PhD project title
Self-organisation, Communities and New Venture Internationalisation

Supervisors
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Research centre
CREED

Project description
To date, little is known about the extent to which self-organised learning through real or digital media, enables and supports the international growth and development of entrepreneurial new ventures.

Self-organised learning in Small and Medium enterprises (SMEs) refers to how their entrepreneurs or managers "learn to learn" by constructing communities with a culture of shared knowledge, rather than through institutionally directed networks e.g. government sponsored export promotion agencies, although the latter might provide a digital platform. Self-organised learning places emphasis on learning-by-doing, learning-by-sharing and peer-to-peer communication. It may be an emergent, or experiential process and tends to happen in co-operative clusters, and where firms are interdependent or not directly competitive. Self-organised learning is possible where suitable digital platforms enable the development of on-line communities.

There is a significant body of literature on social capital, networks and network relationships in internationalisation research, but the notion of self-organisation, as a means of generating experiential knowledge of foreign business environments and practices at a distance is under-explored.

PhD proposals are invited that focus on new venture internationalisation, and address topics related to learning communities and/or self-organisation and advance research questions around one or more of the following:

1) Process - how do new venture entrepreneurs construct learning communities across national, cultural or sectoral boundaries and why?

2) Knowledge exchange - what kind knowledge is exchanged and in what form, and how does it differ from knowledge exchanged through other mechanisms or institutions?

3) Performance - to what extent is internationalisation enabled, and what are the costs and benefits?

4) Context - is self-organisation more likely to occur in formal or informal economies; or e.g. knowledge-intensive, creative or traditional sectors, or emerge from crisis situations?

5) Sense-making – how does it feel to entrepreneurs as “lived-experience” and does it change their orientations towards internationalisation?

6) What are the policy implications of international self-organised learning communities?
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 Marian Jones at mv.jones@sheffield.ac.uk.