

# Empowering active ageing into labor market: a new alternative human resource for employment in Taiwan

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**ABSTRACT:** Ageing becomes general phenomenon in the world that shapes population structure and economic development, especially great impacts on dependency ratio and labor market. Taiwan is one of the serious ageing societies in the world and that, consequently, has heavily hit Taiwan's economy and labor force market. A quarter century of life span for the ageing to stay in Taiwan, it will be very important to learn and plan a better life to live with. We may call it as an alternative and creative career reconstruction, combining contributive work, volunteering assistance, and joyful learning. The logic of empowering active ageing into labor market must be: live longer, be healthy longer, work longer, and then remain independent.

*Keywords:* contributive work, volunteering assistance, joyful learning, life longer, work longer

## 1 INTRODUCTION

“Ageing” becomes general phenomenon in the world that shapes population structure and economic development, especially great impacts on dependency ratio and labor market. Taiwan is one of the serious ageing societies in the world and that, consequently, has heavily hit Taiwan's economy and labor force market.

Basically, active ageing policy framework is normally realized and accepted to develop ageing-friendly society and let ageing people to live harmoniously and independently. Its policy framework comprises three indispensable dimensions, such as security of living, health maintaining, and social participation. Three components must take place concurrently for the elderly to engage with building an ageing-friendly neighborhood and work.

According to official statistics, Taiwan's population is about 23,571,227 in 2017. The peak of Taiwan's population will be around 23.7~23.8 million and during 2022~2024. Taiwan will emerge negative population growth. Assumed, Taiwan's population will reduce into 17.1~19.5 millions in 2061, about 72.5%~82.8% of 2016 Taiwan's population. This means 5.17 million of population will be lessened.

In fact, Taiwan's population moves from ‘aging’ to ‘aged’ as statistics showed. That is, an increase in Taiwan's 65-and-over population has indicated that the nation is from being an “ageing society” to an

“aged society.” Ageing citizens accounted for 13.86% of Taiwan's population in 2017, up from 9.95% in 2006 and 10.9% of 2011(Ferry, 2017). In 2018, this percentage will be possible up to 14%, compared to 5.6% in 1956. Certainly, Taiwan may easily reach a so-called “hyper-aged” society that accounts for 20% of the population 65 or over by 2025, 23.85% in 2030, and 36.72% in 2050.

## 2 RESEARCH METHODS

Three research methods will be adopted, such as historical-structural analysis, documentary analysis, and policy analysis in order to deal with population change and influence.

Besides, two viewpoint approaches are highly considered, one is based on political-economic interaction and the other is from constructivist thinking.

## 3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Interestingly, in 2017, the population over 65 years (about 13.86%) is ever exceeding the population under 15 years (about 13.12%), in sharply contrast to 9.95% of over 65 years versus 18.17% of under 15 years in 2006. The gap will continue to grow. In 2050, estimated there is about 36.72% of population over 65 years, compared to 7.85% of population under 15 years (see Table 1).

### 3.1 Current Conditions of Taiwan's Active Ageing on Labor Force: Live Longer and Work Longer

Traditionally defined, ageing is equal to growing old over 65 years. This definition is heavily based on physical aspect and elderly socialization. In 2002, World Health Organization (WHO, 2002) has also raised the concept of "active ageing," it denotes the most adequate learning policy is to pursue ageing's health, social participation and security during individual ageing process.

ageing population are basically active and productive who can be reused for labor force and volunteer work in community. In this way, it can reduce the number of relied ageing population at least, but not counting for all the so-called ageing population.

Government agencies must have performance measurement indicators, because when measuring activities must compare between plans and realization in program / activity management and consider other planning documents, namely strategic

Table 1. Distribution of Taiwan's Population by Age and Dependency Ratio (%).

Year	Total population (million)	Age Structure (%)			%	Dependency Ratio	
		0-14 years	15-64 years	65 years and over		Young Age (0-14) Population Ratio (%)	Old Age (65+) Population Ratio (%)
2006	22.9	18.17	71.88	9.95	39.13	25.28	13.85
2017	<b>23.6</b>	<b>13.12</b>	<b>73.02</b>	<b>13.86</b>	<b>36.96</b>	<b>17.97</b>	<b>18.99</b>
2030	<b>22.8</b>	<b>10.59</b>	<b>65.56</b>	<b>23.85</b>	<b>52.54</b>	16.16	36.38
2050	18.9	7.85	55.43	36.72	80.42	14.17	66.25

Source: Dept. of Household Registration Affairs, MOI, 2018. 2. Council for Economic Planning and Development, "2006-2051 Population Projection in Taiwan ROC," June 2006.

Yet, it is not really acceptable up-to-date to treat the elderly as inferior group any more. Two negative reasons of sociological suggestions keep the elderly people recognized worse and worse, not as supposed to be better as they should be.

One is on psychological influence. The ageing people are inclined to receive and accept the elderly message and recognition from society, i.e., ageing norm or old-stereotyped characteristics, which is likely to accelerate the speed for ageing.

The other is on social influence. The concept of the ageing is highly implanted by social role from learning. The elderly people have leaned and socialized the old-role expectation that will easily cause them being weak, helpless, dependent, and sickly. This tendency is not necessarily leading to the inevitable physical process. If the mind and body are not on separate tracks, the mindfulness becomes important for the elderly to learn something new that is conducive to their physical health. After all, there are 90% of mind activity and 10% of sport for individual's life.

Among the ageing population in Taiwan, two important features can be observed, one is female ageing population is much larger than male ageing one. Two is the younger ageing population from 65~79 years (accounting for **1.91 million**) is much larger than that from 80~above (for **763,663**) that is almost **2.5** times. This means almost 1.9 million

plan documents, annual performance plan documents, government work plan documents, term development plan documents medium, document work plans and budgets, performance contracts. A performance contract which in Presidential Instruction No. 5 of 2004 is called a performance determination document is a planning document that is used as the basis for describing performance accountability to higher-level employers or institutions. The performance document contains

### 3.2 Taiwan's Elderly Education in Connection to Labor Force Training: Ageing Employment First Priority Strategy

Looking at table 2 about the labor engagement at different age range, it shows 62.82% of the population at the age between 45 and 64 years in 2017. The ratio at different age ranges on 55-59, 60-64, over 65 years is 55.66%, 36.65%, and 8.58%, respectively. Quite clearly, the active elderly people can be released from the senior age range on 55-59 and 60-64. At least, 20% of labor force at the age of 55~59 years (1.8 million) can be released to the labor market and 20% of the labor force at the age of 60-64 years (1.58 million) can be released too. Combined these two age range population, Almost about **676,000** (360,000 and 316,000 persons) can be re-engaged into labor market. This is a big number that can be offset the gap on the labor market

shortage. Only 8.58% of over 65 years population still work, about 185,600. If accounting for 84% of over 65-year population (about 3.2 million) being active and healthy, then 200,000 productive ageing can be released to labor market. These numbers of work force are very significant.

Doing in this way, it can solve the urgent problem of labor shortage in Taiwan. Besides, it can be founded that most of ageing people still expect to have works in order to support family expenditure, almost 66.5% for 55-64 years and 51.0% for over 65 years. Only 29.1% of 55-64 years and 27.4% of over 65 years of ageing people have enjoyed their financial independence and **70.9% and 72.6%** of

Table 2. Different Age Level Labor Engagement in Taiwan (%).

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
45~64	60.31	60.36	60.48	60.73	61.65	61.89	62.42	<b>62.82</b>
45-49	77.20	77.84	78.70	79.56	80.21	80.92	81.68	<b>82.66</b>
50-54	65.93	67.14	67.73	68.27	69.63	70.34	71.44	<b>72.47</b>
55-59	50.67	51.66	52.52	53.21	54.41	55.08	55.67	<b>55.66</b>
60-64	32.20	32.01	32.56	33.42	35.61	35.77	36.35	<b>36.65</b>
65+	8.09	7.93	8.10	8.34	8.68	8.78	8.61	<b>8.58</b>

Source: National Statistics Republic of China (Taiwan), 2018.

The characteristics of ageing population will tell the general need and demand of the ageing, especially for employment. As Table 3 shown, over 65-year population, there is about **89.7%** without job and **10.3%** still on paid job, in relative to **56.8%** no job and **43.2%** on job with the age of 55-64 years. This means government should promote and improve labor employment for the elderly that must aim at the group of 55-64 years first as well as group of over 65 years. Regarding to “no job” situation of the group of 55-64 years and over 65 years, it might possibly increase 25% (from 56.8% down to 31.8%) and 25% (from 89.7% down to 59.7%) of each portion for re-engaging labor market. In Taiwan, only 10.3% of ageing population over 65 years still work, contrast to 17.7% in USA and 20.1% in Japan in 2013.

them still in financial insecurity that is called “ageing poverty.” Female ageing is a little bit worse than male ageing on financial independence. As result, active ageing employment is very concerned, not just for labor shortage for productivity but also for Elderly economic support (Chou, 2011).

In order to turn over the cognitive image and bias of “ageing as old-sick-weak-poor-disable negativity” from the society, the ageing re-education becomes crucial thru learning activity to improve ageing mentality and societal recognition. In Taiwan, more than 80% of the ageing people are healthy and sub-healthy. How to provide helpful educational activity to prevent physical, psychological, and mental degradation for the ageing is considered as important educational policy (Lin and Huang, 2016).

Table 3. Reasons and Percentage of Working for the Elderly in Taiwan in 2013.

Age Group	Total (%)	No Job (%)	Paid Job (%)	Reasons for working (%)				
				Burdening Family Budget	Financial Independence	Remaining Social Participation	Killing Time	Others
<b>55-64 years</b>	100.0	<b>56.8</b>	<b>43.2</b>	<b>66.5</b>	<b>29.1</b>	12.0	14.0	1.2
<b>Male</b>	100.0	42.8	57.2	72.1	24.2	11.7	12.3	0.8
<b>Female</b>	100.0	70.2	29.8	56.4	38.2	12.7	17.2	2.1
<b>Over 65 Year</b>	100.0	<b>89.7</b>	<b>10.3</b>	<b>51.0</b>	<b>27.4</b>	12.0	<b>33.1</b>	1.2
<b>Male</b>	100.0	84.6	15.4	49.1	28.0	15.0	<b>30.9</b>	1.7
<b>Female</b>	100.0	94.2	5.8	55.5	26.0	4.9	<b>38.2</b>	-

Note: No Job includes No-paid workers.

Source: Ministry of Health and Welfare (MHW), Report of the Senior Citizen Condition Survey 2013, Oct. 2014, Taipei, p.25.

In order to assist elderly re-employment, since 2015, Taiwan’s government lifts up an Elderly Re-employment Planning to expel the work barriers for the elderly people. Keeping each senior or elderly labor in labor market for continuous productivity may receive NT\$ 100,000 allowance from the government. This planning elaborates a concept of “job re-design,” (職務再設計) or “job accommodation” so that it can let senior works still continuously work in the familiar environment and also delay withdrawing from their works. To live longer is to work longer with a friendly environment for the ageing in the workplace and society.

#### 4 CONCLUSION

Taiwan’s government and society will continually promote on healthy, active, and productive ageing policy for two aims: one is to lift up the quality life of the ageing in order to renew social settlement. The other is to rebalance labor market for keeping with workable ageing labor force in.

Four major measurements in Taiwan have been operated to deal with active ageing policy. Firstly, it is to improve and promote lifelong education and training for ageing. Secondly, it is to improve the labor market structure and employment opportunity for Ageing. Thirdly, it is to improve social supporting policies for building an ageing friendly society. Fourthly, it is to encourage the active ageing on engaging community volunteering work and service (as figure 1 shown).

Two decades ago in Taiwan, the ageing will live for about 10 years after retirement at the age of 65 years. Yet nowadays the aged will survive about 20~25 years after retirement. A quarter century of life span for the ageing to stay, it will be very important to learn and plan a better life to live with.

We may call it as an alternative and creative career reconstruction, combining contributive work, volunteering assistance, and joyful learning. The logic must be: live longer, be healthy longer, work longer, and then remain independent.

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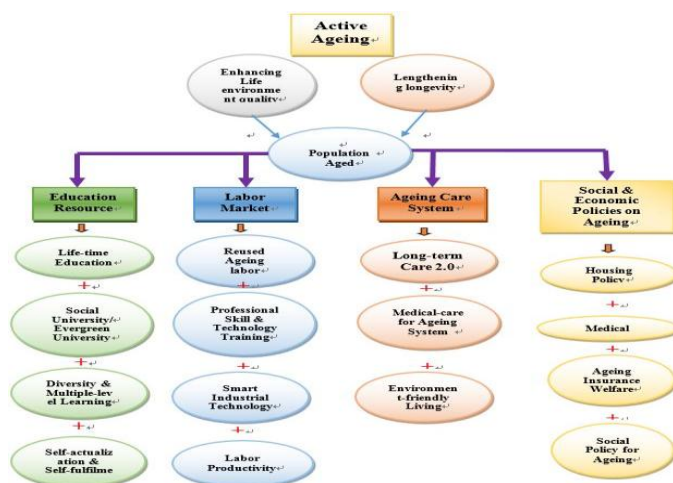


Figure 1. Policy Framework of Empowering Active Ageing in Taiwan for Work and Participation Source: summarized and drawn by author