

Special Issue Editorial

Special Issue Guest Editors:

Louise Oldridge

Ricky Gee

Nottingham Trent University

As a source of study, HRD is an area of HR which began being widely examined in the 1980s and in a recent article, Shirmohammadi et al. (2021) mapped the main areas which have emerged from the literature. These include the nature and identity of HRD, interventions and outcomes, national HRD, career development, and HRD in academia. Indeed, HRD needs to respond to the changing nature of work, role of technology, and promote opportunity, equality and inclusion (see Torraco & Lundgren, 2020), with recent calls made for sustainable careers (McDonald & Hite, 2018) providing opportunity and meeting individual needs. Whilst the importance of studying career development in the field of HRD has been highlighted before (for example, Shuck et al., 2018), Shirmohammadi et al. (2021) pointed to the debate around focus on career development in the field given the changing nature of careers, moving away from organizational to individual in nature, and call for scholars to focus on working beyond studies of single employers. Furthermore, in Shuck et al. (2018), Byrd calls for attention to be paid to lived experiences of social identity which can lead to social marginalization and ultimately impact career mobility.

The focus of HRD and career development for this special edition is the realm of Higher Education (HE). With the increased post-industrialization of OECD countries most HE settings have seen the widening of participation of students and staff, where there has been an increase of recruitment from those communities that have not previously engaged with HE. This has occurred in concert with

increased credentialization and marketization of HE, where youth has become prolonged, and where HE places a significant emphasis upon employability to feed the increasingly precarious labour market of the twenty-first century. Career development within the post-industrial milieu becomes increasingly individualized seeing the reduction of collective bargaining and unionization, whilst many experience complex and unpredictable career trajectories. Although individualized, which could be interpreted as providing more choice and agency to individuals, individual career development is still heavily influenced by societal structures, therefore the individualization process within neoliberal regimes has restructured career as opposed to deconstructing it (see Roberts 1997 and 2012). Individual careers must navigate a more precarious and unpredictable labour market where the responsibility for success or failure is placed upon the individual, what Foucault would describe as responsibilization, even though societal structures enduringly disadvantage and marginalize some groups over others, e.g., men over women (see Friedman & Laurinson, 2019; Irving, 2017). The academy and those that work within do not escape such parameters especially since the increased casualization of academic staff (Burton & Bowman, 2022). Human Resource Development becomes an important endeavour in such an environment to support the career development of academic staff to ensure it is an enabling force rather than disabling and reproducing modalities of oppression and discrimination. HRD is likely to advocate an equality, diversity, and

inclusive approach to espouse its enabling efforts, however there are also dangers that such approaches may well consolidate social divisions rather than address them especially when considering vertical dimensions of the labour market, e.g., who gains the opportunity and the resources, including time, to be promoted (see Burton & Bowman, 2022).

This special edition is a means of exploring such dimensions to consider the career stories of those involved in academia and HRD practices. The focus of the contributions has predominantly been on those that have tenured positions as academics though there is also an insight into those that are early career academics – that have recently experienced precarious contracts and that of a mature student navigating the contours of a master's degree and its implications for this work career development. All of the contributions explore case studies, either the author(s) own or that of others. The case studies are presented as career journeys, the most popular metaphor utilized to explain career development, where journeys experience a range of fateful / significant moments or episodes with their inevitable 'highs' and 'lows' linked to material gain and loss and a range of emotional experiences that are diachronically traced via memory and recounted stories (Inkson, 2007). These fateful moments are likely to be moments that scar such storytelling leaving their mark to recount moments of change which are likely to provoke the individual to consider the paradoxical interplay between being and becoming (Gee, 2017). It is at such junctures that an individual is likely to call upon or be called toward HRD policy and practice.

Within this special issue the cases revealed as journeys all focus upon moments of unfolding becoming where new forms of knowledge are gained, usually as a result of a change of circumstance, whether initiated by the individual or another. Such new forms of

knowledge reformulate narrativization upon career development, involving a review of a person's identity and their understanding of the societal setting, examples in this issue are considering the colonial history of academia (as is the case for Ricky in Gee et al.); different journeys into academia (in the case of Johnson et al.); or perceived unjust feedback of a negative nature upon individual practice (as is the case for Ho); the uptake of a Masters that challenges perceptions of self-worth and academic ability (Holden and Percival); or family changes within the life career and its knock-on effect on working practices (Hite and McDonald).

Specifically, Gee et al. explore how the neoliberal university, embroiled in discourses of 'progress', influences the narrativization and navigation of an academic career. It speaks to the work of academics seeking to address issues of 'social justice', whilst being constrained by objective matrices of 'progress', such as research outputs and teaching evaluations.

Reflecting on two contrasting teaching observations in their career, Ho explores the journey of being a new faculty member navigating the tenure-track process. In so doing, Ho provides recommendations for both new faculty, and academic leaders in mentorship and fostering inclusivity.

Johnston et al. consider academic 'progress' from four different perspectives and stages in academic careers, considering pitfalls, barriers, and challenges, notwithstanding the influence of demographic characteristics on career experiences. Considering imposter syndrome, identity, and the psychological contract, they proffer guidance to new entrants to the Academy.

Furthermore, Holden and Percival examine the experiences of one individual's career development over a period of 14 years, studying the interplay between Masters based learning, work, and

organizational ‘progress’, offering insight into career development practice.

Discussing institutional matrices and ‘progress’, Hite and McDonald address the notion of sustainable careers (of person, context, and time) to those seeking careers in the Academy. Through examining their own experiences, they suggest five concepts of sustainable career development: fit between person and career, continuous learning, renewal, employability, and integration of home, work, and community.

In sum, career navigation takes place within a social terrain with a range of interconnecting institutional, influencing, either knowingly or unwittingly, career journeys. Given these circumstances it appears prudent for individuals to consider the interplay between such structures and their own perceived agency; such a reflexive consideration requires an understanding of the influence of gender, ethnicity, age, and class upon career enactment where social position may enhance or challenge career development. Even in the wake of individualization, careers must be managed in accordance with institutional requirements, such as research outputs and teaching evaluations. Indeed, two contrasting teaching observations form the basis of Ho’s reflections whilst navigating the tenure-track process. This is echoed with Holden and Percival suggesting that whilst age may be an inhibitor, within a supportive environment, people can ‘progress’ and as such has implications of ‘supportive’ environment importance for HRD. Gee et al. question the very nature of ‘progress’ and suggest that this has colonialist tendencies and may inhibit career development as it provides a discourse that shapes action to favour the status quo, despite careers evolving from being organizational in nature.

Considering academic ‘progress’ from four different perspectives and trajectories, Johnson et al. reflect on experiences of imposter syndrome, identity and the

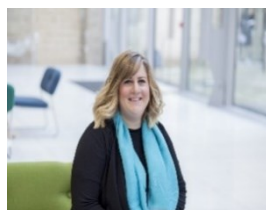
psychological contract running parallel. Important then is the work of Hite and McDonald on the significance of a sustainable approach to career development and how HRD practises can aid ‘progress’.

References

- Burton, S., & Bowman, B. (2022). The academic precariat: Understanding life and labour in the neoliberal academy. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 43(4), 497-512.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/01425692.2022.2076387>
- Friedman, S. & Laurison, D. (2019). *The class ceiling: Why it pays to be privileged*. Policy Press.
- Gee, R. (2017). Contemplating ‘career’ across disciplines: reflexive explorations of ‘career’ in A. Barnard (Ed.). *Developing professional practice in health and social care*, (pp. 180-198). Routledge.
- Inkson, K. (2007). *Understanding careers: The metaphors of working lives*. Sage Publications Ltd.
- Irving, B. A. (2017). The pervasive influence of neoliberalism on policy guidance discourses in career/education: Delimiting the boundaries of social justice in New Zealand. In T. Hooley, R. Sultana, & R. Thomsen, (Eds). *Career guidance for social justice*, (pp. 47-62). Routledge.
- McDonald, K. S., & Hite, L. M. (2018). Conceptualizing and creating sustainable careers. *Human Resource Development Review*, 17(4), 349-372.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1534484318796318>
- Roberts, K. (1997). Prolonged transitions to uncertain destinations: The implications for careers guidance. *British Journal of*

- Guidance and Counselling*, 25(3), 345-360.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/03069889708253813>
- Roberts, K. (2012). The end of the long baby-boomer generation. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 15(4), 479-497.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13676261.2012.663900>
- Shirmohammadi, M., Hedayati Mehdiabadi, A., Beigi, M., & McLean, G. N. (2021). Mapping human resource development: Visualising the past, bridging the gaps, and moving toward the future. *Human Resource Development Quarterly*, 32(2), 197-224.
<https://doi.org/10.1002/hrdq.21415>
- Shuck, B., McDonald, K. Rocco, T. S., Byrd, M., & Dawes, E. (2018). Human resources development and career development: Where are we and where do we need to go. *New Horizons in Adult Education & Human Resource Development*, 30(1), 3-18.
<https://doi.org/10.1002/nha3.20205>
- Torraco, R. J., & Lundgren, H. (2020). What HRD is doing – What HRD should be doing: The case for transforming HRD. *Human Resource Development Review*, 19(1), 39-65.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/15344843198770>

About the Guest Editors



Louise Oldridge

Dr. Louise Oldridge is a Senior Lecturer in Human Resource Management at Nottingham Business School. Her research interests include the intersections of women's caring and careers, the nature and role of Human Resource Management, writing differently and work-based learning practices. Recent outputs have been published in the *International Journal of Care and Caring* and the *Encyclopedia of the UN Sustainable Development Goals* (Springer). Louise teaches on undergraduate and executive education programmes.



Ricky Gee

Dr. Ricky Gee is an Associate Professor in Sociology in the Department of Social and Political Sciences at Nottingham Trent University, UK. His research focuses on philosophical, sociological and political dimensions of career, influenced via the continental philosophical tradition. He has wide teaching experience at undergraduate and postgraduate levels and is a PhD supervisor.