It's good to share: job share as a solution to youth unemployment and ageing working populations

Dan Wheatley

Abstract

This article outlines a job share policy as a labour market solution to the challenges presented by youth unemployment *and* ageing working populations in post-industrial economies. Reforming present apprenticeship constructs, the job share policy would involve a phased retirement for older workers acting as mentors for young apprentices. It would ensure retention of human capital stock through intergenerational learning, providing a lean policy solution. This article presents a policy outline with reference to extant literature, but identifies design and implementation challenges. Finding a solution to these concerns is essential. This article calls for research to assess a job share policy.

Keywords: apprenticeship, human capital stock, intergenerational learning, job share.

Introduction

Unemployment and underemployment of skilled and unskilled young people, from NEETs (not in education, employment or training) through to graduates, represents an increasing policy concern which is unlikely to diminish without some form of policy intervention, especially given the current fragility of many post-industrial economies (ILO, 2012). Concurrently, ageing populations are creating specific policy challenges. These include the retention of human capital stock as the post-War 'baby-boomer' generation of over 50s workers near retirement, and the restructuring of state pensions, as in the UK, to address the pension burden. This article proposes a job share policy (JSP) as a labour market solution to these problems. In the three months to November 2012, the unemployment rate in the UK

stood at 7.7% (approximately 2.49m). However youth unemployment, i.e. the 16-24 age group who report that they are NEET, stood at 20.5% (ONS, 2013). This accounts for approximately 957,000 unemployed individuals (NOMIS, 2013). A substantial proportion of young unemployed may lack the necessary skills and qualifications employers seek, however, increasing numbers of recent higher education graduates report unemployment. In 2011, 18.9% of recent graduates (within first six months of graduation) in the UK reported unemployment (ONS, 2012).[1] This problem is not unique to the UK. Youth unemployment across the OECD was reported at 17.1% in March 2012 (OECD, 2012). Some EU economies are in an even more fragile state: in both Greece and Spain over half of young people report unemployment (Eurostat, 2013). Problems of youth unemployment are even more severe in some developing economies. However, the specific problem facing many post-industrial economies is the combined concerns of youth unemployment, and that of an ageing workforce. It has been suggested that, 'the dependency ratio within the EU is becoming problematic at both ends of the age spectrum relative to the working population' (Roberts, 2006, p.69). The state pension age in the UK has been raised in recent years from 65 for men and 60 for women, to 65 for both men and women. However, pension age will rise to 66 for both men and women between 2018 and 2020, with a further projected increase to 67 in 2034-2036, and 68 in 2044-2046 (Directgov, 2012). Meanwhile, the statutory retirement age, previously enforced by employers, was abolished following the implementation of *The Employment Equality (Repeal of Retirement Age Provisions) Regulations 2011 (No. 1069)* in April 2011 (DWP, 2012). These measures have been taken as a response to increasing life expectancy, and as a method of managing the costs of the state pension (Directgov, 2012). However, it is clear that measures put in place to address the pension burden could have important labour market implications in respect to the working contribution of older individuals.

Removal of the statutory retirement age and restructuring of the state pension are likely to result in increases in the numbers of individuals working in their 60s. Economic necessity is also likely to increase proportions working beyond current state pension age (over 65). Currently, there are around 11.3 million individuals aged 50-64 in the UK, approximately two thirds of which report employment (NOMIS, 2012). Incidence of individuals working beyond pension age has increased in recent years (Leslie et al, 2009). Data from the UK *Annual Population Survey* reveals that there were approximately 880,000 workers aged 65 or over in the UK in 2012 (NOMIS, 2013). The loss of the knowledge held by these individuals as they reach retirement represents a significant concern (DeLong, 2004; Levy, 2011). Given the similar numbers of youth unemployed and those working beyond pension age, the question arises as to the impact the latter group may be having on the former. The focus of this article, however, is not to suggest that older workers be removed from the labour market through policy intervention. This would result in a significant loss of knowledge and expertise from the labour market. Instead this article proposes that these workers share their knowledge with young workers through a JSP, acting as a phased retirement policy for older workers and an apprenticeship for young workers. This would ensure knowledge retention in organizations and maintenance of the human capital stock (Levy, 2011). Specifically, this article seeks to: (1) consider concerns facing many post-industrial economies surrounding youth unemployment and ageing working populations (in respect to phased retirement), using the case of the UK, and; (2) develop, with reference the extant literature on job share, an outline for a job share policy. Following this introduction the next section provides a discussion of job share, before outlining concerns regarding youth unemployment and phased retirement, including past and present policy. The job share policy is then considered, including potential

challenges. The final section summarises the key debates presented in this article, and offers recommendations for research and policy development.

Job Share

Job share is a flexible working arrangement in which one full-time position is shared between two employees (Branine, 2004, p.137; Walton, 1990). It differs from work sharing which refers to the short-term reduction in working hours to spread work among workers, often used as an alternative to job losses (Crimman et al, 2010). Under a job sharing arrangement a job is divided in respect to task, time, and other individual, role, or employer-specific criteria. Job sharing has the potential to open work opportunities for a broad range of employees. In the majority of cases full-time working hours are divided equally between job sharers. Job share can take the form of one employee working mornings and the other afternoons, alternate day working, alternate two/three days, or two-and-a-half day splits (Branine, 2004, p.137). Salary, leave and other benefits are also divided between each worker on a pro-rata basis (Curson, 1986). Together job sharers are responsible for the entire job with each benefiting, in principle, from retaining the career opportunities and status of a full-time employee (Branine, 1998, p.63). Job sharing has been criticised in the sense that this working arrangement actively perpetuates current models of working time (Lewis, 2001, p.27). A practical limitation to use of job share is in finding an individual with which to share a role. In some organizations, especially larger national employers, job share registers are used as a solution, where individuals advertise details of their role and request a job share (Tomlinson, 2006, p.592). Depending on the nature of their employment, job sharers may not need to share the same characteristics. It is possible that an able person shares with a disabled one, a woman with a man, people of different nationalities and ethnicity, or someone younger with someone older (Branine, 2004, p.137-8).

Job share remained relatively unknown as a form of flexible working until the 1980s (Walton, 1990). Recent empirical research identified its use remains limited. While approximately 30% of employees reported the availability of job sharing at their workplace, only 6% reported use of job share schemes (Russell et al, 2008, p.83). Meanwhile, there are notable gender divisions, as evidence suggests that most of those engaging in job share are working mothers (Branine, 1998; Lewis, 2001; Russell et al, 2008). Use of job share is also more common in the public sector, as with other forms of flexible working arrangement. Hutchens (2010, p.1018), further, identifies that job sharing is more common among white collar workers. While job share remains relatively uncommon (Russell et al, 2008, p.80), consistent with other forms of flexible working arrangement, it has the potential to provide a 'win-win' outcome for employers and employees (Lawrence and Corwin, 2003, p.924). Evidence regarding the outcomes of flexible working identifies benefits including higher levels of satisfaction with work (Gregory and Connolly, 2008; Author A). The extant literature is indicative, though, of outcomes varying between workers in respect to gender, age and other demographics (Lewis, 2003, p.11), and benefits being limited by poor implementation driven by 'business need' (Author B). The specific outcomes associated with job share have been discussed extensively in the context of work in medicine (see for example van Someren, 1992; Branine, 1998, 2003; Whitelaw and Nash, 2001; Guigliemo, 2008). Much of this literature focuses on practical applications of job share among junior doctors and nursing staff. The evidence is indicative of a range of potential benefits but also a number of challenges specific to job sharing. The benefits identified in these studies include improved work-life balance from better time management, and increased opportunities for learning from one another (Branine, 2003; Guglielmo, 2008). However, concerns are also raised from the perspective of employers in regards to: the compatibility of job sharers;

continuity of work (with respect to care in the case of medicine), and; increased administration, training and other costs (Branine, 1998, p.66). Central to employees are concerns regarding: benefits associated with full-time employment being lost; conflicts between job sharers, and; lack of control over the nature and outcomes of work (Branine, 1998; 2003; 2004).

Research exploring other applications of job sharing has provided further evidence regarding the outcomes for job sharers and employers. Savage et al (2001), using an empirical survey of 200 senior managers in the UK, suggested that job sharing can result in productivity improvements, and improve resilience, leadership, and commitment. Moreover, job sharers are able to use best practice, engage in joint reflection on completed work, and learn from each others' strengths (Eick, 2001, p.902). Harris (1997) used a cost benefit analysis framework to consider the relative benefits of job share schemes in UK Universities. Findings identified potential to reduce stress, reduce unemployment in the economy, and to improve retention of valued employees, a finding consistent with other research (Lafferty et al, 2002). Tiney (2004), investigating evidence from the application of job share among senior managers in retail, reported that job share was successfully used by two mothers to assist management of work-life balance. However, difficulties were encountered regarding communication between the job sharers, which required full-time members of staff to act as a link (Tiney, 2004, p.431). Additionally, Freeman and Coll (2009) reported in their study of US education that job share can present further problems if one sharer is more competent than the other in the shared role. This emphasises the importance of compatibility between job sharers. If poorly implemented job share can, additionally, result in increased work intensity if sharers are each given the workload of a full-time employee (McDonald et al, 2009). Meanwhile, job share schemes can result, in some cases, in job sharers being given

lesser responsibility, and job share only being used where a ‘seamless’ handover of work is possible (McDonald et al, 2009, p.149).

Brocklebank and Whitehouse (2003, p.245), reporting on a job share of a managerial role, emphasise the need for some ‘overlap’ in the time job sharers are present in the workplace to facilitate effective communication and organization of the shared role. As Branine (2004, p.150) identified, “it is vital that the [job sharers] work well together”. Conflicts, a potentially important barrier to successful sharing, are often the product of personality clashes and differences in behaviours and attitudes (Branine, 2004, p.147; 1998). Job share can be considered an under-utilized form of flexible working, but one which is used in an increasing range of work environments and has the potential to provide significant benefits to certain workers. In particular, the evidence regarding learning, reflection, and knowledge sharing (Branine, 2004; Eick, 2001) gives cognizance to the concept of job share being used in mentoring schemes consistent with the discussion present in this paper. Expanding use of job share could provide a method of addressing current policy concerns surrounding youth unemployment and an ageing workforce.

Youth unemployment, aging working populations, and phased retirement

Youth unemployment refers to individuals aged 16 to 24 who during a specified reference period, report they are: (1) without work; (2) currently available for work, and; (3) have sought work in the last four weeks (ILO, 2012). Youth unemployment represents a significant economic cost, as it is a waste of the human capital stock, and results in excess consumption of social welfare (ILO, 2012). It represents a failed social investment, in education and training. Youth unemployment is, further, associated with a range of social problems (ILO, 2012). Unemployment during the earlier parts of an individuals working life can negatively

affect career mobility and potentially result in the development of an anti-work attitude (Levin, 1983; Bell and Blanchflower, 2009). Unemployment in the OECD is especially high among low or unskilled young individuals, and among minorities and immigrants. However, a number of those unemployed are higher education graduates (Bell and Blanchflower, 2009; ONS, 2012). The European Commission's *European Pact for Youth* highlights the growing importance of labour market opportunities for young people from a policy perspective as it is considered 'essential for ensuring a return to sustained and sustainable growth in Europe' (Commission of the European Communities, 2005).

Youth unemployment: drivers and solutions

Causes of youth unemployment include both demand and supply side factors. These include: the economic environment; a lack of job opportunities; the cost of hiring for employers, and; education including the school-to-work transition (Levin, 1983; Raffe, 1984). Research focusing on young NEET individuals in Scotland identified that external factors i.e. lack of availability or suitability of jobs or training/education courses, were perceived by young people as significant employment barriers as apposed to internal factors, including individuals having not decided what job/course to do, or feeling that they need additional qualifications (Furlong, 2006). For employers young workers represent a significant investment. Employers have to absorb the cost of training. Hiring experienced workers who have undertaken prior training is thus often more attractive as it reduces the costs and associated risk of employing new workers (Magnussen, 1979). Young people with limited or no work experience are vulnerable, especially during periods of recession. Employers will often rationalise training opportunities, and either suspend recruitment or choose to employ those who already have the necessary skills for the role (Raffe, 1984). Bell and Blanchflower (2009) suggest youth unemployment can impact individuals for up to two decades in respect

to employment, health, wages, and job satisfaction. In addition, youth unemployment is likely to have greater lasting effects than experiences of unemployment during other periods of life.

Demand-side measures of addressing youth unemployment focus on increasing the demand for labour (Magnussen, 1979). However, the current economic fragility of many post-industrial economies, especially in the EU, is resulting in the persistence within these economies of the problem of weak demand for labour. Mismatches between the perceptions of unemployed individuals with regard to available employment opportunities creates a further barrier to employment, especially in less skilled service work, which has not been adequately addressed by supply-side policies (Lindsay and McQuaid, 2004, p.302). Preventative intervention through education offers one possible supply-side solution to youth unemployment (Godfrey, 2003). Other potential solutions include: (1) wage and employment subsidies for the young; (2) incentives for hiring young workers in public sector organisations such as education and health, and; (3) lowering the minimum wage for the young (Bell and Blanchflower, 2009, p.22-23). Education options may seem inappropriate for the increasing numbers of unemployed higher education graduates. However, education options include the use of apprenticeship and more vocationally focused forms of training. Evidence has shown that educational systems which include vocational and apprenticeship elements offer beneficial outcomes as they create the fewest barriers between education and work (Breen, 2005). Further, Migliore (2009) has argued that the involvement of older workers in apprenticeship schemes could provide significant potential benefits. Workers engage in *intergenerational learning* as older workers share their knowledge and help to train their eventual replacements, while younger workers provide novel input. Intergenerational learning refers to the reciprocal process of learning which is obtained through inclusivity of different levels of skill, seniority, and age. It supports innovation within organizations by ‘facilitating

novel forms of knowledge combination for the realization of ideas; and by unlocking knowledge that may have become overlooked' (Tempest, 2003, p.183). Intergenerational learning of this nature could thus provide a 'win-win' outcome for young and older workers, and employers.

Ageing working populations and phased retirement

Retention of knowledge represents an increasing challenge as the baby boomer generation reaches retirement (DeLong, 2004; Levy, 2011). The permanent exit of this knowledge stock from the labour market poses a specific problem due to the numbers of workers retiring who have remained in the same organization, and even role in some cases, for extended parts of their career (Levy, 2011, p.583). Ensuring the knowledge held by these workers is transferred prior to retirement is therefore important to organizations and the broader human capital stock. International concerns in respect to the impact of an ageing population have resulted in the development of policies aimed at challenging social misconceptions of older workers, including diminishing productivity levels and commitment, in order to create favourable conditions for individuals to age successfully (Katz, 2002). Across the EU policymakers have promoted the concept of an 'active old age'. This focuses on older individuals remaining in paid or voluntary work, and has also raised debate regarding the validity of mandatory retirement ages (European Commission, 2003). There remain, however, certain barriers to the concept of an 'active old age'. Slow changing social attitudes, specifically occupational and gender norms, among some groups of workers result in some men e.g. male skilled manual workers, and many women, taking early retirement (Radl, 2012). Evidence using US data is, further, indicative of workers who are heavily reliant on some forms of firm-specific training undertaken early in their careers retiring earlier than those with transferrable skills (Montizaan et al, 2013). Work, though, represents a significant contributor to the wellbeing

of older individuals (Cameron and Waldegrave, 2009). An outcome of the changes to the state pension in the UK is that greater proportions of older workers will feel pressure to continue working during their 60s, and possibly beyond state pension age. Evidence suggests that drivers of delayed retirement include improving financial position, retaining enjoyment obtained by working, and to keep healthy and active (Humphrey et al, 2003). From business, policy, and employee perspectives, retention of older workers can therefore be considered desirable.

Phased (or gradual) retirement is a non-standard work arrangement in which an employee retains their current employment while reducing their work contribution, often gradually, in terms of both working hours and effort (Hutchens, 2010).[2] This often involves the use of flexible working arrangements including part-time and flexi-time. It has been suggested that non-standard work arrangements may not only provide a more satisfying path to full retirement (including retention of cognitive skills in old age), but also enables employers to preserve human capital and consequently enhance labour productivity (Hutchens, 2010, p.1010). Schemes have been implemented across Europe for a number of years with varying degrees of take-up and success, including in Denmark and Finland since 1987, France since 1988, Germany since 1992, Spain since the 1960s, and Sweden since 1976 (Belloni et al, 2006, p.12-14). Empirical evidence reported by Loretto and White (2006, p.323) identified that approximately a quarter of employers in Scotland offered phased or flexible retirement, while almost half offered older employees the opportunity to work part-time. Most employers, additionally, are willing to negotiate reductions in working hours with older employees on an informal or case-by-case basis (Hutchens, 2003). Evidence indicates, though, that use of phased (and partial) retirement is limited by incentives which do not successfully engage older workers in this route to retirement. Inclusion of the phased

retirement years in calculating pension or social security benefits acts as one significant barrier (Gustman and Steinmeier, 1984b). Those who do take partial retirement may, further, be unable to remain in their previous role, impacting income (Latulippe and Turner, 2000). Phased retirement is more common among white-collar occupations, with availability and take-up greatest among employees who require little supervision and put in significant work effort (Hutchens, 2010, p.1018; Radl, 2012, p.767). Evidence further suggests that the presence of flexible working arrangements increase opportunities for phased retirement (Hutchens and Grace-Martin, 2006), and produce positive outcomes for older workers (Loretto and White, 2006).

Retirement and unemployment policies in the UK

In the late 1970s the 'lump-of-labour' concept formed the foundation of employment policy in the UK (Laczko and Phillipson, 1991). This concept is predicated on the view that only a limited number of jobs are available and that the continued employment of one group of workers comes at the opportunity cost of the employment of other workers (Walker, 2007). Thus a reduction in the labour supply of older workers could help mitigate unemployment among the young. This concept was pushed to the policy forefront with the introduction of the *Job Release Scheme* (JRS), funded under the Job Release Act, in 1977. The JRS acted as an incentive for older workers to retire, and required employers to provide a job to an individual from the unemployment register as a replacement for the retiring older worker. Evidence reported by Banks et al (2010) suggests that the JRS reduced employment among the old, but had no positive effect on youth employment (nor was evidence found of crowding out from the labour market). In addition, it has been noted that participation in the JRS was low as the Job Release Allowance paid to retiring workers was offered at a flat rate. The majority of those who retired were thus low-paid semi-skilled and unskilled workers

(Laczko and Phillipson, 1991, p.50). The introduction of the *Youth Training Scheme* (YTS) in 1983, and the eventual phasing out of the JRS in 1988, represented a significant shift in policy makers' attitudes with regard to the 'lump-of-labour' concept.

Policy in the UK has since shifted focus to supply-side education and training measures. Following the election of the New Labour government in 1997 a raft of supply-side employment policies were introduced and extended, including the expansion of *Modern Apprenticeships* (introduced in 1995), *Investing in Young People* which was introduced in 1998 and later extended and renamed *ConneXions* in 1999, and *Sure Start* in 2000. The majority of labour market policy relating to older workers, though, remains focused on pension reform (O'Brien, 2010). However, public finance considerations have been argued as the primary motivation for these reforms, rather than (un)employment (Banks et al, 2010, p.321). Continued focus on fiscally driven pension policy reform has simply shifted some of the financial burden of retirement onto the individual, but does not address problems associated with labour demand and employment opportunities for older workers (O'Brien, 2010). The UK government has acknowledged the need to develop strategies to address an ageing population since 2005 with the launch of *Opportunity Age*. This policy strategy focused on increasing employment rates, flexibility, managing health conditions, and combining work with family (and other) commitments; promoting active ageing, and; provision of services which facilitate independence among older people (DWP, 2005). Meanwhile the recent *Age Positive*, enacted through legislation in April 2011, removed the default retirement age to promote continued employment (DWP, 2012).

Active labour market policies, for example the *Work Programme* introduced in 2011 to replace the *Future Jobs Fund*, have refocused employment policy away from the public

sector. The Work Programme focuses on the provision of funding for private and voluntary sectors to help the long-term unemployed back into work (Directgov, 2011). *Building Engagement, Building Futures*, introduced in late 2011, focuses on five priorities: (1) raising attainment in secondary education; (2) achieving full participation among 16-17 year olds by 2015; (3) encouraging and incentivising employers to offer apprenticeships and work experience; (4) ensuring that work pays and providing support through the *Work Programme*, and; (5) investment of £1bn in late 2011 through the *Youth Contract*, specifically focusing on reducing youth unemployment using employer subsidies (£2,275 per employee), work experience placements, and apprenticeships (DfE, 2012).

Apprenticeships, under the current UK scheme, are offered in a range of business sectors with duration of one to four years. They are designed by the *Sector Skills Councils*, with input from relevant industry representatives to develop course content. They are enforced using an *Apprenticeship Agreement*, legislated under s32 of the *Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009* (ASCLA). There are currently three levels of apprenticeship scheme: (1) intermediate; (2) advanced, and; (3) higher (see Apprenticeships.org.uk, 2012). They are offered predominantly by large firms, although some smaller firms are involved in the scheme. The National Minimum Wage for apprentices is £2.65 per hour, although some employers do offer higher pay. Employment is usually based around the apprentice working at least 30 hours per week i.e. full-time. Employers who take on a 16-18 year old apprentice only pay their salary. Central government fund training through the *National Apprenticeship Service*. The funding level is dependent on the nature of the apprenticeship and the age of the apprentice. The majority of the training takes place ‘on-the-job’, with additional training in local learning institutions. The scheme was boosted in 2012 through the allocation of government grants of £1,500 for 40,000 apprenticeship employers (with up to 1000

employees) when recruiting 16-24 year olds (Apprenticeships.org.uk, 2012). However, a serious limitation of the current construct of apprenticeships is that there is no certainty of employment upon completion of the apprenticeship. Contra the 'lump-of-labour' concept this article considers job share as a method of mitigating youth unemployment through apprenticeship *and* retaining older workers and their knowledge stock.

Discussion: towards a job share policy

Given the austere economic environment in many post-industrial economies, labour market policy must offer value-for-money not only to employees, but also to employers and government (through reductions in welfare payments for example). Most organisations are increasingly very lean as they attempt to drive down costs of production, including labour costs, as a means of economic survival. As an alternative supply-side policy, the job share policy would provide a platform for the empowerment of the young which values the experience of old workers, and creates capacity for lean organisations. Reforming current apprenticeship constructs, the JSP would provide young workers with appropriate on-the-job training and experience provided by a specific mentor. Mentoring, too, could offer substantial benefits for older workers (and employer relationships with them): increasing the visibility and value of their contribution to the organisation, while creating flexibility rather than necessitating retirement.

The job share policy would involve a contractual change for older workers upon reaching a specified age. It is posited that older workers could, from a pre-determined point in their labour contract, begin job sharing their role with a young worker. In many areas of employment this may be when the older worker reaches the age of 60, but this may differ dependent on the specific nature of industries and firms. An outline of the content of a

proposed job share policy is summarized in Table 1. Job sharing would go much further than simply the younger worker 'shadowing' the older worker, although in the first few months of employment some level of shadowing or 'overlap' may be required in certain roles (Brocklebank and Whitehouse, 2003).[3] Advertising roles, and subsequent screening, would ensure this use of job share would not be subject to delays or difficulties in finding a suitable job share 'partner' in the same manner as some standard job share policies. Some complexity would arise, however, in respect to matching older and young workers in order to facilitate a positive outcome as a result of variations in the valuation of knowledge and communication problems between generations (Branine, 2004; DeLong, 2004).

TABLE 1 HERE

Sharing a role would enable the older worker to mentor the young worker, facilitating intergenerational learning (Migliore, 2009), knowledge sharing, and knowledge generation as the young worker brings their novel input into the organization (Branine, 2004; Eick, 2001; Tempest, 2003). From the employers perspective this would act as a method of knowledge retention, and would offer a lean policy alternative to current apprenticeships as neither employee would work full-time equivalent hours for the duration of the job share. It should be noted, though, that offering shorter working hours may necessitate higher wages than those currently offered to apprentices to effectively incentivise the scheme. It is also likely that young workers would require some level of training in educational institutions, in addition to that undertaken on-the-job, to ensure they don't suffer from a lack of transferable skills later in their careers (see Montizaan et al, 2013). Funding for this training could, though, result in some continued costs to the public sector. The period of job share would likely have to be determined at the industry or in some cases firm level, as it would be

heavily dependent on the nature of the role. In addition, the division of labour present within the job share may create some complexity in the implementation of this policy. It would be logical for the older worker to 'sign off' and quality control work completed by the younger worker in order to ensure standards are maintained during the earlier stages of the job share. However, in the short term, this could leave the older worker with incommensurately high workloads. This may require some 'overlap' or an uneven division in the role, at least in the earlier share period, for example an older worker on a 0.6 contract and a younger worker on a 0.4 contract. An iterative development process for the JSP may be required in this respect.

Barriers, challenges and other considerations

Implementation associated with a JSP does present a number of specific challenges. Persuading employers to embrace such schemes may represent an initial challenge as this could be seen as leaving employers with a number of additional liabilities and costs. Some employers, especially in the private sector, have not embraced the use of flexible working arrangements, although many do offer a range of schemes. Evidence has suggested that this is partly due to a lack of formalisation in many organizations (Author B). Even when available use of flexible working arrangements in the private sector is often informal and *ad hoc* and can lead to the marginalization of those working flexibly (Hoque and Kirkpatrick, 2003; Author B). Convincing employers that a job share policy would benefit their organization may therefore present a particular challenge. It should also be acknowledged that application of job sharing may be unsuitable in certain occupations/industries, for example due to specific skill/knowledge requirements.

Persuading older workers that job sharing could offer a positive outcome may also present a significant challenge. Older workers would, as a result of the JSP, be expected to reduce their

hours of work and incur the associated reduction in earnings. However, this may not align with the preferences of some older workers who may prefer to negotiate any hours and subsequent pay reductions on a case-by-case basis with their employer or, in some cases, retire earlier. Older workers may be particularly concerned about potential consequences vis-à-vis reductions in pension/social security contributions in the last years of their working lives if adopting phased retirement, as identified by Gustman and Steinmeier (1984b). A potential solution could be for government to part-pay pensions to older workers engaged in job share to off-set the loss of contributions or to subsidise continued contributions, albeit both of these options would carry considerable financial cost. Social norms may also prove a considerable barrier to take-up among some groups as it has been shown that lower skilled workers and women often retire earlier, driven by occupational and gender norms respectively (Radl, 2012, p.766-7). This raises questions over the structure of the proposed job share policy. If the policy were implemented on a voluntary basis this could result in low up-take, as with the JRS, rendering the policy ineffective. It may also impact the attractiveness of employers adopting the policy from a recruitment and retention perspective. However, implementation of a mandatory policy could result in discontent among some employers and workers. If successfully implemented the JSP could offer older workers an added incentive to remain in paid work, albeit on a reduced hours job share contract. A further barrier exists in addressing intergenerational differences in young and older workers valuation of knowledge, which could result in potential communication problems (DeLong, 2004), and conflict between job sharers (Branine, 2004). Any industry/sector specific tailoring of the policy would also present a particular challenge, not least in relation to the administrative and HR burden this could create in the short term which may require financial incentives/subsidies to be offered to firms during initial implementation. However, a one-size-fits-all approach may be ineffective in respect to retirement (see Flynn, 2010) and youth

unemployment policies (ILO, 2012). In order to avoid ineffective implementation, and develop a suitable policy framework, research is required.

Conclusion

This article considers job share as a labour market solution to the policy challenges presented by both youth unemployment and ageing working populations in post-industrial economies. It is posited in this article that job share, a flexible working arrangement, could be used as a 'slow exit' from the labour market for older workers, and as a form of apprenticeship for young workers. Specifically, this article has sought to: (1) consider concerns facing many post-industrial economies surrounding youth unemployment and ageing working populations (in respect to phased retirement), using the case of the UK, and; (2) develop, with reference to the extant literature on job share, an outline for a job share policy.

Over 20% of 16-24 year olds in the UK currently report unemployment. Similar problems of youth unemployment are present in many post-industrial economies, some of which report unemployment rates over 50%. Youth unemployment is an increasing policy concern and represents a failure of the social investment in education and training. Concurrently, ageing populations are increasing pressure on state pension schemes resulting in restructuring, and increases in state pension age. This is likely to increase pressure on older individuals to remain in paid work. However, contra the 'lump-of-labour' concept, this article considers a method of retaining older workers (and the human capital stock) *and* mitigating youth unemployment in post-industrial economies. This article proposes that job share may offer the solution. The job share policy outlined in this article could be developed as a modification or alternative to the current apprenticeship scheme in the UK. It would involve a contractual change for older workers upon reaching a specified age (e.g. 60). Older and young workers

would then begin sharing their role for a specified period, which may include an initial period of job shadowing or ‘overlap’ (dependent on the role). After completion of this period it is proposed that the older worker would retire and the young worker take on the full-time role, thus providing a more secure route to permanent employment for young people than current apprenticeship constructs. This policy would have the potential to ensure retention of the working contribution of older workers (and create added visibility of their contribution to their employer) *and* reduce levels of youth unemployment. It would also provide significant employer benefits as it would provide a lean method of ensuring maintenance of the human capital stock through intergenerational learning and knowledge exchange. Finally, the JSP would potentially offer government a more value-for-money policy requiring lesser public sector funding than current policy.

A range of barriers exist in successfully designing and implementing a job share policy, though, in a way which is attractive to young and older workers, as well as employers. Any job share policy would require some level of industry/sector specific tailoring, as a ‘one-size-fits-all’ policy would be unlikely to be effective. However, this generates costs associated with design and implementation, including administrative and HR costs. There would also be concerns regarding the willingness of older workers to engage in job share as this would result in hours and pay reductions in the last years of their working life. Important questions also remain in respect to implementation vis-à-vis a voluntary or mandatory policy framework. Finally, it must be acknowledged that job sharing may be inappropriate in certain occupations/industries, due to skill/knowledge requirements or the nature of the role. The evidence base on job share is indicative of the potential for ‘win-win’ for employees, employers, and wider society, but also highlights potential problems especially if policies are poorly implemented. Additional research is therefore required relating to good and bad

practice in respect to policy design and content, which would be central if the job share policy suggested in this article were to be implemented. This article, therefore, calls for research into this proposed use of job share. In particular, research could be used to further develop a framework for the job share policy. Research could capture employer and employee attitudes on the use of job share, and even develop pilot schemes. Pilot schemes would allow for in-depth assessment at the firm level including employee satisfaction surveys for older and young workers involved in job sharing, and employer surveys assessing the policy in respect to impacts on productivity levels, costs, and other aspects of their business. Further research would thus provide much needed insight into potential implementation of a job share policy. What is presently clear is that finding a solution to youth unemployment *and* ageing working populations is essential. The question which remains is whether a job share policy could offer an effective solution.

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[1] Unemployment rates among those who graduated 2-4 years previously were reported at 6.7%, and among those who graduated 4-6 years previously were 4.4% (ONS, 2012).

[2] Phased retirement refers to the reduction in work effort within a career job, while partial retirement is often used to refer to reducing work effort outside of the career job (Gustman and Steinmeier, 1984a). Gradual retirement is a more general term used in reference to reduced work effort.

[3] Job shadowing refers to pairing workers together as part of training. One worker observes the other, asks questions, and possibly engages in some elements of the role.

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