

Enabling retired trainers' participation in circular economy workforce in Kenya: Policy frameworks and recommendations for enhanced engagement

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Cite this article in APA

Komen, P. K., & Ongínjo, J. A. (2024). Enabling retired trainers' participation in circular economy workforce in Kenya: Policy frameworks and recommendations for enhanced engagement. *Journal of policy and development studies*, 3(1), 43-53 <https://doi.org/10.51317/jpds.v3i1.543>



A publication of Editon Consortium Publishing (online)

Article history

Received: 07.05.2024

Accepted: 05.06.2024

Published: 10.07.2024

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Abstract

This study aimed to examine the participation of retired trainers in Kenya's circular economy workforce, evaluating existing policy frameworks and identifying the barriers and enablers influencing their engagement. Despite the global importance of circular economy principles, retired trainers in Kenya face challenges hindering their involvement in the circular economy workforce. The study applied a descriptive survey design; data was gathered from a target population of seventy-five retired trainers, with sixty-three responding. Descriptive statistics were used to analyse the data, presented in tables and percentages while preserving anonymity. The findings recognize retired trainers' potential contributions to Kenya's circular economy. However, existing policies often need to address their specific needs and challenges, such as limited access to training, financial constraints, and age-related discrimination. By addressing the policy implications of retired trainers' engagement in circular economies, this research contributes to the broader discourse on sustainable development and inclusive growth, offering actionable insights and recommendations for policymakers, practitioners, and stakeholders. These recommendations empower them to foster a more inclusive and resilient circular economy workforce in Kenya.

Key terms: Circular economy, enhanced engagement, policy frameworks, retired trainers, workforce.

INTRODUCTION

The government, lawmakers, and professionals in many sectors might use the knowledge gathered from this study to help them develop policies and initiatives that effectively utilize retirees. Our goal in this project is to investigate how to enable retired trainers to work in Kenya's CE. According to Luke (2021), policymakers need to consider the changing dynamics of retirement and develop frameworks that facilitate the re-engagement of retired trainers.

Kenya's circular economy (CE) workforce faces a significant challenge: underutilizing retired trainers' extensive knowledge and experience. The CE aims to eliminate waste and resource use by creating closed-loop systems that continuously reuse and recycle resources (Patwa et al., 2022). Retirement, transitioning from an active professional lifestyle to relying on pensions, represents a significant shift (Ugwu et al., 2024). According to the Public Service Commission of Kenya, the retirement age is 60 for most individuals and 65 for those with disabilities (Mboga, 2014). Enhanced Engagement Policy Frameworks involve strategies and guidelines designed to improve the involvement of specific groups, such as retired professionals, in various sectors, ensuring their skills and knowledge are effectively utilized (Vasconcelos, 2018).

Retired Trainers have concluded their formal teaching or training careers but possess valuable expertise that can be leveraged in new contexts. This study underscores the importance of using this expertise wisely and the potential it holds for Kenya's circular economy. (Savishinsky, 2018). The Workforce encompasses all individuals engaged in employment or economic activities, including active and retired individuals who can contribute to various sectors. (Zacher et al., 2018). (Zacher et al., 2018). Understanding how to incorporate the experience and knowledge of retired trainers into Kenya's CE is critical to fostering a sustainable and efficient economy.

Retired trainers possess invaluable reuse, repair, and recycling skills, which are crucial for the CE. However, obstacles such as lack of awareness of mutual benefits, restrictive regulations, and the need for knowledge refreshment hinder their engagement. Current rules or laws may inadvertently restrict retired

trainers' ability to re-enter the Workforce. In some CE sectors, retired trainers may need to refresh their knowledge. Misconceptions about older workers and age discrimination further complicate this issue (Sadati et al., 2024). Age-based programs identify the optimum retirement age and demonstrate why working beyond a particular age is undesirable.

Given the recent advances in demographics, it would seem that individuals, organizations, and policymakers ought to begin considering retirement more carefully. Research suggests that working after retirement can favour life satisfaction, especially for people with lower pension incomes (Markowski et al., 2020). This demonstrates the possible advantages of continuing work-related activities even after retirement. In contrast to lawyers and engineers who continue to work after retirement, most trainers take time off after retirement to recover and pursue other interests.

The Life Cycle Perspective Theory by Elder Jr. (1998) and the Social Cognitive Theory provide the framework for this study. According to Elder Jr.'s Life Cycle Perspective Theory, people continue to engage in their lifetime pursuits well into old age. Choices have favourable and unfavourable repercussions, influencing how well a retiree settles into retirement (Hansson, 2019). Addressing these components of social cognitive theory should help stakeholders create a supportive environment that inspires retired trainers to contribute their skills and knowledge to the CE workforce.

Kenya's CE struggles to expand and develop because retired trainers are underutilized, resulting in a skills deficit (Kim et al., 2021). This impedes Kenya's development towards a more sustainable future and limits the sector's capacity to provide employment and economic benefits. The recent rise of the engagement economy introduces several elements to HCM that call for future planning to keep up with this evolution, including occupational health and employee exploitation.

The current paper explores policy frameworks and recommendations to enhance the engagement of retired trainers in Kenya's CE, promoting sustainable practices, job creation, and social well-being. To achieve this, there is a need for a collaborative

campaign to highlight the advantages of re-engaging retired trainers and to update existing regulations to support this Workforce's participation in the CE (Carolan, 2019).

Retired trainers have the potential to share a multitude of knowledge and experience in the field of CE, including reuse, repair, recycling, waste disposal, and production. Their knowledge can be crucial in training the new wave of ecologists for the CE and businesses that want to make a circular transition. Therefore, addressing the obstacles and creating a conducive environment for their re-engagement is essential for the growth and sustainability of Kenya's CE.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Enabling retired trainers' participation in the circular economy workforce in Kenya requires a comprehensive policy framework that addresses multiple facets of their engagement. The circular economy (CE) focuses on maximizing resource efficiency, minimizing waste, and creating sustainable economic opportunities, making it an ideal avenue for leveraging the experience and skills of retired trainers (Luke, 2021). Policies should emphasize lifelong learning and continuous professional development to ensure retirees remain updated with the latest CE practices and technologies (Sulopuisto, 2020). Additionally, establishing mentorship programs where retired trainers can impart knowledge to younger workers can create a robust intergenerational workforce (Browne, 2021).

Financial incentives, such as tax benefits or stipends, can encourage retired professionals to re-enter the Workforce (Lorenz & Zwick, 2021). Moreover, creating flexible work arrangements and part-time opportunities can cater to older workers' preferences and physical capabilities (Zacher et al., 2018). Policies should also support the development of community-based initiatives that utilize the expertise of retired trainers in local CE projects, fostering grassroots innovation and sustainable practices (Hossain, 2018). Collaboration with industry stakeholders, educational institutions, and non-governmental organizations can facilitate the integration of retired trainers into the CE workforce (Muzambi, 2019). Finally, raising awareness about the value of their contributions and combating

age-related stereotypes can ensure a more inclusive and dynamic workforce, driving Kenya's transition to a circular economy (Sinclair et al., 2024).

Human capital, involving managing and improving employees' skills and experience, is essential for organizational productivity. Employees who labour for companies to boost output and productivity are called human capital (Mies & Gold, 2021). This group of assets is commonly referred to as human capital management (HCM), and it entails employing, educating, managing, and keeping employees. In the business world, organizations must constantly adapt; therefore, they must choose whether it makes sense to retain senior employees (Klein et al., 2020). Businesses should ideally be profitable, growth-oriented, and competitive. Managers provide the proper personnel, including seasoned senior employees. Employees' decisions to stay or quit may depend on how their bosses perceive them.

Sullivan and Al Ariss (2019) posit that retirement, once seen as a permanent transition to full-time leisure, is increasingly becoming a phase where many retirees reenter the labour force. With a significant rise in the number of studies on postretirement employment, there is a need to consolidate this knowledge. Using employability as an organizing framework, this review examined postretirement work through the dimensions of human capital, identity, career motivation, social capital, and personality.

The global ageing population, particularly those over 60, is proliferating, with projections indicating a substantial increase in their proportion by 2050. As many retirees return to paid work, it becomes vital for organizations to understand this trend for effective strategic HR planning, especially amid potential labour shortages in skilled professions. Countries like Australia, Finland, and the UK are already encouraging the employment of retirees to mitigate these shortages. However, much of the research on postretirement employment needs a cohesive theoretical framework. This study sought to fill that gap by organising findings through the lens of employability, identifying gaps, trends and suggesting directions for future study to understand better and support postretirement employment.

Abolishment of the default retirement age in the United Kingdom (UK) following the Age Discrimination Act (2006) has led to more academics choosing to remain in their posts. The trend of remaining in the post presents both challenges and opportunities in the academic labour market. On the positive side, older academics contribute their expertise and experience, continue to pay taxes, and maintain their health, potentially reducing social health and welfare costs. However, this also raises concerns about the impact on employment and promotion prospects for younger academics in a job market that may be shrinking (George & Maguire, 2021).

Older academic international business travellers (AIBTs) continue to work in a different capacity after retiring or reducing their responsibilities, driven by a strong identification with their occupation. These individuals often find greater job satisfaction in their new roles and are willing to keep working if opportunities are available and their health permits. Universities have the potential to benefit from the vast experience and expertise of these older academics by utilizing their skills in various capacities (Hutchings et al., 2022).

Age discrimination is one of the most common practices in the European labour market, according to (Williams & Kayaoglu, 2023). Out of all the potential character traits a candidate could possess, the European public believes that being "old"—55 or older—puts them at a considerable disadvantage. Studies have indicated that the opinions of senior employees influence employers' actions regarding human resources (Henkens et al., 2018). For instance, age discrimination may arise from the notion that a person's effectiveness at a job decreases with age.

Population and Workforce ageing are significant global phenomena, posing challenges and opportunities across countries worldwide. As societies age, the composition of the Workforce becomes more diverse in terms of age, impacting economic productivity and social policies. Developed nations and emerging economies must navigate issues related to sustaining their Workforce amidst demographic shifts (Agarwal et al., 2022). Considering the socio-cultural contexts and broader societal implications, this necessitates a great understanding of ageing and

retirement dynamics beyond Western-centric frameworks. The lifespan developmental perspective provides a valuable lens to explore these issues, emphasizing individual development within specific historical and cultural contexts. By examining global trends in workforce ageing, including demographics, health, mobility, and institutional responses, a comprehensive understanding of the complexities can be attained, informing policies and practices to support ageing populations globally (Rudolph et al., 2018).

Kuitto and Helmdag (2021) state that a rapidly evolving organization is always considered when deciding whether to keep top workers on staff. We also observe that teachers/trainers only work if they start a private school. The CE allows retired trainers to share their knowledge in a structured and impactful manner. Retired trainers and companies operating in the CE may need to be made aware of the complementary benefits each might provide.

The study conducted on retired teachers in Makueni County, Kenya, illuminates the multifaceted challenges retirees face as they navigate post-employment. Financially, retirees often struggle due to inadequate savings and delayed pension processing. This financial strain not only affects their standard of living but also impacts their access to healthcare and ability to meet daily expenses, contributing to feelings of loneliness and reduced self-esteem. Health challenges such as poor eyesight, back pains, and hypertension further exacerbate their quality of life. Socially, the transition from a structured work environment to retirement can lead to isolation and a loss of purpose, significantly when retirees' social support networks diminish. These findings underscore the need for policy interventions aimed at improving retirees' financial preparedness, enhancing healthcare accessibility, and fostering social support systems to alleviate the challenges identified and promote a more fulfilling retirement experience (Musila et al., 2019).

METHODOLOGY

According to Huntington-Klein (2021), researchers use a research design as a roadmap to address specific research problems. This study used a descriptive survey design to gather data. The design was suitable for this study because it found out what was

happening and reported it without trying to influence the respondent's thoughts or feelings (Asenahabi, 2019). The Data for this research were gathered by distributing questionnaires to a pre-selected sample of participants. The researcher collected data using an online Google form and recorded it in an Excel sheet for analysis. Seventy-five retired trainers were the target population, as determined by Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) table. Sixty-three retired trainers

responded. Descriptive statistics was used to analyze the data, as shown in the tables and percentages. To preserve anonymity, names were left off the surveys. The goal of the research, participant privacy and anonymity, any dangers, and data processing were all explained to the participants. It was acceptable for participants to withdraw from the activity at any time.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: Retired Trainers' Responses to Existing Policy Frameworks Governing Retired Trainers' Participation in CE Activities

Statement	Agree (%)	Strongly Agree (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly Disagree (%)
1. Current policies support my involvement in CE activities	22	31	36	11
2. The government provides support for retired trainers like me	16	2	38	44
3. Policy frameworks are inclusive of retired trainers in CE	13	4	53	29
4. CE practices are well-promoted in Kenya	13	4	53	29

The survey results reveal significant challenges within the current policy frameworks affecting retired trainers' involvement in Circular Economy (CE) activities. Notably, only (22%) of respondents agree that current policies support their participation in CE, and an additional (31%) strongly agree. In contrast, (36%) disagree, indicating that a substantial portion of retired trainers feels unsupported by existing policies. This disparity suggests that while some retired trainers perceive the policies as supportive, a significant number find them inadequate, highlighting a critical need for policy reform.

Government support is another crucial area of concern. Only (16%) agree and (2%) strongly agree that the government provides sufficient support for retired trainers, whereas (38%) disagree and (44%) strongly disagree. This overwhelming dissatisfaction indicates a considerable gap in government initiatives and support mechanisms. The lack of governmental backing likely hampers the ability of retired trainers to fully engage in CE activities, underscoring the need for enhanced government interventions and various support programs tailored to the unique needs of retired professionals.

Inclusivity in policy frameworks is also a significant issue, with only (13%) agreeing and (4%), strongly agreeing that policies include retired trainers in CE. In contrast, (53%) disagree, and (29%) strongly disagree, indicating that the majority feel excluded from existing policy frameworks. This exclusion suggests that current policies may not be adequately designed to accommodate retired trainers' specific challenges and contributions. Enhancing the inclusivity of policy frameworks could enable better integration and participation of retired trainers in CE activities.

Promoting CE practices in Kenya is perceived as lacking, with only (13%) agreeing, while (4%) of the respondents strongly agree that CE practices are well promoted. A substantial (53%) disagree, and (29%) strongly disagree, reflecting a widespread perception that CE practices are not sufficiently advertised or endorsed. This lack of promotion could contribute to lower awareness and engagement levels, suggesting that increased efforts in promoting CE practices could enhance participation among retired trainers.

Table 2: Retired Trainer's Responses to Barriers and Enablers Influencing Retired Trainers' Engagement in the CE Workforce in Kenya

Statement	Agree (%)	Strongly Agree (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly Disagree (%)
1. I face financial barriers to participating in CE	51	24	7	18
2. I have experienced age-related discrimination in CE roles	40	31	13	16
3. There are enough retraining programs available for me	22	13	40	24
4. I have good access to resources needed for CE	13	9	44	33
5. I encounter many challenges when trying to participate in CE	56	20	16	9
6. There is financial assistance available for CE projects	13	2	62	22
7. Private organizations support my involvement in CE roles	29	7	56	9
8. I am aware of the opportunities in CE	33	2	42	22
9. My skills are valued in the CE sector	53	16	20	11
10. There are mentorship programs available in CE	22	11	51	16
11. I receive support from my peers in CE activities	36	2	47	16
12. I have opportunities to network within the CE field	27	7	51	16
13. Societal attitudes hinder my work in CE	53	11	33	2

14. There are plenty of opportunities for retired trainers in CE	31	16	24	29
15. I have equal opportunities compared to younger trainers	9	9	38	44
16. The community is supportive of CE initiatives	24	7	49	20

These findings are significant to note as they describe several factors that significantly affect the participation of retired trainers in CE activities. Time and finance become the ultimate blocks on a scale of (51%) agreeing and (24%) strongly agreeing that they face financial constraints when participating in CE. On the other hand, the deficiency of financial support is equally striking where (62%) disagreed, and (22%) strongly disagreed that the CE projects have no financial sponsorship. It is easy to see why such financial challenges may significantly hinder elderly retired trainers from participating in CE activities and why there is a need for programs to address financial gaps.

Age-related discrimination is another global barrier, as shown by (40%) of the respondents who agree, while (31%) strongly agree. This implies that most retired trainers also experience age-related discrimination, which could hinder their ability to serve the CE workforce and discourage involvement. Educational programs and awareness activities on age-related discrimination and inclusion in the workplace may address this obstacle.

Access to resources and retraining programs also poses challenges, with (44%) disagreeing and (33%) strongly disagreeing that they have good access to necessary resources, (40%) disagreeing, and (24%) strongly disagreeing that there are enough retraining programs available. Improving access to resources and providing adequate retraining opportunities can significantly enhance the ability of retired trainers to engage in CE activities.

Despite these barriers, several enablers can facilitate retired trainers' engagement in CE. Awareness of CE opportunities is relatively high, with (42%) disagree and (33%) agree that they are aware of these

opportunities. Peer support is also strong, with (36%) agreeing while (47%) disagree that they receive support from their peers. Additionally, the recognition of skills is evident, with (53%) agreeing while (33%) disagree that their skills are valued in the CE sector. Leveraging these enablers through targeted programs and policies can help maximize the contributions of retired trainers in the CE workforce. (31%) Some respondents agree, while (29%) strongly disagree that there are plenty of opportunities for retired trainers in CE. 44% strongly disagree, and 38% disagree that retired trainers have equal opportunities compared to younger trainers. 49% of the respondents disagree that the community supports the CE initiative.

Furthermore, although currently limited, support from private organizations, mentorship programs, and networking opportunities can be bolstered to create a more supportive environment for retired trainers. Enhancing these areas can help overcome some of the barriers and provide a more inclusive and engaging platform for retired trainers to contribute to the circular economy in Kenya.

Discussion Policy Frameworks Governing Retired Trainers' Participation in CE Activities

The survey results also show that although a few retired trainers view the policies as supportive of their CE activities, many trainers believe that the current policies do not support their efforts. This gap means inadequate policy recognition of retired trainers' unique circumstances. Mies and Gold (2021) further draw attention to human capital in circular economies and argue that experienced people have the means to give to these economies. It explains why policy changes are needed to acknowledge the role of former CE trainers in the area.

A sense of disappointment in the government is evident among retired trainers, as many of them believe that the current policies do not support them. This emphasizes the need for a glaring void in government support and programs. Patwa et al. (2022) stress the role of the government in offering subsidized loans and stimulating the creation of favourable conditions for CE activities. The findings of this study represent a strong call for more robust government initiatives or programs explicitly targeted to professional retirees in the CE workforce.

Around 88% of the respondents feel left out of the existing policy frameworks; hence, they need to be more inclusive. This indicates that policies need to be better tailored to address the concerns and contributions of retired trainers effectively. Kuitto and Helmdag (2021) also pay special attention to the role of policies in life extension and retaining older workers. The study results indicate the necessity to revise the current policies and incorporate policy changes to meet the needs of retired trainers and address their participation in CE activities.

Former trainers also need to gain awareness and interest in CE because they do not perceive its practices as being promoted in Kenya. Kirchherr et al. (2018) stress the need for knowledge of CE principles as another obstacle to CE. This aligns with the study regarding the promotion aspect and highlights the need to intensify the awareness program to increase the participation of retired trainers and other groups in CE activities.

Barriers and Enablers Influencing Retired Trainers' Engagement in the CE Workforce in Kenya

The survey also revealed financial constraints to be a significant hindrance to retired trainers' participation in CE activities, with the majority of respondents indicating that they are faced with inadequate funds. Ugwu et al. (2024) present the financial problems affecting retirees and how they contribute to retirement anxiety and life satisfaction. This aligns with the study results and illustrates the importance of specific financial support programs to eliminate economic barriers and ensure that retired trainers can participate in CE activities.

Discrimination against a trainer to retirement is also practised due to age. Karpinska et al. (2018) focus on stereotypes and age demographic norms among managers and their influence on the retention of older workers. These experiences are trends experienced by retired trainers in Kenya, highlighting the need for anti-ageism campaigning in the CE sector. Access to necessary resources and retraining programs is shallow. It is a constraint for retired trainers who want to be involved in CE activities—older workers' attitudes toward retirement and the determinants of their retirement experience (Nilsson, 2018). The results of this study are consistent with the current increasing support for barriers to resources and providing retraining programs for retired trainers so that they could participate in the CE workforce.

On the other hand, pay-offs abound for retired trainers who get significant peer support and recognition within the CE sector. (Musila et al., 2019) Classify the problems retired persons face and identify potential sources of support. The study's results conform to the views of retired trainers in Kenya in that the recognition of skills and the availability of fellow ex-trainers are essential in encouraging elderly trainers to indulge in CE activities.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

Conclusions: The survey results also indicate some of the challenges and opportunities that will be useful in promoting retirees' participation in CE activities in Kenya. The main characteristics are that several respondents indicated that the current policy frameworks need to be improved in that they are dissatisfied with their government and excluded from the policies. Debt, ageism, lower resources, and rehabilitation programs have become significant challenges. Such challenges consequently necessitate the broader implementation of policies such as providing funds and other support, training programs, and enacting anti-discrimination measures to promote inclusivity. Nevertheless, some determinants can be used to promote engagement. Low-risk perception, availability, and quality of communication with peers, as well as the acknowledgement of skills as CE benefits, point to the potential to increase the use of CE if various support systems are provided. Networking activities and corporate sponsorship may enable CE retired trainers to play their part optimally in

the sector. These barriers highlight the need to remove the current barriers and further enable the training potential of retired instructors. CE in Kenya by retired trainers will boost the sustainable development of CE practices if Kenya develops a good policy environment to support retired trainers.

Recommendations: Policy makers need to develop inclusive policies that recognize retirees' valuable knowledge and expertise in order to integrate retired trainers into Kenya's circular economy (CE) workforce. Additionally, the government should provide financial relief measures, such as grants, subsidies, and low-interest loans tailored to CE initiatives. These measures will offer economic security to retired trainers, enabling their active participation in CE activities without financial strain. Accessible and frequent re-skilling opportunities are essential to update retired trainers with the latest CE practices and technologies. CE programs should focus on practical, on-the-job, and technical skills acquisition, ensuring that retirees remain relevant and effective contributors to the CE workforce. Furthermore,

existing CE policies must be reviewed and expanded to explicitly address and eliminate age discrimination. A comprehensive plan should be developed to conduct health awareness campaigns and implement legal measures promoting equality for all age groups, fostering an inclusive environment where retired trainers can participate without facing age-related biases. Support for retired trainers should also extend to providing cost-effective methods for material acquisition. This could involve reserving school spaces as resource centres or creating virtual resource hubs, enabling retirees to implement CE practices more effectively. Awareness campaigns addressing alcohol dependence can educate the public on its impact and encourage more retired trainers to engage in CE activities. This promotes a healthier retired workforce. Lastly, promoting the privatization of CE initiatives by involving retired trainers in business undertakings and fostering social capital among peers will enhance collaboration and innovation, ultimately strengthening the CE sector.

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