PhD Project title
Cultures of Feedback in New Ventures

Supervisors
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Project description
Entrepreneurship is a feedback-driven process (Bhave, 1994) whereby feedback is information about whether goals are achieved or how to achieve them at the individual or venture levels of analysis. Entrepreneurs are often seen as the managers of feedback in new ventures. They can receive formal feedback from the market in the form of demand or investment, as well as through launching product prototypes, piloting services, and changing business models (Andries et al., 2013; Baum & Bird, 2010). They can also proactively seek interpersonal feedback through interactions with different individuals, such as co-founders (Gemmell et al., 2012), employees (Volery et al., 2015), experts and community leaders (Katre & Salipante, 2012), prospective and early customers (Corner & Wu, 2012; Fisher, 2012), and other entrepreneurs in the same industry (Kuhn & Galloway, 2015). Finally, they receive unsolicited feedback from peers, experts, and individuals at support organisations (Seidel et al., 2016). Entrepreneurs value feedback because it is evaluative information that helps them to improve their decision making (Haynie et al., 2012), correct errors (Frese, 2007; 2009), develop new products, services, and processes (Gemmell et al., 2012; Katre & Salipante, 2012), balance between incremental and radical innovation (Volery et al., 2015), gain first customers, and turn customers into advocates who promote the offering (Corner & Wu, 2012; Fisher, 2012).

The aim of this project is to investigate how cultures of feedback are established in new ventures, which may be for-profit, non-profit or hybrid organisations. While entrepreneurship is a feedback-driven process (Bhave, 1994), feedback processes are poorly understood in the entrepreneurship context (Ashford et al., 2016; Collewaert et al., 2016; Frese, 2007). The focus so far has been on entrepreneurs as receivers of feedback and only recently they have been seen as active seekers of feedback. However, this entrepreneur-centric view of feedback ignores the perspectives of relevant others, such as employees and investors, and the interactive nature of feedback processes as other individuals can provide, seek, and reproduce feedback to share it upward or downward in the organisation. How feedback flows in new ventures is a new research agenda that aims to examine the challenges of giving and seeking feedback downward, upward, and outside of the organisation from the perspectives of entrepreneurs, employees, and stakeholders. Particularly relevant for understanding the flow of feedback in new ventures is the idea of feedback cultures as organisational environments in which entrepreneurs, employees, and even heavily involved stakeholders feel comfortable and safe to seek, give, receive, and use formal and informal feedback for individual and venture development. How such feedback cultures are created in terms of specific processes, capabilities, and mechanisms is unclear, yet provides an interesting multi-perfective lens on understanding feedback processes in entrepreneurship.

Both longitudinal inductive and deductive (drawing on insights from psychology and organisational behaviour) research designs can be used to address the aim of this research project.

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 at a.drencheva@sheffield.ac.uk.