

PhD Fellowship at the Faculty of Education at The University of Hong Kong

One PhD fellowship within the context of the project "Characterizing researchers' research agenda-setting: an international perspective across fields of knowledge" - to start on the 1st of January 2017.

The Principal Investigator (Dr. Hugo Horta) of the abovementioned research project invites applications for a single PhD position at the Faculty of Education at The University of Hong Kong (supported by the research project funding, which secures 3 years of the PhD funding). The PhD fellowship is expected to start on January 1st of 2017 or as soon as possible thereafter. The PhD candidate will participate both in formal project events and in informal deliberations throughout the candidate's affiliation with the project; He or she will have the opportunity to pursue a research topic that is to be framed and developed within the scope of the research project (description below). In addition to coursework and other institutional obligations, the PhD candidate will undertake the following main activities that relate both to the PhD and the project:

- Scheduling and performing interviews (mostly in Hong Kong and East Asian countries)
- Analyze varied types of qualitative data
- Collaborating in the writing of research outputs
- Contributing to the dissemination of project findings and other outreach activities.

REQUIREMENTS

The successful PhD candidate must be fluent in spoken and written academic English (Documentation of English proficiency such as IELTS or TOEFL required). Knowledge of Mandarin and/or Cantonese will be considered an advantage, but is not a requirement. Other following conditions are of key relevance:

- Strong knowledge of qualitative research methodologies
- Leaning towards conceptual development
- Possession of a master degree in a field of the social sciences
- Have proven interest in the field of science and technology and/or higher education
- Research experience - If the applicant has authored or co-authored publications from research activities, these should be made available during the application process.

APPLICATION

- Curriculum Vitae
- A copy of the applicant's Bachelor and Master's degree diploma - transcript of records desirable if possible

- Documentation of English proficiency (for IELTS a minimum of 6 with no subtest below 5.5; for TOEFL a minimum of 100)
- Publications (if any)
- A tentative PhD project proposal based on the description of the research project below (must not exceed 5,000 words).

The application deadline: October 15, 2016.

Applications should be sent to: Dr. Hugo Horta at horta@hku.hk . Applicants may be requested to be interviewed, during late October and early November of 2016.

Description of the project

Research activities are key to knowledge creation, innovation and socio-economic development. However, a research gap exists concerning the knowledge production processes related to research agenda-setting by individual researchers, although it is known to drive the knowledge produced by researchers and shape their careers. This proposed study will contribute to a better understanding of the decision-making process researchers employ in choosing a research agenda. Its analysis will focus on three main research questions:

- 1) What factors influence the choice of specific research topics?
- 2) What leads researchers to opt for research agendas in a single rather than multiple fields of knowledge?
- 3) What explains researchers' choices of 'riskier' rather than 'safer' research agendas?

Guided by this set of questions, research agenda-setting will be studied in the context of researchers working in both academic (e.g. universities) and non-academic (e.g. public research institutes) research settings worldwide. The study will draw on Bandura's social cognition theory as a conceptual framework from which to develop a more specific theoretical framework for research agenda-setting. It will use a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative (a survey administered to the world population of authors published in the past five years in the SCOPUS database) and qualitative methods (interviews: narrative inquiry). A purposely designed crawler software to gather data will also be developed. Four main factors will guide the analysis: field of knowledge (OECD's six fields of knowledge), country, research environment and career stage.

The study's findings will lead to a novel conceptual perspective on the motivation behind researchers' contributions to knowledge accumulation and advancement. They will also have key policy implications for policymakers and research team managers in and out of academia. For policymakers, particularly those working in research funding agencies, a deeper understanding of research agenda-setting by researchers will illuminate how researchers position themselves for

different research funding schemes (e.g. grants, prizes, secondments, fellowships). They will also benefit from a better understanding of the decisions involved in 'riskier' or multidisciplinary agendas relating to each funding scheme. For research team managers, the study's analysis will provide a clearer picture of two issues. The first relates to the impact of such exogenous variables as organizational incentives, institutional support, power structures, funding availability and time constraints on the research decision-making of researchers, and the second focuses on the relation between those variables and such endogenous variables as personality and learning styles when researchers are determining which research agenda to pursue.