- HESKETH, B. & GRIFFIN, B. (2010) *Retirement Planning Survey* (NSW Department of Premier & Cabinet). Viewed 13 April, 2012 at <http://www.dpc.nsw.gov.au/public_employment/policy_directory/policy_statement?metadata=103709>.
- HOWARD, A. (1995) *The Changing Nature of Work* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Jossey-Bass).
- JOHNSON, R. (2001) *The New Retirement* (Missouri, USA: World Press).
- JOHNSON, B. & CHRISTENSEN, L. (2008) *Educational Research: Quantitative, qualitative and mixed approaches* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications).
- JOHNSON, R., MERMIN, G. & RESSEGER, M. (2008) *Employment at Older Ages and the Changing Nature of Work* (Washington: Urban Institute). Retrieved 21 June, 2009 from <<http://www.urban.org/publications/1001154.html>>.
- KABACOFF, R. (2000) *Leadership: What has age got to do with it?* (New York: Research Release Management Group).

- KAKABADSE, A., KAKABADSE, N. & MYERS, A. (1998) Demographics and leadership philosophy: Exploring gender differences, *Journal of Management Development*, 17(5), pp. 351-388.
- LACEY, K. & GRONN, P. (2005) 'I'd rather be driving a bus', Final Report from the ARC Discovery Project, *Principal Aspiration and Recruitment amidst Disengagement*, (Melbourne: Monash University).
- LACEY, K. & GRONN, P. (2006) Cloning their own: Aspirant principals and the school-based selection game, *Australian Journal of Education*, 50(2), pp. 102-121.
- LACEY, K. & GRONN, P. (2007) *Letting Go: Former principals reflect on their role exit* (Jolimont, Vic: Centre for Strategic Education).
- LAHN, L. (2003) Competence and learning in late-career, *European Educational Research Journal*, 21(1), pp.126-140.
- MACKAY, H. (2007) *Advance Australia Where?* (Sydney, NSW: Hachette Publications).
- MARSHALL, C. & ROSSMAN, G. (1989) *Designing Qualitative Research* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage).
- MCCRINDLE, M. (2009) *The ABC of XYZ* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press).
- MCMILLAN, R. (1998) Approaches to leadership: What comes with experience? *Educational Management and Administration*, 26(2), pp. 173-184.
- MOR-BARAK, M. (1995) The meaning of work for older adults seeking employment: The generativity factor, *International Journal of Aging and Human Development*, 41(4), pp. 325-344.
- MULFORD, W. (2008a) The leadership challenge: Improving learning in schools, *Australian Educational Review*, 53. (Victoria, AU: ACER – <http://research.acer.edu.au/aer/2>).
- MULFORD, W., KENDALL, K., KENDALL, D., EDMUND, W., EWINGTON, J. & SILINS, H. (2008b) Successful school principalship and decision making, *Leading & Managing*, 14(1), pp. 60-71.
- MULFORD, W., KENDALL, K., KENDALL, D., EDMUND, W., EWINGTON, J. & SILINS, H. (2009) Successful school principalship in late-career, *Journal of Educational Administration*, 47(1), pp. 36-49.
- OPLATKA, I. (2007) The school principal in late-career: An explorative enquiry into career issues and experiences in the pre-retirement working years, *Leadership and Policy in Schools*, 6(4), pp. 345-369.
- OPLATKA, I. (2010) Principals in late-career: Towards a conceptualization of principals' tasks and experiences in pre-retirement period, *Education Administration Quarterly*, 46(5), pp.776-815.
- OSHAGBEMI, T. (2004) Age influences on the leadership styles and behavior of managers, *Employee Relations*, 26(1), pp. 14-29.
- PONT, B., NUSCHE, D. & HOPKINS, D. (2008) *Improving School Leadership, Volume 2: Case Studies in Systems Leadership* (Paris, France: OECD Publications).
- QUINE, S., BERNARD, D. & KENDIG, H. (2006) Understanding baby boomers' expectations and plans for their retirement. Findings from a qualitative study, *Australian Journal on Ageing*, 25(3), pp. 154-150.
- QUINE, S. & CARTER, S. (2006) Australian baby boomers' expectations and plans for their old age, *Australasian Journal on Ageing*, 25(1), pp. 3-8
- ROSEN, B. & JERDEE, T. (1990) Middle and late-career problems: Causes, consequences and research needs, *Human Resources Planning*, 13(1), pp. 59-70.
- SALT, B. (2007) *The Big Picture: Life, work & relationships in the 21st century*, (Victoria, AU: Hardie Grant Books).
- SCHAIE, K. (1996) Human development: Ageing, in A. TUIJNMAN (Ed.), *International Encyclopedia of Adult Education and Training* (Oxford, UK: Penguin Press), pp. 324-360.
- SCHULTZ, K. & ADAMS, G. (Eds) (2007) *Aging and Work in the 21st Century*, (New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Publishers).
- SCOTT, G. (2003) *Learning Principles: Leadership capabilities and learning research in NSW Department of Education and Training*. Report prepared for NSWDET. Last accessed on 15th December, 2008 at <http://www.curriculumsupport.nsw.edu.au/leadership/docs/Learning_principalsnewb.pdf>.
- STRAUSS, A. & CORBIN, J. (1990) *Basics of Qualitative Research: Grounded theory procedures and technique* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Press).
- STRAUSS, A. & CORBIN, J. (1998) *Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory*, 2nd edn (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Press).
- SWAN, W. (2010) *Intergenerational Report 2009-2010*, Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia Budget Papers, 2009-2010 (Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia).
- TASHAKKORI, A. & TEDDLIE, C. (2003) *Mixed Methodology: Combining the qualitative and quantitative approaches* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications).

- THOMPSON, P. & BLACKMORE, J. (2006) Beyond the power of one: Redesigning the work of school principals, *Journal of Educational Change*, 7(3), pp. 161-177.
- WEINDLING, D. (1999) Stages of Headship, in T. BUSH, L. BELL, L. R. BOLAM, R. GLATTER & P. RIBBINS (Eds), *Educational Management: Redefining theory, policy, practice* (London: Chapman Publishing), pp. 90-101.
- WINSTON, A. & BARNES, J. (2007) Anticipation of retirement among baby boomers, *Journal of Ageing*, 19(3 & 4), pp.137-159.