

HRMWE Research Seminar Series 2014-2015

Graduate Blues: a critical examination of the role of habitus in graduate employment

Wednesday 29th October 2014

4:00 - 5:30pm, Room 2.05

Delivered by

Dr Ciaran Burke (University of Ulster)

Discussant

Dr Ron Kerr (University of Edinburgh)

Abstract

The emergence of post-industrialisation and, with it, the knowledge economy has firmly placed education as the primary tool of social mobility. A direct and clear consequence of this human capital discourse of “access equals success” is that there are more and more individuals reading for degrees in U.K. HEIs. As a result, we are in a situation of graduate inflation; in other words, there are fewer graduate jobs than graduates, leading to graduate unemployment and underemployment. This context is the starting point of the research project which this paper will discuss. In the situation of fewer graduate jobs than graduates and the relative cancelling out of educational capital, via a devaluation of educational capital, this research asked, “do other forms of capital influence graduate trajectories?” or, more specifically: “does social class, with a priori levels of capital, play a directive role in graduate employment trajectories?” Grounded in the life histories of 27 University graduates and framed through Bourdieusian social theory, this paper will illustrate the directive influence of habitus and capital on my respondents’ educational and (graduate) employment trajectories.

About the Speaker

Dr Ciaran Thomas Burke was awarded his PhD in Sociology in 2012 from Queen's University Belfast. On completing his PhD, he took up a Lectureship in the University of Ulster, Jordanstown Campus. His doctoral and subsequent research is focused on the effectiveness of widening participation initiatives and social mobility. Taking a broadly Bourdieusian theoretical approach, his research questions how social class affects individuals' aspirations/expectations and their ability to successfully negotiate social space in the context of accessing higher education and university graduates' employment trajectories.

About the Discussant

Dr Ron Kerr is Senior Lecturer in International Management at University of Edinburgh Business School. Dr Kerr’s research focuses on extending the application of the work of Pierre Bourdieu in the study of management and organizations, with a particular focus on symbolic power, the relationship between language and power in the context of transnational organisations and international management.