PhD project title
Career Pathways toward Third-age Social Entrepreneurship

Supervisors
Andreana Drencheva

Research centre
CREED

Project description
Third-age entrepreneurship, that is to say entrepreneurs aged 50+, has become a focus of public (e.g. PRIME) and academic debate (e.g. Gielnik, Zacher & Frese, 2012). As individuals live longer, third-age entrepreneurship has become more prevalent, representing an attractive option for some, and a necessity for others. Faced with the prospect of financial uncertainty in retirement, workplace age discrimination, and structural labour market changes, Hart et al. (2014) found that the proportion of 50-64 year-olds engaged in entrepreneurial activity has steadily increased to 7.1% (similar to the rate of the 18-29 year-olds). With older people attributing more importance to the intrinsic rewards of work, social aspects of work, and feeling valued and involved (see Kanfer & Ackerman, 2004), there are strong arguments about why those over 50 may find social entrepreneurship attractive. Consequently, third-age individuals may find a natural home in social ventures. The involvement of third-age individuals in social ventures is significant with 7% of social start-ups led by individuals over 65 (Social Enterprise UK, 2013) and almost a third of social enterprises having a leadership team member over 65 (Social Enterprise UK, 2015).

This project aims to investigate the career pathways of third-age social entrepreneurs and the challenges, learning needs, learning practices, and desired support associated with different career pathways. Despite the growth in third-age social entrepreneurship, there is not a clear picture of how individuals’ careers shape the decision to become a social entrepreneur and the journey after the decision. Indeed beyond demographic data and research into why individuals become either third-age or social entrepreneurs (e.g. Kautonen, 2013; Yitshaki & Kropp, 2015), little is known about the heterogeneity of third-age social entrepreneurs (e.g. as a form of early retirement or a desire to remain active after retirement, necessity due to long-term unemployment related to age discrimination in traditional organisations, etc.). Additionally, engagement in third-age social entrepreneurship is not an either/or decision, but can be a part time pursuit before or after early retirement or part of a portfolio career in later life. Yet different career pathways toward third-age social entrepreneurship can bring different types of human and social capital, while also introducing different challenges, learning needs, learning practices, and desired support. Given that social entrepreneurship is a complex and uncertain process (Battilana & Lee, 2014), whereby social ventures are less likely to become operational compared to commercial ventures (Renko, 2013), understanding individuals’ pathways toward third-age social entrepreneurship is essential to provide them with tailored and effective support. It can also contribute to the inclusive entrepreneurship agenda to break down barriers for under-represented groups, such as older individuals, to engage in entrepreneurship.

Both inductive and deductive research designs can be used to address the aims of this
research project.

References


PhD candidate profile
The PhD candidate should meet the following requirements:

- Be enthusiastic, well-organised and have good interpersonal skills.
- High motivation and a keen interest in the research area.
- A first degree that is equivalent to a UK classification of upper second class honours or above. In addition, a good masters level qualification of merit or above, with a minimum of 60 per cent in the dissertation, research project element or equivalent experience. We also accept an MBA from an accredited school where the candidate can demonstrate that a significant research element has been undertaken. For further information on entry requirements, please see: http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/management/study/researchdegrees/howtoapply

Duration and start dates
Full or part time study for 3 or 6 years is available, and remote location study is also possible. We have two start dates a year for PhD students. Our preferred start date is 1 October, however we do recognise that not everyone will be able to commence studies at that time, so we also offer a second start date of 1 February. If you are unable to start in October or February, it may be also possible to start your PhD at a different time of the year.

Closing date for applications
Applications will be considered until a suitable candidate has been identified. For the 1 October start date, a full application must have been received by 15 July. For 1 February start date, a full application must have been received by 15 November.

How to apply
See http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/management/study/researchdegrees/howtoapply for full details of how to apply.
For an informal discussion about this opportunity, please contact Andreana Drencheva at a.drencheva@sheffield.ac.uk.