



## **THE DISSERTATION PROCESS DESCRIBED BY DOCTORAL STUDENTS IN FINLAND**

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### **Abstract**

The Problem: The number of doctoral theses has increased enormously during the past few years. Though research on this phenomenon has also increased, the personal experiences of a dissertation process have not been studied from a doctoral student's perspective. A crucial research question in this article is, in what way does the dissertation process appear as described by doctoral students themselves (N = 25)? What steps lead to a doctoral degree when considered as doctoral students' personal endeavours? Method: The data consists of hundreds of e-mails written during the supervision process between the doctoral students and the author, who supervised their doctoral theses. Results and Recommendations: This article reveals the special significance of the human relationships and the support experienced by PhD students during their dissertation process with the supervisor and close friends or family members. In this research, the road to receiving a doctorate appeared as a process that consists of five stages; most of which the academic world keeps still about. The aim of this article is to support prospective doctoral students and their supervisors in completing doctoral theses.

**Key Words:** Doctoral students, Doctoral studies, Dissertation process, Supervision of PhD students

### **INTRODUCTION**

The dissertation process is an unforgettable and special phase of life for everyone. The fascination with a doctoral thesis has not abated although the number of doctorates awarded has increased enormously (Chambaz, Biaudet and Collonge, 2006). The number has increased four-fold in the past twenty years.

Writing a doctoral thesis requires an enormous effort, perseverance as well as talent and ambition (Dill et al., 2006; Green and Powell, 2005). A doctoral thesis has to meet official academic standards. However, these standards do not describe how a doctoral student's personal everyday life will change for the years of the dissertation process and how it demands adjustment, effort, support and empathy from a doctoral student and his/her intimates.

A dissertation process is a significant experience and a chain of events. Every path to becoming a doctor is different and requires engagement not only from a doctoral student and his/her supervisor but also from the doctoral students' circle of acquaintances (see also Määttä, 2009).

The number of the researches on the doctoral education is still low (see e.g. Kiley and Mullins, 2005), but it has increased and is increasing all the time (Knight, 2005).





The personal experiences of a dissertation process have not been studied from a doctoral student's perspective. The whole picture of the dissertation process does not become evident in a public dissertation or in a printed doctoral thesis. What do the writers of doctoral theses think of this process, and of what phases does completing a doctoral thesis consist? Until now, only the prefaces of the doctoral theses have opened the curtains to the scene of a doctoral student's personal experiences; and analyzing personal experiences has been considered unnecessary or insignificant compared to the scientific writing.

## **METHOD**

This is a qualitative research about dissertation process described by doctoral students. The participants in this research are composed of 25 students who have either started doing their doctoral research or have already graduated under my supervision in 2005-2008. They gave me their own written stories about their dissertation process. In addition, I corresponded with them by e-mail in hundreds of pages over the years during their dissertation processes. Therefore, the supervision conversations took place in real supervision situations. As considered as a dialogue between a supervisor and a student, the original purpose of the supervision conversations was to enhance the work with thesis. In the post-doctoral party of one of my doctoral students, I came up with the idea to do research based on this data as it had become clear that there was abundantly experiential data, and that the data was saved and might help to shed light on the doctoral process more generally. The research did not proceed until I asked every doctoral student for permission to use the data. In addition, I told the purpose of the research and assured that no one's identity will be exposed. I also promised that the doctoral students could check that my interpretations about them correspond to their conceptions and experiences.

All the participants have given me permission to make their correspondence public. All of the participants are women, which appears as a special tone in the experiences.

A crucial research question is, in what way does the dissertation process appear described by doctoral students themselves? What steps lead to a doctoral degree when considered as the doctoral students' personal endeavors?

The data have been analyzed with content analysis. The main themes have been derived from the stories, and the participants' answers have been quoted to form a reliable overall description, a narrative structure of a sort, which consists of the narrative categories and series of events with a plot (see Denzin, 1989; Labov and Waletzky, 1967; Peura, 2008). The participants have also read the analyses and agreed that my interpretations corresponded to their experiences. The purpose is to provide as much space as possible for the doctoral students' voices when introducing the results. At the same time, I will reflect on the results compared with previous Finnish and international research about the supervision of the doctoral theses and its problems.





## **FINDINGS AND COMMENTS:**

Dissertation process consists of five steps. These are called as follows: "Getting Started", "Being Hooked on the Dissertation Process", "Putting One's Social Life to the Test", "The Strain of One's Own Demands and Expectations" and "Will Everything Be All Right if the End Is All Right?"

### **1. Getting Started**

**Conquering the Doubts:** *"Write a doctoral thesis? Me? Never."* The first thoughts of a student who contemplates doctoral research can be quite hesitant (see Golde, 2000). *"Could this really turn into a doctoral thesis?"*

At the beginning of the dissertation process, uncertainty, self-protection, and even mystical expectations occur. *"It is as if I was asked to fly a UFO from point A to point B."* Doubts about one's resources are daunting. Nor does anyone want to let himself or herself down or set too high goals for his or her capability (see Rae, 2002). *"Why on earth should I be doing a doctoral thesis? I could study an interesting phenomenon for the fun of it."*

On the other hand, apparently many want to test their limits and abilities: *"Or could I? If this does not turn into a doctoral thesis, maybe it will be some other book then."*

Starting to write a doctoral thesis may engage and attract for a long time. The pendulum between starting and withholding is present (see McWilliam et al., 2005). The workload as such is not frightening. Many are ready for hard work, but the uncertainty and doubts about one's own survival create ambivalence. A doctoral thesis is usually the first and only experience for its writer of which he or she does not have any previous experiences.

To others, the decision to start to do doctoral research is crystal clear even before their master's thesis has been completed (see Peura, 2008). The process seems well defined and goal oriented with work schedules and such. The decision to write a doctoral thesis and to overcome all the obstacles, whatever comes, proves to be worth its weight in gold, especially at the finish line of the dissertation process.

A salient reason for starting post-graduate studies is the attractiveness of a researcher's career. A master's degree provides one with scientific resources, and some students have a compulsion to continue doing research and to experience the relaxed and stressless joy of researching. The academic merits can be considered attractive, too.

**The Numerousness of Motives:** Why would one start doctoral studies while working? The motives can be the most sundry (see Doncaster and Lester, 2002). Some other people's success can be inspiring: *"When I was in my colleague's dissertation, I became inspired to start writing a doctoral thesis. Previously, I had thought that it would be such a utopia that is far from real life."*





Another motive is to do something valuable that has wider use. *“The most pleasant is to see the common advantage so that the research is not done just for the researcher herself.”*

A doctoral thesis can aim at helping those who have experienced a bitter fate, opening others’ eyes to see or giving hope: *“I hope that my research would make even one person struggling with problems see that escape is not impossible. I also hope that everyone who reads my research will wake up to think of their changes to help their close ones who are struggling with problems.”*

Then some others think that their duty is to provide more information. Many have a change and privilege to enter a special world: *“I have been surprised at how easily [it] all seems to run. I have the network ready, and everyone is happy to participate, almost as [if] they were putting out the red carpet for me.”*

Work tasks as such may provide a natural research context (see Peura, 2008): *“In my work, I had to constantly search for more information and knowledge as the field was undergoing a transformation, so why should I not start researching.”*

Particularly, in teacher’s work the desire to develop in one’s work is an important motive. A long-term work experience helps to see and arouses a need and challenge to adhere to something new. Inspiration can break out in the spur of the moment or during a continuous and constant thirst for learning and studying (see Johnson, 2001). Studying just feels nice. *“I started to write my own doctoral thesis after dreaming of it for a long time. I have always enjoyed studying. Additionally, doing research suited my life situation well.”*

In addition to a conscious choice, the coincident are also significant.

## **2. Being Hooked on the Dissertation Process**

After getting started and into one’s stride, many will be hooked on the dissertation process (see Doncaster and Lester, 2002). The obsession of writing a doctoral thesis and working with it may feel hard, and one may even lose one’s grip on reality momentarily.

Although many of the participants said they had visited *“a weird planet,” “the spaces of mind,”* or *“had alienated [themselves] from the surrounding world,”* the flame of working and doing as well as the feeling of mastery have riveted them and simultaneously endlessly brought the joy of work.

Writing a doctoral thesis represents a new phase of life (see Leonard, 2001).

*“After being a housewife, doing research meant diving into my own world for me. I was able to search information and write about a subject that really interests me all by myself.”*

*“I was told that we had a lovely hot summer, but I did not have time to notice that as I was excited about sitting at my computer. A surprise visitor marveled at me as I was wearing thick slacks, a sweater, and wool socks although it was really hot weather!”*





The e-mails I received in the small hours showed how a doctoral student who thrives on the computer does not always notice the passage of time. *“Thank you for being so patient. I have suspected that you will already close the door. I am so annoyed. Now that I have rewritten the table of contents, I became inspired again. Nor do I know what the time is.”* (This e-mail was sent at 2.23 a.m.)

Someone may just note when dedicating oneself to the inspiring thoughts that *“the day has already changed.”*

The work pace may be hard labor or the strengthening and rewarding of mental energy and attention akin to *flow* (see Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; 2000). Working on a doctoral thesis encourages doctoral students to concentrate and to prevent interruptions. Not many complain about fatigue; they merely talk about *“the flame of working”* and *“drive”*: *“Now I am going strong”* or *“I do not understand the spree that is going on. I am so unusually impatient and unable to dissociate myself from this.”*

The way of life might be renewed in this process: *“If I were to name any positive sides of this hard work pace, I would say I have quit smoking by oversight since I do not have time for it anymore.”*

**Living Down the Everyday Life:** When concentrating on a doctoral thesis, many fail to do housework and clean; they *“fail to dust and clean the closets.”* A doctoral student may feel entitled to take time to himself or herself and pass on everyday duties: *“My family was amazed because the mom was just writing all the time. My children are quite old but used to having me available. Now I am not. I love being selfish.”* Children take time but teach effectiveness and support, too (see Peura, 2008).

One doctoral student got a book called *The Cleaning Book* from her colleagues at her post-doctoral party, in which there was immemorial and felicitous remarks on her: *“Mundus mutatur, pulvis remanet – The world is changing, dust remains.”* The post-doctoral party reminded her of the return to everyday life and reality after the dissertation.

A doctoral student creates a world of his or her own for himself or herself (Doncaster and Lester, 2002; Malfroy and Yates, 2003), which includes autonomy of a special kind and enthusiasm for searching for information (Murray and Lawrence, 2008) as well as a feeling of competence (Ryan and Deci, 2000). Researching and studying form a central part of one’s own life and world.

Taking care of one’s own well-being may also be forgotten, or one tends not to have enough time for rest, exercise, or eating: *“This workaholic has sat the whole day that is approximately 13 hours on the computer. I also have to admit this: during the busiest times, I made fast food that I have eaten straight from the kettle! I do not have time for setting the table or washing dishes. This is the kind of researcher I am. I do not know whether this is very healthy ...”*

The writing may turn into *“a dangerous sport”* that tests one’s health. For some, the monotonous sitting at the computer causes tenosynovitis, a stress injury of a leg, or other physical injury, and others may worry about something worse: *“My deterioration started now from my legs and the lumbar region is hopefully not proceeding very fast upwards.”*





Surely, there are also many who consider writing a doctoral thesis as ordinary drudgery, systematic working that proceeds step-by-step: *“Writing a doctoral thesis requires rigorous work. The files and references have to be grouped, noted, and kept in order. You just have to sit, read, and write persistently.”*

### **3. Putting One’s Social Life to the Test**

**A Test of Relationships:** During the finishing phase of a doctoral thesis, socializing skills are also frozen, and the ordinary exchange of thoughts necessarily is not at its best, either. A researcher who has become absorbed in the world of a doctoral thesis may seem absent and distant: *“Being absent-minded and talking fuzzy, my husband noted often that apparently I have had a little too rough a day.”*

Interaction and dealings with others is halting, and even one’s own train of thought seems abnormal. A doctoral student may lose previous friendships when concentrating closely on his or her own research (see Bolker, 1998). Former friends seem different. One does not get any response, and previous topics do not interest anymore. Some convey their concern about their will to retire from the world as well as their inability to be interested on others’ *“trivial”* matters: *“I hope this is not incessant?”*

Many of the doctoral students are aware of the temporariness of the phase: *“Interaction with others seems quite a hassle. Next, I will try to behave calmly and in a civilized manner.”* However, the feeling of alienation amazes doctoral students themselves as well: *“I do not know myself. Am I really me or someone else?”* To be able to be alone with doctoral research is like a double-edged sword (see Delamont et al., 2000; Leonard, 2001); it is enjoyable and liberating but also harrowing: *“Working alone and the detachment are the hardest in writing a doctoral thesis.”*

**The Social Importance of a Post-Graduate Seminar:** On the other hand, the agony of laboring alone is being eased by the brand-new support contacts that come along during the dissertation process. The research work familiarizes the doctoral student with new people, and long-term friendships may spring up between people who are experiencing the same thing: *“I also learnt that any research is not a product of just one person. The discussions in the seminars, the supervisor’s help, the conversations in the method courses mould one’s own research and bring new ideas.”*

The companionship between a supervisor and post-graduate students is special and significant by nature (see Parry, 2007). A post-graduation seminar provides an opportunity for testing the feasibility of one’s own thoughts and solutions in a safe and confidential atmosphere (see Boud and Lee, 2005). The seminars can turn into a *“feast”* epitomized by supporting the exchange of experiences, posing clarifying questions and perspectives and appreciation (Eraut, 2004). A supervisor’s task as *“a master of ceremonies”* according to the Sokratesian metaphor comes true if the students attain an enriching interaction (see Himanen, 2007).

**The Gauge of a Spouse’s Patience:** Writing a doctoral thesis poses a risk to love affairs. A spouse’s or partner’s tolerance is tested if a doctoral student buries himself or herself in a researcher chamber, bows out from the togetherness, and cannot participate in mutual activities or conversation (see Määttä, 2002). Even shared hobbies are being





laid aside. Still, many of the doctors thank their very spouses or partners for understanding, support, and encouragement:

*“My spouse has evinced his patience by living with his preoccupied wife (I still cannot guarantee that now the absent-mindedness will get better), and he has patiently listened to my endless contemplations. I want to thank him also for our hot discussions, ‘the pre-dissertations,’ in the sauna, as I was trying to explain some problems related to my research.”*

Friends’ support can also occur as courage to bring the doctoral student back to earth every now and then, among more ordinary activities. Many doctoral students consider it important that their close friends have suggested jogging or having lunch and thus prevented the researcher from totally burying himself or herself in the study.

#### **4. The Strain of One’s Own Demands and Expectations**

**Adjusting Schedules:** There is no deadline for when a doctoral thesis should be finished. A doctoral student should not be stressed out because of hurry as there is no external need or date. Nevertheless, a doctoral student’s own need for completion may become quite a whip. Many have the desire to enhance their work with speed, and the aspiration to finish it is insuperable. Hang the extrinsic rewards, the rise in salary, new work tasks, or changing positions in the workplace. Some spree makes one hammer away and make hay in a way that it is simultaneously enjoyable. Hardly anyone can explain the reason for the spurt nor is it necessary. The question is all the more to prove to oneself, when one’s own performance, powerful goal orientation, and inner motivation work as catalysts. The promises of a schedule for completion help a family and circle of acquaintances to understand and support the process; and determined working becomes easier:

*“It has been hard as a mother and when working with a demanding job to constrain oneself from overburdening. One has to draw up a realistic schedule and hold on to that.”*

Usually, a schedule makes one committed, but if it is too hard, it can turn into a burden or stressful baggage: *“Then there is this worse thing. I am working with this too fast. And I have scheduled my work in a totally wrong way. Now I am complaining about my own work pace.”*

Sometimes, it is necessary to keep one’s own work at arm’s length (see Cryer, 2003). Often, a doctoral student comprehends the significance of a pause: *“Now I have to admit that the whole subject seems repulsive. I have to take a break if that helps to continue”* or *“A good outcome is not born by bustling or hurrying.”* Still, it may be difficult to detach oneself from the grasp of writing a doctoral thesis. Having a break may be striking or depressing even though *“the saddest thing would be to let the doctoral student think that something is possible when it is not.”*

Even a supervisor may become blind to the speed (see Delamont et al., 2000; Philips and Pugh, 2000). The quick pace does not harm or bother those who are able to proceed with a sense of direction and comprehend that scientific thinking, studying, and understanding the complicated phenomena require long-term conversance, demanding





consideration, and reflection: *“I have learnt that things become apparent progressively. One has to test different thoughts, study the literature, and the data. One has to reflect on them and match up over and over again.”*

**Living in the Distress of Uncertainty:** Uncertainty about the direction of one’s own road preys on any researcher’s mind occasionally (see Costley and Stephenson, 2009). Should one continue on the selected road, would some other direction be better, or will this solution lead to an adequate result at all? How and in what order should one proceed? Is the text sufficiently scientific or scientifically convincing as a whole? The ability to ask for help is crucial.

*“What is this disease called? The symptoms: I am unable to produce new text and also the previous seems hollow and trivial?”*

A variety of questions exercise the doctoral student. To a supervisor, these questions are expressed as active worries, a need for help, or requests for advice:

*“Again, I have written the theoretical background. Would you please check how I should proceed so that I do not go off track very badly?”*

*“I wonder how much of this has to be revised.”*

*“Life has been a little bit blue and dreary, too. Every now and then, I was ready to quit this research thing.”*

Uncertainty may also be doubt about whether the whole doctoral thesis will be finished or one’s resources are enough to achieve that at all (cf. Golde, 2000). A doctoral student relies on the supervisor at the beginning and during his or her studies and to become convinced that the prerequisites for a doctoral thesis will be met.

*“I know that it is not easy to be a supervisor, and you demand that the scientific criteria are met. I know that not everyone is able to reach the adequate level. Let us see, if I will?”*

*“I have turned over the text of the doctoral thesis so much now that it already comes to my dreams. I have had plenty of joy and anxiety. Now, I feel mostly empty: I feel like having given my all. What else could I do since I have looked through the correction tips several times?”*

The expression of doubt may appear with the features of hope for encouragement and support. At the end, behind the criticism of oneself lies just aspiration to get confirmation of the selected direction, solutions, and one’s own strengths (see Cullen et al., 1994). The questions that are in the doctoral students’ minds are sent to the supervisor’s e-mail mostly on weekends, when many have the time to concentrate on their doctoral thesis.

*“I am asking your opinion: I hope this perspective or all this are not staggering? Weekends are not your working time, so the answer comes when it comes.”*

*“You are so wonderful, because you read your e-mail on Sundays, too! Thank you for the feedback, I feel better now. The skis were gliding in the skiing sortie on Sunday after reading your message.”*





How to get understood correctly; both a doctoral student and a supervisor are thinking about this question. The advantage of writing and e-mail conversation is that the written texts can be read several times and reflected on in peace. Still, the risks of misunderstanding are high (see Tracy, 1997), and a student worries the most in the written communication *“how to pack the message and questions so well that it does not leave chance for misunderstanding.”* Supervision is interaction with a variety of response elements: the expressions of surprise and identification, advice, help offers, objections, answers that aim at normalizing, and interpretation. Interaction may also turn into a struggle of opinions, in which a supervisor’s questions and views are accepted, reflected, or rejected. Admitting one’s own obliviousness, accepting the state of wondering, and the ability to pose questions and problems are the bases of all learning; and the dissertation process is continuous studying to a doctoral student and a supervisor as well.

**The Moments of Discovering Engagement and Balance:** The most inspiring moments in the research work are the insights and even the smallest theoretically or practically relevant findings or discoveries that occur during the process. Finding workable solutions and confirming a clarifying direction may produce enthusing experiences of engagement. The moments of success and the experiences of one’s own proficiency are motivating (Pintrich and Garcia, 1994; Ryan and Deci, 2000). Then, good supervision feedback has two central features: one is informational, and the other is pleasure: *“Now I have to quit grumbling! The next months will be scheduled, and this will proceed according to it (see the schedule as an attachment). Thank you for being so supportive. Now I think I found a new gear again.”*

Skilful supervision consists of appreciating and supportive interaction, but along with the emotional tone, the structure of a supervision conversation is of great importance (Atkins and Brown, 1988).

*“Thank you and sleep well, my supervisor, since you confirmed those to me! This is interesting processing. I have been able to do plenty of specifications today.”*

From a doctoral student’s point of view, the situations of concern should be handled promptly. Answering *“at once,” “immediately,”* or *“quickly”* is helpful and inspiring to a doctoral student, especially when it is a question of facilitating or eliminating problems, offering solutions, or just confirming the selected way. Even matters that seem the simplest or smallest may turn into a stopper if a doctoral student’s feeling of uncertainty swells.

*“Oh wow. That is it! Thanks. Now I see it.”*

*“Warm thanks for your quick feedback - I am speechless with surprise and abashed. I was so scared.”*

**Tolerating Criticism and Positive Feedback:** A doctoral thesis has to meet the requirements that are set for the highest-grade thesis. Achieving this goal rarely happens overnight. Some of the doctoral students proceed with deliberation and diligence, contributing to their thesis phase-by-phase and step-by-step. Sometimes, a student works long periods by himself or herself *“and is ashamed to make a supervisor read the unfinished texts.”* Whatever way the work proceeds, a doctoral student has to learn to





tolerate criticism and corrections, suggestions about one's work (see Cullen et al., 1994). Many may feel the information about their research not being "finished" yet as a verdict. Although a supervisor would assure a student that a thesis is going to improve due to the feedback and to lead to academic appreciation, the doctoral student may be disappointed, annoyed, and insulted because of comments that suggest corrections. Some find it hard to hear that the text has to be shortened, condensed, inserted, or improved: "You could still look at," "search some more," or "continue."

A supervisor's ability to give feedback is being tested. Evaluation and feedback should be concrete and substantive-related, and reflect options as much as possible: "What if you concentrated on this," "Would it be better to emphasize...," "Try to get some more of..." There are abundant resource books to support a supervisor in giving feedback in general (Tracy, 1997), formulating good questions (Lea and Street, 2000), and supervising writing (Booth, Colomb and Williams, 2003).

At its best, a supervision and feedback situation ends with the following question: "What are you going to do next?" Thus, mutual understanding about the direction is confirmed. The answer will sum up the whole supervision conversation and correct potential misinterpretations.

Writing a doctoral thesis leads a student to his or her limits. Therefore, giving positive reinforcement and appreciative feedback for successful solutions is also important (Costley and Armsby, 2007). It is hardly possible to thank too much for proficiency. "This part is good" and "You have finished text here already" may be crucial comments when straddling the troublesome groundsills (Doncaster and Lester, 2002).

**Waiting for the Review Statements and Dissertation:** The examination of a doctoral thesis begins officially when a doctoral candidate and supervisor consider the research ready. Several academic phases and formalities are still ahead. A doctoral student is confronting struggles of a new kind. One has to have patience to wait, nor is one able to hasten the review process by one's own actions. One may also feel tired although "even in a marathon the actual competition starts at the final quarter."

Official feedback consisting of correction suggestions or demands may seem to be criticism that makes one feel annoyed, belittled, defensive, the need to explain, ignore, want to quit ("now I am going to quit this"), feel despair and depressed ("this is not going to work"), hurt and blame, and try to find fault with others ("he or she does not understand me"). Accepting the tenets and hints may require a great deal from both a doctoral student and a supervisor.

Some doctoral students' excitement is just transformed: "When I finally received favorable review statements, it was the biggest joy, and then I started to be nervous about the actual dissertation."

Someone's road seems to end totally: "Is there nothing positive to say about my work? I will move abroad! Or at least, I will become a hermit. Or there is one option, too: I will finish this doctoral thesis."

Another dissects peacefully his or her work and its proceeding: "Writing a doctoral thesis requires self-discipline. Doing these corrections suits me fine."





The acceptance of the doctoral thesis culminates in the public defense that has slightly different features in different countries. The evening preceding the presentation of the dissertation is exciting for the doctoral student, and every minute of the prospective dissertation is important—and long: *“I felt paradoxical. It might be that I am strong and brave or weak and like a mousekin. I am not able to predict, this is my first dissertation.”*

### **5. The Final Step: Will Everything Be All Right if the End Is All Right?**

What does the whole dissertation give in the end, and what kind of marks does it leave? The experiences and significances vary. Nor do the consequences or advantages always meet the expectations. Nevertheless, hardly anyone regrets having the experience and travelling the journey of a doctoral thesis.

Common to all doctoral students are their own change and strengthening. Doing doctoral research and defending it in public represent a mental border crossing. Getting through this challenge assures one of one’s own expertise, gives resources and courage to race to new challenges. Expertise increases, self-confidence strengthens, and responsiveness may increase as well.

*“I will not ever forget the dissertation day, and I was content with myself: I was able to accomplish this.”*

*“The dissertation day was the culmination and the best day of all.”*

Returning to everyday life after graduating as a doctor is not necessarily just sunshine (see Golde and Walker, 2006). Even if one does not find new work tasks that correspond to one’s education, post-graduate studies have anyway provided one with readiness and expertise to develop one’s own work; and the imprints will appear little by little.

Even if a dissertation process did not bring any concrete benefits, it being so immemorial and rewarding is undeniable. After writing a doctoral thesis, a doctoral student is not the same, and something has permanently changed. A doctoral student has had his or her own abilities and resources confirmed.

### **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

A doctoral thesis is the highest-grade academic thesis. It is proof of a doctoral student’s special expertise and learnedness and his or her merit. However, hardly anyone achieves the goal of becoming a doctor by oneself or alone. A doctoral student’s family, friends, employer, working conditions, and the library and other support services are of primary importance to the progress of a doctoral thesis. In addition, the companionship of other doctoral colleagues, scientific conferences, and post-graduate seminars may provide special support and help. The significance of a supervisor is remarkable. It is to a supervisor’s credit to make a doctoral encouraged and stretch to a top achievement. It is the most far-reaching and rewarding thing in supervision.

The doctoral students’ stories show how the development of the supervision system is a central challenge of doctoral education (Green, Maxwell and Shanahan,





2001). The relationship between a supervisor and a doctoral student is a reciprocal interdependency in which both learn, and where the supporting atmosphere, adequate communication skills, and the ability to participate in a personal supervision conversation and group supervision are crucial.

In academic education and supervision, the cognitive processes are at center stage. In addition to the previous, emotions belong essentially to post-graduate education. The joy of knowing and the fear of failure, excitement and relief, the ultimate efforts and overwhelming delight: all these are placed in the doctoral students' stories. Emotions, knowledge, and learning intertwine (Rantala and Määttä, 2010). The emotions affect the energizing of the action, setting a goal, and a learner's attentiveness (Pintrich, 2003). Positive emotions enhance problem-solving skills and logical reasoning, creativity, and social decision-making (Rantala and Määttä, 2010) and increase self-efficacy (Elias, 2004). Faulty reasoning is to think that the negative emotions will always prevent one from learning, but people tend to back away or stagnate in threatening situations, and when being stressed or harassed (Pintrich, 2003). As the dissertation stories in the present article show, emotions are an essential catalyst in doctoral studies as well.

Not enough attention has been paid to the significance of emotions in learning and supervision, and the presence of emotions has been seen as hard to recognize as a part of traditional academic scientific seminars or supervision. The need for constructing a special pedagogy of supervising doctoral theses is most evident.

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## **FİNLANDIYA'DAKİ DOKTORA ÖĞRENCİLERİNİN GÖZÜYLE DOKTORA TEZ SÜRECİ**

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### **Genişletilmiş Özet**

*Problem (amaç):* Doktora tezlerinin sayısı geçtiğimiz birkaç yıl içinde büyük ölçüde arttı. Bu konu ile ilgili bir takım çalışmalar yapılmış olsa da, bir tez sürecinin bir doktora öğrencisinin bakış açısından kişisel deneyimleri bağlamında nasıl olduğu incelenmemiştir. Bir tez süreci önemli bir deneyim ve olaylar zinciridir. Bu araştırmanın temel sorusu; tez süreci doktora öğrencileri tarafından açıklandığı şekliyle nasıl görülmektedir?. Doktora öğrencilerinin kişisel çabaları düşünüldüğünde hangi adımlar bir doktora derecesiyle sonuçlanır? Doktora tezi yazarları bu süreç hakkında kişisel olarak ne düşünüyorlar?

*Yöntem:* Bu çalışma, tez süreci hakkında doktora öğrencileri tarafından yapılan açıklamaları veri olarak değerlendiren bir nitel araştırmadır. tez devam ederken (2005-2008 Yılları arasında) doktora öğrencileri ve onların doktora tezlerinin danışmanlığını yapan kişi arasında yazılmış yüzlerce e-postadan meydana gelmektedir.

*Bulgular:* Bu makale, doktora öğrencilerinin, tez sürecinde insan ilişkilerinin önemine gönderme yaparak, tez danışmanından, yakın arkadaşlarından ve aile üyelerinden alınan desteğin önemini ortaya çıkardı. Bu araştırmada, doktora, beş aşamadan oluşan bir süreç gibi görülüyor ve bu süreçlerin çoğu akademik yaşamda hala yer alıyor. Başlangıçta kararsızlık baskındır ancak motifler çok çeşitli de olabilir. Bu motiflerin bir çoğu, tez sürecinde korunacaktır. Sosyalleşme becerilerin durduğu bitirme aşaması boyunca, doktora öğrencileri ve danışman arasındaki yakınlığın doğal olarak özel ve önemli olmaktadır. Bir eşin anlayışı ve arkadaşların desteği sınırdır. Kişinin kendi istek ve beklentilerindeki gerilme onu daha fazla kamçılayabilir. Birçoğu işlerini bir anca bitirmeyi ister. Belirsizliğin sıkıntısını yaşama, sorumluluğu ve dengeyi keşfetme, eleştiri ve olumlu dönütlere izin verme ve eleştiri için beklerken sabırlı olma benzer diğer deneyimlerdir.

*Öneriler:* Elde edilen sonuçların, müstakbel doktora öğrencileri ve danışmanlarına doktora tez süreçlerinde yardımcı olacağı ümit edilebilir..Çünkü, Bir doktora tezi akademik tezler içinde en yükseğidir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Doktora öğrencileri, Doktora çalışmaları, Doktora tez süreci, Doktora öğrencilerinin danışmanlığı.

