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Project Title: Age Diversity: Applying the Capabilities Approach to Career Development across the Life Course

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In response to ageing populations, governments and employers around the world are looking for ways to encourage workers to delay retirement. Extended work longevity not only relieves some pressure on state and occupational pension systems, it also proves the employers are recognising the value of retaining older workers who have a wealth of experience. At the same time, workers would be amenable to delaying retirement if the work in which they are engaged in later life is fulfilling and can be balanced with non-work activities. Quality work is therefore essential to extended working life. It is part of the United Nations' (UN) Active Ageing agenda as a means to both financial security and social inclusion.

How then do employers construct jobs which simultaneously provide quality work to the individual and add value to the organisation? In this research, we will be investigating how Nussbaum and Sen's Capabilities Approach (CA) can be used by employers, employees and unions to develop quality work which can enable older workers to delay retirement. CA has been used as the framework for the UN Human Development Index in assessing the extent to which national social, economic and political context facilitates and or constrains individuals in achieving the "good life". The research is based on not just age, but also on work and life experiences across the life course which lead people to certain retirement paths. Within four case study organisations, the research team will conduct interviews with managers; survey employees; and facilitate "innovation groups" of managers and employees to discuss ways in which to facilitate extended working life.

The research will be conducted in the UK and Hong Kong. In addition to assessing the applicability of CA to managing work and retirement, the research will also compare older workers' work orientation and employers' age management practices within these two contrasting institutional and cultural contexts. The research is conducted in collaboration with the UK Employers' Forum on Age and Hong Kong Community Business which will assist in the development and dissemination of the research.