

Timothy Charlton: Social Learning Practices in Crowdwork

The aim of Timothy Charlton's PhD project is to investigate how and with whom workers learn in novel platform-mediated work environments. "Crowdwork" is a new form of digital labour emerging from the platform economy that brings together workers and clients on a global or regional level to carry out tasks for pay. In contrast to conventional workspaces, platforms usually do not provide training and skill development opportunities to their workers, shifting this responsibility entirely to the individual. Despite this, self-regulated learning behavior and skills development practices have been identified as key criteria to success in the crowd workplace. To gain an evidence-based understanding of these practices, the project proposes to answer the following research questions using empirical data from a longitudinal survey and electronic diary study of crowdworkers:

RQ1: What social learning activities do online freelancers engage in and what self-regulatory learning strategies do they undertake to plan, implement and evaluate their learning in the context of their crowdwork?

RQ2: What social networks – personal, professional, online or offline - do digital workers utilize to support their learning and skills development?

Timothy's project seeks to contribute substantively and methodologically to a nascent field of research into an important global social phenomenon. Methods and practices from the platform economy are increasingly adapted to and applied in conventional organizations. Understanding how learning takes place in online workplaces is an important step towards devising modern and appropriate teaching approaches and materials for higher education.