Jyväskylän yliopiston julkaisuarkisto
Jyväskylä University Digital Archive

UNIVERSITY OF JYVÄSKYLÄ

This is an electronic reprint of the original article.
This reprint *may differ* from the original in pagination and typographic detail.

Author(s): Maunula, Minna

Title: Doctoral studies in individual point of view - mixing the macro and the micro levels in everyday life in Finland

Year: 2014

Version:

Please cite the original version:

Maunula, M. (2014). Doctoral studies in individual point of view - mixing the macro and the micro levels in everyday life in Finland. In R. Kumar (Ed.), Proceedings of the International Conferences in Management, Economics and Social Science - MES 2014 (pp. 1-5). IRED - Institute of Research Engineers and Doctors. http://www.seekdl.org/nm.php?id=3583

All material supplied via JYX is protected by copyright and other intellectual property rights, and duplication or sale of all or part of any of the repository collections is not permitted, except that material may be duplicated by you for your research use or educational purposes in electronic or print form. You must obtain permission for any other use. Electronic or print copies may not be offered, whether for sale or otherwise to anyone who is not an authorised user.

Doctoral studies in individual point of view

- mixing the macro and the micro levels in everyday life in Finland

[Maunula Minna]

***Abstract*—This article is based on my doctoral thesis research in Education. The subject of this study was the under 40-year-old female doctoral students with a family. The objective was to understand the experiental stages of lifecourse of the female doctoral students with a family through their stories. In the study chronological and lifecourse continuity are emphasized: past, present and future. The examination is performed mainly from the points of view of a family and of doctoral studies. The family and doctoral studies are placed in both the macro and the micro level when examined with regards to lifecourse; in them the public and the individual meet. How advantageous it is for the female doctoral student with a family to understand the stages and consequences of the process of gaining a doctoral degree, in both the wider and in the individual context?**

Keywords— lifecourse, family, female doctoral student, everyday life, future thinking, understanding, temporality

I. Introduction

In the lifecourse of the female doctoral student with a family factors which are individual and represent the continuity, of which one significant one are doctoral studies, are structured. The doctoral studies have become more commonplace and within reach of an increasingly wider group. The doctoral studies are a multi-dimensional process, in which the different starting points, contexts and objectives build different wholenesses, everyday life and expertise. In the lifecourse of a female doctoral student with a family the doctoral studies are individually placed. The doctoral studies are not separate from other life and contexts but they have their wide reflections both on to the everyday lifecourse of the individual and to the future. At the individual level the doctoral studies stand for a target-oriented and long-term effort. The expertise to be achieved through the doctoral studies is valuable to the individual, business and society. In the examination of the subject the society's macro level as well as the individual micro level are combined.

In figure 1 I present the central starting points and concepts of the study. At the core of the study are the lifecourse and future thinking of the female doctoral student.

Maunula Minna
Jyväskylä University, Kokkola University Consortium
Finland
minna.maunula@chydenius.fi

In the lifecourse of the female doctoral student I concentrate especially on the family, doctoral studies and work. I concentrate on the women's experiences of the comprehensiveness of the lifecourse, of choices and continuity. Furthermore, I concentrate on the future thinking of the female doctoral student: to past, present and future in the context of the changing society and the university. The everyday life, processes and temporality refer to the dialogical nature of the individual and public lifecourse and to their manifestation in different concrete sectors of the lifecourse. In the changing contexts the methodicalness, organization and restrictions colour the lifecourse and future thinking of the female doctoral student. How does the female doctoral student with a family structure the wholeness of her lifecourse and how does the continuity of the lifecourse become concrete in the everyday life of a family? The functional solutions are not given or found by chance, they are chosen by oneself, they are taken into the everyday use and are updated in the changing contexts. The macro and micro level of the lifecourse are in a constant dialogue.

A. *Changes and universities*

Social and global changes are reflected in the universities and doctoral education. The high-quality skills and the centrality of knowledge are emphasized in the global economy. The productivity of also the universities is measured, for example, in the degrees, publications, quality, internationality and in money. In Europe the higher education has been unified, along with others, with the help of the Bologna process and the Lisbon Strategy and they both have a significant role in the doctoral education [1].

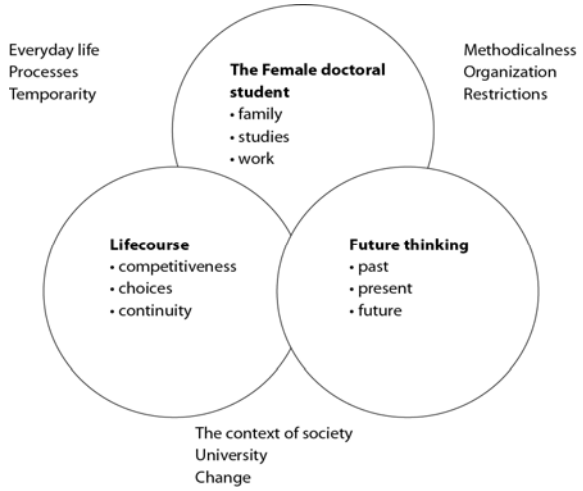

Figure 1. The central starting points and concepts of the study.

Increasing expectations are set for the doctoral education by different quarters. The objective with the comparability of degrees is the promotion of mobility, the shortening of graduating times and also the education which is of higher quality than before and meets the demands of different employment quarters. The starting point is an improvement of the appeal and competitiveness of European science in relation to the other continents. In spite of the common aspirations, the doctoral education is still heterogeneous nationally, according to the university and even according to the field. The objective of universities and the interest of the society is to produce even younger doctors, which the universities are directed towards by financing according to the results and by intensifying the practices in supervision [2].

The changes touch also Finnish science and the doctoral education which is in a central position from the point of view of the development of science. Systematized effectiveness and even better relevance to the working life are sought after for the doctoral education. In Finland the doctoral education has become more common and it has become feminized during the last decades. In Finland about 1600 doctors graduate every year, of whom more than half have been women since 2007, however, different fields have a majority of men or a majority of women [3]. Free doctoral education is arranged in each of the 16 Finnish universities and in principle it is available to everybody, however, the selection for doctoral education is based on the earlier academic performance and on the meritorious research plan [2]. In spite of the aims for equality the heritability of the level of education is still strong. According to the OECD report [4] 68% of the parents of Finnish university students are highly educated.

B. *The future of the doctors*

The doctoral degree qualifies the doctor for the different specialist tasks of working life better than before and also the demands of working life towards the doctors increase continuously [5]. The work is often creative specialist work, in which learning new things and at the same time modifying their own skills and occupational identity are a natural and a continuous process. Of the future doctors only a fraction continue their working career in academic tasks, the majority moves to or continues to be employed in other lines of work [6]; [7]. The working life does not totally realize the doctors' potential yet, nor do the doctoral students and doctors themselves totally comprehend their wide possibilities. The universities have become aware of the challenge and have taken action to improve the doctoral students' readiness for working life. The cooperation of the universities and economic life is a good option for both the different operators and the students [8]. The position of research knowledge and skills are continually emphasized, examples of which are the increased knowledge requirements and the importance of innovations.

In spite of its wide connections and high objectives, studying for a doctoral degree is largely operation at the individual level which is affected by the individual starting points, objectives and contexts. Doctoral studies are undertaken in a number of ways: as work, in addition to work and in many alternating ways and the ones studying for a doctoral degree are also a heterogeneous group. It is advantageous for the doctoral student to realize the demands of the process, the available resources, the opportunities and challenges unfolding in the future and to clarify their own objectives.

C. *Doctoral studies in individual lifecourse*

Alongside the changes and objectives an individual, the doctoral student needs to be considered. In an individual lifecourse the doctoral studies are a significant part of the whole. The diversified lifecourse is a strongly personal project, which consists of different training, relations, networks and family. The pedagogical-sociological concept of lifecourse represents the process of both the micro and the macro level: the social relationships of an individual in a changing society. In the concept of the lifecourse the private and public are combined, furthermore, in the examination the comprehensiveness instead of one sector of lifecourse and the development during the whole lifecourse are emphasized. In the lifecourse the individual's significant life events form the continuum. The lifecourse can be described in a simplified manner as a life in time, in which chronologic, biological, social and historical time take place. [9]; [10]; [11.]

The doctoral studies as well as an individual lifecourse are as a part of the social operation which is affected by other development. In the shared review of a macro and micro attention must be paid to their intersection, the everyday and concrete level of the operation. The reviewing of doctoral education is deepened by the identification and recognition of the interaction between macro and micro levels of the operation: the international cooperation and the uniform objectives create a large frame for the development, the national operation combines the long term major definitions of policy and levels of the everyday operation.

D. *Everyday life and lifecourse*

The diversified lifecourse and the expanded possibilities require the matters to be examined as a whole. Orientation to the future combining different walks of life opens a wider perspective on the life and adulthood. The different life choices and decisions are the everyday combination of the different sectors of life. [11.] Each decision opens or closes doors, on the other hand the opportunities to reconsider the decisions reduce risks and provide the opportunity for different experiments. Even if the plans do not even come true as such, an attempt is made to adapt to the prevailing conditions and to experience the matters as proceeding according to their own plans [12]. Beck [13] emphasizes that the egocentricity is typical when designing one's own life. People want to develop their life as the one they desire and to operate within their own interests and objectives.

The doctoral studies are a demanding project for a woman with a family, where the commitment to them is a precondition for success. The female doctoral students experience enthusiasm and commitment towards their doctoral studies even though the future is open and new challenges arising. The doctoral degree makes the participation in the competition possible and guarantees that the competition steps up. [14.] If one does not perceive the prevailing trends or know one's own direction, they may be faced by an unclear jungle of demands, the conflicting ideas and lack of clarity of the future possibilities. [6.] The doctoral students' thoughts which project to everyday life or to the future have not been really studied, their voices are in the background and in the adaptable role in the studies [15]. However, the major lines and the small implementors should form a dialogical wholeness and pay attention both in the name of meaningfulness and effectiveness.

In particular the under 40-year-old female doctoral students have simultaneously several projects which require time and input in their lives. Combining work and family life as well as the challenges with time usage are current and significant subjects from both the individual and from society's point of view. Big and significant choices become concrete in everyday life and tell more in detail about the value choices that have been made than the celebratory speeches, visions and strategies. The unstable education and labour markets as well as globalization have promoted the modernization and the weakening of traditional values. The earlier sets of norms and the common traditions have become looser, in which case individuality is emphasized. The rapidly changing situations require increasingly flexible methods of adaptation. [8.]

II. Purpose of the study

In this study the lifecourse of the under 40-year-old female doctoral student with a family is examined. In the examination the chronological continuity and comprehensiveness of the lifecourse are emphasized as well as the constant demarcation and negotiation of a private and public sectors of the lifecourse. With my delimitation I direct the attention to the female doctoral student's family, the doctoral studies and work.

The graduating doctors will meet a different reality and future in comparison to earlier decades. The increase in the number of doctors, the change in the form of information and knowledge and in general the change in doctoral education create the need to examine the current practices and foundation of gaining a doctoral degree. The change forces in the discussion about the future of doctoral education and of the prospective doctors. The doctoral education has to answer the demands and the expectations, which are being set also by the future doctors. [6.] In the examination of the doctoral education attention must be paid simultaneously to the different levels of operation: the international cooperation and the uniform objectives create a large frame for the development, the national operation combines longer term major definitions of policy and the levels of everyday operation. At the individual level carrying out the major lines eventually become everyday actions.

The main question of the study are:

1. How does the under 40-year-old female doctoral student with a family understand her lifecourse before the doctoral studies?
2. How does the female doctoral student organize her everyday life and connect the different sectors of her lifecourse?
3. How does the female doctoral student with a family perceive her own future as a prospective doctor?
   - 3.1 How do the present doctoral studies direct future thinking?
   - 3.2 How do the separate sectors of the life combine in the plans as a whole?
4. What types of female doctoral students form in the examination of the lifecourse?

The research material consisted of 12 narrative theme interviews. The female doctoral students in the research carried out their studies in three different Finnish universities and were at different stages in their studies in different fields. The analysis of the material was the content analysis of themes which develop hermeneutically as well as narrative classification stemming from the themes and constructing of types of stories. The study is placed in the area of the pedagogics and represents theoretically and methodologically the pedagogical-sociological lifecourse research examined in a hermeneutical manner as well as applying a phenomenological and narrative approach.

III. Results of the study

The results of the study conveyed the comprehensiveness and continuity of the lifecourse told by the female doctoral students with a family. The female doctoral student constructed their life actively as directed by their family and their doctoral studies.

A. *Early years*

The stages of lifecourse for the women studying for a doctoral degree were fairly homogeneous. Families of their childhood and early school years were described most often as ordinary. The academic careers began varyingly individually and the early stages were reflected in the future stages of academic and other life. Comprehensive style of operation and a way of organizing everyday life that were adopted during the master's degree studies became fairly static. In the whole lifecourse the time of establishing a family in relation to the stage in the studies was also reflected. The ones who started a family early adopted in their circumstances an efficient

organization and diverse activity. The significant separating factors proved to be the starting motives of doctoral studies and understanding the demands of the process of gaining a doctoral degree. The motives of examined female doctoral students for starting the doctoral studies were fairly light: over half started the doctoral studies directed by external motivation factors, such as in order to avoid unemployment or because of the lack of other alternatives. The different factors of lifecourse overlapped with each other and with the wholeness. The different factors were tightly connected and formed a dynamic wholeness of lifecourse. The past stages of the lifecourse had significance in the present and future of the lifecourse.

B. *Commitments and organizations*

According to the results, reflecting on the starting motive of doctoral studies was useful and when the doctoral studies proceeded, its development deepened the experienced meaningfulness and commitment to the studies. The superficial motive was associated with the serious considerations of discontinuing the doctoral studies and with difficulties in everyday organization. If the doctor studies were regarded as meaningful, then the everyday organization also ran well. All the female doctoral students experienced everyday challenges and over half had considered discontinuing their studies at some stage.

The method of undertaking the doctoral studies determined the process of gaining a doctoral degree, the forming of the everyday life's conditions of lifecourse and also partly the future for female doctoral students with a family. The doctoral studies that were undertaken as work fitted well into family and other life. Studying alongside other life threw the everyday life into busy performing and into constant organizing. The study showed that the time of starting the family in relation to the stage in studies was significant: the ones who had begun the family early carried out doctoral studies part-time and drifted to the margins also in working life. All the female doctoral students organized their everyday life for the advantage of the family but did not sacrifice themselves. The family supported as well as challenged the doctoral studies.

C. *New challenges*

The results showed that gaining a doctoral degree was an intermediate stopping point in the lifecourse of a women with a family. After graduating as a doctor new challenges would dawn. The future women doctors were especially worried about their employment in the uncertain labour market of temporary employment. None of the women in my study had permanent employment. To the ones who had studied in addition to working, getting employed was a constant challenge and a primary objective. Gaining a doctoral degree is a big threshold to the ones who had undertaken doctoral studies as their work: the work and the studies would end simultaneously. The women appreciated the work experience they had gained and regarded it as useful from the point of view of future employment. One did not want to expand the proportion of work in the lifecourse and everyday life in the future, their other life also was valuable according to the female doctoral students. Other challenges for the future for the women with a family were internationalization, competitiveness and the conflicts to do with use of time. Meaningfulness, versatility and peacefulness were expected for the future. The opportunities for independent choices were regarded as important.

D. *The types of female doctoral students*

From the material three types of female doctoral students and their lifecourses were analysed: Project leader (6), Survivor (4) and Seeker (2), whose lifecourses and use of time formed differently. *The Project leader* undertook her doctoral studies as paid work and had advanced the furthest in the studies of all the types. The Project leader divided lifecourse events into sections and reserved separate time resources for each event. She had acquired work experience comprehensively also from outside the university. In the Project leader's family there was one child and another one was hoped for. The lifecourse was planned and clearly consistent. *The Survivor* carried out her doctor studies in addition to her other life. The primary objective was to obtain employment in their own field fast. The Survivor actively organizes her everyday life in the family, her uncertain career of temporary work and her doctoral studies. The Survivor's work history was mixed and the family ready established. The lifecourse was of ordinary everyday life and continuous organization. *The Seeker* undertook her doctoral studies as paid work but experienced that she was at a dead end with them. She considered discontinuing the studies, but an economic responsibility for the family narrowed the choices. The Seeker hoped for an addition in the family in the near future, which would make taking a break from a heavy phase of life possible. The Seeker's work experience was limited. The direction of the Seeker's lifecourse was lost and the situation required making decisions.

IV. Conclusions

Based on the findings of the study, it is important to personally understand the lifecourse continuity. The past stages of the lifecourse, such as the formed idea of the demands of the studying, the nature of the acquired work experience and vision of the development of own career are reflected in the choices in the present and in the possibilities perceptible in the future. The hopes and objectives for the future direct the operation of female doctoral student in the present.

The doctoral studies and the family are in a significant position in the construction of the lifecourse and everyday life of the female doctoral student with a family. The family and

doctoral studies determine the overall context of lifecourse as most central and become attached to the chronological continuum: to past, present and future. The doctoral studies and graduating as a doctor are not only a separate degree but they have the wider effects of which a doctoral student must be aware of from the beginning of the process.

It is beneficial for the one considering the doctoral studies to clarify the stages of doctoral process, advantages and disadvantages beforehand. With wider supervision, the mentoring and closer working relationships could be used to strengthen the development of expert identity, reduce the experienced uncertainty regarding employment and relevance of own skills in working life. Tighter forms of cooperation between economic life and the university would reduce prevailing uncertainty between different quarters. The wider awareness of the common objectives and of the current state is an advantage for all involved in doctoral education, economic life, university and an individual.

The future appears partly steady and continuous, partly changing and uncertain. The family represents the continuity, the studies and work are the changing factors. The female doctoral students' attitude towards the future is mainly trusting, it is believed that things will work out in one way or another. The female doctoral students determined as turning points of the lifecourse establishing the family, and graduating as a doctor in the future as well as the future employment.

The doctoral studies have a deep significance for the individual as well as for the society and economic life.

Acquiring the doctoral skills in efficient, meaningful and productive use is a common advantage and objective. The changing contexts need to be paid attention to also in the doctoral education. One possibility could be increasing the transparency of different paths of gaining a doctoral degree. Young people aiming for a career in research could continue in the education pipeline to the doctoral degree and graduate to the researcher's tasks. Another route to become a doctoral expert directed to adults contains a stronger contact with the working life. The graduating expert doctor of the working life would have a strong link to working life during the process of gaining a doctoral degree and after it, an awareness of its demands and expectations. In practice this kind of trend can already be perceived, but in the education different doctors are not yet identified. The criteria of the selection for the doctoral education can be tightened and include the claim for a more profound understanding. The doctoral education is not a choice to fill the lack of choices.

The doctoral studies are a part of the individual lifecourse in which the different factors and stages weave into wholeness. The surprises and unpredictability are part of the lifecourse but rapid changes require planning and spontaneous activity. The doctoral studies are placed in an interesting crossroads in the lifecourse. In the doctoral student's lifecourse the privacy of the individual life and the terms of public boundaries meet. Also the tightening dialogue of education and of working life becomes visible. In the everyday life of the female doctoral student with a family the nuances of realization of individuality of the lifecourse will become visible and intelligible.

References

[1] A. Bitusikova, ”New challenges in doctoral education in Europe.” In Changing practices of doctoral education, D. Boud and A. Lee, Eds. London: Routledge, 2009, pp. 200-210.

[2] J. Stubb, K. Pyhältö, and K. Lonka, ”The experienced meaning of working with PhD thesis” Scandinavian Journal of Education Research vol. 56 (4), 2012, pp. 439-456.

[3] K. Hiltunen, and H.-M. Pasanen, ”Tulevat tohtorit. Jatko-opiskelijoiden kokemukset ja arviot tohtorikoulutuksesta 2005.” Ministry of Education, Finland 2006.

[4] OECD “Education at a Glence” 2012.

[5] D. Dill, S. Mitra, H. Jensen, E. Lehtinen, T. Mäkelä, A. Parpala, H. Pohjola, M. Ritter, and S. Saari, ”PhD Training and knowledge based society: An evaluation of doctoral education in Finland. Finnish Higher Education Evaluation Counsil. International Postgraduate Students Mirror 2006. Högskoleverket report 2006:29R.

[6] D. Boud, and A. Lee, ”Introduction” Changing practices of doctoral education. London: Routledge, 2009, pp. 1-9.

[7] V. Baker, and L. Lattuca, ”Developmental networks and learning: towards an interdisciplinary perspective on identity development during doctoral study”. Studies in Higher Education vol. 37 (7), 2010, pp. 807-827.

[8] H. Aittola, “Doctoral education and doctoral thesis – Changing Assessment Practices”. Cultural Perspectives on Higher Education, New York: Springer, 2008, pp. 161-177.

[9] D.J. Levinson, et.al. “The seasons of a man´s life”. New York: Ballentine, 1978.

[10] D.J.Levinson, “The seasons of a woman´s life. New York: Ballentine. 1996.

[11] M. Diewald, and K.U. Mayer, “The sociology of the life course and life span psychology: integrated paradigm or complementing pathways?” Advances in Life Course Research vol. 14 (1-2), 2009, pp. 5-14.

[12] R. Barnacle, and I. Mewburn, “Learning networks and the journey of becoming doctor”. Studies in Higher Education vol. 35 (4), 2010, pp. 433-444.

[13] U. Beck, ”Risk society. Towards a new modernity.” London Sage, 1992, pp. 92-94.

[14] D. Leonard, R. Becker, and K. Coate, “To prove myself at the highest level: The benefits of doctoral stydy”. Higher Education Research and Development, vol. 24 (2), 2005, pp. 135-150.

[15] D. Leonard, and R. Becker, “Enhancing the doctoral experience at the local level.” In Changing practices of doctoral education, D. Boud and A. Lee, Eds. London: Routledge, 2009, pp. 71-86.