

Developing employability capital in university students: A practical guide

Book
Review

10.20856/jniecec.5518

Author: William E. Donald

Publisher: Routledge

Publication Year: 2025

Number of pages: 136

Hardback: ISBN 9781032912936

Price: £37.09

eBook: ISBN 9781003562429

Price: £19.79

Available from: <https://www.routledge.com/Developing-Employability-Capital-in-University-Students-A-Practical-Guide/Donald/p/book/9781032912936>

Reviewed by **Fiona Christie**, NICEC Fellow; Senior lecturer, Manchester Metropolitan University, UK.

Developing Employability Capital in University Students: A Practical Guide presents the conceptual foundations, rationale, and evolution of the Employability Capital Growth Model (ECGM). It offers a strong blend of theoretical exposition and practical application, positioning itself as both a scholarly monograph and a practitioner-oriented guide. The book will be of particular interest to academics, researchers, and career development professionals engaged in employability and higher education.

William E. Donald, Associate Professor of Sustainable Careers and Human Resource Management at Southampton Business School, University of Southampton, and founder of Donald Research & Consulting (est. 2022), brings an engaging authorial voice to the text. His enthusiasm for the subject matter is evident throughout, contributing to a highly readable and accessible narrative.

The book is structured into four parts:

- Part I outlines the theoretical underpinnings of sustainable career ecosystems and introduces the development of the ECGM.
- Part II explores the ECGM in depth, detailing nine forms of capital, alongside contextual, temporal, and personal outcome factors.

- Part III offers a 10-step guide for applying the ECGM with university students, enriched by insights from international case studies from career development practitioners and academics.
- Part IV considers the broader implications for stakeholders within a sustainable career ecosystem and provides a reflective chapter-by-chapter summary from the author.

Donald skillfully traces the development of the ECGM, weaving together literature from the often-disconnected domains of career development and graduate employability. His clear articulation of the model's foundations is particularly welcome, as is his engagement with the broader discourse on 'capitals' as a proxy for the resources students and graduates possess — or need to cultivate.

A notable strength of the ECGM is its holistic approach. Donald deliberately avoids the term 'human capital,' instead presenting nine distinct forms of capital: Social, Cultural, Psychological, Personal Identity, Health, Scholastic, Market-Value, Career Identity, and Economic. His synthesis of existing theories into these categories is both thoughtful and well-executed.

Part III stands out for its practical relevance. It includes reflective contributions from practitioners who have implemented the ECGM, offering a transparent account of processes of application. Particularly valuable is the chapter on good practice, which provides actionable guidance and suggested activities for both one-to-one career guidance and classroom-based learning.

However, like much of the literature on graduate employability, the book's scope is also defined by what it does not bring to the fore. While it draws on the language of sustainability — particularly in reference to sustainable career theory and ecosystems — it uses the term 'sustainable' in ways that are different from other societal debates, e.g., around the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The book does not engage with broader global challenges such as climate change, neoliberalism, labour market injustices and inequalities, although it does point to contextual factors of importance. These omissions are understandable given the book's scope, which is focused on individual employability and organisational structures that influence this.

A minor critique concerns the book's layout: an index at the end would have enhanced usability, and some content — such as citation guidance — might have been better placed outside the main text.

Overall, this is a valuable and timely contribution that successfully bridges theory and practice. It deserves a place on employability module reading lists and will be a useful resource for those supporting students' career development in higher education.

