

Work and Equalities Institute



Research Seminar

Strategies for flexibility in a disconnected world

Wednesday 21st February 2018

15:30 - 17:00 Hrs (coffee and tea at 15:15)

Alliance Manchester Business School East, Room B5

Speaker:

Professor Stephen Procter

Newcastle University Business School



This paper makes connections between three things: financialisation, flexibility and strategic HRM. It is argued first of all that financialisation should be understood as an intensification of long-standing pressures on organizations. Picking up on themes of flexibility first developed twenty years ago in the model of the 'new flexible firm', the impact of financialisation on the structural flexibility of large UK organizations is examined. Consideration of financialisation also provides a link to the disconnected capitalism thesis, with its implications for strategic HRM. While recognising the strength of the thesis, it is argued that there are also other ways of explaining HRM's failure to deliver on its promises. The third side of our triangle links flexibility with strategic HRM, and draws on research that looks at whether flexibility and fit should be seen as complements or as substitutes for each other. This is looked at in relation to financialisation, in an attempt to provide a framework in which current developments can be located in their wider and more long-term context.

Professor Stephen Procter is Alcan Chair of Management at Newcastle University Business School. His research has focused on the contemporary restructuring of work, exploring teams and teamworking as central elements of this restructuring. His focus on teamworking developed out of earlier work on workplace flexibility, which dominated debates on restructuring in the early 1990s. In response to these debates, his work put forward the model of the new flexible firm as a means of understanding contemporary developments, which linked workforce flexibility with broader operational and organizational concerns. His more recent research has extended these ideas to provide an understanding of 'lean' teamworking, presenting an alternative to the interpretation based simply on work intensification.

Discussants:



Dr Andrew Smith is Senior Lecturer in Human Resource Management and Employment Relations at Bradford University School of Management. Prior to entering academia as a mature student he worked in the civil service and was a trade union representative for the CPSA and PCS unions. His research interests are in the experiences of work, employment change and the complexities and challenges of work-life 'balance'. He has published in the journals 'Work, Employment and Society', 'New Technology, Work and Employment' and the 'Industrial Relations Journal'. Andrew is currently working with Dr Jo McBride (Newcastle University) on a new project critically examining the working lives of low-paid workers in multiple legitimate employment.



Professor Jill Rubery has worked at Manchester since 1989, first at the Manchester School of Management at UMIST and since 2004 in Alliance Manchester Business School. She previously worked at the Department of Applied Economics at Cambridge University. Professor Rubery is the Director of the Work and Equalities Institute at Alliance Manchester Business School. She was previously Deputy Director of Alliance Manchester Business School (2007-2013) and head of the People, Management and Organisation Division (2004-2009). In 2006 she was elected a fellow of the British Academy and an emeritus fellow of Murray Edwards College, University of Cambridge.