The efficacy of digital technologies in transforming global learning

ESRC DTP Collaborative Studentship

University of Nottingham and XPRIZE Foundation

The Midlands Graduate School is an accredited Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) Doctoral Training Partnership (DTP). One of 14 such partnerships in the UK, the Midlands Graduate School is a collaboration between the University of Warwick, Aston University, University of Birmingham, University of Leicester, Loughborough University and the University of Nottingham.

The University of Nottingham as part of Midlands Graduate School is now inviting applications for an ESRC Doctoral Studentship in association with our collaborative partner the XPRIZE Foundation to commence in October 2019.

This studentship will investigate how digital technologies might provide high-quality basic education to marginalised children worldwide. Acquiring elementary literacy and numeracy skills is a basic human right. Yet, despite global efforts to increase access to primary education, 330 million children of primary school age are unable to read and do basic mathematics. To address this global crisis, the XPRIZE Foundation, a non-profit organisation based in Los Angeles, launched the Global Learning XPRIZE, to challenge teams from around the world to develop a digital technology solution that will teach basic literacy, numeracy, and writing skills to marginalised children outside of the traditional school setting. From over 350 teams that applied, five finalist teams were selected to be trialled with 2500 children, aged 9-11 years, from across 150 remote villages in Tanzania. Literacy, numeracy, and writing skills were assessed using standardised instruments for individual children before and after a 15-month period where children worked with the apps. The team that produces the largest learning gains will win the $10million USD competition. Results will be announced in May 2019.

This studentship will establish state-of-the art knowledge on how digital technology can support learning by systematically reviewing literature and mapping the apps of the five finalists to a theoretical framework of mobile learning. In-depth analysis of data collected throughout the competition will establish environmental factors that impact learning. The student will undertake an internship in Los Angeles with XPRIZE staff to facilitate understanding of the added value and any disadvantages of using digital technologies to support learning in remote settings.

Candidates with a minimum of a 2i Hons degree in Psychology or allied discipline are encouraged to apply. Strong statistical data analysis skills, experience/interest in educational technologies, experience/willingness to learn python and/or R, and experience/interest in living or working in sub-Saharan Africa are desirable. The award may be made on a 1+3/3.5/+3 basis dependent on prior education and research methods training.

Application Process

To be considered for this PhD, please complete the Collaborative Studentship application form available online here and email it along with a cover letter, CV, and two references, to Chris Atkinson at sszcra@exmail.nottingham.ac.uk.

Application deadline: Tuesday 30 April 2019

Interview date: Friday 10 May 2019, between 1600 – 1800 UK time

Midlands Graduate School ESRC DTP

Our ESRC studentships cover fees and maintenance stipend and extensive support for research training, as well as research activity support grants. Support is available only to successful applicants who fulfil eligibility criteria. To check your eligibility, visit: www.mgsdtp.ac.uk/studentships/eligibility/

Informal enquiries about the research or School of Psychology prior to application can be directed to Professor Nicola Pitchford via email at nicola.pitchford@nottingham.ac.uk.