PhD Project title
Third-age Social Entrepreneurship for Personal Wellbeing

Supervisors
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Research centre
CREED

Project description
Population ageing is a Grand Societal Challenge that has an impact on labour markets, productivity, health, and wellbeing for older individuals and society at large. In this context, third-age entrepreneurship is considered a possible solution by both individuals and institutions. As individuals live longer and healthier lives, yet face shrinking retirement security or workplace age discrimination, engaging in entrepreneurship becomes a more attractive option for older individuals. As population ageing poses significant economic and societal challenges (EEO Review, 2012), institutions are encouraging third-age entrepreneurship to extend working lives.

A natural home for third-age entrepreneurs might be social ventures. With older individuals 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 why those over 50 may find social entrepreneurship attractive, as exemplified by the high civic and volunteering activity amongst people over 50. The involvement of third-age individuals in social ventures is increasing 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 effects of engaging in social entrepreneurship on older individuals’ emotional, social, and financial wellbeing. While third-age social entrepreneurship is generally regarded as positive for society, the economy, and individuals, this growing phenomenon is underdeveloped. Beyond a one-size-fits-all approach of examining demographic data and push or pull factors for who engages in either third-age or social entrepreneurship (e.g. Kautonen, 2013; Yitshaki & Kropp, 2015), the expected benefits have not been tested. Overlooking the potential dark side of third-age social entrepreneurship, such as burnout or financial insecurity, is particularly risky given that social ventures are less likely to become operational compared to commercial ventures due to higher levels of complexity and uncertainty (Battilana & Lee, 2014; Renko, 2013). Not only do social ventures struggle to establish legitimacy (Battilana & Dorado, 2010; Galaskiewicz & Barringer, 2012; Pache & Santos, 2010), but this might also be a challenge for third-age social entrepreneurs as older individuals tend not to fit the stereotypes of enterprise and find it difficult to secure support, such as investment or mentors (Kibler et al., 2015). The positive and negative effects of engaging in social entrepreneurship for older individuals’ wellbeing may be moderated by push (i.e. engaging in social entrepreneurship as a necessity) and pull factors (i.e. engaging in social entrepreneurship as an opportunity to retire early or develop a portfolio career in later life). Examining the effects of engaging in social entrepreneurship on older individuals’ wellbeing is essential to provide responsible support that aids individuals to cope with the possible negative effects, while also contributing to a responsible inclusive entrepreneurship agenda.

This project requires a longitudinal deductive research design.
References


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

● Be enthusiastic, well-organised and have good inter-personal 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.