Developing mutually beneficial understandings of academic cultures in an international higher education Master's degree programme

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ABSTRACT

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International degree programmes (IDPs) in higher education institutions (HEIs) are no new concept. They represent teaching and learning environments (TALEs), in which a variety of academic cultures intersect. The research aims to understand this diverse teaching and learning community. The objective of the study is to particularly explore the student perspectives navigating this TALE. It is hoped that this research will help providers of IDPs better respond to the diverse experiences and backgrounds of their participants.

The case study looks at the stories of sixteen students, interviewed in pairs, sharing their academic journey in the Master's programmes of Educational Leadership and Educational Sciences at the University of Jyväskylä, Finland. Findings are based on a holistic and iterative data analysis process of the collected qualitative data.

The narratives explore a variety of academic and professional backgrounds intersecting in the programmes and influencing the current learning environment. The stories told and the reflection processes within the interviews highlighted key disjunctures; disconnection between what the participants assume, expect and experience in the Finnish TALE.

The study concludes that the academic cultures of the enrolled students and the host HEI need to be more visible and understood at both stakeholder levels, students and staff involved in creating, administrating and teaching. The study closes with a comment on the importance of understanding student viewpoints and perspectives in order to create a mutually beneficial TALE.

Keywords: internationalization in higher education, international degree programmes, student perspective, academic culture, academic shock, academic integrity, educational leadership

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ABBREVIATIONS

EDU	Master's degree programme in Educational Sciences
EFL	English foreign language
ENL	English native language
HE	Higher education
HEI	Higher education institution
IDP	International degree programme
JAMK	Jyväskylä University of Applied Sciences
JYU	University of Jyväskylä
MPEL	Master's degree programme in Educational Leadership
TALE	Teaching and learning environment

1   INTRODUCTION

As higher education institutions (HEIs) increasingly offer degree programmes conducted in English in English Foreign Language (EFL) countries (McCambridge & Pitkänen-Huhta, 2012, p.165), the factors supporting the importance of *this* research are connected to HEIs embracing internationalization and offering such programmes resulting into increasingly diverse teaching and learning environments (Nieto & Zoller Booth, 2010, p.406). According to Lam and Wächter (2014, p.17), Finland belongs to the Top Four leading European countries providing HE in English after The Netherlands, Denmark and Sweden.

> These 'international' programmes attract students and teachers both from within Finland and from around the world, forming remarkably multicultural, multilingual discourse communities where English is used both for participation and learning and for instruction and assessment. (McCambridge & Pitkänen-Huhta, 2012, p.165)

From the first locally established university in Turku, to regionally spread, to nationally active and nowadays globally engaged HEIs, the Finnish HE sector has changed since its founding in the mid 17th century. It has been influenced by not only its ruling by Sweden and Russia, but moreover by the urge of the Finnish population to find its own identity and independence. Universities nowadays encompass a high level of internal autonomy. With the implementation of internationalisation activities as an integral part of the HE policy, the Finnish HE sector has enjoyed an increase in incoming international students as well as programmes taught in English (Välimaa, Fonteyn, Garam, Van den Heuvel, Linza, Söderqvist, Wolff, & Kolhinen, 2013). With the aim of strengthening the Finnish economy for global competitiveness through and by internationalization in Finnish HEIs, the role of the student has changed as well:

> In Finland, the national rhetoric has become more economic and political as policy makers view international students as a source of revenue, highly skilled labor, and as a means to be globally competitive (Välimaa & Weimer, 2014, p.708).

The students in international programmes and their learning outcomes are assumed to be therefore of crucial importance:

> Globalised knowledge economy urges higher education institutions to move from internationalisation to global dimensions with emphasis on learning and learners' perspectives (Lehtomäki, Moate, & Posti-Ahokas, 2015, p.1).

However, students in international programmes in Finnish HEIs seem to experience a variety of challenges related to the academic culture and pedagogical approaches driving the Finnish HE environment due to a lack of familiarity, which is not explicitly expressed and explained by the host culture (Välimaa et al., 2014, p.41; pp.45-46, p.52). Additionally, Välimaa and Weimer (2014) highlight that

> Finnish HEIs are struggling to become more international in their teaching and administrative practices in addition to the increased emphasis put on internationalization cooperation in research (p.708).

My earlier research in this area explored the understanding of expectations regarding ethics and responsibility in an international undergraduate programme at the Jyväskylä University of Applied Sciences (JAMK) among three stakeholders: the institution, its teaching staff and students. Results support above mentioned challenges. They indicated that culturally based expectations and behaviours intersect and have the tendency to create challenges and misunderstandings regarding on what is considered academically correct behaviour (Crawford & Niemi, 2015; Niemi 2015). Being an international student myself and being emerged in the Finnish HE setting over a longer period of time, I myself have experienced challenges due to a variety of teaching and learning styles impacting a student's motivation, learning outcomes as well as wellbeing.

This research focuses on an international graduate programmes taught at the University of Jyväskylä (JYU). The aim of this study is to shed light on the diverse teaching and learning community, in which the majority of stakeholders are EFL speakers, and to especially explore the perspectives of students navigating in this teaching and learning environment. By sharing the findings of this research, it is hoped that providers of international programmes can better respond to the diverse experiences and backgrounds of their participants.

2 THE ACADEMIC ENVIRONMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Expectations within a HE setting can vary and it is important to note that those expectations are not universally transferable. Being enrolled in a HEI means, generally speaking, experiencing a variety of teaching methods and styles as well as learning approaches (Cottrell, 2003, p.11). This can include distant, independent and group work studies, as well as a variation of theoretical and practical approaches. This may result in seeing stakeholders, such as lecturers because of their varying degrees of responsibilities, as well as students from the same cohort, much less than expected and that needs to be taken into consideration (Cottrell, 2003, pp.11-12). Also, notions of or understandings what is involved in learning may differ from previous experiences as now a high level of independence and responsibility occurs expecting maturity in decision-making, time management and independent study focus (Cottrell, 2003, p.13). The following student characteristics may apply to an efficient and successful HE student: independence, self-motivation, openness to working with others, ability to work things out for yourself, ability to set goals to improve your work, ability to organize your time, and ability to work out when, how and where you learn best (Cottrell, 2003, p.21). Additionally, so-called interpersonal skills play a role in nowadays HE learning environment considering a shift from merely individual's achievements to working with others taking into consideration also nowadays working environment. Interpersonal skills include being supportive, encouraging, collaborative, co-operative, being able to offer constructive criticism and being able to receive criticism. Cottrell (2003) notes that expectations and limitations should be set clear from the beginning in order to avoid potential difficulties/threats such as imbalance in interactions, unequal share of workload or (un-) intentional academic dishonesty or even discrimination as it may impact the group work output negatively and therefore group assessment (pp.97-105).

A rather practical skill set includes academic skills in research, reading and writing, which are expected of the students to utilize in various ways in order to fulfil assignments (Cottrell, 2003, p.115). They usually develop and improve during the time spent at the HE (Cottrell, 2003, p.143). Since students' objectives of learning may vary, certain academic aspects may occur without relevance. Cottrell (2001) explains that:

> Students often need acculturation to higher education, including rationales for its practices, clarification of terms, and explanations for the demands made upon them as students (p.29).

> The demands and constraints on the time of today's students mean that they cannot afford to make for deficits in resources or teaching in the way a student could in the past (p.37).

These requirements outlined by Cottrell (2001) might be significantly different from studying experiences in other learning environments. The next part of the thesis explores therefore key concepts addressing the academic environment in international programmes in HE from the student perspective. An international programme is within this paper referring to an education setting in HE, in which students from abroad (and the host country) are enrolled to a programme fully taught in English. Students are the crucial anchor point in this research. Students enter HEIs from various positions in life: some with work experience, some with a prior degree in HE, some directly from high school, just to mention some and therefore, "they bring a range of personal attributes and skills which can be harnessed to enrich the teaching and learning experience" (Cottrell, 2001, p.37). Students represent the main core of a study programme - they can be seen as clients, which need to be served. Therefore, their experiences and learning outcomes are of positive interest considering that, for example in Finland not only local students are nowadays seen as a source for the labour market:

> In Finland, the national rhetoric has become more economic and political as policy makers view international students as a source of revenue, highly skilled labor, and as a means to be globally competitive (Välimaa & Weimer, 2014, p.708).

Such matters are addressed in the following subchapters looking into the academic environment of HEIs.

2.1   The Academic environment of international programmes

In today's world of increasing student mobility and internationalization, hence gradually growing diverse student body (Nieto & Zoller Booth, 2010, p.406; Perkinson, 2006, p.1; Ryan, 2011), the so-called "academic game" (Cameron & Kirkman, 2010, p.1) has changed immensely as a variety of teaching and learning backgrounds intersect within the chosen host institution. Those teaching and learning dynamics are continuously reshaped, and naturally culturally oriented factors influence such environments as

> [a]ll our students enter university with expectations, knowledge and behaviour which have been shaped not merely by their individual personalities, but, more fundamentally, by their previous educational experiences [...] (Ballard & Clanchy, 1991, p.10, in Ramburuth & Tani, 2009, p.183).

> Both students and teachers bring their social backgrounds, language backgrounds, literacy histories, pedagogical philosophies and content approaches with them to class (McCambridge & Pitkänen-Huhta, 2012, p.167).

Hence, the students' own perspective of a teaching and learning environment (TALE) and that of the entered host culture TALE intersect and challenges may arise. A crucial question emerges: "How do international students respond to two different educational systems premised on very different beliefs, aims, and values?" (Fang, Clarke, & Wei, 2015, p.11) and its variety of assumptions and expectations it has on the teaching and learning behaviours. The main focus herein is to stretch the importance of pre-existing teaching and learning habits as well as assumptions on how teaching and learning is constructed and implemented. Hence, it is important to optimize and enhance awareness and eventually reduce tensions regarding challenges and misunderstanding which may develop throughout for example a graduate programme in HE. Challenges and misunderstandings hereby mainly refer to the occurrence through 'Academic shock' described in the next chapter. Aspects on how potentially mitigate such challenges and possible negative encounters in international HE programmes are addressed in the then following chapter entitled 'Academic support measures'. The following sections outline some key considerations that have been associated with the internationalization of academic institutions.

2.2   Academic shock

The phenomenon of academic shock can be evident when for example a student experiences a phase of transitioning, adjusting and adopting from familiar, well-supported networks to unfamiliar, differently supported educational, but also personal settings (Cameron, 2005, p.24; Ryan, 2011). Though the notion of academic shock can also be experienced by students switching from one educational system to another, for example from a community college to a university as researched by Cameron (2005) in which she highlights the increased negatively perceived pressure due to "increased faculty expectations and increased workload" (p.32). In this paper though, academic shock is referring to Ryan's view, in which student mobility and internationalization imposes challenges towards a new, and host-culture influenced TALE, which varies from one's own teaching and learning culture, generating challenges that not only students, but also the institution's staff (teacher and administration) experience when they encounter a variety of culturally-influenced teaching and learning approaches. The student represents hereby an individual and it is important to keep in mind that the community within a university programme consists of various individual stakeholders, which may result into various levels of academic shock.

The source of the so-called academic shock may arise due to the following: differences in teacher-student relationships (Ryan, 2011), student-student relationships (Penn-Edwards & Donnison, 2011, p.568) as well as the host's institutions academic criteria such as assessment (Faiz, 2011, p.501; Ryan 2011) which may impact the student's learning performance negatively (Lillyman & Bennett, 2014, p.67).

Difficulties arise as institutions tend to assume that students are able to gather such academic needs in an independent manner (Cameron & Kirkman, 2010, p.3; Ryan 2011), which may result in lack of student engagement seeking academic support (Penn-Edwards & Donnison, 2011, pp.566-567). Such expectations are elevated by the phenomena of culture and language shock (Cameron & Kirkman, 2010, pp.2-3; Ryan 2011), whereby Ryan (2011) stresses

that "the effects of academic shock can persist much longer than the effects of culture and language shock". Moving to a new country and being surrounded by its unfamiliar features such as food varieties, transportation, accommodation, and personal relationships may result into the experience of 'culture shock' (Ryan, 2005, pp.149-150). Varying verbal as well as non-verbal communication aspects such as accents, embedded cultural cues in conversations, but also academic language can be described as 'language shock' (Ryan, 2005, pp.149-150). Academic language and writing academically in English when being an EFL speaker can be a "heavy burden" (Pecorari, 2013, p.105) and "support needs to be tailored accordingly" (Pecorari, 2013, p.105).

Academic shock is therefore a factor that may contribute to what may be perceived as an international student being a threat to the TALE (Lillyman & Bennett, 2014, p.64) creating "misunderstandings and disharmony" (Faiz, 2011, p.501) if there is lack of awareness of inter- and cross-cultural understanding (Lillyman & Bennett, 2014, p.65) and lack of appropriate support (Lillyman & Bennett, 2014, p.67; Ryan, 2011). It can be argued then, that if expectations towards student groups are not clearly communicated and may not be explicitly and clearly defined, actions may result in ignoring certain aspects of what is considered academically correct (Jolly, 1998, p.3). This can lead for example to actions by students, which are seen by the institution as wrong, which may be referred to "cheating without intent" as experienced in a culturally diverse setting (Crawford & Niemi, 2015, pp.141-142).

2.3   Academic support measures

It is known that adjustment phases after arriving in a new cultural environment may vary (Van Oudenhoven & Van der Zee, 2002, p.679) and may be difficult (Andrade, 2006, p.135), which highlight the importance of acculturation programmes including guidelines, training and support benefitting the creation of a mutual understanding among the given groups (Graeffe & Lestinen, 2011), particularly student-student and teacher-student interactions. On the one hand,

often there are assumptions of what students' capabilities and abilities consists of upon entering the HE environment and a lot of time the students do not match the "expected profile" (Cottrell, 2001, p.56). On the other hand, students may have the assumption and therefore expectation, in which staff "will take responsibility for their learning and attendance" (Cottrell, 2001, p.72) which does not reflect the HE study reality. Making these assumptions within the academic environment explicit is therefore crucial considering that "students may be used to a very different set of academic conventions" (Cottrell, 2001, p.200).

Research suggests that organizational learning and the concept of dissemination as an aim for shared understanding through e.g. dialogue with its described characteristics of equality, empathy and the discovery of assumptions might aid to avoid "misunderstandings and errors of judgement" (Yankelovich, 2001, p.13, cited in Collinson & Fedoruk Cook, 2007, p.115), supporting a continuous improvement process within the given environment (Collinson & Fedoruk Cook, 2007, p.115) emphasizing that "Schools can learn only when there is explicit or implicit agreement about what they know - about their students, about teaching and learning, and about how to change" (Louis, Kruse, & Raywid, 1996, p.11). Additionally, Ryan's concept of "three levels of shock" and the term 'academic shock' which students experience when not studying in a familiar education setting, aids to create understanding and awareness of the variety of expectations and assumptions in the given TALE among the stakeholders (Ryan, 2005, pp.149-150). There seems to be a need for strategic measures in order to meet the needs of diverse expectations of stakeholders when addressing strategic leadership in connection with multicultural implications for the classroom environment emphasizing especially student-centeredness (Dimmock & Walker, 2004, p.51).

For example, one of the major difficulties seems to be on how to develop a sensitive and meaningful understanding of what embodies academic dishonesty (Ashworth, Bannister, & Thorne, 1997, p.191; Jolly, 1998, p.4; Simkin & McLeod, 2010). According to Ashworth and colleagues, who research students' perception of academic dishonest behaviour in a UK-context, plagiarism was for example a

newly introduced concept for some students during their studies resulting into anxiety and uncertainty (1997, pp.200-201). One cannot assume that a host university's norms and values of what constitutes ethically and morally correct behaviour to easily transfer into newly arrived students, especially in their first year of studies. An additional concern is the one of "cultural or moral acceptance of cheating as an established norm" (Simkin & McLeod, 2010, p.450). For some students, "copying from a source (is viewed) as a laudable study skill" (Pecorari, 2013, p.22). The commitment of the HEI (Williams & Hosek, 2008, p.103) may play an important role in ensuring an atmosphere where learning is enabled:

> Only when institutions treat ethics as an essential element of all conduct – at school, at work and in personal lives – will students see the importance of infusing ethics in their academic conduct (Williams & Hosek, 2008, p.104).

Furthermore, understanding the viewpoint of the students seems to be necessary in order "to communicate appropriate norms" (Ashworth et al., 1997, p.201).

2.4   Finnish higher education sector

Educational organizations or communities have their distinct characteristics depending on where they are located around the globe and they might differ immensely in teaching and learning approaches according to their national developments (Imants, 2003, p.294). Especially past events with their distinctive cultural context have shaped these environments.

Therefore, it is important to also look into the development of the Finnish HE system, which continuously developed throughout time since its establishment in 1640 with the founding of its first HEI: the University of Turku (Välimaa, 2004, p.31). The creation of a HEI in Finland aimed to enhance the 'Finnish' territory reigned by Sweden (Välimaa, 2004, pp.31-32). With increasing interest in Finnish history and the communal folklore, glimpses of Finnish nationalism emerged (Välimaa, 2004, p.32). When Sweden lost the geographical region of Finland to Russia in 1809, Finland received the so-called status of 'Grand Duchy' granting internal self-government rights (Välimaa, 2004, p.32). Continuing the Swedish manner of operating, the Finnish HEI remained in

religious hands (Välimaa, 2004, p.32). With increasing resources, the HEI grew in staff size (Välimaa, 2004, p.33). Additionally, the students' academic freedom and moral growth gained importance (Välimaa, 2004, p.34). On one hand, with the civil service reform in 1817 aspects of morality and honesty were increasingly stressed (Klinge 1989, 1997, cited in Välimaa, 2004, p.33), on the other hand opinions of students were monitored trying to assure loyalty to the Russian empire. The relocation of the HEI to Helsinki after the Great Fire in 1827 can be seen as a political decision (Välimaa, 2004, p.33). In the mid 19th century, a university reform took place with the University becoming a "national institution with its own statues, separate from the Russian higher education system" (Välimaa, 2004, p.34). By 1917 Finland was its own independent state, its development was highly connected to movements in the HE setting (Välimaa, 2004, p.34). The University provided a pillar for not only discussion, debate and interaction, but was also the locus of change and development of the Finnish identity (Välimaa, 2004, p.34).

Until the late 1950s, HE settings were mainly for upper class societal members. The so-called welfare-state agenda and the majority of parties routing for "creating equal educational opportunities - including equal access to higher education" (Välimaa, 2004, p.38) enabled an expansion towards mass HE. Externally, the regional policy principle supported these developments by allowing regions to establish own HEIs (Välimaa, 2004, p.38). The preferences of that policy were adjusted resulting into no university establishments after the 1980s (Välimaa, 2004, p.39). So-called academic drifts enabled colleges to receive university status. (Välimaa, 2004, p.39).

With the fast-moving expansion during the 1960s and 1970s of the HE sector throughout the country, structures and practices were in need of reform aiming to serve Finnish needs (Välimaa, 2004, p.39). Instead of dealing with reduced budgets unlike in other Western European countries, the Finnish HE was profiting from an increase in basic resources (Välimaa, 2004, p.39). In the 1990s, the need for more efficiency initiated to focus more on institutional autonomy and academic leadership (Välimaa, 2004, p.39). Implemented with the Higher

Education Policy in 1991, goals were now in accordance with the OECD goals of the 1980s (Välimaa, 2004, p.39). With the hit of an economic recession in the early 1990s, monetary support slowed down, and budget cuts resulted into a two-year period of having no regulations for the development of HE as the Higher Education Development Act was cancelled in 1993 (Välimaa, 2004, p.40). The Finnish HE was more and more reliant on private and public funding (Välimaa, 2004, p.40). Developments led to the provision of internal autonomy to universities enabling competition between and within HEIs (Välimaa, 2004, p.40).

Culturally and politically, Finnish identity is highly connected to and shaped through the developments of the education sector, especially the HE environment. Therefore, they characterize the Finnish HE sector. Seen as national ('loyal') and therefore rather homogenous institutions, they nowadays are influenced by a global force and a global orientation may bring "new funding sources and partners", predicts Välimaa (2004, p.41). Internationalization has become a national higher education policy goal with publication of the 'Strategy for the Internationalization of Higher Education Institutions in Finland 2009-2015', in which the then current Minister of Education and Science Henna Virkkunen highlights the connection of Finnish society and the Finnish HE sector as well as the global outlook:

> The higher education institutions have contributed positively to the renewal of society and the development of the economy and productivity. The significance of higher education institutions is emphasised in a global operating environment. In addition to market position and capital, competition is increasingly based on an educated workforce and on research resources. Production of new knowledge and competence as well as their versatile utilisation will remain the basis of our success also in the future (Ministry of Education, 2009, p.4).

She elaborates that the Finnish HE sector is lacking internationalization and therefore represents a weakness (Ministry of Education, 2009, p.5). Internationalization as well as internationalization at home has since then rapidly been recognized and is visible foremost in having every Finnish HEI offering a minimum of one programme taught in English (Maiworm & Wächter, 2002, cited in McCambridge & Pitkänen-Huhta, 2012, p.165; Välimaa et al., 2013, p.89) and the increase of enrolled degree and exchange students from abroad to

international programmes offered by universities and universities of applied sciences (see Figure 1). Although the different international programmes represent different levels of education as well as duration, they are often seen as one entity constituting a diverse student body (Välimaa et al., 2013, p.89).
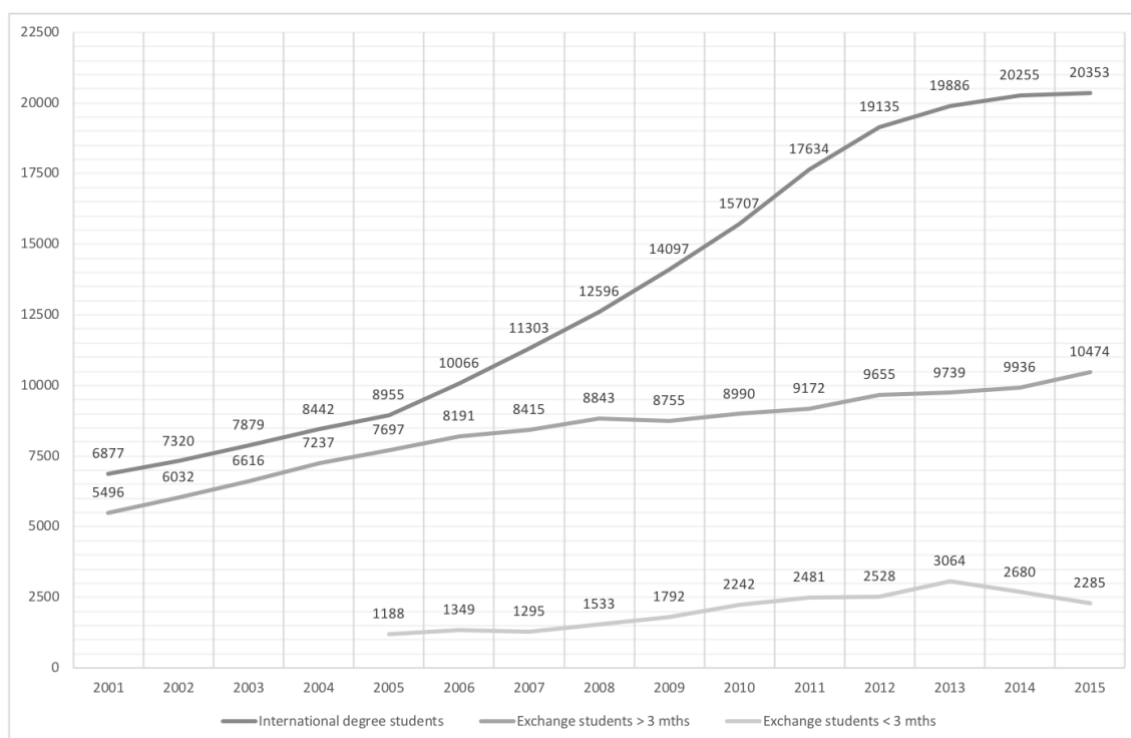
FIGURE 1. Student mobility in Finland 2001/2005-2015: International students (Centre for International Mobility, 2016a, p.6), Exchange students staying more than 3 months (Centre of International Mobility, 2016b, p.5) and Exchange students staying less than three months (Centre of International Mobility, 2016b, p.6)

Keeping the historical and societal developments in mind, the Finnish education TALE is characterized through "flexibility and loose standards, broad learning combined with creativity, and intelligent accountability with trust-based professionalism" (Sahlberg, 2007, p.152). Lewis describes honesty and trust as "basic values and the building blocks of Finnish society" (2005, cited in Sahlberg, 2007, p.157) and Sahlberg (2007) adds:

> While the principle of justice (i.e. equity and equal opportunities) has remained a leading value of Finland's long-range education vision, strong, systematic emphasis on leadership at all levels of education began to emerge in the 1980s. Since then, it has remained clear that education policies must be based on depth, length and breadth of leadership, and that diversity and resourcefulness are conservative drivers of educational change (p.167).

Next to the notions of equity, equality, honesty and trust, Niemi (2012) describes the aim of the Finnish educational system to be continuous learning, "devoid of so-called 'dead-ends'." (p.25). Curricula-makers and -designers, also in the HE sector, are given high autonomy (Niemi, 2012, p.31).

2.5   The Academic environment of international programmes in Finland

As mentioned earlier, internationalization of HE is part of and therefore integrated into the goals of the HE policy. More than 400 international degree programmes (IDP) exist in Finland, with the majority being implemented at universities (Välimaa et al., 2013, p.37).

> The attractiveness of Finland as a business, work and living environment must be increased. Internationalisation of higher education, research and innovation systems is at the core of societal renewal. Moreover, internationalisation of higher education institutions promotes diversity in the society and business community, international networking, competitiveness and innovativeness, as well as improves the well-being, competence and education of the citizens. (Ministry of Education, 2009, p.9)

In their comprehensive study on the evaluation of IDPs in Finland, Välimaa and colleagues found out that around half of the Finnish HEIs have internationalization stated as part of their core strategy. Other reasons include:

- Regional importance and fulfilling the needs of working life (especially UASs)
- Reputation, competitiveness and quality
- Competence creation and pedagogical reasons
- Multiculturalism and the creation of an international campus
- Networks and networking
- Quantity targets for mobility set by the Ministry of Education and Culture (Välimaa et al., 2013, p.34, p.38).

IDPs are part of the existing HEIs, their faculties or departments and they do not indicate a notable difference in "structure, management, QA, marketing and recruitment of student" (Välimaa et al., 2013, p.54). In this paper, the focus is on the student perspective and their experiences. Välimaa and colleagues (2013)

address student experiences and the challenges they may have encountered while navigating in a Finnish HEI as well. Students for example...

> ... found the level of independence expected of them and lack of specific instructions to be difficult during their studies (p.41).

Students as well as teaching staff for example…

> … expressed a desire for better English language skills among the staff and the students (especially the Finnish students) as well as better preparation of the international students for the pedagogical approach in question - that is, the Finnish way of teaching (Välimaa et al., 2013, p.45).

Working in groups appears difficult due to differences in learning and studying styles (Välimaa et al., 2013, p.46). Possible support measures include courses related to intercultural competences in order to understand the Finnish teaching culture and Finnish learning styles (Välimaa et al., 2013, p.45). Due to the lack of familiarization with the host environment, time and resources are needed to provide effective support measures. (Välimaa et al., 2013, p.46). This can be for example implemented in so-called orientation events for students, this includes also the Finnish academic culture and the theme of ethics (Välimaa et al., 2013, p.69). Teachers as well as administrative staff involved in supporting international students' integration process into Finnish (academic) life "need to be provided during the year and not only during the orientation week" (Välimaa et al., 2013, p.77).

Teaching staff requires to have a certain skill set of competences reflecting their work in an IDP such as English language proficiency and intercultural communication skills (Välimaa et al., 2013, p.49). Generally, teachers seem to have the opportunity to reach out for additional training regarding these competences, but it is ultimately a personal decision and initiative to apply for additional training and often it is neglected because "teaching and pedagogy in general are less valued than research" (Välimaa et al., 2013, p.50). Research activities impact the career path. (Välimaa et al., 2013, p.50). On one hand, the international students and therefore atmosphere enriches the working life of the teaching staff; on the other hand, it creates more challenges and therefore extra work, e.g. because

Students from different backgrounds may also need more information on and guidance in understanding Finnish academic culture because they do not understand the system here (Välimaa et al., 2013, p.52).

Additionally, it is important to note that international students represent a diverse group of people with various motives: "For this reason, we should not assume that they have similar needs or similar academic motives and motivations" (Välimaa et al., 2013, p.80). This is the case not only in the Finnish context but can be seen and experienced in other IDPs globally (Pecorari, 2013, p.134) It seems like international students struggle with the Finnish academic culture being characterized by individual planning and self-paced study (Välimaa et al., 2013, p.72); they are perceived as less independent than Finnish students (Välimaa et al., 2013, p.81).

One of the inherent reasons for the implementation of IDPs is to provide an opportunity for students to shift from the TALE to working life in Finland enhancing the competitiveness of Finland, upon graduation. According to Välimaa and colleagues (2013) there seems to be currently a clash of understanding, which may result into rather contradictory outcomes:

A clear misunderstanding seems to exist between the stakeholders of HEIs and the HEIs themselves; based on the feedback that we received, neither the stakeholders nor the HEIs see their role as essential for promoting the employability of foreigners who took part in an IDP programme (p.88).

2.6   University of Jyväskylä, Finland

The Finnish HE sector currently consists of 14 universities and 23 universities of applied sciences (Ministry of Education and Culture, n.d.). Whereas the university of applied sciences have a practical approach offering "pragmatic education that responds to working life needs", universities "focus on scientific research and education based on it" (Ministry of Education and Culture, n.d.). The University of Jyväskylä (JYU) belongs to the latter group. JYU was established in 1863 as the first Finnish-language teacher training college (Times Higher Education, n.d.; University of Jyväskylä, 2017), which in 1966 received University status (University of Jyväskylä, 2017). JYU consists of six faculties

offering study programmes to around 15.000 students, of which around 1.300 are international from over 100 nationalities (University of Jyväskylä, 2018).

JYU is continuously engaging in educating students in English-taught Master's programmes. Figure 2 provides details on the number of applicants to these programmes since 2015. The majority of applicants come from outside the European Union countries and represent in this four-year period on average 69 per cent, applicants from European Union countries 11 per cent, and applicants from Finland 20 per cent. (Jyväskylän Yliopisto, n.d.; V. Aumanen (personal communication, April 10, 2018)). The student participants in this research represent the cohort 2015 and 2016. They therefore do not belong to the cohort, in which the non-EU/EEA students are required to pay tuition fees (4.000 to 18.000 Euros depending on the IDP), which started in 2017 (Finnish National Agency for Education, n.d.). The aim of IPDs in Finland is also recruiting students to the Finish workforce; therefore, foreign students also represent an economic benefit (Välimaa, 2013, p.88).
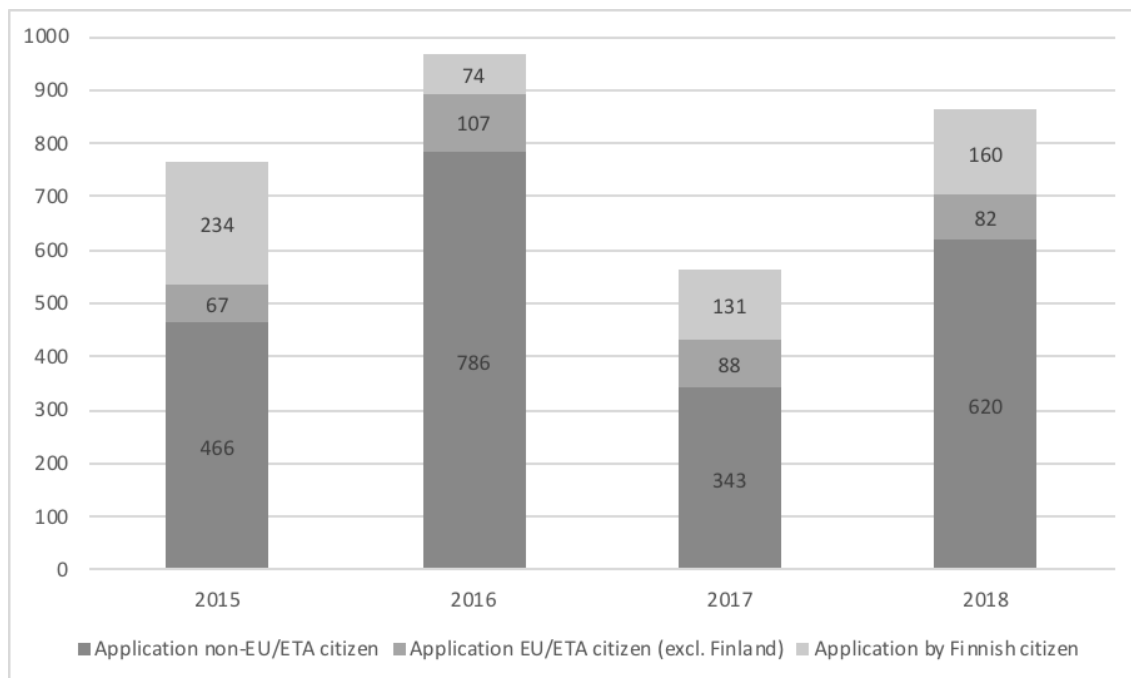
FIGURE 2. Number of applicants to English taught Master's degree
programmes at the University of Jyväskylä
(Jyväskylän Yliopisto, n.d.;
V. Aumanen (personal communication, April 10, 2018))

In this research, the student perspective of students studying in the Master's programme of Educational Leadership (MPEL) and Educational Sciences (EDU). MPEL exists since 2007 (University of Jyväskylä, 2014, p.3) and EDU since 2013 (University of Jyväskylä, n.d.d, p.1). Both are two-year programmes of 120 ECTS credits implementing a phenomenon-based curriculum (University of Jyväskylä, 2014, p.5; University of Jyväskylä, n.d.d, p.3). Details about the aims, objectives, purpose, target group and gain for the target group of the MPEL programme can be found in Table 1.

TABLE 1. General overview of the Educational Leadership
programme offered at the University of Jyväskylä, 2007-2017
(University of Jyväskylä, n.d.a, n.d.b, 2009, 2010, 2014)

Curriculum from:	2007-2009; 2008-2010; 2010-2012; 2012-2014 / 2013-2015	2014-2017
General	"The Master's Degree Programme in Educational Leadership is a 2 year programme of 120 ECTS credits providing both theoretical knowledge and practical skills required in the complex field of educational leadership in different settings." (University of Jyväskylä, n.d.a; n.d.b, p.5; 2009, p.5; 2010, p.5)	"The Master's Degree programme in Educational Leadership is a 2 year programme of 120 ECTS credits, but it may include additional studies which exceed the minimum. It provides both theoretical knowledge and practical skills integrating the key elements of educational administration and leadership required in the complex field of educational leadership in diverse settings." (University of Jyväskylä, 2014, p.4)
Aim of the programme	"... develop(ing) internationally oriented professionals and experts for the field of education and educational leadership. Learning is built on the scientific expertise of the participants operating in a collaborative network of universities and practitioners." (University of Jyväskylä, n.d.a; n.d.b, p.5; 2009, p.5; 2010, p.5)	The objective of the MDP in Educational Leadership is to prepare highly competent educational leaders and managers for improving the quality of education and educational reform in the diversifying contexts of the globalized world, where education is the key to the success of both individuals and societies (University of Jyväskylä, 2014, p.4).
Purpose of the programme	"... build(ing) a genuine international learning environment utilizing the best possible resources of the participating universities." (University of Jyväskylä, n.d.a; n.d.b, p.4; 2009, p.4; 2010, p.4)	-
Intended for	"... students who have acquired a Bachelor's degree in education or some related field." (University of Jyväskylä, n.d.a; n.d.b, p.5; 2009, p.5; 2010, p.5)	"...students with a Bachelor's degree in education or a related field." (University of Jyväskylä 2014, p.4)
Gain for the student	- a good knowledge base of the major subject - facilities to apply scientific knowledge and practice - skills in operating in working life as an expert for the development of the field - eligibility and capability to pursue scientific postgraduate education - possibilities to develop their communication and language skills. (University of Jyväskylä, n.d.a; n.d.b, p5, 2009, p.5; 2010, p.5)	Demonstration of knowledge, values, skills and attitudes necessary to: - Learning and guidance - Competence and expertise - Scientific knowledge - Interaction and cooperation - Education, society and change (University of Jyväskylä, 2014, pp.5-6).

There is no information available for the EDU programme for its curriculum from 2013-2014, the 2014-2017 curriculum states though a similar objective than the MPEL programme:

> The objective of the Master's Degree Programme in Education is to prepare highly competent educators to raise the quality of education in the diversifying contexts of the globalized (University of Jyväskylä, n.d.e, p.2).

Appendix 1 and 2 provide additional information on the development of the curricular for respective programmes with looking especially into the courses provided for orientation and research. After thoroughly explaining the research background, the theoretical foundations in the next chapter, aid to understand theoretical foundations of the research.

3   THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The following section of this paper covers aspects regarding the theoretical framework including the theoretical base. Theoretical foundations can be based on different paradigmatic assumptions of approaches and are the basis for "preferred ways of understanding reality, building knowledge, and gathering information about the world" (Tracy, 2013, p.38). As a researcher myself, its descriptions aided to understand that the current paradigm boundaries are not as clear as initially thought, but to rather see them as a collection of tools to create a category and/or classification for the researcher's own view within the implementation of qualitative research (Tracy, 2013, pp.38-39). Tracy (2013) refers hereby to (1) positivist and post-positivist, (2) interpretive, (3) critical, and (4) postmodern/ poststructuralist paradigms. The following so-called assumptions of these paradigmatic approaches are reduced in this research paper to the following paradigmatic approaches described in Table 2.

TABLE 2. Applied assumptions of Four Primary Paradigmatic Approaches
(based on Tracy, 2013, pp. 48-49)

	Applied Paradigmatic Approach	Explanation
Ontology (nature of reality)	Interpretive	Socially constructed
Epistemology (nature of knowledge)	Interpretive	Produced; dependent and value-laden; subjective, co-created
Goal of research	Interpretive Critical	To understand why and how; to be useful and interesting; to provide opportunities for participant voice To ask "what should be" to improve and transform; to disrupt power relations
A good researcher…	Interpretive	Is a self-reflexive research instrument, aware of biases and subjectivities; background is imperative for understanding the research
Method (strategies for gathering, collecting and analysing data)	Interpretive	A value choice with ethical and political ramifications; multiple methods show the contexts' layered and partial nature; hermeneutical; seeks verstehen
Focus	Interpretive Critical	"Making sense" of scene from the participants' point of view – examining not only behaviors but intentions and emotions Pointing out domination; aiming toward emancipation and transformation
Theory creation	Interpretive, Critical, Postmodern/Poststructural	Inductive, expansionistic and iterative. Researchers hold on loosely to tentative explanations, compare them with emergent data, revise their claims, go back to the data and repeat. As a result, the study may solve a problem, attend to a given controversy, critique an existing school of thought, strengthen a fledging theory, or construct a new one.

Table 2 recognizes the interpretive paradigm as dominant throughout the
research, i.e. "reality and knowledge are constructed and reproduced through

communication, interaction, and practice" (Tracy, 2013, p.40). This allows the researcher to take the position of a mediator, who is therefore a minor part in the production of reality by conducting this research; through communication, interaction and practice the participants are the main producer of reality and knowledge.

Within the interpretive paradigm the term and 'verstehen', a concept derived from German philosopher Wilhelm Dilthey aiming towards 'empathic understanding' (Tracy, 2013, p.49). In order to reach such understanding, the implemented research methods accompany these stances of an interpretive paradigm. Critical perspectives of the paradigmatic approaches add to the interpretive perspective when it comes to the goal and the focus of the study amplifying the notion of understanding, but also eventually influencing future actions.

The researcher takes the stance that an academic (HE) institution cannot transfer its academic culture, approaches to learning and teaching as well as internal operating modes directly and immediately to students when entering an educational environment, they are not familiar with. Adjustment and adaptation are a process, which take time and require discussion and negotiation.

Educational research is hereby understood within the definition of Edward, who connects educational research with "continual meaning making" and being "an activity in which engagement with its field of study is crucial" (Edwards, 2002, p.158). Hence, the aim of this research is to immerse into and be engaged in the educational setting in order to understand the given educational setting and provide insights, which may be heard and impact stakeholders which have the chance to implement improvements or even change. Research here is understood to "support reflect[ion] and forward-looking policy-making (Edwards, 2002, p.159).

4   PRESENT STUDY

The implementation of this research is based on conversations with students, but also the inherent impact of the researcher oneself being part of the study programme and the shared experiences being among a diverse student cohort. This lead to the implementation of this research, which aims to cover aspects of student needs and the current implementation within the programmes of Educational Leadership (MPEL) and Educational Sciences (EDU) at the University of Jyväskylä (JYU). The aim is that stakeholders, also outside of this programme, may be able to understand the important aspects of creating a study environment, in which students of various backgrounds are able to cope and supported with such matters as academic shock from the initial beginning of their studies until the end, without avoidable complications and/or misunderstandings.

4.1   Research aims and objectives

As the research aims to understand and create awareness and understanding of the current situation of students being educated in an English-taught programme, in this case at JYU the overarching theme is related to the statement by McCambridge and Pitkänen-Huhta "*Both students and teachers bring their social backgrounds, language backgrounds, literacy histories, pedagogical philosophies and content approaches with them to class*" (2012, p.167). In international programmes in HE a variety of education systems, which are highly influenced by the education system of the host institution, therefore collide and interact. This research particularly focuses on what it means to study in an academic environment in a Finnish HEI providing students the opportunity to share their experiences and thoughts with specific focus on the engagement in academic work and the academic environment. The research tries to create an understanding of the ***disjuncture perceived between the prior and current***

experiences of students in an international Master's degree programme and therefore tries to explore the following questions:

1. What kind of different academic cultures come together in an international Master's degree programme?
2. What are the perceived responsibilities of the stakeholders interacting in the Master's degree programme?
   a. Who are the perceived stakeholders?
   b. What are the perceived responsibilities?

Education research in this study focuses on exploration aiming "to flesh out and broaden our understanding of specific issues" (Curtis, Murphy, & Shields, 2014, p.1) and concentrates on theme of 'Teaching and learning: Curricular and pedagogical practice', which "has understandably become a mainstay of educational research" (Curtis et al., 2014, p.5). The following subchapters provide the necessary insights to the conducted research justifying the research design, methods and analysis.

4.2 Research methods and data

With this and the generated research questions in mind, a case study was regarded as an appropriate and reliable approach, especially with the aspect in mind to have an "evaluative intent" (Simons, 1989, p.114). The "entity of intrinsic interest" (Simons, 1989, p.116) of this case study are the student experiences in an international programme. The researcher represents an internal stakeholder being a student herself in the MPEL Master's degree programme. Therefore, the terminology 'internal case study' is appropriate (Simons, 1989, p.128). A case study is focusing on the "specific rather than the general - a choice of depth over breadth" (Burton, Brundrett, & Jones, 2008, pp.66-67).

A qualitative interviewing method was chosen to be relevant, which in this study is referring to pair interviews. A qualitative research method in form of interviews provides a way of collecting purposeful and a rich set of information,

and "opportunities for mutual discovery, understanding, reflection, and explanation via a path that is organic, adaptive, and oftentimes energizing." (Tracy, 2013, p.132). Patton (2002) describes that the circumstances of a qualitative research "take(s) place in real-world settings and the researcher does not attempt to manipulate the phenomenon of interest" (p.39). Flexibility and depth are considered important; therefore, a semi-structured interviewing process allows being guided by a set of key questions (Burton et al., 2008) enabling an "option of systematically comparing and contrasting data across participants" (Tracy, 2013, p.140) enriching the research. Participants are hereby and foremost in this research encouraged to discuss and elaborate on certain narratives exploring experiences and perspectives which is termed also 'narrative interviewing' (Tracy, 2013, p.141). Additionally, this approach adds value in form of interactivity:

> In this way focus groups can be transformative - raising participants' consciousness about certain issues, or helping them to learn new ways of seeing or talking about a situation (Tracy, 2013, p.167).

Initially, the research was designed to have focus group discussions including three students. Due to scheduling arrangements, the interviews were adjusted to include two students and therefore are referred to the above-mentioned pair interviews. The interview questions were generated by the researcher (see Appendix 5) and are supported by a questionnaire (see Appendix 6), which was sent to the confirmed participants in advance (content of mail see Appendix 4). The questionnaire, though it might generally concern a larger population (Burton et al., 2008, p.80), aimed to collect useful information prior the pair interviews in order to utilize the actual interviewing time efficiently. More details regarding that can be found in the next subchapter.

paradigm:	interpretive
approach:	internal case study
nature of evidence:	qualitative
methods:	questionnaire focus group discussion
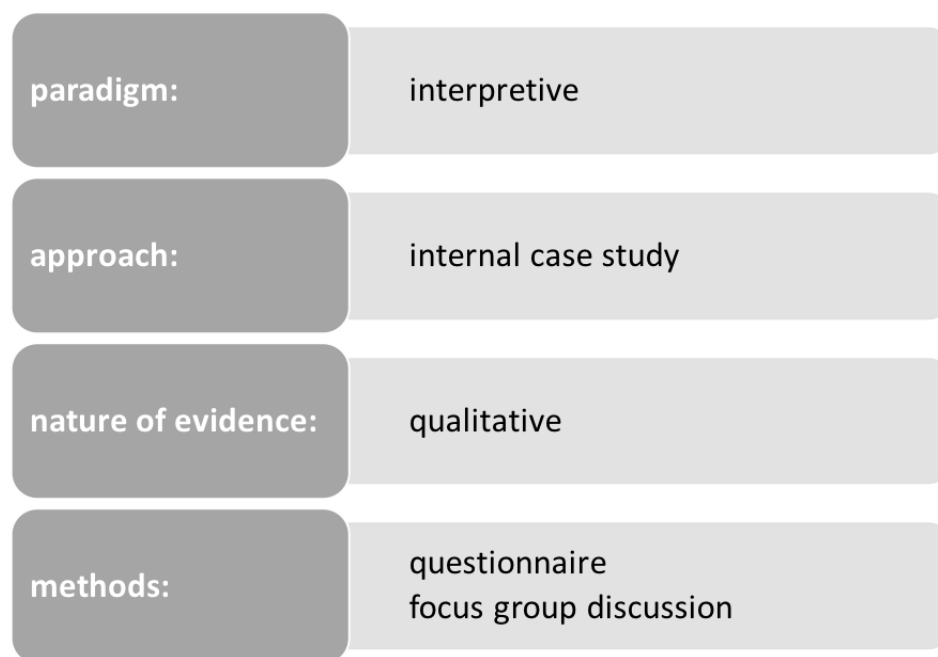
FIGURE 3. Research overview (adapted from Burton et al 2008, p.65)

Figure 3 provides an overview of the implemented research; details on the participants as well as the process are explained in the next subchapter.

4.3   Research participants and research process

As this research is considered an internal case study focusing on the perceptions and experiences of students of the MPEL and EDU Master's degree programmes, ideal research participants were located within these two programmes representing "the total number of possible units or elements that are included in the study" (Gray, 2004, p.82; cited in Burton et al., 2008, p.46). The research participants or so-called population of this study is limited, but adequate. Respecting the purpose and qualitative nature of this research, non-probability sampling applies best. Within this sampling approach, a variety of sampling methods can be utilized (purposive, quota, convenience or volunteer, snowball sampling) (Burton et al., 2008, pp.47-48). Hereby the researcher considers especially the accessibility and availability of potential research participants. Not only is the sampling pool of vital importance, so is the sampling size (Tracy, 2013,

p.138). A voluntary participation was encouraged by announcing and inviting students of the respective programmes over two channels: emails sent out by the respective coordinators as well as the social media channel Facebook because of existing groups for the programmes (see Appendix 3). Robson (2002) criticizes the sampling method as being "least satisfying" (p.265; cited in Burton et al., 2008, p.47). It may neglect the responses of participants who for example may be not having the time to join or have not been reached over either channel. Additionally, it may be perceived as the easiest and least time-consuming and therefore 'lazy and not credible' solution (Tracy 2013, pp.134-135). In this research, it needs to be highlighted that not necessarily the convenience of the sampling approach resulted into the choice of sampling, but the purposeful fit within the research. An ongoing recruitment process of participants supported to schedule the so-called pair interviews on the spot allowing to distribute the discussions over a longer period of time.

The data collection consists of two parts: eight semi-structured pair interviews with students of the MPEL and EDU Master's degree programme conducted at JYU. According to Tracy (2013), five to eight interviews can be considered as 'pedagogically valuable' (p.138). Prior the implementation and conduct of the pair interviews by the researcher, each participant filled out a so-called pre-questionnaire providing demographic information as well as study background information in form of dichotomous, multiple-choice, ratio data and open-ended responses. This information also aided as a way to introduce participants to each other. The face-to-face interviews were conducted in the premises of JYU; they were audio-and video-recorded with the equipment available at these premises. Table 3 provides an overview of the scheduled pair interviews, which took place between the 24th of April 2017 and the 17th of May 2017 with an average length of 59,375 minutes.

TABLE 3. Date and lengths of the scheduled pair interviews

Pair interview	Date	Lengths
Interview 1	24.04.2017	≈ 1h 11 min
Interview 2	04.05.2017	≈ 1h 08 min
Interview 3	04.05.2017	≈ 59 min
Interview 4	08.05.2017	≈ 43 min
Interview 5	09.05.2017	≈ 1h 05 min
Interview 6	09.05.2017	≈ 56 min
Interview 7	10.05.2017	≈ 54 min
Interview 8	17.05.2017	≈ 59 min

It is important to keep in mind, that the participants of this study compile of individuals with various degrees of familiarity with each other (from 'none' to what one would refer to 'friends'). They furthermore represent a group of people which may differ from other student intakes of the Master's degree programmes. The next part provides insights about these participants, which were acquired through two main sources: the pre-questionnaire sent before the pair interview took place and the transcribed content of the pair interview.

As mentioned earlier, in order to maintain anonymity, age, nationality and gender of the single participants will not be elaborated on. A total of sixteen students participated, the average age was 28,31 years, the majority of the participants were female (N=11, 68,75 %), males were represented by five students (N=5, 31,25 %). In total, twelve nationalities and eleven mother languages were represented in the discussions.

TABLE 4. Numeric overview of the studied Master's degree programme

Master's degree in Educational Leadership		Master's degree in Educational Sciences		Total (%)
n=11 (68,75%)		n=5 (31,25%)		16 (100,00%)
1st year student	**2nd year student**	**1st year student**	**2nd year student**	**Total (%)**
n=5 (31,25%)	n=6 (37,50%)	n=2 (12,50%)	n=3 (18,75%)	16 (100,00%)

The majority of the students are from the Master's degree programme in Educational Leadership (MPEL) (N=11, 68,75%); five students are from the Master's degree programme in Educational Sciences (EDU) (31,25%). 43,75 per cent (N=7) are first-year students and 56,25 percent (N=9) second-year students (see Table 4).

After the interviewing process, the interviews were transcribed by the researcher. Interviewees were assigned with a code name (P1 to P16). Throughout the transcription process additionally mentioned names of students, teaching and administrative staff were also coded and anonymized accordingly. The next section addresses the procedures and practices implemented assuring a sense-making data analysis resulting into a reliable, high-quality and ethically responsible findings section.

4.4 Data analysis

Presenting findings in a manner recognizing consistency, credibility and integrity follows a 'holistic' approach, i.e. that the research questions are supporting the structure of the findings sections (Burton et al., 2008, p.144). With a comprehensive qualitative data collection on hand, the findings are trying to provide a deeper understanding on the issues addressed. In this research, the data analysis process is iterative, i.e.

a reflexive process in which the researcher visits and revisits the data, connects them to emerging insights, and progressively refines his/her focus and understanding (Srivastava, & Hopwood 2009, p.77; cited in Tracy 2013, p.184).

The recorded interviews were conducted and transcribed by the researcher. The first phase consisted of reading through the transcribed material trying to make sense of possible themes and patterns. Burton and colleagues (2008) explain that especially "quoting from respondents is able to offer insight and humanity into the analysis" (p.147). Statistical details are noted down in form of participant information. Computer-aided approaches for analysing are limited to Microsoft Excel and Word. A printed hard copy of the transcriptions aided to draw connections, which resulted into several stages of data reduction: *Firstly,* the material was read through several times. Through this 'date immersion phase' (Tracy, 2013, p.188) thoughts on interpretation emerged. Within this phase, all for this research considered irrelevant information pieces were neglected. In this first phase, transcribed content was digitally moved from the particular transcription of the specific pair interview, which were until that point kept separately, into one document compiling all information. *Secondly,* themes and patterns were categorized into so-called support themes. The emerging themes of support aided to create an understanding of the perceived responsibilities and stakeholders involved. *Thirdly,* the focus shifted back to the research questions aiming to highlight the disjuncture in an international Master's degree programme following the advice from Tracy (2013) to "move from emergent and descriptive coding to more focused and analytic coding" (p.195). Hereby cues addressing the student needs and support measures aided to identify challenges, difficulties and possible disjunctures: 'different/differently/differences, differentiation, unbalance, difficult/difficulty, confusing/confusion, challenging/challenge, frustrating/frustration, expect/expectation, assume/assumption, little idea, no idea, I do/did not know, I knew zero, I have never, I am not familiar with, I am/was not sure, I do not understand, started to realize, comparing/compared to, I do not remember, I cannot really tell, I have learned nothing' aided in the analysing process. The following two example quotations add to the identification of disjuncture:

> It sounds like there is no coordination or communication between different areas of the university or faculty members to think about what is with other students need and how we can support them in their learning. (P4, Interview 2)

> Yeah, I don't know. I feel sometimes that there are some choices that should be made a bit more clearly. Like, do we want to focus on the open atmosphere of Finnish education where everything is possible, or do we want these specific academic skills, do we want to cater to students' needs or do we want them to do these things? Or do we find a way in the middle somewhere? But, it's drifting a bit and it's also… within the programme there is huge differences. (P6, Interview 3)

Predominantly, the stories told and the reflection processes within the pair interviews allowed to recognize disjunctures. Some participants wondered about and questioned certain aspects of implementation during their studies at JYU. In order to highlight the experiences and thoughts of the individual participants the data reduction process does also include the profiling of the students (see Appendix 8 & 9).

4.5 Validity, reliability and generalizability

Every so often, the conduct of a qualitative research is implemented on what could be considered on a small-scale level within a specific setting (Burton et al., 2008, p.168; Patton 2002, p.39). Unlike quantitative research, which relies on varying extents of statistical information being analysed supporting factors of validity, reliability and generalizability (Burton et al., 2008, p.168), the scope of this research is limited to a specific setting with a limited number of participants navigating in this setting.

In this research, a specific setting, the TALE of students enrolled in specific international programmes at a specific HEI in Finland and their unique thoughts and experiences are explored and thus, represent a unique research setting. Therefore, aspects of generalizability are limited, and the recurrence of similar results is unlikely, but also not aimed for. As Edwards (2002) notes: "Educational research should not be limited to evaluating existing practices and identifying those which seem to be the most generally effective" (p.158). On the same note, reliability, which refers to the "degree of consistency with which instances are assigned to the same category by different observers on different occasions" (Hammersley, 1992, p.67; cited in Burton et al., 2008, p.168) may be considered

questionable. The 'observer', i.e. researcher, is a student within the specific research setting and therefore certain contextual aspects and insights might be on a different level of understanding and so-called 'claims of subjectivity' (Burton et al., 2008, p.168). This position will be elaborated in the next chapter addressing ethical considerations.

In educational research, the outcome(s) potentially call(s) for discussion as the current aim of this stage of the research is awareness building. Trustworthiness of the collected data is dependable on the participants responses and hence, dependable on the methods and their execution (Burton et al., 2008, p168).

4.6   Ethical considerations

"All human research has ethical dimensions, decision-oriented human research most of all" (Simons, 1989, p.115). Interpretative approaches in (educational) research ask for responsibility (Edwards, 2002, p.159). Considering those aspects, ethical considerations were thoroughly taken into consideration and respect also the interpretive research paradigm (Burton et al., 2008, p.62).

Anonymity of the participants: Case studies portray individual participants sharing their views and thoughts, which are of informative and also of influential nature. Therefore, participants' anonymity in social research is often not applicable and sometimes the need is questionable (Saunders, Kitzinger, & Kitzinger, 2015, p.629; Simons, 1989, p.117, p.131) because participants are possibly able to at least identify themselves as well as their respective pair. Additionally, participants may be identifiable by stakeholders of the respective degree programmes. This may represent an ethical threat to the thought of provided confidentiality of provided information (Simons, 1989, p.117). The individual participants represent students enrolled in an international programme an JYU. Their 'recruitment' is based on a voluntary basis by announcing a 'safe space' for sharing as student participants may be hesitant to share for example negative experiences. Within this research, their

anonymity is considered assured by "actively obscuring any features which may identify them" (Curtis et al., 2014, p.186), for example neglecting the provision of demographic information as age, gender and nationality may be the easiest methods of identifying a participant. A research participant is hereby coded as 'P'. Any other stakeholders mentioned within the interviews are treated in a similar way; though their positions and/or connections to certain courses within the programme may reveal their identity in an unavoidable way. In this research, the advice by Saunders and colleagues (2015) is respectfully followed: "along which researchers balance two competing priorities: maximising protection of participants' identities and maintaining the value and integrity of the data" (p.617).

The participants of this study have been informed during the recruiting process that their anonymity will be assured. Additionally, information were provided in form of a consent form confirming their participation in this research project, its aims and possible impacts (see Appendix 7). The possibility of withdrawal from the research was provided. The consent form was signed by the interviewee and interviewer. A scanned soft copy was provided to the participants after completion of the interviews including a summary and a thank you note by the researcher. If of personal interest of the participants, the provision of results is assured accordingly. A permission is required to receive access. A consent form is often seen as a vital piece of information flow enabling an ethically conducted research (Curtis et al., 2014, p.188; Tracy, 2013, p.172). Considering the fact that the participants shared their personal journey throughout their studies to a certain time in point, personal feelings and experiences of one participant may or may not have influenced and/or guided the responses of the respective pair within the interview.

Processing the data: The recorded data was transcribed by the interviewer, i.e. the researcher allowing accuracy avoiding possible threats of misinterpretation and/or misunderstanding. As mentioned in the data analysis process, especially the profiling process tries to ensure an honest presentation of the experiences of the individual participants for the reader of this study.

Researcher's personal stance: as mentioned above, the presence of a fellow student at the researcher of this study has possible impacts. Therefore, in order to minimize potential aspects of bias by the researcher, this part is considered as important to be included in this ethical considerations sections ensuring transparency, credibility and reliability.

> Our identities as researchers are created in our actions and in the meanings made of them. Meanings are constructed and given value in the communities to which we belong (Edwards, 2002, p.167).

Prior research in this area, being a student in an international degree programme myself as well as conversation and observations with students studying in an international programme have increased the personal interest in continuing to explore the nature and perspective of students in international degree programmes in Finland. There seems to be a pre-existing set of assumptions on how students are able to cope and navigate in a Finnish HE setting. My personal aspiration is to shed light and increase awareness on those matters. By sharing the thoughts and experiences of the participants, it is hoped that the developers and providers of international degree programmes are able to better respond to the diverse experiences and backgrounds of their participants. It may also provide insights to future students about the Finnish TALEs. Considering the status of student in this specific programme as the researcher, of which the participants are recruited from, can be considered as problematic. I rather had the feeling of students appreciating being listened to with the hope that aspects of their shared experiences may be heard. It is believed that trustworthiness by the researcher and the research participants throughout the implementation of the research was in existence. The next section 'Findings', supported by the profiling of the participants (see Appendix 8 & 9), comply with above written ethical considerations.

5   FINDINGS

The findings section aims to give a description of the results obtained from the pre-questionnaire and the interviews conducted. It hereby tries to make connections of the shared experiences and thoughts provided by the student participants. The findings are presented in the flow and structure of the research questions provided earlier. Quotations enriching the context are indicated with the letter Q plus its respective number and the information of the person talking with the letter P and its respective participant number. An overview can be found in the Appendices (see Appendix 10, 11, 12). For example, Q1-P5 would be quote one by participant five.

In order to understand the variety of academic cultures within the Master's degree programme of EDU and MPEL, the findings highlight the importance of being informed about prior study and work experiences of the students. Therefore, the first subchapter purposefully elaborates on the backgrounds of the participating students. The second subchapter then looks into the perceived responsibilities of the stakeholders described by the interviewed student participants by first providing an overview of the stakeholders mentioned and then characterizing their perceived responsibilities. Identified disjunctures in an international Master's degree programme are identified throughout and are highlighted and elaborated on.

5.1   Academic cultures in an international Master's degree programme

The following section aims to describe the participants' higher education background prior to their studies at the University of Jyväskylä. It focuses on their language and study environment and experiences. So-called 'profiles' were created as part of the data reduction process consisting of information describing their backgrounds (see Appendix 8) The subsequent section aids to form an

understanding in form of providing an overview of the present academic cultures.

Insights into the individual student participants prior the studies at JYU: The participants' study experience prior their studies at the University of Jyväskylä are summarized in Tables 5 and 6. A quarter (N=4) of the participants represent English native language (ENL) speakers. They all completed a Bachelor's degree in their respective home countries in English with one student submitting a Bachelor's thesis in English. Three quarters (N=12) are non-native English speakers from which nine have completed their degree in the respective native tongue, five submitting a thesis. Three of the non-native English speaking students have completed their degree in English with one student submitting a Master's thesis in English. One EFL speaking student has completed a Bachelor's degree completely in an ENL study environment. Five students have completed a minimum of one semester abroad fulfilling the time as exchange students (N=3) or interns (N=2): two in an ENL study environment, three in a EFL study environment.

Considering the current study programmes, it is also interesting to look at the context of the previous study programme as well as the working experience. Nine out of the sixteen participants have a study background in teaching (N=5) and education (N=4). That does not necessarily mean that those participants also have teacher work experience. From five participants (N=5) it is known that they have such experience.

TABLE 5. Overview of the participants study and work
experiences prior their studies at JYU
(ENL = English native language, EFL = English foreign language) (cont.)

	English native speaker	Study abroad	Latest completed degree, language of completion	Submission of thesis, language of completion	Former studies related to teaching/ education	Teacher (work) experience
P1	-	Exchange in ENL environment	combination of Bachelor's and Master's in native tongue	-	teaching	-
P2	X	Exchange in EFL environment	Bachelor's in English (native tongue)	-	teaching	None-little
P3	-	Bachelor's degree in ENL environment	Bachelor's in English	-	-	X
P4	-	-	Bachelor's in native tongue and English	-	teaching	X
P5	-	-	Bachelor's in native tongue	-	-	-
P6	-	Internship in EFL environment	Bachelor's in native tongue	in English	teaching	X
P7	-	-	Bachelor's in English	-	-	?
P8	X	Internship in EFL environment	Bachelor's in English (native tongue)	in English (native tongue)	education	?
P9	-	Exchange in ENL environment	"between" Bachelor's and Master's in native tongue	in English	teaching	?
P10	-	-	Master's in English	in English	-	?

	English native speaker	Study abroad	Latest completed degree, language of completion	Submission of thesis, language of completion	Former studies related to teaching/ education	Teacher (work) experience
P11	-	-	Bachelor's in native tongue	in native tongue	education	?
P12			Bachelor's in native tongue	in native tongue	education	?
P13	X		Bachelor's in English (native tongue)	-	education	X
P14	X		Bachelor's in English (native tongue)	-	-	?
P15			Master's in native tongue	in native tongue	-	X
P16			Bachelor's in native tongue	-	-	?

Table 6 indicates that half of the participating students have completed their latest HE degree in their respective native tongues. They also represent the majority of having submitted a thesis (N=5). The other half has completed their latest HE degree in English, from which four (N=4) are English native speakers (ENL) and three (N=3) English as a foreign language speakers (EFL). Additionally, one EFL student has completed the latest HE degree in their respective native tongue and English. A quarter of those students (N=2) have submitted a thesis. It is interesting to note that P4 has submitted a document similar to a thesis in P4's native mother tongue to graduate; P11's thesis was split into two, a part comprising theory and a part comprising a data collection; and P13 submitted a research-based paper in order to graduate, not per se a thesis.

TABLE 6. Numeric overview of language
of completion and submission of thesis

	Latest HE degree in native tongue	Latest HE degree in native tongue and English (EFL)	Latest HE degree in English (ENL)	Latest HE degree in English (EFL)	Total (%)
number of students (%)	8 (50,00%)	1 (6,25%)	4 (25,00%)	3 (18,75%)	16 (100,00%)
submission of thesis (%)	5 (31,25%)	0 (0,00%)	1 (6,25%)	1 (6,25%)	7 (43,75%)

Considering the range of academic backgrounds, Table 7 additionally includes information about academic skills (academic reading, writing and research). Additionally, information on the previous information on the TALE prior JYU are summarized.

TABLE 7. Overview of the current study status, the students' academic reading, writing and research experiences and TALE prior JYU; *participant has acquired a degree similar to a Master's or a Master's degree (cont.)

	Current study status	Academic writing exp.	Academic reading exp.	Academic research exp.	TALE
P1*	MPEL 2nd year	-	-	-	The student body consisted of local students. P1 is not used to group work.
P2	MPEL 2nd year	X	-	-	The student body was mainly local, other larger student groups were from East Asia. The classroom size varied, with up to 500 students. Controlling study work such as homework and checking up on attendance took place. Within the completed degree, writing a thesis was optional and accounted for one ECTS. According to P2, within the study programme only the "best of the best" were acquired to graduate with submission of a thesis.
P3	EDU 1st year	X	X	BQN	The student body consisted mainly of ENL speakers, other larger groups were from East Asia and Africa. Grades played an important role

					during studies. P3 states to have little knowledge of quantitative research. P3 is not used to a large amount of group work.
P4	MPEL 1st year	X	X	-	The student body was mainly local, other larger groups were from areas in close approximate to P4s local environment. P4 is not used to a large amount of group work and essay writing. Essays were written and submitted usually at the end of a course, which can last for months allowing space and time for discussing, reading and learning. Teaching staff would provide guidance of requested reading material.
P5	MPEL 2nd year	?	?	-	The student body was mainly local. Some of the courses and projects within the degree were offered in English language. P5 describes the learning style during the studies as passive, influenced by instructions and navigations.
P6	EDU 1st year	X	X	?	The student body was local, but P6 participated in various international projects during the studies, which were conducted in English. P6 has experienced group work.
P7	MPEL 1st year	X	X	?	The student body was local. Exams were common. Additional note: P7 is grown up in an English-speaking environment.
P8	EDU 2nd year	?	?	?	The student body was mainly local students.
P9*	MPEL 2nd year	-	-	-	Part of the programme's courses were conducted in English allowing also exchange students to participate. P9 has no academic reading and writing background, and no research experience. Within the programme, P9 was able to choose on whether to do group work (often meaning a presentation) or write an essay, P9 generally choose the latter. Assessment took place usually at the end of the semester or during study breaks in form of an exam or assignment. Additional note: P9's English language skills are

					influenced by attending for a longer period an international school during childhood.
P10*	MPEL 2nd year	X	X	?	The student body was local. Group work activities usually had practical implications allowing 'real-word' scenarios. Additional note: P10 is grown up in an English-speaking environment.
P11	EDU 2nd year	?	?	?	The student body was mainly local. The classroom size varied with more than 100 students, 300 to 600 students in one cohort. Assessment took place usually at the end of the semester in form of an exam, there was not much contact with lecturers. A display of subjective opinion was not appreciated.
P12	MPEL 2nd year	?	?	-	Assessment took place in form of more essays than exams.
P13	EDU 2nd year	X	X	X	The student body was local. P13 states to have no problems in writing academically besides having used a different citation style during the degree.
P14	MPEL 1st year	-	-	-	The student body was mainly local and East Asia. P14 has no essay writing experience. A display of subjective opinion was not common.
P15*	MPEL 1st year	?	?	?	Familiar assessment prior studies at JYU were book exams and exams. Additional note: Next to a Master's degree, P15 has completed two Bachelor's degrees having the choice to complete the programmes with submission of a thesis or book exam, whereby the latter was chosen in both cases.
P16	MPEL 1st year	?	?	?	The student body consisted to up to local 150 students. Familiar assessment methods prior studies at JYU were book exams, no assignments were given within the study programme. Presentations are not set as obligatory, therefore there is limited amount of interaction among students as well as teachers.

The above tables summarize a variety of backgrounds which characterize the participants' academic culture. In order to understand how these academic cultures, influence the learning environment and in order to enrich the context of these categories, the following statements made by the students aid to provide an understanding on the importance of academic cultures intersecting in the Finnish HE setting and the disjunctures they can create. This section addresses study and work experiences, culture, skills in academic reading, writing and research and the presence of exchange (Bachelor) students.

Study and work experiences: A variety of backgrounds intersect in the programme and they therefore may influence the current learning environment of the individual student, but also in a group setting. A lack of study and work experience in education and/or teaching may depict difficulties and challenges in the fulfilment of assignments (Q1-P5, Q2-P9, Q3-P12). P10 states in an example, in which work experience aided to produce a personally satisfied with individual assignment and the impact the variations may have also on group work assignments:

> (...) I think what really came out in the writing was from my own experience of doing school reforms (P9 nodding) back in (home country) than the actual studies, I felt. Because many times when I gave certain suggestions, the team members were like 'What, will that work?' But I actually have seen it work. And it's so hard to logically convince someone that 'No, no, no, this works in real life, I have seen it change students' lives.' So, I think that's very true like your… if you have actually engaged in those kind of activities, I feel there is a lot more you can draw from this programme than, actually that programme doesn't build you so much to be (P9 nodding) ready in so many ways. (Q4-P10, Interview 5)

The previous study environment, and the manner of navigating and operating in that environment as well as the circumstance of studying in an English-speaking setting may impact the study environment in the Finnish HEIs in a broad sense with experiencing for example new teaching as well as assessment methods and the direct teaching environment and teaching content in English (Q5-P15, Q6-P16, Q7-Q16). Examples include the expectation of what is considered to be a reflective essay in the Finnish learning context (Q8-P13) and student engagement during course sessions:

> So, even here I end up doing the same thing. Like I don't value "class time" as much because I used to study on my own a lot. Even though I go for lectures and all, I find it best if I study on my own. So, I actually realized subconsciously I do the same thing here. I don't really participate much in class because I wouldn't be engaged in the topic in classes because I am the kind who needs to go home, read about this and slowly think about the assignment, and suddenly I would have some ideas. So, I am usually not very engaged in classes and usually I am only engaged with the course more when I actually do the assignments. (Q9- P14, Interview 7)

Due to a lack of background in the field of for example educational leadership itself, P1 describes the MPEL cohort being lost in terms of feeling that the programme assumed that "everyone has the same definition of what educational leadership is" (Q10-P1). P16 provides a personal example of having difficulties within the teaching environment and fulfilment of an assignment due to above mentioned lack of background in education as well as leadership:

> Yeah. On the first semester, T1 asked us (name of the assignment). I am coming from a different background, (name of study background) I have no idea about education, about leadership, nothing. It's my first semester here (P15: No, but..), I am trying to see what's going on. (Name of assignment). Why? That wasn't very helpful, why didn't you help me? Because I didn't, I picked the articles with photos, less pages to do it 'cause I didn't know my topic, I had no idea. (Q11-P16, Interview 8)

P3 and P4 elaborate on the assumption of having some kind of background in educational leadership impacting the workflow of given assignments (Q12-P4). The freedom given in such context can be overwhelming and shocking (Q13-P5). P11 on the other hand indicates that the personal study background and previous teaching and learning style created an environment described as easy and not challenging (Q14-P11, Q15-P11).

Upon entering the Finnish HE environment, previous learning styles may be in need of adoption and/or adjustment (Q16-P2). The management of own study processes and responsibilities are concerned with the experience of a high level of freedom and flexibility (Q17-P4, Q18-P4, Q19-4, Q20-P5, Q21-P7, Q22-P11):

> For or me, I have started to realize that Finnish education has so much flexibility and it gives big, huge autonomy compared to my background, education surroundings. So, I know freedom is good, but then I started to realize, I faced challenges, because I do not know how to use the freedom when they give me too much autonomy. I helps me to develop what is my own interest, but on the other hand...it also gives me confusion. I have never learned in that way. (Q20-P5, Interview 3)

Adjustment periods may vary but can turn out to be positive and create motivations (Q23-P3) as well as a less stressful learning environment compared

to the native study environment (Q24-P14). P3 and P4 also elaborate on the importance of grades in other teaching and learning backgrounds and how the Finnish education setting is a 'big shift' (P4, Interview 2) and a challenge taking time to adjust to.

'Culture' as a factor influencing the learning environment: The term 'culture' is referring to the background of education system and the methods used there as well as communication styles influencing group dynamics. Being from a similar cultural background may enable compatible styles of working and synergies (Q25-P1, Q26-P5, Q27-P11, Q28-P11). Within the conversations, the term 'culture' was used carefully indicating that the learning outcome should be the main purpose (Q29-P8). Though cultural backgrounds may add an additional dimension into learning activities, P6 notes that they are also a 'big resource' (Q30-P6).

Skills in academic reading, writing and research: The topic of variations of academic reading and writing skills as well as writing styles were addressed concerning individual (Q31-P14) and group work (Q32-P16). English language skills have impact in the thinking as well as on the writing process. P12 provides an example, in which P12 discovered differences in perspectives as well experiences through pair work directly for the first time:

> (excerpt) (...) and it was like very interesting to see that 'Ok, different people from different countries have different perspective and different experience to write and view of academic writing.' (Q33-P12, Interview 6)

But also, variations and capabilities on what is considered an academic text in terms of integrity exists, resulting into additional workload for group members (Q34-P3, Q35-P3, Q36-P12). The issue of academic integrity can be an assumption also among students and interfere in group dynamics (Q37-P4, Q38-P8, Q39-P10, Q40-P11, Q41-P15). The issue of plagiarism is addressed on an intentional level (Q35-P3) and unintentional level (Q40-P11, Q42-P3, Q43-P9). Student support, so-called peer support was for example provided in case of not understanding and being able to implement academic integrity (Q42-P3, Q43-P9).

> (...) what I did once was like, when that student really honestly didn't really know about it that problem. Then I would tell her 'So, you cannot do that. And if you want to use the

exact thing, then you have to put quotations marks.' I was basically teaching her about the academic integrity. (...) So, that the English proficiency level and then academic integrity is defined differently for different people, so that is also a big struggle. (Q42-P3, Interview 2)

As above summarized (see Table 6), seven students have submitted a thesis, which does not necessary mean they have research experience. In this research, the research methods courses were discussed on importance of implementation and differentiation of content due to existing knowledge and/or lack of interest (Q44-P6). The variations of backgrounds vary from having no background in research to being experienced in research processes and an imbalance in addressing those needs is discussed (Q45-P6, Q46-P14, Q47-P4, Q48-P6).

> And I mean, in one course they come in with the assumption that you don't know anything about academic reading and writing, and this is why we tell you what the parts of an article are. And then in the other course, they come with the assumption that 'oh, everyone has done research.' So, I am just gonna like skim through it really quickly and just kinda do everything really fast, you find your way. Just numbers, right... Everyone knows math.
> (Q47-P4, Interview 2)

Though a few participants consider making the courses therefore optional (Q44-P6, Q45-P6, Q46-P14), P13 reflects on the personal thesis process and the importance of at least understanding the basics. A lack of interest in for example the provided research methods courses, is not a reason to neglect them:

> Some of the other courses like I would kinda disagree about making the quantitative and qualitative optional, especially if just going to do qualitative research, why do I need a quantitative class? Well, there is still a vast body of research in quantitative, so if you don't know what Cronbach's alpha is, you don't know what all these different statistical analyses are, how are you going to understand that quantitative research and I kinda have that, I am not gonna say problem, but I have that circumstance now with my thesis 'cause I am doing a quantitative method of analysis, but my supervisor doesn't understand quantitative research. (Q49-P13, Interview 7)

Presence of exchange (Bachelor) students: Within the Master's degree programme and the coexisting academic cultures of the Master's degree students, an additional sub-culture, which does not depend on the programme cohort, influences the academic environment and possible learning outcomes: exchange students. Six out of the eight pair interviews (all, but Interview 4 and 6) addressed the matter of having exchange students, which are Bachelor students, in their courses. Throughout the discussions, a variety of reasons are described including English language proficiency (Q50-P14), academic writing skills (Q51-P9), and

background knowledge in the field of study (Q52-P13) to impact the workload, but also having the feasibility of creating tensions and complications in group work assignments (Q53-P1, Q54-P16). P6 mentions that some of the courses may take the presence of exchange students into considerations and therefore influencing the quality of the course content (Q55-P6). Due to the lack of skill level P15 reflects on the issue of not being able to learn from exchange students (Q56-P15).

The variety of academic backgrounds and therefore academic cultures reflect upon the challenges students may experience. Disjunctures vary but show a common theme: variations of skills and background knowledge as well as accustomed teaching and learning styles influenced by the home education systems. Also, language proficiency plays a role in comprehending teaching content and, depending on the level of proficiency may influence dynamics and outcomes in group work assignments. The next two sections aim to create an understanding on what is considered as perceived responsibilities of the perceived stakeholders within the TALE within their respective programmes.

5.2   Perceived stakeholders in an international Master's degree programme

This section summarizes the stakeholders mentioned throughout the focus group discussions impacting the TALE of the participating students. A stakeholder is hereby considered an 'actor' involved in the teaching and learning of the students impacting their learning process and progress.

As the overarching stakeholder the University of Jyväskylä is mentioned. Within the university the provided JYU Master's degree programmes, in which the participating students are enrolled in, is a stakeholder as well as the administrative and teaching staff involved. This also includes thesis supervisors. Also, other courses from other Master's degree programmes within the University of Jyväskylä are a stakeholder as students started to draw comparisons between their own enrolled programmes and the courses they have attended. These and the visiting educational institutions are considered external

stakeholders within this research and will not be considered as a part of the next section describing the perceived responsibilities. Their impact and the coordination between other stakeholders should not be neglected though. Additionally, the Master's degree students themselves are considered a stakeholder as well as exchange students (Bachelor's) attending courses, in which they join Master's degree students. An overview can be found in Figure 4.
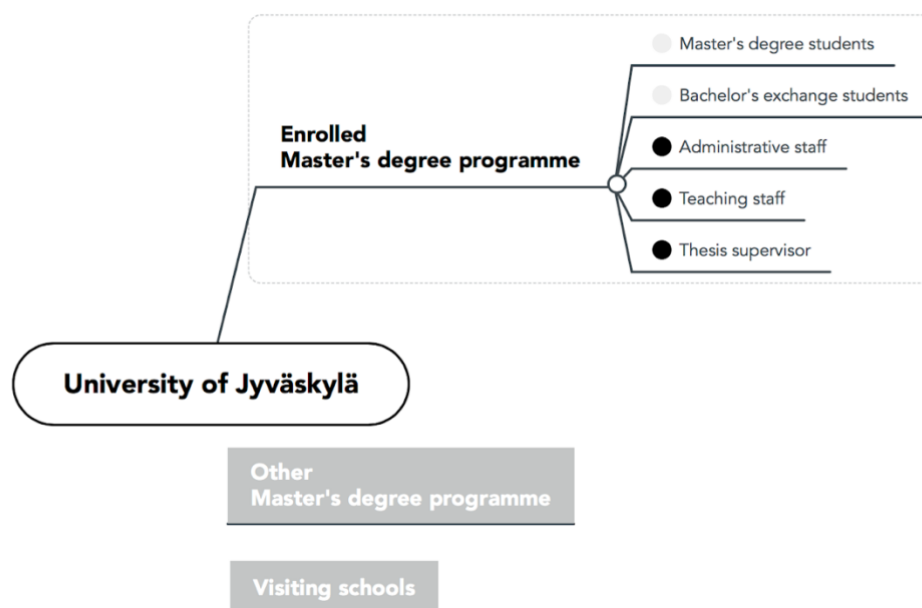
FIGURE 4. Overview of the perceived stakeholders.

5.3 Perceived responsibilities of the stakeholders in an international Master's degree programme

It is important to note, that the responsibilities of the stakeholders are limited to the discussed context. It is primarily concerned with the TALE the students are emerged in and may not reflect upon the range of responsibilities expressed elsewhere. The *perceived responsibilities* of the stakeholders are the expectations and assumptions the participants have regarding what should be provided as part of or to support their study experience on an international Master's programme. The created tables provide an overview of the perceived

responsibilities as well as the perceived lack of responsibilities with the possible tendency to create a disjuncture, a disconnection between what the students assumes and expects and therefore disrupt the teaching and learning setting. A summary of these so-called disjunctures can be found at the end of this chapter. Since, the topics varied and often a specific context was provided by the student participant, selectively chosen quotes from the transcribed interviews will aid to create understanding of such context reflecting upon their own and other students' needs and understanding of the given teaching and predominantly learning situations. Topics are concerned with thesis, courses and their content, teaching methods, assessment and feedback, interaction between student body and teaching staff, and expectations as well as assumptions on student backgrounds and needs. The chapter is divided into subchapters concerning the stakeholders starting with the Master's degree programme, followed by the teaching staff, the thesis supervisor leading to the perceived responsibilities of the enrolled Master's degree students themselves.

5.3.1 Perceived responsibilities of the enrolled Master's degree programme

Generally speaking, the enrolled Master's degree programme and its administrative staff is currently providing courses students can attend. Supportive measures are given when a student is reaching out for support and guidance, which is considered as positive, but also challenging for some students, who may be in need for guidance and support and not necessarily are of nature to do so (Q57-P8, Q58-P10, Q59-P4, Q60-P3):

> But then you have to always think if you are working with multicultural, international groups how much are people really coming to you for help, right? How much do you also have to go to students and meet them maybe halfway? Just saying 'I am here for you.' doesn't really cut it. (Q60-P3, Interview 2)

TABLE 8. Perceived responsibilities of the enrolled Master's degree programme

Perceived responsibilities	Perceived responsibilities for developing mutually beneficial understandings of the academic culture

• Provision of courses students can attend (General)
• Provision of guidance and support (General)
	• Provision of guidance and support (P2, P3, P4, P7)
	• Arrangement of courses (scheduling) (P2, P3, P4, P6, P7, P8, P16)
	• Provision of space to create community (P1, P4, P7, P8, P9, P10)
	• Familiarization with students needs/backgrounds (P4, P5, P6, P9, P13)
	    • Provision of introduction to the programme (P1)
	    • Provision of introduction to academic integrity (P3)
	    • Provision of English language development support (P4, P5)

When it comes to the arrangement of courses, the scheduling in the sense of timing throughout the semesters is addressed. The courses supporting academic reading and writing as well as research skills may address too early and too quickly. A lack of connection within the course design may cause confusion (Q61-P7, Q62-P8).

As partially addressed in the section about academic cultures, the backgrounds and therefore needs of students and its consideration in the programme design and therefore course design are discussed by a variety of students in regards of their backgrounds (Q63-P4, Q64-P6, Q65-P9, Q66-P13):

> Ähm, you were saying that it would normally according to that person, it would cater to the individual needs. I don't think that's happening, except for the thesis supervision. In the courses, I mean yes, (name of the course), we still looked, like we got individual feedback from the teacher and we looked at how we work. But generally, it was the same for everybody. There was no like looking at 'Ok, what's your background, have you done research before, what's your knowledge in academic reading and writing?' and build upon that. It was more like 'Everybody has to do this.', which I don't think makes sense. I know that some of my classmates said 'This class doesn't help me at all.', others they were kinda lost because as I said their English level wasn't high enough to be able to read a lot and write a lot at the beginning already. So, yeah. So, I think it depends on what you are talking about if you can say you are satisfied or not. (Q65-P9, Interview 5)

Recommendations therefore also include an introduction to the programme theme itself, to provide an introduction to academic integrity to bring students on a similar level of understanding or at least awareness about it and reflecting on the levels of English language proficiency and providing support for those needed (Q67-P5). The problematic of English language proficiency is further addressed in the section about the perceived responsibilities of the Master's degree students.

5.3.2   Perceived responsibilities of the teaching staff

Students also address the matter of guidance and support in context of teaching staff. Similar issues as mentioned above are addressed also here. Next to providing the learning content, teachers are responsible for providing assignment assessment and feedback. They are also stated to be involved in research activities.

TABLE 9. Perceived responsibilities of the teaching staff

Perceived responsibilities	Perceived responsibilities for developing mutually beneficial understandings of the academic culture

• Provision of guidance and support when reaching out (P3, P4, P7, P8, P11, P12, P15, P16)
• Researching (P3, P4)
• Provision of assessment and feedback (P1, P2, P4, P7, P8, P11, P13, P14, P15, P16)
	• Provision of guidance and support (P3, P4, P16)
	
	• Provision of feedback and provision of reasonable assessment (P2, P4, P8, P9, P10, P11, P12, P15)
	• Provision of more contact hours for courses (P2, P4, P13, P14, P15, P16)
	• Utilization of contacts hours efficiency (P4, P15 P16)
	    ◦ Provision of class content material in English (P1, P13)
	    ◦ Being prepared (P3, P4, P6)
	    ◦ Provision of follow-ups (assuring accountability) (P1, P2)
	    ◦ Provision of continuous content (avoiding overlap) (P2, P5, P6)
	    ◦ 'why' -clarification of course and course content (P2, P3, P5, P6)
	    ◦ Provision of practical input/output (P5, P10)
	    ◦ Being engaged and using different teaching methods (P3, P7, P14)

Variations of assessment and feedback by lecturers seem to exist (Q68-P8, Q69-P12, Q70-P12). A lack and/or value of feedback is addressed by students discussing assessment methods and its possible impact on improving their academic development. (Q71-P9, Q72-P9, Q73-P11, Q74-P11). P4 describes a feeling, that the standard grade in Finland is a five (Q75-P4).

> What makes it so frustrating for me in particular is, the way feedback is given here, which I think is like deeply connected to the Finnish like way of communicating, I guess because I have to know if I write a, mess up in an essay or my presentation is shit, I have to know. I have to get feedback and I feel like people give shitty presentations and then the lecturer says 'Oh yeah, thank you for your contribution today, it was very interesting.' I am in the audience and I don't know, do I have to cross check everything the guy just said or you know, what to take form it very difficult for me. (Q73-P11, Interview 6)

P10 provides an example, in which a good grade as an assessment is influenced by the quality of the feedback and how it may impact a student's motivation:

> I think those feedbacks that came were very precise, elaborate, very clear. Especially for this particular course. I think the one I was kind of disappointed with was, although it was a grade 5, the feedback I got was 'You know what, you got a big fat 5' and I was very unhappy (laughing) hearing that statement because for me it's no longer about grades so much (P9 nodding). (...) I asked can I get some feedback from like how useful (P9: Yeah.) it is as a tool or something in that sense. Sadly, I don't think she is very like motivated about what she does. I haven't heard anything from her, so. These were kind of like, a bit too disappointing. (laughing) (Q76-P10, Interview 5)

The amount of contact hours is addressed as there seems to be a need to have them increased because there are less contact hours than expected (Q77-P2) considering the position of students having left their home country to study in Finland (Q78-P4). Furthermore, participants stated to have need for more contact hours to create a learning effect (Q79-P16), to achieve better results and to cover the course anticipated ECTS (Q80-P14, Q81-P16). The lack of learning effect due to a perceived low amount of contact hours is described in general and for specific courses. Within the given contact hours, time should be allocated to important matters utilizing the contact hours efficiently (Q82-P4, Q83-P16). The in-class time should not be used for organizational matters to an extent that they fill out the majority of the time, which also addresses the matter of being prepared as a teacher. This also includes providing in-class material in English and not Finnish and being engaged as a teacher using different teaching methods:

> One more thing I would like to add, is the way of presentation, the way of conducting the class. I mean we talk about different environments and creating them and stimulating the kids and giving them opportunities to do different things while we are just sitting (P8 commenting, not understandable) and looking at presentations. (P7 and P8 laughing) (Q84-P7, Interview 4)

Assigned reading materials seems to lack a follow-up, therefore it was recommended to talk and discuss academic texts more, add a task to the reading assignment (Q85-P2, Q86-P2, Q87-P3). Additionally, it is recommended to make the course content more relevant and continuous to avoid overlapping content as it influences the motivation negatively. Though for P5, overlapping content may aid to gain understanding over time if English language skills are still developing because of the repetitive effect of listening and therefore eventually comprehending content (better) (Q88-P5).

A lack of practical input is discussed among participants as it may aid to understand theoretical processes better and challenges which may occur (Q89-P5, Q90-P7, Q91-P10).

> I think one other recommendation I would have, is… it's not like Finland is devoid of challenges in the education system (P9 nodding), there are plenty that can be looked at and we could look at one real problem that exists locally and actually as a leadership cohort take that as a case study (P9 slightly nodding) instead of taking something from your own imagination (...) or something from your previous experiences. (...) Yeah, I think it actually tests to some extent the openness, the stress levels that we talk about in this education system. We could take one real problem and develop something as a group and I feel that would be far far more satisfying individually and even for the faculty (P9 nodding) itself. You actually contribute something. (Q91-P10, Interview 5)

The course content itself may be impacted by teaching methods (Q92-P3), but also the fact that some students may be unmotivated of participating in the course due to the lack of reasoning for attending the course itself (Q92-P3, Q93-P6, Q94-P8, Q95-P7, Q96-P11).

5.3.3   Perceived responsibilities of the thesis supervisors

Participants addressed the need for a more structured thesis supervision and/or guidance. There seems to be a perceived difference among thesis supervisors addressing thesis supervision in structure, communication and tasks. Additionally, one student explained that the academic load should not be too high as less time can be allocated to the thesis itself.

TABLE 10. Perceived responsibilities of the thesis supervisors

Perceived responsibilities	Perceived responsibilities for developing mutually beneficial understandings of the academic culture
• Provision of feedback (P2, P8, P9, P10) • Provision of meetings (P2, P12) • Provision of support (P13, P15) • Provision of facilitation (P15)	• Provision of feedback (P1) • Provision of regular meetings (P1, P2) • Provision of guidance (P1, P2)

P8 recommends to not only provide group sessions on thesis supervision, but also space for individual discussion considering that some students may experience difficulties having to write a thesis for the very first time (Q97-P8).

As within their current studies in the Master's programme in Educational Sciences the programme's website information state that the 'final project' of their students is to…

> …conduct a small-scale research and write a Master's thesis supervised by professors and senior lecturers. The thesis topics are related to the research areas of the Faculty of Education. The thesis process is supported by research method courses, research seminars and individual supervision. (University of Jyväskylä, n.d.c).

During the first pair interview, upon asking the participants whether there would be something, which should be added during the pair interview (see Appendix 4), P2 raised the question whether students participating in the upcoming pair interviews could be asked whether they finish their thesis in time, meaning that they would submit a thesis on the end of their second year (fourth semester). P2 may have raised the question because of personal concern as a student of the MPEL programme:

> Yeah. I am planning on one semester delay and most… at least 80% of the people I have talked to, it seems they are doing the same thing and that seems to be a huge problem in the department, we touched on the idea of having like monthly thesis meetings. (Q98-P2, Interview 1)

Table 11 provides the participants aims for submitting their thesis as well as additional explanations provided (if described).

TABLE 11. Participants' opinion on finishing their thesis in time
(Stand: Spring semester 2017)

	Current study degree at JYU	Current study year at JYU	Finishing thesis in time	Explanation
P1	MPEL	2	No	Planning to finish in 5th semester.
P2	MPEL	2	No	Planning to finish in 5th semester.
P3	EDU	1	No	Planning on finishing thesis in the third year (already planned as such upon starting Master's degree).
P4	MPEL	1	Yes	Trying to finish even before 4th semester.
P5	MPEL	2	No	Planning to finish in 5th semester.
P6	EDU	1	Yes	Trying to finish in third semester because of planned internship in 4th semester.
P7	MPEL	1	Yes	Is financially not able to extend studies but has grasped the fact that it might be difficult to do so.
P8	EDU	2	Yes	-
P9	MPEL	2	No	-
P10	MPEL	2	Yes	-
P11	EDU	2	Yes	-
P12	MPEL	2	No	Trying to finish during 5th semester utilizing the summer break after the 4th semester.
P13	EDU	2	Yes	-
P14	MPEL	1	no info	n/a
P15	MPEL	1	Maybe	Trying to finish in the 4th semester in order to apply for PhD positions (outside of Finland).
P16	MPEL	1	Maybe	Trying to finish in the 4th semester, latest 5th semester in order to return to home country as soon as possible.

The majority of students indicating not finishing their thesis in time study in the MPEL programme (N(MPEL)=5), whereas only one (N(EDU)=1) student in the

EDU programme indicates to not finish his/her in time. Overall, seven students state to finish their thesis in time (N(MPEL)=3), N(EDU)=4), two (N(MPEL)=2) are unsure and one (N(EDU)=1) student did not indicate whether he/she are able to finish his/her thesis in time and therefore graduate timely.

TABLE 12. Numeric overview of participants perspective on finishing their thesis in time divided into Master's degree students of the Educational Leadership and Educational Sciences programme

Master's degree in Educational Leadership (MPEL)			Master's degree in Educational Sciences EDU)			Total (%)
n=11 (68,75%)			n=5 (31,25%)			16 (100,00%)
Yes	**No**	**Maybe**	**Yes**	**No**	**Maybe**	**Total (%)**
n=3 (18,75%)	n=5 (31,25%)	n=2 (12,50%)	n=4 (25,00%)	n=1 (6,25%)	n/a	15 (193,75%)

5.3.4 Perceived responsibilities of the Master's degree students

The students themselves seem to show high awareness on their responsibilities in the Finnish HE setting such as being independently motivated, accountable and autonomous, being able to express critical thinking and a subjective opinion as well as reflection.

> It does to at least 50% of… I think, just get a whole lot of the topic. You don't go really deep into the topic. I think the way the programmes are structured here are in the sense that it's a lot of your own individual work. The more you dwell into a topic and go deeper into it, the more you get out of it. From just the classes, I think it's just like… at a very base level you have ideas (P9 nodding) because there is only so much you can do in the number of hours you actually meet as students. There is not much you can do. But you can introduce a lot of things. So, it is up to you really. (Q99-P10, Interview 5)

Some students expressed difficulties in finding this motivation (Q100-P5), often peer support, especially the effect of group work aided to exchange for example ideas on assignments (Q101-P9) and getting assignments finished in time (Q102-

P5) and a better focus (Q103-P7). Supporting each other also occurred due to a lack of understanding after attending class; peer support was initiated for an individual assignment leading to the submission of an identical individual assignment, which the student within this research described as collaborative and no intent of cheating:

> So we work on that and because we didn't know how to paraphrase the report, we submit the same answers, but it wasn't individual, it wasn't a group work, we collaborate because we didn't know how to do it and after all, we received an email that you have done a fraud and you can have a counsellor and you will pass a hearing and at the end, we have to do again the assignment with new data, new questions. But it's university's fault because you don't know, you didn't do a good class, you gave permission for extra class from our classmates. So, that was the only thing. (Q104-P16, Interview 8)

Not mentioned in Table 13 are aspects of learning, reading and attending classes - though they were an existing theme indirectly discussed throughout the pair interviews.

TABLE 13. Perceived responsibilities of the Master's degrees students

Perceived responsibilities	Perceived responsibilities for developing mutually beneficial understandings of the academic culture
• Being independently motivated (P2, P5, P16) • Being independently accountable, autonome (P2, P3, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, P10, P16) • Expressing critical thinking, own opinion (P1, P5, P6) • Reflecting (P8, P13, P14, P16) • Utilizing English language (P1, P5, P6, P9) • Supporting each other (P3, P4, P6, P7, P8, P9, P10, P14, P16)	• Being independently motivated (P5, P7) • Utilization of English language (P3, P4, P5) • Being mature (P10)

Though it might be naturally given that English language needs to be utilized, it may be a challenge for the student herself/himself, but also for the students who may need to work together with a student showing a lower English level proficiency in understanding, oral and written. Within the participation pool of this research, two extremes were identified: on one hand, a student with low

English proficiency skills having difficulties understanding and comprehending lectures (Q105-P5) and on the other hand a student, a native English language speaker, who states to utilize the English language skills to 'upscale' own writings to an extent diminishing possible own lacks of understanding and convincing the person in charge of assessment with more 'flowery language' (Q106-P13). Also, other students raised awareness about some students having issues with the English language, especially reading and writing assignments (Q107-P9).

After having critically looked into the varieties of academic cultures and perceived responsibilities of the stakeholders, the reader may notice that the notion of disjuncture drives the findings section. In order to deepen the understanding of disconnection on what the participants assume and expect, a summary is provided next as starting point of the discussion, in which the researcher also addresses the concern of the participants on how the Finnish HE TALE contradicts itself.

6   DISCUSSION

This research and its inherent research questions aimed to create an understanding on what it means to study in a Finnish academic environment within this specific given setting. The introduction to this section aims to summarize the responsibilities and the possible disjunctures in the respective Master's degree programmes EDU and MPEL at JYU taking also in consideration the academic cultures, prior and current experiences identified earlier. It tries to understand the various challenges and needs students have studying in these specific graduate programmes. It then connects to the literature described earlier.

To begin with, the first research question 'What kind of different academic cultures come together in an international Master's degree programme?' was explored. A variety of characteristics emerged to have impact on the current study experiences at JYU. These were sectioned into study and work experiences,

culture, academic skills in reading, writing and research and the presence of exchange (Bachelor) students. The existing differences among students including degree and exchange students in their skill sets influence the teaching and learning setting directly and can be seen as challenging and difficult in the group work setting. Own perception of responsibilities as well of other stakeholders emerged throughout the pair interviews leading to respond to the second research question as well as sub-questions 'What are the perceived responsibilities of the stakeholders interacting in the Master's degree programme?' Stakeholders were identified and reduced for the purpose of this research to the Master's programme itself, the teaching staff, thesis supervisor and the Master's degree students. Disjunctures in responsibilities with the tendency to create tensions and misunderstandings are summarized taking the academic cultures in consideration as well. Figures 5 and 6 depict these perceived responsibilities at two stakeholder levels: the stakeholders involved in creating, administrating and teaching and the students enrolled in the international Master's degree programme. Figure 5 focuses on the responsibility of explaining and managing the present academic culture in the host HE by the stakeholders involved in creating, administrating and teaching in order to explicitly create an understanding of the academic culture for the enrolled students. The research found that there might be disjunctures caused by both stakeholder levels not sharing awareness and understanding of the host HEI's academic culture resulting into confusion, potential misunderstandings of expected outcomes and a lack of motivation and therefore disconnection to the Master's degree programme.
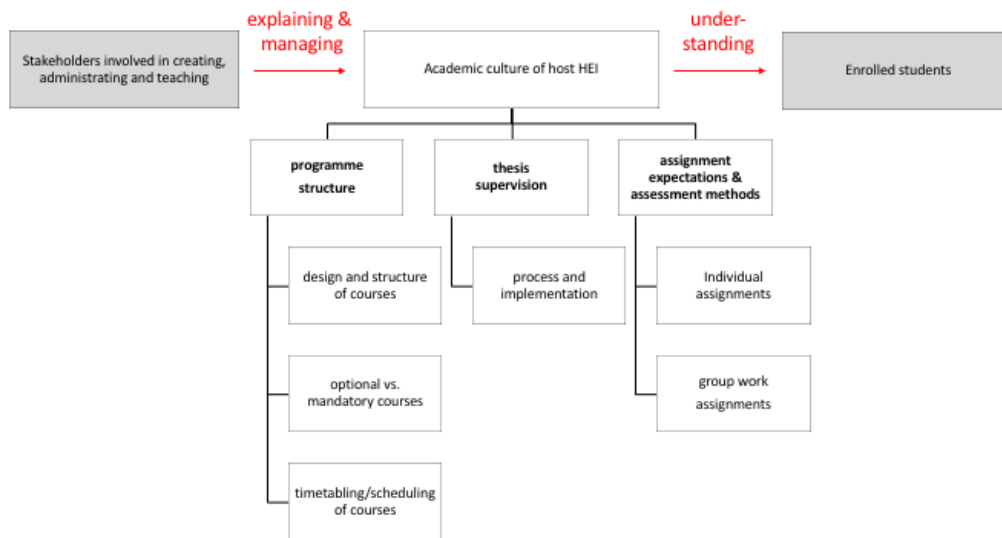
FIGURE 5. Reflecting on the disjunctures and potential needs:
Academic culture of the host HEI

Figure 6 additionally focuses on the academic culture of the incoming and therefore enrolled students. The findings indicate that both stakeholder levels seem to vary in understandings and familiarization of the academic cultures of the enrolled students within the host TALE. This has the tendency to create tensions in the classroom environment: on one hand within the teacher-student relationship and on the other hand within the student-student relationship impacting the teaching and learning atmosphere.
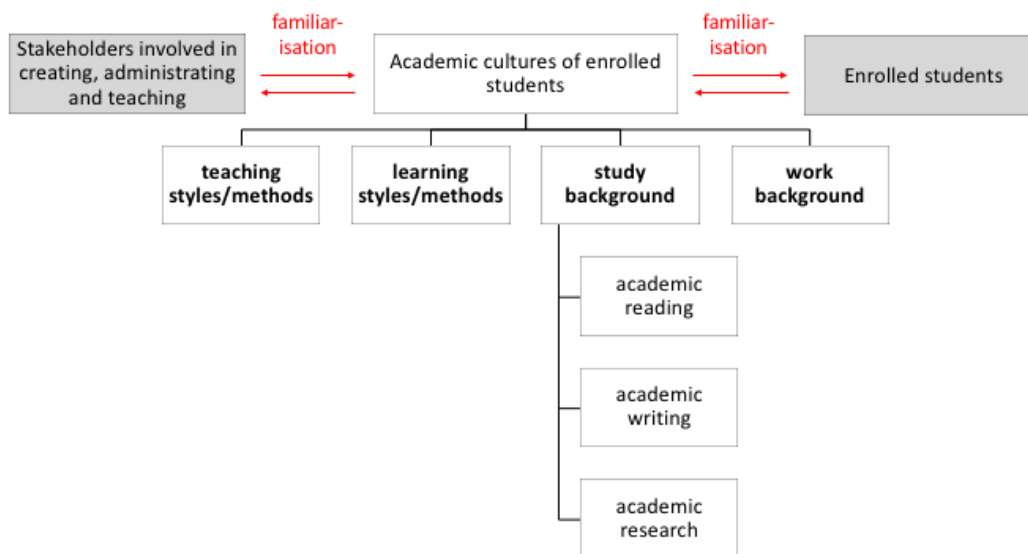
FIGURE 6. Reflecting on the disjunctures and potential needs:
Academic cultures of enrolled students

Reflecting upon the occurring disjunctures, there is need for creating an understanding of the academic culture at JYU through explaining the academic cultures. The disjunctures caused by occurring lack of familiarization with the academic cultures of the enrolled students and the unfamiliarity with the host culture, the Finnish context, create a gap, which is why the student participants may question aspects as the structure of the programme and its courses. Thesis supervision appears to be implemented in various ways, which may result into students questioning its process. Assignment expectations are connected to assessment methods and its explanations may aid to understand teaching methods. There seems to be a disjuncture in the sense that students may think to understand the Finnish academic culture, but it appears to be contradictory when addressing the nature of assessment (Q108-P3), the restriction of having to attend certain courses (Q109-P4), limitations in course context provided (Q110-P6) and the importance of grades (Q111-P3). Additionally, there seems to be a perceived gap in the responsibility of understanding the academic cultures of the enrolled students by mainly the institutional stakeholder (creating, administrating and teaching staff), but a lack of conscious awareness among students also may contribute to challenges and misunderstandings.

6.1 Studying in an IDP in a Finnish higher education environment

The summary of the findings described above reflects on the institutional and the student perspective. The focus in this research is on the latter. As many other Finnish HEIs in Finland, JYU embraces internationalization and internationalization at home as part of the HE policy with offering of a variety of Master's degree programmes in English. The Master's degree programmes in Educational Leadership and Educational Sciences belong to the Faculty of Education and Psychology, one of the six faculties of JYU (University of Jyväskylä, 2018). They therefore represent a specific case environment, in which hereby the learner's perspective is of crucial importance. Experiencing different teaching methods, which are built upon different learning styles, is common - also in the Finnish HE context. Students mentioned a lack of variety in teaching methods though. Generally, a HE student is characterized by a high level of independence, self-motivation, self-management and an openness to working in groups (Cottrell, 2003, p.21). Also, academic research, reading and writing skills are expected to be utilized (Cottrell, 2003, p.115). Both, the interpersonal and academic skills, are recognized as present and relevant by the majority of the students within this research. In this particular Finnish context, academic freedom, flexibility and student autonomy is described by many student participants in connection with high level of personal responsibility and trust. This links to the statements made by Sahlberg (2007) and Lewis (2005) of Finnish education being characterized through certain aspects of flexibility, accountability and trust, and the Finnish society valuing honesty and trust. Naturally, students entering the HE environment bring their own unique "experiences, knowledge and behaviour" (Ballard & Clanchy, 1991, p.10, in Ramburuth & Tani, 2009, p.183) into the host HEI's context. The student participants of this research display diverse backgrounds in their pedagogic and work experiences, but also English language proficiency and academic reading, writing and research skills, which may inherently be influenced by the previous cultural setting in their home country. Students studying in an IDP are also faced

with the host institution's own characteristics carried by administrative and teaching staff (McCambridge & Pitkänen-Huhta, 2012, p.167). As described by Välimaa and colleagues (2014), students in IDPs in Finland experience challenges related to the academic culture and pedagogical approaches driving the Finnish HE environment due to a lack of familiarity. The unfamiliarity is connected to a lack of initiative of the host culture, which occurs also within this research. The next subchapter will address these matters in more details. It is important to note that those challenges are presented from the student perspective.

6.2 Challenges of studying in an IDP in a Finnish higher education environment

The following challenges address the lack of familiarity with academic cultures from three standpoints starting with academic culture of the host HEI by the enrolled student and then heading to the academic cultures of the enrolled students by the host HEI as well as enrolled students themselves.

6.2.1 Lack of familiarity of the academic culture of host HEI by the enrolled student

As highlighted within this research, students may experience stages of so-called academic shock when unfamiliar with the implementation of certain academic aspects. Differences in one's own teaching and learning habits occurred also within this research. Students explained that the Finnish education system is appreciated and sometimes even preferred, especially being able to reach out for support directly. Other aspects include the perception of academic freedom, flexibility and student autonomy. The challenging aspect is connected to the previous learning environment. The methods may differ, and it can be rather overwhelming to be given an immense amount of personal freedom and rather low amount of guidance on what is considered right, wrong or even enough regarding the input in for example assignments. Adjustment phases to a new TALE vary (Van Oudenhoven & Van der Zee, 2002, p.679) and often the host culture does not recognize the need to support these adjustment phases over a

longer period of time as it assumed that students are capable of independently adjusting to different academic needs (Cameron & Kirkman, 2010, p.3; Ryan 2011). This seems to be the case also within this research. A crucial starting point is here already a possible lack of understanding in the management and therefore implementation of the programme including course design and structure. This carries itself throughout course content and the perceived disjuncture and/or preparation of courses and thesis supervision. The programmes are designed to provide appropriate time to focus on writing. Having the personal freedom and responsibility to choose courses though, a student may take more courses because of the perceived lack of contact hours for example. This leads to more work load academically and therefore less time to concentrate on thesis matters. Within the courses, the level of independence is seen as positive as it provides the opportunity to respond to one's own interest, especially if own interests are not covered in the classroom context. A lack of clarity on expected outcomes clashing with the student autonomy can though interfere with a positive study experience. This can be enhanced by the option of being unsure on whether the perceived student autonomy is actually actively implemented in course context and provision of assignment, but not in the assessment. This mentioned, the personal responsibility is challenging especially in cases of having never experienced a self-guided study mode beforehand. This reflects upon the research by Välimaa and colleagues (2003), in which students "found the level of independence expected of them and lack of specific instructions to be difficult during their studies" (p.41). Additionally, differences of assessment methods and extent of feedback within the host HEI's academic culture occur, which may be interpreted by the students as a lack of continuity. An example is the influence of English language proficiency and its utilization in assignments, i.e. some teaching staff might mark a grade down, which is influenced by correctness of the English language and students stated that this would be considered to contradict with the value of 'learning being a progress' often described by teaching staff. This connects also to the notion of language shock, which is not necessarily connected to the academic culture of this specific host HEI, but

generally to the academic culture of an IDP. It is especially challenging for students, who have never studied before in a degree programme conducted in English. It is amplified by a variety of accents and dialects spoken by students and staff members and can cause in an extreme case, a feeling of not being able to cope in that environment. Language proficiency also impacts group work, in this context often an essential part of a course and its assignments. It appears that students are many times not used to group work and the assessment of an assignment might be considered unclear. A presentation as a form of an assignment is seen as an easy way for the lecturer to provide assessment, i.e. grade. The value of the grade does not represent a learning curve though. An additional factor impacting group dynamics are exchange students, which represent international Bachelor students, due to a mismatch of the required academic skill set influencing the fulfilment of Master's degree courses. This problematic does not come up in previous research. Bachelor students have the potential to create a level of disruption causing frustration because academic skills in academic writing as well as English language proficiency may be less familiar and less utilized. Cases of plagiarism can occur.

6.2.2 Lack of familiarity of the academic culture of the enrolled student by the host HEI

A factor influencing the study environment greatly is the academic culture of the enrolled student. Being in an unfamiliar HE setting oneself, one's own background is important and influences actions and habits immensely as a form of coping. These include teaching methods and interactions with institutional staff as well as own study modes and methods. In this research, students perceive a lack of understanding of their own academic culture and inherent knowledge and backgrounds and therefore impacting the TALE. And though it is known that students bring their own experiences and various set of skill levels with them into the host HE environment, it seems partly neglected. This reflects, according to the student participants, in course content not taking into consideration work experiences in for example the field of study and variations in academic reading,

writing and research. The academic reading and writing as well as research related courses can cover very basic, but also very advanced aspects. Considering this, it is assumed by the students that backgrounds are not looked into. As above mentioned, cases of plagiarism occurred. It seems to be assumed that students are familiar with terms of academic integrity in the Finnish context. Students though describe cases of plagiarism within group work assignments, in which it became clear that some students may not be aware of behaving in an academic dishonest way. This is referred to "cheating without intent" (Crawford & Niemi, 2015, pp.141-142) and has the potential to create tensions among group members, but also a less positive assessment outcome. On the 'cultural note', the variety of nationalities are high and therefore cultural implications exist. Cultural sensitivity and intercultural communication skills may not be a matter of importance among all teaching staff as a case of perceived racism occurred impacting the classroom setting negatively. In this Finnish context, it is the staff's personal decision on (further) developing such skills (Välimaa et al., 2013, p.50). It is the researcher's opinion such skills are of crucial importance though. Students are partially experiencing for the first time studying in such diverse classroom setting and a lack of cultural sensitivity among all stakeholders can impact the TALE negatively.

Motivational thoughts are brought into context in both perspectives, lack of familiarity of the academic culture of host HEI by the enrolled student and lack of familiarity of the academic culture of the enrolled student by the host HEI. When students encounter these challenges and disjunctures, it can create not only confusion, but also disinterest.

6.2.3 Lack of familiarity of the academic culture of the enrolled student by the enrolled student

Also, the familiarity among students need to be taken into consideration and is therefore addressed here as it creates challenging situations merely concerned with group work dynamics in group work assignments, but also within the classroom setting when discussions are encouraged. This includes

communication styles (verbal and non-verbal) as well as teaching and learning backgrounds. The unfamiliarity of lack of opportunities to explore each other's academic culture can lead to misunderstandings and frustration. Group constellations depend on the teaching staff putting groups together oneself or giving the freedom and initiative to choose one's own group members. Often, the latter is preferred as it provides the opportunity to work together with students of similar working styles and skills sets in order to avoid potential complications. This is criticised though by some students noting that in working life situations, such possibilities do rarely exist and that there should be an openness and level of maturity of the student being able to cope with challenges arising in group work assignments.

In the HE sector it is known that adjustment phases in an uncommon TALE vary (Van Oudenhoven & Van der Zee, 2002, p.679) and therefore acculturation programmes and other support measures are beneficial for mitigating difficult situations (Graeffe & Lestinen, 2011). And if it turns out that the accepted student may not fit into the expected profile (Cottrell, 2001, p.56), measure to support positive learning outcomes need to be taken. In order to enrich the TALE and mitigate potential threats and challenges due to the described disjunctures, HEIs such as JYU should use their high level of autonomy to improve the learning experience of students in IDPs. The next section therefore addresses possible recommendations mentioned within the pair interviews as well as support measures recommended earlier.

6.2.4   Recommendations: a reflection on support measures

Schools can learn only when there is explicit or implicit agreement about what they know - about their students, about teaching and learning, and about how to change
(Louis, Kruse, & Raywid, 1996, p.11).

Students experience a variety of challenges within the IDPs, which is due to a lack of explicitly expressing the academic culture and pedagogical approaches of the host HEI, but also due to a lack of awareness and consideration of the academic cultures of the enrolled students. According to Välimaa and colleagues

(2014) this seems to be the general case in the Finnish HE environment when studying in in an IDP (p.41, pp.45-46, p.52). Currently, no differences are made in for example structure and management of IDPs (Välimaa et al., 2013, p.54) and such matters may need adjustment and/or explanations for students entering the host HEI as it has been shown that there is lack of understanding on how the programme and its inherent ways of operating are managed and structured. Additionally, the academic cultures of the students are of crucial importance in order to create a beneficial learning outcome. Two main categories need to be considered and both categories need to take into account the institutional as well as the student level, which in this research is merely influenced by the student perspective. Figure 7 summarizes Figures 5 and 6 indicating the possibility of connecting certain aspects reducing assumptions on how teaching and learning is constructed and implemented.
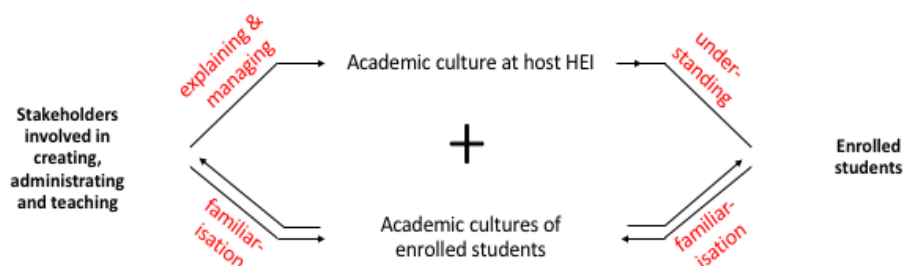
FIGURE 7. Summary of the reflection on the disjunctures
and potential needs

The statement of Cottrell (2001) regarding the need of acculturation to an unfamiliar HE setting "including rationales for its practices, clarification of terms, and explanations for the demands made upon them as students"(p.29) applies also within this research context. In order to provide more detailed information and explanations on how the programme is structured and how courses build up on each other, it is recommended to establish allocated times and spaces for dissemination, but also discussion of information - preferably on a regular basis. This would also provide the opportunity to discuss differences and get to know the students' academic culture better. In the researcher's opinion, getting to know

the student in more detail will be crucial in the future. Neglecting their backgrounds, academically and professionally, creates disharmony and misunderstandings or errors of judgement (Faiz, 2011, p.501; Yankelovich, 2001, p.13, cited in Collinson & Fedoruk Cook, 2007, p.115). This includes previous study and work experiences and its respective teaching and study modes as well as English language proficiency. Though an English language proficiency test may be taken in advance, it does not necessarily mean that coping in a fully English taught programme is naturally given. Especially the processes of academic reading and writing and the daily processes of speaking and comprehending content in English may be difficult and requires additional support. Suggested forms are additional English language classes or a tutoring format. Academic conventions about academic integrity should be included and not explained but taught as there are students who may not been in contact with such terms as plagiarism before. Such complications should and can be avoided. If Bachelor's students are attending Master's degree classes, they should be kept in the loop of dialogue as well. Stress, anxiety and uncertainty due to academic shock such as academic integrity (Ashworth et al., 1997, pp-200-201) should be avoided. A HEI can furthermore not always rely on the student's proactive mindset when in need for support.

Inter- and cross-cultural understandings and cultural sensitivity need to be enforced and could be integrated in all stakeholder levels, keeping the dialogue in such matters iterative and not limited to the orientation week activities (Välimaa et al., 2013, p.77). This includes concepts such as academic, culture and language shock - concepts also the students should understand in order to possibly create their own coping strategies and/or know that there are opportunities for reaching out for support if needed. It also may aid to understand the challenges occurring in group work assignments and can aid to ease such tensions. Limitations and expectations should be communicated and set clear from the beginning.

Keeping up with the ever-changing environment with fluctuating administrative and teaching staff, but moreover a new set of students every year

is not an easy undertaking. Developing certain strategic measures and routines on how to manage and explain, i.e. communicate, the TALE in an efficient and beneficial way is important though. There is high potential to reduce the identified disjunctures and create an attractive study environment reflecting upon the positive reputation the Finnish education system has. Students represent an economic income for HEIs and with the implementation of tuitions fees for non-European students, attractiveness needs to be represented in the outcomes and achievements of the students.

"The demands and constraints on the time of today's students mean that they cannot afford to make for deficits in resources or teaching in the way a student could in the past" (Cottrell, 2001, p.37). It is therefore important to keep in mind to understand the viewpoints and perspectives of the students "to communicate appropriate norms" (Ashworth et al., 1997, p.201).

7   LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

This research was initiated to explore experiences and thoughts of students enrolled in an international Master's degree programme and is therefore limited to the student perspective only. Their perspective is rich on information, but their stories tell only one of many stakeholders involved in creating a beneficial study environment. Therefore, other stakeholders' stories are in need to be explored, giving them a chance to respond for example to the stories told by the student participants. Within a case study, findings are limited to its certain situational setting including its temporal implementation as well as participant selection (Patton, 2002, p.563) and it can be argued that collected responses are "unique to each individual respondent" (Burton et al., 2008, p.147). Taking in consideration the qualitative research aspect of implementation though, it becomes clear that the researcher is able to identify not only patterns and themes but can also add explanations representing their perspective in more detail (Burton et al., 2008, p.147; Patton, 2002, p.341). This may limit the research, but also opens up

opportunities for further research including an implementation over a longer period of time and identifying a change in patterns (i.e. disjunctures) and therefore development of the programme and its stakeholders. The sample size is hereby understood as flexible and emergent (Patton, 2002, p.246).

Within the conducted pair interviews, the variety of topics were intense and interestingly, thoughts of one student within a specific pair interview was reflected upon from a different angle by another student in a different pair interview. These connections in thoughts could be researched further. One crucial aspect is hereby the theme of group work: throughout the pair interviews the researcher noticed that students defined group work on various levels (workload sharing, level of support among group members, level of maturity and willingness of working together etc.). Group work assignments are challenging but can be rewarding depending on the group dynamics and inputs and outputs of each member. Looking into this on a deeper level and/or implementation in an in-class setting could be eye-opening for students, but also teaching staff, who may need to deal with a range of tensions as well. This could include a inter- and cross-cultural dimension. One aspect standing out in this respect are the shared emotions and struggles and tensions when working together with students with 'Asian' background by students from a more 'Western' background. The setting includes group work and in-class sessions, in which students of 'Asian' background may not speak up and may not engage and/or contribute in in-class discussions. During the pair interviews, a student of 'Asian' background explained the way of navigating and studying in a less engaged manner due to the manner of studying back home:

> So, even here I end up doing the same thing. Like I don't value "class time" as much because I used to study on my own a lot. Even though I go for lectures and all, I find it best if I study on my own. So, I actually realized subconsciously I do the same thing here. I don't really participate much in class because I wouldn't be engaged in the topic in classes because I am the kind who needs to go home, read about this and slowly think about the assignment, and suddenly I would have some ideas. So, I am usually not very engaged in classes and usually I am only engaged with the course more when I actually do the assignments. (Q9-P14, Interview 7)

This and other aspects rooting in the prior teaching and learning environment is an interesting research topic of itself and has been addressed in this research to

an intensive extent impacting the current environment, in which a variety of backgrounds intersect. A connection can also be drawn to a mentioned assumption and possible perception by stakeholders that students of EFL background are not knowledgeable and capable to express ideas in comparison to ENL speakers, which may impact assessment on an unconscious level. A case of perceived racism occurred, when a member of teaching staff described a group of 'Asian' students as less 'civil' by noting that 'The Westerners, we have to give civilization'. It is important that such matters and experiences need to be explored in more detail, which may include intercultural communication skills and cultural sensitivity among teaching staff.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1

Curriculum development of the Educational Leadership programme

(University of Jyväskylä n.d.a, n.d.b, 2009, 2010, 2014) (cont.)

Curriculum from	2007-2009	2008-2010	2010-2012	2012-2014 / 2013-2015	2014-2017
2008-2010: Orientation and language studies **2010-2012: Division into (1) Academic skills and language studies and (2) Orientation studies**	EDLS110 Orientation to studies and personal study plan (1)	EDLS110 Orientation to studies and personal study plan (1)	EDLS110 Orientation to studies and personal study plan (2)	EDLS110 Orientation to studies and personal study plan (2)	EDLS110 Orientation to studies and personal study plan (2) EDLS120 Orientation to educational leadership (2)
	XENX020 Mastering academic assignments (1)	XENX035 Orientation to academic assignments (1)		EDLS001 Academic reading and writing skills (2)	XENK006 Academic reading and writing skills 1 (2)
	XENX009 Integrated research communication (4)	XENX009 Integrated research communication (4)	XENX009 Integrated research communication (4)	EDLS002 Academic reading and writing skills (2)	XENK007 Academic reading and writing skills 2 (2)
	XENX027* Conference skills (1)	XENX027* Conference skills (1)	XENX031* Project and conference skills (2)	XENX031* Project and conference skills (2)	
	XSU0005* Finnish language studies Suomi I (5)	XSU0005* Finnish language studies Suomi I (5)	XSU0005* Finnish language studies Suomi I (5)	XSU0005* Finnish language studies Suomi I (5)	XSU0005* Finnish language studies Suomi I (5)
Amount of courses (credits) excluding*	3 (6 ECTS)	3 (6 ECTS)	2 (6 ECTS)	3 (6 ECTS)	4 (8 ECTS)

Research methods **2014-2017: Description change to 'Advanced research methods, seminars, thesis'**	EDLS610 Research methods (5)	EDLS610 Research methods (5) ELDS620 Research methods (4)	EDLS611 Research methods I (qualitative) (3) EDLS612 Research methods II (quantitative) (3) EDLS613 Research methods III (3)	EDLS611 Research methods I (qualitative) (3) EDLS612 Research methods II (quantitative) (3) EDLS613 Research methods III (3)	EDUS361 Qualitative research methods (3) EDUS362 Quantitative research methods (3) EDUS310 Educational research (3)
Amount of courses (credits)	1 (5 ECTS)	2 (9 ECTS)	3 (9 ECTS)	3 (9 ECTS)	3 (9 ECTS)
Research seminars	EDLS911 Research seminar I (4) EDLS912 Research seminar II (4)	EDLS911 Research seminar I (2) EDLS912 Research seminar II (2)	EDLS901 Research seminar I (2) EDLS902 Research seminar II (2) EDLS903 Research seminar III (2) EDLS904 Research seminar IV (1)	EDLS901 Research seminar I (2) EDLS902 Research seminar II (2) EDLS903 Research seminar III (2) EDLS904 Research seminar IV (1)	EDLS991 Research seminar 1 (5) EDLS992 Research seminar 2 (5)
Amount of courses (credits)	2 (8 ECTS)	2 (4 ECTS)	4 (7 ECTS)	4 (7 ECTS)	2 (10 ECTS)

Appendix 2

Curriculum development of the Educational Sciences programme

(University of Jyväskylä n.d.d, n.d.e)

Curriculum from	2013-2014	2014-2017
Orientation studies	EDUS300 Orientation and Personal Study Plan (2) OKLV110 Information Technology and Acquiring Information I (3) XENX009 Integrated Research Communication (4) XSU0005* Finnish I (5)	EDUS300 Orientation and Personal Study Plan (2) KTKO104 Information Technology (3) XENX009 Integrated Research Communication (4) XSU0005* Finnish I (5)
Amount of courses (credits) excluding*	3 (9 ECTS)	3 (9 ECTS)
Research Methods	EDUS310 Educational Research (3) EDUS510 Research Seminar (10) EDUS360 Research Methods (6)	EDUS310 Educational Research (3) EDUS511 Research Seminar I (5) EDUS512 Research Seminar I (5) EDUS361 Qualitative Research Methods (3) EDUS362 Quantitative Research Methods (3)
Amount of courses (credits)	3 (19 ECTS)	5 (19 ECTS)

Appendix 3

Invitation mail and information about pre-questionnaire

Dear students of the Educational Sciences and Educational Leadership programme,

I would like to invite you to take part in a **focus group discussion group** of <u>three</u> as part of my Master's Thesis, which is focusing on what it means to study in an academic environment in a Finnish higher education institution.

As an international student in an international programme, previous experiences of teaching and learning in different places come together and may influence the educational setting, in which you find yourself in, in various ways: positively and negatively. I have had informal conversations as well as discussions about the communication of expectations as well as specifically created classroom content aiming to communicate and create an, what is perceived as an 'academically honest' environment.

The aim of this focus group discussion is therefore to provide an opportunity for you to share your experiences and thoughts in an official space as a student here at JYU with specific focus on your engagement in academic work and the academic environment.

Your views will be used to understand the teaching and learning environment **from the student perspective** and eventually further develop certain content areas such as research methods courses, research seminars and individual supervision. The main aim of the research at this stage is awareness building. By sharing the findings of this research, it is hoped that providers of international programmes can better respond to the diverse experiences and backgrounds of international participants.

The focus group discussion should not last longer than an hour and takes place within the premises of JYU. In order to find a common time slot (end of April, beginning of May), I would like to ask those interested in participating, to fill out the following form created with Google Docs by the 19th of April 2017 latest: (Link, Link closed). More details on when and where the focus group will take place, will be send to those filling out the form. If you have any questions regarding my research, please feel free to get in-touch.

Yours sincerely,
Christine Niemi (personal email address)
Educational Leadership Master's degree student at the University of Jyväskylä (JYU)

Appendix 4

Participant invitation mail and information about pre-questionnaire

Dear (name of participant),

thanks for filling out the file for scheduling the focus group discussion as part of my Master's Thesis!

In order to create ideal focus group arrangements, I would like to ask you to fill out the following short pre-questionnaire at least one day before your scheduled focus group discussion. The questionnaire consists of two parts: (1) Demographics and (2) Previous experiences in an academic context in a higher education institution. It should not take more than 10 minutes to fill out the questionnaire: (Link, Link closed).

Here you can find details on your scheduled focus group discussion:

Date:
Time:
Place: Ruusupuisto, C102 Diana (Tutkimuslaboratorio)

In order to start with the focus group discussion on time, please be at the premise 5 to 10 minutes beforehand. Please inform me in case you are not able to join the discussion on the currently allocated time. In case of emergency, please contact me via phone: (personal phone number).

Yours sincerely,

Christine
Educational Leadership Master's degree student at the University of Jyväskylä

Appendix 5

Content of the semi-structured focus group discussions

Welcome and Introduction

I would like to welcome and thank you for participating in today's focus group discussion as part of my Master's Thesis in the Educational Leadership programme on the matter of discussing on what it means to study in an academic environment in a Finnish higher education institution - in this case the University of Jyväskylä. My name is Christine Niemi and I am a Master's degree student in the Educational Leadership programme.

As an international student in an international programme, previous experiences of teaching and learning in different places come here together and may influence the educational setting, in which you find yourself in, in various ways: positively and negatively.

The aim of this focus group discussion is therefore to provide an opportunity for you to share your experiences and thoughts in an official space as a student here at JYU with specific focus on your engagement in academic work and the academic environment.

Your views will be used to understand the teaching and learning environment **from the student perspective** and eventually further develop certain content areas such as research methods courses, research seminars and individual supervision. The main aim of the research at this stage is awareness building. By sharing the findings of this research, it is hoped that providers of international programmes can better respond to the diverse experiences and backgrounds of international participants.

The focus group discussion should not last longer than an hour. Please note that the following session is video- and audio-recorded. An informed consent sheet has been provided to you. Please read the form carefully and sign the paper.

Introduction to focus group structure

There are main themes I would like you to address and discuss. Your individual experiences, your group work experiences, the support measures here at JYU and I would like to also give you space to provide recommendations.

As you represent a group of diverse students, you bring a variety of teaching and learning backgrounds, motivations, and experiences with you...(Pecorari, 2013, p.134)

Q: How do you manage your studies here at JYU?
            How would you describe your study experiences so far?
            What has gone well and what has been difficult? Why?

PQ: (build in knowledge about pre-questionnaire)
            Academic language (reading & writing)
            Academic shock
            Academic freedom

Q: How does it contrast from your previous experiences as a
            higher education student?

PQ: Did it help?
            Did it prepare?
            Did it complicate things?

Part 1.1 Individual experiences at JYU

Often, as part of a course here at JYU, it is your task to write an essay in an academic format. This is referred to academic writing. Additionally, the so-called final project is to

> conduct a small scale research and write a Master's thesis supervised by professors and senior lecturers. The thesis topics are related to the research areas of the Faculty of Education. The thesis process is supported by research method courses, research seminars and individual supervision. (University of Jyväskylä, n.d.).

Q: How do you approach such given assignments?
            Can you think of...
            → example of an assignment you were pleased with. Why?
            → example of an assignment you were disappointed with. Why?

PQ: expectations of the lecturer (clear/vague) vs. expectations of the students

assessment, feedback

Part 1.2 Group work experiences at JYU

This is maybe not your first time doing group work in an academic context, but we would now like to take a look into the aspects of working as a group in an academic context here at JYU.

Q: How do you approach such given assignments?
               → example of an assignment you were pleased with. Why?
                    → example of an assignment you were disappointed with. Why?

PQ: expectations of the lecturer (clear/vague) vs. expectations of the students
               Level of skills - Intersecting? Hindering? Improving?
               assessment, feedback

Part 2 Support measures and recommendations at JYU

Ideally, academic support should be constructed around your needs, the needs of the student…
(Pecorari, 2013, p.105).

Q: To what extent have you been supported for your academic work here at JYU?
               Are you satisfied with the support you receive? yes/no - why?

               Can you describe challenges, difficulties, beneficial aspects?
               Particular support

PQ: this can be related to assignments as well as your work proceeding with your
thesis

               department
               supervisor
               other students
               externally?

               → Support courses such as for example academic reading and writing,
               several research-oriented courses, research seminars, supervisors

Q: In what ways do you think you have developed as students academically here at
JYU?

Q: What would you recommend, what would you like to see more (supported)?

Outro

Q: What did you feel was the most important thing we talked about today and why?
               Would there anything you felt missing and would like to add?

Appendix 6

Content of the pre-questionnaire

The following pre-questionnaire is part of the data collection process for the Master's Thesis of Christine Niemi, student at the University of Jyväskylä, Master's programme in educational Leadership, Spring term 2017.

Thanks for participating in the upcoming focus group discussion. In order to be informed about the focus group population in more detail, I would kindly ask you to fill out the following questionnaire before attending the focus group discussion.

All answers and as well as the collected data during the focus group discussion are treated with confidentiality and remain anonymous.

In case of any questions throughout the process, please contact the student researcher (Christine Niemi) via email: (personal email address).

* Required

Demographics

The following section aids to create an understanding of the researched population collecting information about age, gender, nationality/nationalities, native language and information about their current studies at the University of Jyväskylä (JYU).

Entering your name helps the researcher to match the participants throughout the coding and analysing process.

Please enter your full name here: *

Please indicate your age: *

Please indicate your gender: *
Female
Male
Prefer not to say
Other:

What is/are your nationality/nationalities? *

What is your first language? *

I am currently a Master's degree student in... *
Educational Sciences at JYU.
Educational Leadership at JYU.
Other:

I am currently a ... *
First year student.
Second year student.
Other:

Previous experiences in an academic context in a higher education institution (HEI)

In the following section, I would kindly ask you to share your previous studying backgrounds.

I have completed a... *
Degree in a Bachelor's programme with submission of a thesis.
Degree in a Bachelor's programme without submission of a thesis.
Degree in Master's programme with submission of a thesis.
Degree in a Master's programme without submission of a thesis.
Doctoral degree (PhD) with submission of a thesis/dissertation.
Other:

In order to have an understanding of your previous academic experiences, please share briefly your academic path in the context of higher education. Please place emphasis on the cultural setting(s).*

Example   1:
I have not completed a degree in a higher education institution in my home country or mother tongue. I have completed a Bachelor's degree in International Business (BBA) in Jyväskylä, Finland. The programme was completely conducted in English. The classroom setting was international, i.e. around 60 students in one cohort from which 50% were Finnish students and the other 50% represented students from Russia, China, Vietnam, Estonia, Belarus, USA, India, Nepal, etc. We also had courses, in which degree students studied and worked together with exchange students.

Example   2:
I have completed a Bachelor's degree in Business Administration (BBA) in Germany in German language. As part of my degree, I have completed a semester abroad in London, UK. Courses were completed in English. Exchange and degree students alike attended courses together.

Your personal example(s) *

Thank you.

In case of any questions throughout the process, please contact the student researcher (Christine Niemi) via email: (personal email address).

Appendix 7

Information sheet for research subject and consent to participate in research

INFORMATION SHEET FOR RESEARCH SUBJECTS AND CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

**Developing mutual beneficial understandings of academic integrity
in an international higher education programme in Finland
(working title)**

Contact information of the researcher:
Christine Niemi
Master's degree student in Educational Leadership at the University of Jyväskylä
christine.niemi@gmail.com

Contact information of the supervisor:
Josephine Moate
Senior Lecturer at the University of Jyväskylä
josephine.moate@jyu.fi

Dear participant,

the focus group discussion is part of the researcher's Master's Thesis at the University of Jyväskylä (JYU) in the Educational Leadership programme. It focuses on what it means to study in an academic environment in a Finnish higher education institution, in this particular case at JYU.

As an international student in an international programme, previous experiences of teaching and learning in different places come together and may influence the educational setting, in which you find yourself in, in various ways: positively and negatively.

Through informal conversations and discussions about study experiences in Finland in an international programme, I have become increasingly interested in the range of experiences and what supportive measures could be implemented to create a positive study environment.

The focus group discussions are an opportunity for you to share your experiences and thoughts as a student here at JYU in an official space with specific focus on your engagement in academic work and the academic environment.

Your views will be used to understand the teaching and learning environment **from the student perspective** and eventually further develop certain content areas such as research

methods courses, research seminars and individual supervision. The main aim of the research at this stage is awareness building. By sharing the findings of this research, it is hoped that providers of international programmes can better respond to the diverse experiences and backgrounds of international participants.

Your participation in this research is voluntary. If you choose to participate, you have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without any consequences.
The research will be conducted in a way that it will maintain your anonymity. No personal information that is collected during the research will be disclosed to anyone else besides you and the researcher. When the results of the research will be published, no information will be included that would reveal your identity. At any point, you will have the right to receive further information about the research by contacting the researcher.

The session is video- and audio-recorded. The anonymised data will be stored digitally by the JYU, which then may be used also for further research purposes.

I have been informed of the purpose and content of the research and the use of its research materials. I hereby agree to participate in the study in accordance with the instructions given by the researcher. I can withdraw from the research at any time. I give my consent to the the data collected in such a way that it is impossible to identify me as a person.

Date	Signature of the research participant
Date	Signature of the researcher

Appendix 8

Data reduction, participant profiling on prior study experiences

Pair interview 1 (P1 and P2):

P1 (MPEL, 2nd year) is a non-native English speaker, who has completed a combination of Bachelor's and Master's degree in the respective native tongue in the respective home country without submission of a thesis almost a decade ago. The student body consisted of local students. During the Bachelor's/Master's degree, P1 spent an exchange semester in an ENL study environment. P1 has no experience in academic reading and writing, and research and is not used to group work. The degree was related to teacher education studies.

P2 (MPEL, 2nd year) is a native English speaker, who has completed a Bachelor's degree in English in the respective home country without submission of a thesis. The student body was mainly local, other larger student groups were from East Asia. The classroom size varied, with up to 500 students. Controlling study work such as homework and checking up on attendance took place. During the Bachelor's degree, P2 spent an exchange semester in a EFL study environment. Within the completed degree, writing a thesis was optional and accounted for one ECTS. According to P2, within the study programme only the "best of the best" were acquired to graduate with submission of a thesis. P2 has no academic reading and research experiences but writing experiences. The degree was related to teacher education studies.

Pair interview 2 (P3 and P4):

P3 (EDU, 1st year) is a non-native English speaker, who has completed a Bachelor's degree in English in a ENL study environment without submission of a thesis. The student body consisted mainly of ENL speakers, other larger groups were from East Asia and Africa. Grades played an important role during studies. P3 states to be familiar with academic reading and writing (APA) and to have little knowledge of quantitative research. P3 is not used to a large amount of group work. The degree was not related to education studies, but P3 has work experience as a teacher.

P4 (MPEL, 1st year) is a non-native English speaker, who has completed a Bachelor's degree in the respective native tongue and English in the respective home country without submission of a thesis. A similar type of document was submitted in P4's native tongue in order to graduate. The student body was mainly local, other larger groups were from areas in close approximate to P4s local environment. P4 is not used to a large amount of group work and essay writing, but states to be personally pleased with academic writing skills. Essays were written and submitted usually at the end of a course, which can last for months allowing space and time for discussing, reading and learning. Teaching staff would provide guidance of requested reading material. The degree was related to teacher education studies, P4 has work experience as a teacher.

Pair interview 3 (P5 and P6):

P5 (MPEL, 2nd year) is a non-native English speaker, who has completed a Bachelor's degree in the respective native tongue in the respective home country without submission of a thesis. The student body was mainly local. Some of the courses and projects within the degree were offered in English language. P5 describes the learning style during the studies as passive, influenced by instructions and navigations. The degree was not related to education studies.

P6 (EDU, 1st year) is a non-native English speaker, who has completed a Bachelor's degree in the respective native tongue with submission of a thesis in English. The student body was local, but P6 participated in various international projects during the studies, which were conducted in English. As part of the studies an internship was completed in an EFL environment. P6 has experienced group work and has writing experience. The degree was related to teacher education studies, P6 has work experience as a teacher.

Pair interview 4 (P7 and P8):

P7 (MPEL, 1st year) is a non-native English speaker, who has completed a Bachelor's degree in English without submission of a thesis. The student body was local. P7 describes the writing style as 'naturally academic'. Exams were common. The degree was not related to education studies. P7 is grown up in an English-speaking environment.

P8 (EDU, 2nd year) is a native English speaker, who has completed a Bachelor's degree with submission of a thesis in English. The student body was mainly local students. P8 has completed an internship in an EFL speaking environment. The degree was related to education studies.

Pair interview 5 (P9 and P10):

P9 (MPEL, 2nd year) is a non-native English speaker, who has completed a degree between Bachelor's and Master's in the respective native tongue with submission of a thesis in English. Part of the programme's courses were conducted in English allowing also exchange students to participate. P9 has completed two exchange semesters in an ENL study environment. P9 has no academic reading and writing background, and no research experience. Within the programme, P9 was able to choose on whether to do group work (often meaning a presentation) or write an essay, P9 generally choose the latter. Assessment took place usually at the end of the semester or during study breaks in form of an exam or assignment. The degree was related to teacher education studies. P9's English language skills are influenced by attending for a longer period an international school during childhood.

P10 (MPEL, 2nd year) is a non-native English speaker, who has completed a Master's degree programme in English with submission of a thesis in English. The student body was local. The degree was not related to education studies. P10 is grown up in an English-speaking environment. Group work activities usually had practical implications allowing 'real-word' scenarios.

Pair interview 6 (P11 and P12):

P11 (EDU, 2nd year) is a non-native English speaker, who has completed a Bachelor's degree in the respective native tongue with submission of a thesis in the respective native tongue. The thesis was split into two, a part comprising theory and a part comprising a data collection. The student body was mainly local. The classroom size varied with more than 100 students, 300 to 600 students in one cohort. Assessment took place usually at the end of the semester in form of an exam, there was not much contact with lecturers. The degree was related to education studies. A display of subjective opinion was not appreciated.

P12 (MPEL, 2nd year) is a non-native English speaker, who has completed a Bachelor's degree in the respective native tongue with submission of a thesis in the respective native tongue. Assessment took place in form of more essays than exams. The degree was related to education studies.

Pair interview 7 (P13 and P14):

P13 (EDU, 2nd year) is a native English speaker, who has completed a Bachelor's degree in English with submission of a research-based paper in English. The student body was local. P13 has academic reading and writing experiences and states to have no problems in writing academically besides having used a different citation style during the degree. The degree was related to education studies.

P14 (MPEL, 1st year) is a native English speaker, who has completed a Bachelor's degree in English without submission of a thesis. The student body was mainly local and East Asia. P14 has no academic reading and writing experience, and no research experience. P14 has no essay writing experience. The degree was not related to education studies. A display of subjective opinion was not common.

Pair interview 8 (P15 and P16):

P15 (MPEL, 1st year) is a non-native English speaker, who has completed a Master's degree in the respective native tongue in the respective home country with submission of a thesis. Additionally, P15 has completed two Bachelor's degrees having the choice to complete the programmes with submission of a thesis or book exam, whereby the latter was chosen in both cases. Familiar assessment prior studies at JYU were book exams and exams. The degree was not related to education, P15 has work experience as a teacher.

P16 (MPEL, 1st year) is a non-native English speaker, who has completed a Bachelor's degree in the respective native tongue in the respective home country without submission of a thesis. The student body consisted to up to local 150 students. Familiar assessment methods prior studies at JYU were book exams, no assignments were given within the study programme. Presentations are not set as obligatory, therefore there is limited amount of interaction among students as well as teachers. The degree was not related to education studies.

Appendix 9

Data reduction, participant profiling on experiences at the University of Jyväskylä

Pair interview 1 (P1 and P2):

P1 (MPEL, 2nd year) describes being 'a long time lost' due to the fact that the MPEL study programme and its main theme of Educational Leadership has not been effectively introduced to the cohort which resulted in the diverse cohort not being on the same page. P1 describes the study environment in the Finnish HEI as not having to learn for passing a course, specifically referring to the lack of follow-up for reading materials.

P1 states to benefit in the Finnish HE environment of JYU from work experience and the completed exchange semester more than the previous study programme in the respective home country considering it was a longer time ago and study environments have changed.

P1 generally describes group work as 'great' after getting used to it, challenges arise when different learning aims consist among group participants and therefore work load may be distributed unequally. Additional complications arise when Bachelor's students (exchange students) are part of Master's students courses and therefore participants in group work assignments, this may be due to a perceived lack of academic skills described by P1. According

to P1, culture may be an additional factor complicating group work activities considering the home educational system.

P1 described the Academic Reading and Writing course as 'very helpful' considering no background in academic reading and writing. The (name of a research methods course) course is described as 'total failure' considering material being partly in Finnish and personally lacking previous knowledge and experiences. When starting the thesis process, things may get clearer. The department environment is described as helpful, JYU being 'student-oriented' considering the opportunity of loaning and not buying books. Thesis supervision has been challenging because the initial thesis supervisor is described as 'not very communicative' and only providing e-mail-contact. P2 states to need more guidance than that. It resulted into changing the thesis supervisor, but also losing valid time for writing the thesis.

P1 states to occasionally have understanding problems when it comes to the English language. Within the MPEL programme, English language skills have improved including writing in English. Academic reading and writing skills have developed, being able to differentiate between an academic and non-academic text.

P2 (MPEL, 2nd year) describes the general study environment as more demanding considering the independent workload within the academic programme. This includes being independently motivated and independently accountable. P2 is still adapting towards the learning style in the Finnish HEI. P2 states that work experience would have better prepared to study in this MPEL programme because of a lack of real-life application possibilities. Positive implementations of individual assignments refer to a balanced workload (amount of assignments, amount of time, well-defined questions, choice of own context). Disappointments appeared when teaching staff's response time regarding submitted assignments is coming in rather late and without feedback impacting motivation of putting effort and submitting into an assignment due to a lack of care.

P2 enjoys group work as it a more beneficial learning experience than individually writing an essay being able to accomplish building 'off from ideas from others'. Outcomes may depend on the motivation of the group members, P2 has been on both spectrums: motivated and unmotivated depending on the time P2 is able to invest. Positive group work experiences are described as having a 'synergy'. P2 was able to enhance learning for academic writing through peer learning. Problematic may be the issue of students being rushed, having no time or having no interest in the course.

P2 describes the Academic Reading and Writing course as most helpful for getting the thesis process started. The research-related courses are stated to be 'semi-helpful'. Thesis support is described as 'quite supportive'. P2 describes specifically a case of reaching out for support concerning personal struggles with courses, assignments and a teaching staff member requesting a face-to-face conversation, which was downgraded to an email conversation resulting in disappointment and demotivation.

When it comes to academic development, P2 states to have learned about the significance of internal motivation and having a mindset for lifelong learning. Furthermore, academic writing skills have enhanced due to a lot of writing assignments, academic reading and research skills have developed. A bigger picture about the 'world of research' exists now.

Both describe a lack of continuity in the assignments and courses and therefore having the feeling that courses are just aiming for completion to gain ECTS, but not impacting learning. Furthermore, they address receiving good grades (individual or group work assignments), though they would consider their personal input not good enough for receiving such a grade (e.g. a 4 or 5). On one hand, P2 elaborates that the amount of ECTS and time provided for courses (contact hours and actual lengths of the course) is not convertible to the personal input (which may be 10-20% of the anticipated working hours). On the other hand, P1 describes the impact of other people's thoughts found on the Internet, the lack of actually reading the provided reading material thoroughly and own thoughts resulting in a 'good looking paper' and therefore a good grade.

When addressing the topic of academic integrity, specifically plagiarism, both state to have not experienced cases of plagiarism.

Pair interview 2 (P3 and P4):

P3 (EDU, 1st year) describes the Finnish HE environment, specifically the first semester, as 'shocking' when referring to academic freedom and flexibility and a perceived lack of structure in comparison to the previous degree, but later on reconverting this environment into 'inner motivation' concentrating on exploring own interests, concentrating on own learning experiences and a described student autonomy: "learning process and outcome process became more important for the first time than outcome". Importance of grade value reduced. The first semester was spent on finding balance between personal and university life. With having taken more courses in the second semester, less time can be spent on learning. The time constraints have impacted assignments and may not result in the best work.

The (name of a research methods course)'s personal learning curve took partly place outside of class in form of peer learning resulting into knowing the basics. P3 mentions that there may have been a pre-set assumption of knowing the basics beforehand.

P3 experiences more group work at JYU than in the previous degree and shares the challenge of being exposed to various skill levels of English language as well as differently defined term of academic integrity. Positive group work experiences are therefore connected to similar levels of academic integrity and academic writing, group members coming together, contributing and sharing the workload reaching for a common final outcome. When it comes to disappointed group work assignments P3 mentions students plagiarizing and therefore lacking a common understanding of academic integrity resulting into an increase of workload for other group members. P3 highlights that "those understandings are not set initially". Additional challenges include group members not showing up for meetings and a lack of task responsibility. P3 describes cases of intentional and unintentional academic dishonesty. In the latter case, P3 provided peer guidance and support teaching the student basics of academic writing. On the one hand, P3 describes the situation as frustrating, not necessarily being the responsibility of the student to teach to that extent another student such matters. On the other hand, the contribution to the learning effect of the student was seen as beneficial for all. P3 tries to have group members P3 knows and trusts. Because of the risk of plagiarizing, P3 would not share personal assignments papers with other students.

P3, if in need of support, reaches out for support, and also helps others to find a solution if P3 has no time to help personally.

P4 (MPEL, 1st year) describes the Finnish HE environment at JYU as a non-pressured environment resulting into a lack of productivity, i.e. it is challenging to manage time, responsibilities and tasks. After having a well-working first semester, one assignment at the end of the first semester could not be finished in time for which a postponement was agreed upon ('whenever you can'). P4 realized that 'learning is (here) more important than me submitting assignments' resulting in regularly postponing assignments' deadlines: "if nobody really cares and is pressuring me to perform in a certain standard or to a certain level by a certain deadline, why would I pressure myself to do it?" which P4 refers to as academic flexibility, the 'Finn's pride', which occurs to be difficult from time to time and is described by P4 as 'a bit of shock'.

P4 experiences more essay writing than in the previous degree, assignments there used to spread over a longer period of time than in JYU, in which contact hours are limited to a few meetings. P4 states that moving countries in order to study in Finland was an investment and expectations are not fulfilled considering that little time is spent in class and therefore courses seem to lack cohort/course group interaction and structure.

Additionally, P4 states that the research and the reading and writing oriented courses lack communication and coordination among the courses themselves, but also the faculty considering the various student needs.

Group work activities have been good for P4 due to the fact that most of the time the groups consisted of people P4 knew well. A disappointing group work experience took place in a course, which was completed in a short amount of time at the end of the semester. Next to the time pressure, one of the group members (exchange student, Bachelor's degree) was not familiar with 'academia'.

Individual support, when reaching out, is easy and helpful. Considering the diverse student cohort, P4 highlights that it may be important also to reach out to the students more proactively knowing that P4 would for example not necessarily ask for help. Within the cohort, the students have developed a practice of sending each other assignment papers for feedback before submission reassuring one another to be on the right path. The risk of plagiarism is addressed, and one current case of an individual assignment is explained, in which students worked together and submitted 'unintentionally' the same paper.

Both refer to classes not being helpful. Lecturers are perceived as researchers, not teachers. P4 referring hereby to a case where the limited in-class time was utilized for organizational matters to an extent which according to P4 should be planned beforehand. P3 describes a class in which the lecturer was not engaging with the class cohort resulting into student carelessness, rather preferring a lecturer trying to learn with students and implementing various styles of teaching methods. P3 furthermore indicates a lack of teaching preparation, in which, on the same note, P4 refers rather to a 'matter of priorities'. They discuss that course contact hours should be used for discussion and promote critical thinking. Some contact hours seem to be allocated for group work meetings and repeating the content of the assigned reading material which may result into not reading the actual provided material. On the other hand, there are cases where no reading material provided which may complicate matters when not being familiar with the topic of course at all. P4 mentions an assumption of students being accepted to the programme having work experience.

When talking about the (name of an orientation and language studies course) which P4 describes as too basic, lacking explanations and spending the in-class time on writing referring to the course as a 'typing class', in which the teacher did not take into consideration that some students this may not be the ideal working environment. P3 on the other describes the equivalent of that course in their programme as 'useful' initiating thesis thought processes.

During the discussion about group work, different levels of input depending on the skillset of the students involved resulting into tempering and adjusting the group work output by other members of the group. Both are aware that such matters, like group work ground rules, should potentially communicated beforehand.

When discussing the topic of grading, P3 refers to the paradox within the Finnish education system, which, according to P3, focused on learning process and learning autonomy, though grades are still given. P4 mentions that it seems that the 'standard grade is a 5'. English language skills may impact a grade negatively, mentions P3 and notes that English language development is not supported. Both describe an assumption that a lack of English language proficiency is equalling a lack of knowledge invalidity of ideas.

Pair interview 3 (P5 and P6):

For **P5 (MPEL, 2nd year)** the Finnish HE environment is characterized by flexibility, freedom and personal autonomy. P5 describes the environment as very different from the environment in the respective home country and therefore having challenges and confusion on how to "be" in such an environment. Finding one owns interest is challenging. With having no background and work experience in education, P5 often felt like 'stepping on air'. P5 also says that the name of the programme (Educational Leadership) implies personally a more broader perspective to educational leadership, but the programme's perspective is reflecting upon the Finnish equivalent (Rehtori instituutti) and therefore a principal's perspective described as a 'disconnection'.

Having classes in English is stated to be challenging, understanding on one site, but acquiring knowledge and comprehending on the other site. Repeating content of certain courses is therefore a benefit helping to develop own ideas understanding though that overlapping content may not beneficial for all. P5 states that practical matters within the courses were lacking.

When working in groups, P5 feels like many cultures come together, i.e. communication and working styles, which may make working together challenging. It feels more comfortable working together with a similar cultural background. Working together with native English speakers feels overwhelming. Group work benefited from peer support in group work assignments being able to cope and finish assignments in time. Considering have problems with

expressing ideas and opinions in English, native English speakers in the group aided for example with proofreading and developing academically further. P6 interrupts explaining that being a non-native English speaker helps being more critical.

When talking about the (name of research methods course), P5 questions how much learning took place. With the completion of the course, i.e. completing the assignment and receiving a grade, practical aspects are still doubtful.

As an academic development path, P5 describes that viewpoints about education has changed. Instead of a demanding and very structured education setting and reaching certain standards ignoring own learning interests, P5 shifts to 'I do study for myself' in contrast to "Although I do not certainly wanna do it, but the society needs and people's expectations and parents' expectations". P5 adds that a practical development is lacking.

P6 (EDU, 1st year) describes the HE environment having a 'a lot of room for choice'. On the one hand, enjoying the opportunities and openness and on the other hand, the offered specialisation courses may contain learning content which was covered in the previous degree, do not cover personal interests or focus. In order to feel inspired, courses need to be interesting and catch attention. If that's the case or if the lecturer does not necessarily what s/he wants from the course putting a lot of academic freedom in place, then it seems like the course is lacking clarity and structure. In mandatory courses, the diverse student groups (educational background) may experience therefore completely new content or repetition. The latter is generally an issue explained by P6 and the expectations of P6 are higher than having content overlapping in courses describing it has demotivating. Additionally, P6 states it to be challenging that the courses are on very various different levels mentioning in for example exchange students (Bachelor) as a possible influential factor.

P6 describes group work always as challenging because of the different personalities, not necessary their educational or cultural background. The international background does add an 'extra dimension'. P6 hereby describes to having a high self-awareness and therefore trying to act as a mediator in group work activities: "working in a group for me is a really good opportunity to learn to keep myself back and to give other people room". Different writing and presentation styles are a challenge. For P6 it appears that nowadays students search for similarities such as a same level of English language skills to work together in group activities.

P6 explains, that though there is an extensive amount of academic and research courses, they are 'not tailored to the student's needs'. Needs hereby refer to the pre-existing skill levels and interests. For P6 for example personally is not interested in quantitative research and therefore 'forgets everything anyway'. In regards of the (name of a research methods course), students offered guidance and help with extra lessons because the course itself was not clear enough to some students. A more differentiated approach would tailor different need considering the unbalanced teaching content of the courses understanding that this may be difficult to implement.

For P6 research skills have further developed because "that's basically what we do here". Biggest developments are seen in creating knowledge and awareness about other experiences utilizing the international atmosphere resulting into having 'more questions about education'.

Pair interview 4 (P7 and P8):

P7 (MPEL, 1st year) describes the current study experiences at JYU as 'interesting' expecting a 'more stimulating environment' in a sense of more experiential learning being rather than traditional learning. Assessment methods were new, i.e. no exams, which P7 likes. Challenging is having so much independence and therefore responsibility: "That was kinda shocking in the beginning", now having adjusted well to such an environment. Personally, P7 finds it difficult to reach out for support. The purpose of Personal Development Session, which P7 considers support, was not set clear and P7 expected more guidance. The placement of the session was according to P7 also too early and therefore overwhelming because "I was just grasping the way things work here". Course teaching staff is supportive and helpful.

P7 states to have no problems with the English language, processes on how to write a thesis were introduced at JYU. P7s writing style is 'naturally academic' indicating no difficulties.

Challenging is academic reading and the timeframe of finishing assigned readings. P7 explains that every submitted assignment is a disappointment because of the thought to submit something even better. Grades a very good though and possibly a bit surprising sometimes.

For P7 says that group work is the best part of studies having no complications in assigned group works because "I just tend to get people together and push them". One case described group work, in which all members were demotivated because the chosen topic focus (by the group itself) was not easily accessible. Individual assignments are more difficult for P7 than group work because within a group many can take about the task and remind each other in case something is forgotten.

P8 (EDU, 2nd year) addresses the study environment as flexible in comparison to the previous degree considering having every day differently structured and the need for checking on the daily basis for changes. P8 describes the study environment of the EDU programme as stimulating, wanting to learn more though because the previous degree covered many of the aspects offered at JYU, which was 'slightly disappointing'. The programme provides space to be flexible and creative, but the lecturers lack creativity. Difficult were assessment methods because all courses were completed in a short amount of time piling up on each other not being used to it anymore (previous degree completed two years ago). P8 mentions that own personal proactivity for reaching out for support is needed as not everything is available in English. When reaching out for support, support is offered greatly. P8 finds it 'strange' to not being able as a student to enter the office areas without ringing a bell creating 'distance' and a 'barrier'. In most cases, email responses are done quite quickly (referring to questions, not feedback). An official space and time for peer support was initiated by students themselves. The idea has been taken by (name of a JYU staff member) of the EDU programme into the next cohort. P8 explains that reflection in form of written journals, feedback and spoken is emphasized, which does not seem to occur for P7 that regularly.

Academic reading and writing is a 'breeze' for P8. An introduction to (name of a research methods course) was seen as unnecessary to be taken because P8 has completed a degree in education and written a thesis before. Within that course only general feedback was given, not individual feedback for an individual assignment, which confused students on what went really wrong (when having a low grade). P8, in the same position, directly searched for contact with the lecturer and found a way to communicate the matter in an unscheduled face-to-face conversation after not receiving a response to an email.

Research methods courses are described by P8 as 'not the best' considering the teaching method ('PowerPoint-guided'), in which case it maybe would be better to assign readings at home. A more individual approach may be needed because though reflection is emphasized, it is difficult to implement in such a class. Experiences shared by former students was seen as positive.

P8 enjoys group work because of the interaction and supportive aspect. Difficulties arise due to potentially 'culture', though the work should be in focus and that's P8 tries to emphasize as well. P8 realizes though that for some it is the first time being involved group work, not being comfortable using the English language. Group formations developed. Appointed groups are considered as 'interesting' because the diverse group members (students from different programmes) make it difficult to meet up. P8 also describes a case of assumed plagiarism because the students spoken English language skills did not match up the with written English language skills. Because of fear of being downgraded as a group, P8 confronted the student and in the end trusted the student that the content was written by him/her.

P8s academic development is not significant. P8 states to have learned self-awareness. Considering the programme 'easy', P8 is rather 'disappointed'.

The research seminars were conducted timewise not smartly, which caused confusion for P7. Similar case with the Academic Reading and Writing course being 'mismatched with what we were going through as a class' to which P8 agrees upon.

Differences in writing styles are perceived by P7, but usually one group member takes the lead in making the text conform. P8 does not consider making group work texts conform because the different writing styles show 'different flows of thinking'.

Pair interview 5 (P9 and P10):

P9 (MPEL, 2nd year) expresses disappointment with the programme, being unmotivated as it does not cater to the needs of P9. According to P9, the focus is on primary and secondary education, not higher education, in which P9 is interested in. Having the freedom, P9 focuses most assignments around the latter. Currently, a lot of assignments are postponed, which is due to overload of studies ('too much at once) and work (enjoying 'practical work'). Having the chance to implement a minor helped to gain motivation as it was something of higher interest. The lack of motivation is due to boring classes and non-interesting class content. P9 was not pleased with many assignments because "I just had to do them". P9 elaborated on assignment being pleased with because it felt 'meaningful' being able to connect it also to the current work environment P9 was involved in. P9 often worked 'last minute' to finish assignments receiving good grades (4-5). Assignments sometimes seem not applicable currently and unrealistic to write about with a lack of work experience in mind.

P9 states to lack a space for communicating on how things are going teaching and administrative staff. The feedback provided, does not seem to be taken into consideration.

P9 enjoys group work, especially presentations because it feels like spending less time and effort and therefore less energy. Group work can be challenging, but P9 enjoys the learning curve. A group work P9 was pleased with, was with a group of people P9 knows taking place in one of the later semesters. A group work, P9 was disappointed with, was with a group of people P9 was not familiar with taking place in the first semester. Additionally, different perspectives of punctuality and group work leadership styles, collided and influenced the experience negatively. Writing in groups can be challenging due to for example having exchange students (Bachelor) in the group who lack academic writing skills. Also, different English language skills impact communication and understanding among group members.

P9 is 'really satisfied' with the thesis support by the thesis supervisor. "Other than that, not so much." The (name of an orientation and language studies course) helped to get the thesis process started. The Research methods courses provided 'some knowledge', "but I don't remember much of them". The courses are according to P9 catered to everyone, not taking in consideration individual's backgrounds and therefore needs. P9 describes cases, in which assignment tasks are 'quite vague' and therefore peers supported each other by exchanging ideas and opinions. Additionally, P9 has provided own assignments to other students (only students P9 can trust) after having personally received already an assessment.

P9's English language skills developed further, also in regards of academic reading and writing, but P9 is unsure about the extent considering that feedback is usually only given through a grade.

P10 (MPEL, 2nd year) elaborates on managing studies at JYU with support by family, friends, students from the previous cohort and colleagues. The study environment is mainly characterized by individual work, i.e. "dealing with your own ideas, thoughts trying to collide there" and academic reading taking a lot of time and energy. P10 considers to be academically oriented enjoying the academic environment at JYU and being motivated by being in an educational setting: "Overall, it has been very pleasant, very engaging, very intense". The study experience would be even better if a practical aspect during group work activities would be implemented ('real projects, real educational challenges') considering working later on in such settings and experiences such an environment in the previous degree. P10 describes the study environment at JYU as "very open, very accessible, in terms of what knowledge resources and in terms of physical resources" and therefore as motivating. Additionally, easily reaching out to teaching and administrative staff is a plus. P10 mentions that the previous background may create more appreciation towards the current environment. P10 states to benefit from work experience: "If you have actually engaged in these kind of activities, I feel there is a lot more you can draw from this programme than, actually that programme doesn't build you so much to be ready in so many ways".

With attending the courses, basic content gets covered. It depends very much on the student, to create a deeper understanding and knowledge base. Assigned and/or provided reading material is evaluated by P10 by interest ('connection') and importance.

P10 describes the group work activities at JYU as "comfortable in the sense that nobody goes beyond a level of comfort", which P10 does not consider group work. Often the focus is just on finishing an assignment, less on an actual learning opportunity, which was for P10 'disheartening'. Group members tend to lack maturity and involvement not considering even a group learning effect and just concentrating on individual parts and not going beyond. Challenging group works took place when people were not in sync and did not try to develop synergy. Bringing coherence into assignments written together can be challenging. P10 mentions cases, in which students utilized parts from previous assignments. P10 has also experienced being mocked because of language by other group members. P10 says that no group work has been enjoyable.

When reaching proactively out for support, support is provided. The Research Methods courses are according to P10 'not empowering', i.e. courses do not 'build a strong base'. The assignments, considering a lot of individual learning input, 'helped more'. P10 provided peer support to other students (pre-reading).

Academic reading and writing skills primarily developed in the respective home study environment. Research skills have developed further at JYU.

When addressing the theme of feedback giving, both agree it on being rare or valuable. Though receiving a grade 5, P10 connects a disappointing assignment, with the given feedback ("You know what, you got a big fat 5.") considering that for P10 grades do not matter that much. The content was relevant and considered to be relevant also to the lecturer's work.

P10 mentions to miss interaction between the MPEL and EDU cohorts, which P9 agrees on.

Pair interview 6 (P11 and P12):

P11 (EDU, 2nd year) describes studying in the EDU programme as not 'very challenging or very time-consuming' being 'underwhelming'. Additionally, P11 states that the "Expectations for passing courses and getting good grades (are not) very high here compared to what I am used to anyway". Instead of the expectation of the programme being scientifically relevant, content is often based on opinions and experiences, not "necessarily related to an academically relevant context". On the one hand, P11 considers the experiences of others as valuable, but on the other hand 'frustrating' because it happens on 'bar level' and therefore lacks 'academic discourse'. According to P11, there are no standards for assessment. Feedback is 'frustrating' because it lacks valuable criticism because it does not seem to take into consideration on how scientifically relevant and true the content is, which is for example talked about in presentations. This occurs also in written assignments, experiences and opinions are appreciated, something which was not the case in the previous degree. P11 has adapted to being more subjective.

P11 does not have a case of a disappointing individual assignment, only when the course content already does not seem to make sense, it may be difficult to reflect interest in the given assignment.

P11 explains to have had 'terrible experiences with group work' at JYU emphasizing to prefer individual assignments. For P11 group work indicates a stressful and time-consuming undergoing because of the struggle of group members agreeing on a topic, making sure work is distributed and everybody does their share as well as meeting up. P11 experienced where only a few people did all the work. P11 refers to communication, 'cultural' and language issues. With language issues, P11 refers to the hesitation of some students to contribute and being involved in group work activities. P11 says that, with one exception, all group work assignments were written by P11 indicating it may have been less stress for all with having other group members checking the content and providing their opinion. P11 describes cases of plagiarism, which resulted into writing the assignment by oneself trying to avoid a low grade for all. P11 mentions that the student (same cohort) was not aware of what s/he did wrong. The case of having all group members writing the assignment together was characterized by knowing each member well and trusting and relying on them.

Deadlines are not strict. 'Communicating with each other' is different from what P11 is used to from the previous degree.

P11 is overall happy and satisfied with the support provided. Staff is easy to approach. The (name of an orientation and language studies course) was 'super helpful' to get the thesis writing process started.

For P12 (MPEL, 2nd year) the programme has not been that easy because P12 needed to get used the bigger amount of reading and writing academically stating that speaking English necessarily has not been a problem but writing academically has been 'tricky'. P12 describes a case, in which the lecturer requested a proposal before starting the written assignment assuming that lecturer would like to see whether student has understood the assignment and may have found relevant reading materials, which P12 appreciates. Otherwise topics are usually freely selectable.

P12 describes cases of disappointing individual assignments, having received a lower grade, because in P12's opinion the lack of work experience and expertise may have contributed to the result. It may also have been unclear for P12 on what was expected to write about.

For P12 some of the group works have been 'fast', especially in the beginning, considering for example understanding everyone's English (accents), which now seems a bit easier. Usually group works have been done in time and graded well. P12 would prefer a more action-based group work than a group, in which a lot of 'chit-chat' is happening. P12 has experienced group work, in which students did not write academically in a sense that quotations were not marked, content was not cited and therefore not referenced, which P12 describes as challenging and frustrating.

P12 values having the opportunity to share and learn from other experiences enhancing own learning. P12 states that feedback can be short - there seems to be variations among teaching staff giving or not giving feedback.

Thesis support provided by the thesis supervisor could have been according to P11 considering not having regular meetings and also no direct tasks. Teaching staff support is provided when reaching out, which for P12 is not so easy. The Academic Reading and Writing course was for P12 'eye-opening': "Ok, different people from different countries have different perspectives and different experience to write and view of academic writing".

Pair interview 7 (P13 and P14):

P13 (EDU, 2nd year) has no problems writing an essay in a short amount of time because of being used to it from the previous degree, also being able to express thoughts in an extended manner. P13's is a native English speaker and it is beneficial, but also 'tiresome' considering the expectation to always talk and present. P13 states to have problems with writing reflections in the Finnish HE setting as it is different from style in the previous degree as expectations of what a reflective consists of are not clearly communicated and being 'up to you (the student)'): "And then you write something and they say, this is not what they wanted, but they don't tell you what they want"., which is 'frustrating' for P13 receiving lower grades. P13 therefore started to submit assignments earlier in order to make possible changes afterwards and avoid a lower grade. When writing an essay, P13 always checks on previous writing assignments' content considering that "a lot of classes here a fairly similar" in order to utilize previous content. If not familiar or not understanding with the course content, P13 looks things up. P13 describes a case, in which the content communicated in the class was not clear/understandable because content was delivered 'poorly'. Additionally, if there is a lack of understanding, P13 states to "use my native English speaker status and abilities to make my language much more flowery, so that's more difficult to understand and kind of upscales what I am actually writing" receiving the 'benefit of a doubt'. P13 also needed to get used to a different academic writing style.

P13 noticed that various students, whose English language skills may not be that good, prefer writing an essay than present. According to P13 presentation skills are more valuable than essay writing skills. P13 says that it may also be easier to grade. Often, there is though a feeling of doing a presentation for 'presentation's sake', i.e. that some classes are very short, the achieved ECTS do not equal the workload.

P13 tends to do group work with the same kind of people after getting to know their 'styles' and trusting them resulting into a more 'smoothly' process. Disappointing group work activities

are connected with having exchange students (Bachelor) in the same course because they make lack knowledge in comparison to Master's students, which may result in doing their parts.

P13 thinks having both Research Methods (Quantitative and Qualitative) courses is important in order to understand the big picture. Within the (name of a research methods course), data was provided in Finnish and content was not communicated efficiently as tools for interpretation were lacking.

P13 states that his previous study experiences were not taken into consideration by the programme responsible, though other students' experiences have.

P14 (MPEL, 1st year) is used to a very competitive study environment, in which class participation is emphasized, i.e. it is not necessarily a valuable contribution, it is more about to 'just say something'. In the Finnish HE setting "people genuinely contribute ideas and add on to the discussion" and there is no competition. It is less stressful for P14 in the Finnish HE environment considering also that there is less pressure put on presentation skills because in the previous degree "the professor is looking at every tiny bit of detail". For P14 is was in the beginning therefore important "to do more, so I am on par with everyone", but P14 has 'slowly adapted' to not doing more as for example in group work, group members would highlight "we don't need to do anything more than that'. P14 contemplates whether this is a good or bad thing and says, "getting students to produce good work in a healthy way, that's the challenge". Being used to the home country study environment, P14 does not value class time that much considering studying a lot at home as lectures were provided online, therefore P14 may not engage in class as there is a need to first familiarize with the topic itself.

P14 tends to do assignments last-minute and considering having never written essays before, it is hard for P14 to estimate the needed time for completion. Essay writing includes reading a lot and that makes P14 feel unproductive. P14 is not used to express own thoughts, therefore not liking to elaborate on things and being rather straightforward having problems writing longer essays. P14 to be not satisfied with most submitted assignments. Grading seems 'subjective' as the last-minute submitted assignments seem to get better grades than the well-though off ones: "So, it doesn't mean that my work is good or not good, but just whether it is aligned with what they (the lecturers) are actually looking for". The Academic Reading and Writing course has supported to being aware about academic reading and writing. Organization of reading material is a challenge and therefore is the system of citing and referencing as P14 tends to make notes for understanding purposes and it is difficult to track back. P14 prefers presentations than writing an essay.

Group work activities can be challenging due to different levels of English language skills. P13 describes a case of having to work together with an exchange student (Bachelor), with whom it was difficult to communicate. When having a group meeting, the student was supported by a friend aiding to translate and communicate. P14 did not mind helping the student (if having time), though different opinions within the group existed about supporting the student. In the end, they wrote a script for the student's part of the presentation. P14 states though that "ideally everybody should put in their own parts and everybody would have some kind of synergy". Additionally, different writing styles may make the assignment sound 'disconnected'. Therefore, P14 prefers and finds it 'more useful' having one person writing the essay, in which all group members participate/contribute by proving thoughts and ideas in bullet format.

The Academic Reading and Writing course was 'good to have' considering no academic reading and writing background of P14. P14 describes this course as 'basic' and a 'good introduction'. The Qualitative Research Methods course is 'useful' because P14 would like to implement a qualitative research method into the thesis. Therefore, considers the Quantitative Research Methods as not necessary to take.

Both have not experienced cases of plagiarism.

Pair interview 8 (P15 and P16):

P15 (MPEL, 1st year) generally speaking has 'a great experience' in the Finnish HE setting of JYU, it being 'supportive and helpful'. P15 describes the academic reading and writing process as well

as style of assessment as 'difficult reasoning coming from a different educational system and studying the first time in English. If in need for feedback, P15 contacts the lecturer directly. P15 appreciates having the chance to postpone deadlines because it helps to submit a better assignment.

P15 receives helpful support from the thesis supervisor. P15 enjoys assignments when connection to personal interests and being able to choose the focus. P15 describes the Quantitative Research Methods and the Academic Reading and Writing course as not 'well connected' or 'coordinated' towards the thesis process mentioning the coordination between two different departments (Language Center and Faculty of Education). P15 considers the amount of ECTS also too low and therefore not motivating and a single session of the Academic Reading and Writing course too long. P15 has communicated the lack of coordination to the respective staff member, the response was: "I have this curricula from the university". P15 assumes having gotten a lower grade (3) because of P15's criticism. The (name of a research methods course) lacked explanations blaming the teaching style.

P15 describes a disappointing assignment, marked 3, which was very personal, in which the lecturer corrected English language and criticizing repetition and not enough references, which P15 does not consider right.

P15 describes a 'horrible' group work experience, in which group members were assigned and having exchange students (Bachelor) in P15's group, who did not do anything providing content last-minute and also having to do another student's work. As a group decision, it was also once decided to drop off a student's writing part because of being believing it may be plagiarism. P15 would like to have the opportunity to learn from each other in group work activities, when referring to exchange students, P15 states: "I expect also to learn from them, but at this point, I cannot learn anything from them". A good assignment seems to be connected to a good grade: "We have written a very good assignment for qualitative, we got five". P15 describes this group work as good because of knowing the student (same cohort), shared responsibility, shared workload, meeting up for discussions. P15 explains that coming from different education systems implies different expectations: "we don't have the same idea of work or let's say working in groups".

P15 shares a case feeling a case of racism happening in one class, in which the lecturer generalized a group of students' nationalities describing them as less 'civil' by quoting for example "The Westerners, we have to give civilization."; P15 felt 'insulted' and 'offended' not belonging to the group being generalized.

P16 (MPEL, 1st year) describes the management of studies 'easy' and not having any difficulties. For P16 it is good to attend all classes because of the interaction aspect and therefore considers the process at JYU better as in the previous degree. It is easy to reach out for support considering that communication process in the previous degree were very different and less open. P16 is satisfied with thesis support, also having the chance to ask for advice from other lecturers at JYU. A lack of communication from the department-side is seen as not supportive. Coordination and time-scheduling of courses within the programme do not align well (e.g. having Seminar 1 and writing already the Literature Review, though having no background in education and/or educational leadership). Self-discipline is important because deadlines 'don't matter' impacting motivation to get assignments done. P16 would appreciate keeping deadlines, not making them so flexible.

P16 explains that the input of the (name of an orientation and language studies course) was not covered well describing that mainly writing was done during the course and lacked explanations about concepts of the specific course topic. The (name of a research methods course) course lacked support and more contact sessions may be needed. P16 describes having too little contact hours also for other courses: "I am doing a Master's degree here, why only three sessions?". P16 describes the (name of a research methods course) as 'awful': "we understood and learned nothing". Peer support was provided by other students in form of a 'private class' resulting in working as a group on an individual assignment and submitting the same essays: "we collaborated because we didn't know how to do it". The group of students were accused of 'fraud' having the chance to see a counsellor, having to pass a hearing and re-doing the assignment. P15 explains that there was no intention of 'cheating'.

P16 enjoys classes, in which the lecturer is supportive, providing a lot of reading material and enabling to focus and being reflective on personal interests.

P16 describes a disappointing individual assignment when being criticized for the English language within the essay. P16 states that the idea is more important than the English language skills level, considering also that the lecturer not being a native English speaker.

P16 had no difficulties with group work activities but does not understand why exchange students (Bachelor) are part of courses and therefore group work considering that they may have different aims of studies. P16 tries to set expectations clear when doing group work aiming for learning from each other. P16 describes a case, in which the group work was done in pairs and because the other student had struggles with understanding the context of the articles provided. P16 read them, made notes, explained them to the other student while then the other student wrote down everything because of having better writing skills.

Appendix 10

Example quotations - Academic cultures in an international Master's degree programme

1. I do not have any background knowledge of education itself, but what we are learning about school context in the perspective of principals. So, I have never been in the place yet and I don't even have background of the school, but it kinda gave me a blank idea. I feel like I am stepping on .. the air.
O 4SU   (P5, Interview 3)

2. There were some like hints like with the (name of course) with T7, where we had (P10 nodding) to think about these things and set goals and stuff like that but doing that from your own perspective and like coming up with a context where you would be working in that and you are working in an assignment with that, is kinda harder. More difficult. Because for me it feels unrealistic at the moment at least. I don't know.
O 4SU   (P9, Interview 5)

3. I have had a couple of essays that I haven't been so happy, and I haven't got that good grade. From the courses I got threes, which is ok, but I think I had a bit difficulties to, well there was kind of that I would have to have experience from the area of kind of, area of expertise from that subject matter or just more knowledge about that, how to for example financial aspect of Finnish education works to write a good essay and well probably some kind of work (...) work experience would have helped to write a better essay, that would have like more concrete aspects for that.
O 4SU   (P12, Interview 6)

4. (...) I think what really came out in the writing was from my own experience of doing school reforms (P9 nodding) back in (home country) than the actual studies, I felt. Because many times when I gave certain suggestions, the team members were like 'What, will that work?' But I actually have seen it work. And it's so hard to logically convince someone that 'No, no, no, this works in real life, I have seen it change students' lives.' So, I think that's very true like your… if you have actually engaged in those kind of activities, I feel there is a lot more you can draw from this programme than, actually that programme doesn't build you so much to be (P9 nodding) ready in so many ways.
(P10, Interview 5)

5. Actually, for me it was a little bit different. I have done my studies back home and we have a totally different way or manner of studying there because actually our assessments are usually book exams or exams…
O 4SU   (P15, Interview 8)

6. And because of, there is another reason, this is my first experience studying in English, so probably both of these, coming from another education system, which is a little bit different in the assessment process, but also my first experience in English and these two were the main difficulties.
O 4SU   (P15, Interview 8)

7. It's totally different, you cannot compare the systems. From the university, the structures of the university, the classrooms, it's totally different.

O 4SU   (P16, Interview 8)

8. Yeah, sure. So, again a lot of this goes back to the reflective essays and especially in the first few I wrote where I had written a reflective essay like I would have done from my education classes back in (home country P13) and I am used to those getting good grades and then when I wrote something with a similar format for here, it got a much lower grade than I expected. And I am assuming because, what's expected from a reflective essay, isn't the same. And,... (...) I still am not quite sure what they want in terms of reflective essay. It's again one reason why I have, why I do write things and get stuff done way ahead of time, so that, again with the reflective essays I can write one, submit it and then the instructor's feedback on it and then change it and write a second draft.

O 4SU   (P13, Interview 7)

9. So, even here I end up doing the same thing. Like I don't value "class time" as much because I used to study on my own a lot. Even though I go for lectures and all, I find it best if I study on my own. So, I actually realized subconsciously I do the same thing here. I don't really participate much in class because I wouldn't be engaged in the topic in classes because I am the kind who needs to go home, read about this and slowly think about the assignment, and suddenly I would have some ideas. So, I am usually not very engaged in classes and usually I am only engaged with the course more when I actually do the assignments.
(P14, Interview 7)

10. And because we come from different backgrounds. Someone came straight from business, I came from teaching English as a second language. So, I had little idea about leadership and management apart from the actual experience that I had. So… I think it would be really good for the programme from the beginning to do introductory course into leadership and management. So that we could get better idea about different theories and their development. And then based on that have whatever we have already gone through.

O 4SU   (P1, Interview 1)

11. Yeah. On the first semester, T1 asked us (name of assignment). I am coming from a different background, (name of study background) I have no idea about education, about leadership, nothing. It's my first semester here (P15: No, but..), I am trying to see what's going on. (Name of assignment). Why? That wasn't very helpful, why didn't you help me? Because I didn't, I picked the articles with photos, less pages to do it 'cause I didn't know my topic, I had no idea.
(P16, Interview 8)

12. On of my first courses in educational leadership here, I knew… zero about educational leadership and they are like… 'What interests you in the field of educational leadership?' *(P3: How do I know?).* And then maybe that that comes from the assumption that international people coming into a Master's here, already had experiences in the field. I don't know if that's the expectation, but then again you will have... you know, twenty-one-year olds, twenty-two-year olds in the programme, accepted into the programme.

O 4SU   (P4, Interview 2)

13. Just about me. Taking the freedom without being prepared to how to use it, it's like chaos (laughing). Could be. Although freedom itself is a good thing. But it's like three inventors and let them hold, let them use anything, but it could be dangerous like knife or anything. Just to describe.

O 4SU   (P5, Interview 3)

14. How do I manage my studies? (short pause) Well, studying full time without like working on the side. I didn't feel it was very challenging or very yeah time-consuming or anything. So, yeah if you don't do anything else, I feel it's super easy to be honest, super easy and very easy-going and yeah. (...) I don't feel that the expectations for passing courses and getting good grades are very high here compared to what I am used to anyway. And yeah, so that's how I felt the past two years. (laughing)

O 4SU   (P11, Interview 6)

15. So, learning the basics basically, which I guess kind of prepared me for this Master's degree programme very well I would say. That's maybe part of the reason why it's easier for me than for others because we have a lot of people with different backgrounds and they obviously like lack some basics that are easy for me to know of course because I know them, but not for others and so in that sense, it probably prepared me very well.

O 4SU   (P11, Interview 6)

16. Yeah, I think the most important thing we talked about today in my opinion is like the learning styles and how to make the sessions more productive and effective like with follow-up quizzes or I don't know… maybe discussing articles more, something like that because the learning styles are usually different from the Finnish one. Yeah.

O 4SU   (P2, Interview 1)

17. (...) it's very difficult for me to manage because while I am not really productive under a lot of pressure, I am not productive either in a context where there is absolutely no pressure. I find it very difficult to manage my own time and manage my responsibilities and tasks. (...)

O 4SU   (P4, Interview 2)

18. I guess it's academic flexibility. (P3 nodding) It's like… I think Finn's pride. It's all about how flexible we are and how much you trust you and everyone else around us. And I find it beautiful, but at the same time it is very difficult for me to handle and work in that kind of environment.

O 4SU   (P4, Interview 2)

19. Well, what should I write about? 'Well, just any topic that you find interesting from these readings.' (P3 laughing) And I am just like… what specifically? 'Well, you know… like anything.' (P3 laughing) Alright. So, is was a bit of a shock… and it still is in a way and yeah, in that sense I'm very used to people telling me exactly what it that I need to do… like for class, for my assignments or.. You know everything. I'm used to seeing people in a more regular bases and having that space to discuss things and kinda grow together with others.

O 4SU   (P4, Interview 2)

20. For or me, I have started to realize that Finnish education has so much flexibility and it gives big, huge autonomy compared to my background, education surroundings. So, I know freedom is good, but then I started to realize, I faced challenges, because I do not know how to use the freedom when they give me too much autonomy. It helps me to

develop what is my own interest, but on the other hand…it also gives me confusion. I have never learned in that way.

O 4SU (P5, Interview 3)

21. What is going well, what has been difficult? Having the independence to choose was like 'What?' (P7 and P8 laughing). That was difficult because in the Bachelor's I did and even in school, we had like set text books and set curriculum that we have to learn and remember and present (smiling). But here is like choosing, you have to choose, you are responsible for everything. That was kinda shocking in the beginning, but now I am getting used to it and it's going pretty well. (P7, Interview 4)

O 4SU

22. (on the topic of writing essays) Because you give your own opinions and experiences and that's not something that was appreciated in my previous programme a lot because you had to, somebody writes their opinion, fine, but you have to back it up with solid sources and even then stating your opinion is kind of… you are writing an academic paper, there is no place for your opinion or your personal opinion, that's like.. Yeah. So, that was kind of weird for me at the beginning, but now, by now I am quite used to it.

O 4SU (P11, Interview 6)

23. For me… first semester was a shock. (…) And life and also the academic freedom or flexibility as we just talked about that, kinda struck me like in the beginning… I don't know what to do with this, just like too much. But then for me… It was a rather positive experience 'cause it gave me inner motivation. So, it didn't really matter what others are doing as long as I am learning, I'm doing, then it's good.

O 4SU (P3, Interview 2)

24. So, it's a lot less stressful for me here. And the whole competitive environment is different here, like people are not competitive here at all. So initially I was quite not competitive, but I do more because I am used to being in a competitive environment. I have to do more, so that I am on par with everyone. But here I am like, at first, I would try to 'Let's do more!', but everyone would be like 'No, oh we just need to do this. (P13 slightly laughing) This is according to the task. We don't need to do anything more than that.' So slowly, I sort of like adapted to it.

O 4SU (P14, Interview 7)

25. (…) culture also matters, what type of education system you come from. If for example this type of group work, where I had to do a lot of stuff by myself. Just… ähm, people they were more from Asian.. towards Asia.. whenever I was in group work with people from Western education system, it went… as P2 said… there was more synergy there. People were more respect… not respectful, but more understanding, they were more… they were used to that. Yeah.

O 4SU (P1, Interview 1)

26. And I could see according to their culture, the working style could be different in proceed. I could see.. And the way how the communicate goes on, it also different from me. Like if there are native speaker there and the communication flow style it seems, but if there are no native speaker students and it also gives… it could… there could be a misunderstanding between the language. Although they intend something other, something else, but then they start to catch the idea. I think culture was a bit challenge, yes.

O 4SU (P5, Interview 3)

27. Yeah, group dynamics (saying it rather unconvincing), of course like communication issues between (Interviewer: People.) and there is cultural issues definitely.

O 4SU   (P11, Interview 6)

28. One thing that has been very frustrating for me is, it also relates to language issues and people being very hesitant to actually contribute, in terms of giving an opinion or giving like kind of directing the work process into some direction or giving some kind of impulse, input yeah and even if you ask them 'Hey, what do you think about that? Can we continue like in this direction.' People like sit there and they say 'Yeah.' (P12 shortly laughing) and that's it and very difficult and yeah, again cultural issues. I feel like especially people from Asian countries have sometimes trouble like being very involved in a group and kind of… I don't know.

O 4SU   (P11, Interview 6)

29. Difficulties in group work so far… I'd like to say 'culture', but I think that's just an excuse for me, you know people kinda say 'Oh, yeah… but this was this and this.', because when you are working on something that should be the main focus (P7 nodding). It shouldn't be how your cultures influencing you in any way I think or any format (P7 nodding). And we should be more focused on the topic. This is my believe. So, I try to kind of put forward that kind of way of thinking.

O 4SU   (P8, Interview 4)

30. Well, there is a little extra dimension with the international background, but the differences are more or less the same. And that's not always easy. At the same it's a big resource to have all these different backgrounds (P5 nodding) because it's really interesting to be able to compare the different backgrounds and to use the experiences that people have in the projects that you are doing.

O 4SU   (P6, Interview 3)

31. It was very difficult at first, just because I am not familiar with it, everything is new. I didn't know that I had to do like put the references, the citations and all. But we had a course on academic reading and writing (P13 nodding) and through that it helps quite a bit, like at least I am now aware that I have to do all those. Yeah, but it is still a challenge to organize my readings, like every time I want to cite something, try to recall where it's from (P13 slightly nodding) which article it is. So, the organization there is still like… (...) Yeah. Yeah, I don't have a proper steps for that.

O 4SU   (P14, Interview 7)

32. It depends, I had for example the group work with (name of a student) and she didn't understand. We had to write for two articles and she didn't understand the context. So, I read the articles, I made my notes, I explained everything to her because she is writing better than me, she wrote down, together but she wrote down.

O 4SU   (P16, Interview 8)

33. For me the academic reading and writing course were kind of, kind of eye-opening experience in a sense that we had to, there was, like we had pair and we had to, we had a pair, peer review like our partner's work. So it was kind of eye-opening experience to see 'Ok, I have written this kind of text and it's kind of was answering to the, what is, what was asked, well not asked, but like the standards of the text or writing and, when your partner is like very different kind of text, it's like you are like 'Ok, this is not.', then you just write ok kind of feedback, 'Ok, you should do this and maybe that.' (...) and it was like very interesting to see that 'Ok, different people from different countries have

different perspective and different experience to write and view of academic writing.'
(P12, Interview 6)

34. Sometimes, when I do group work, it's like… hm.. If it is in a similar level, then it's fine. Different writing styles, of course because people are different but then you could just see all these errors in all these quotes and plagiarism. Then, it's just like… how much work should you put into other's work.

O 4SU   (P3, Interview 2)

35. I guess. But then there was another student, who… we are sure, that he knew about it… and he copied and pasted and we were mad. And we messaged him like 'It's not cool.', but we had to do the thing again. So, there were cases like that, too. (...)

O 4SU   (P3, Interview 2)

36. I think like writing an essay together, it's for example, one of my group works we had to do a presentation and an essay (...) well, when I looked at the essay, which was completed in a sense, I noticed that there was a lot of, well I don't know if it's cultural or just, I don't think it's language thing, but I don't know, hopefully not cultural thing either, but more like it was just one or two of our group members had forgotten to, they had, in the text they had sources, but the sources were not in the references. So, I was like 'Ok, these and these are not on the reference list, can you please put your sources on the reference list because it's not.' (...).' And yeah, it was a little bit frustrating…

O 4SU   (P12, Interview 6)

37. And then when we got together before the presentation we learned that one of our group members didn't really have any experience whatsoever with academia basically.

O 4SU   (P4, Interview 2)

38. Yeah, I questioned one of the students because when they were speaking, their English was not so great. But when you read the writing, it's so academically well written, which kind of creates suspicion (slightly laughing). I thought 'How is this possible?'. So, and I didn't want to get the whole group kind of marked down because of that 'cause I am not sure if it was kind of plagiarized. Yeah, so… that was an interesting experience.

O 4SU   (P8, Interview 4)

39. I think sometimes when you read the text and since you know the person, you know it's not their own words (P9 nodding), you do, immediately (...) Or things like that, but also this is an area where I am still learning so. I always re-look two to three times before I suggest, or I remark on what someone has written or said. Yeah.

O 4SU   (P10, Interview 5)

40. (...) but I had kind of similar experience as you (P12) just stated with people like, people who had obvious language issues and then they write their stuff and then you go through it and there is like grammar mistakes and spelling mistakes and stuff and then there is a few passages, they are just too good and then you put into google and it's copied from somewhere and then you like 'Hey, you can ruin both of our grades with that shit.' and then I just ended up doing it myself and yeah. (...) Yes. Because the person didn't even get what she did wrong and I like wrote emails and emails stating 'Hey, you can't do that, even if you put the source, even if you quote the whole thing and put the source, it's not ok to do it.'

O 4SU   (P11, Interview 6)

41. Öhm, actually I had an experience but because I wasn't sure that the writing was…. Yeah, it's something you read and you not expect and probably in that particular case we decided to not include in our assignment and to do by our own.

O 4SU   (P15, Interview 8)

42. (...) what I did once was like, when that student really honestly didn't really know about it that problem. Then I would tell her 'So, you cannot do that. And if you want to use the exact thing, then you have to put quotations marks.' I was basically teaching her about the academic integrity. (...) So, that the English proficiency level and then academic integrity is defined differently for different people, so that is also a big struggle.

O 4SU   (P3, Interview 2)

43. I was like 'This is not your English.' Like reading her part and then reading that one section, I was like 'This is not ok.' But turned out, she just, she took this sentence from the article, but then only changed single words like looked up synonyms and that, the register didn't fit, but then I also told her 'Even though that, like you taking just the idea, you have to indicate it.' because it wasn't indicated at all. And I think those were mostly the issues that people didn't indicate it was taken from another article, that they forgot to like show that's actually direct quote or even just like correctly citing. (P10 nodding)

O 4SU   (P9, Interview 5)

44. But it's not really tailored to the student's needs. It is quite extensive.. So for people who don't really know anything about it, it could be nice, especially if you want to go in that direction. Me for example, I really don't care about quantitative research. So, why I have to go through all of that? I forget everything anyway. So, it's… I mean, I understand why we do it, but it's not the most useful thing because I don't remember anything of it. And also with the academic writing course…

O 4SU   (P6, Interview 3)

45. So, it would be nice if there is more differentiation in that and also in the research seminars and in the other classes. Because, there is a group of people that has a lot of background in quantitative research methods for example. So, they have to attend the course and there… it's useless because they already know all those things and they have done research in that area. Whereas there is a group of people that have no idea what the lecturer is talking about because they have never seen it before. So, there is an unbalance there, in both… the writing classes and the research classes.

O 4SU   (P6, Interview 3)

46. Well, I think the academic reading and writing course was good to have, especially for me with no background. I am not sure what the others with background actually think because it could be quite basic for them. Like I think that academic reading and writing courses could be more useful. I mean it is useful as as introduction and all, but it could cover more in depth. The research methods, the quantitative and qualitative courses were good introductions as well and it's quite basic. So, again like if you already have experience in it, it will not be useful. So, I was thinking maybe these courses could maybe be optional (P13 slightly nodding).

O 4SU   (P14, Interview 7)

47. And I mean, in one course they come in with the assumption that you don't know anything about academic reading and writing, and this is why we tell you what the parts of an article are. And then in the other course, they come with the assumption that

'oh, everyone has done research.' So, I am just gonna like skim through it really quickly and just kinda do everything really fast, you find your way. Just numbers, right... Everyone knows math.

O 4SU   (P4, Interview 2)

48. That's a difficult thing with especially the compulsory courses that because there is participants in the programme from all different backgrounds, some from psychology, some from English, some from educational backgrounds, but you all have to take the compulsory courses and for a certain group that will be a of repetition of what they've already had and what they already know and for another group, it will be completely new and they will just put right into it.

O 4SU   (P6, Interview 3)

49. Some of the other courses like I would kinda disagree about making the quantitative and qualitative optional, especially if just going to do qualitative research, why do I need a quantitative class? Well, there is still a vast body of research in quantitative, so if you don't know what cronbach's alpha is, you don't know what all these different statistical analyses are, how are you going to understand that quantitative research and I kinda have that, I am not gonna say problem, but I have that circumstance now with my thesis 'cause I am doing a quantitative method of analysis, but my supervisor doesn't understand quantitative research.
(P13, Interview 7)

50. But I think group work can be challenging (P13 nodding) when you are working with others whose English is not as strong. There was once, there was this exchange student, I think Italy. Her English is not strong at all, so it was really hard to like communicate with her and make sure our ideas are aligned (P13 nodding) (...) (later during the conversation:) So she (friend of Bachelor student) was doing some kind of translation for her, but basically for me, I am ok with helping her. I have one other group mate who thinks that we should not be doing the work for her because, you know, we are all adults and we should all be doing our parts. But to me like, I feel like if I can help, I'll just help as much as I can if I have time.

O 4SU   (P14, Interview 7)

51. I think the results were always good in the end, but the process getting there wasn't so easy. Especially, when you work with exchange students. They don't know APA style at all and…

O 4SU   (P9, Interview 5)

52. The bad part about some of these classes is, there are a mixture of Bachelor and Master classes, Master students. So, you have people who don't really know much about education yet (P14 nodding) because they are still doing their Bachelor's and when you are in a group with them and you have to do group work, you constantly having to basically teach them and you are almost doing their part for them, even though you are scaffolding them along, you are still basically doing half of their work, at least for them. (P14 nodding) And that could get really frustrating.

O 4SU   (P13, Interview 7)

53. But I had group works where basically only I worked, because these people… they just didn't have enough background because of (one) they were Bachelor's students and I was Master's and they just didn't have enough skills, you know, to have the correct input there. Yeah. They did stuff, but you have to re-do it and then (…)

O 4SU   (P1, Interview 2)

54. The only thing that I can't understand, but I was the lucky one, was that they put Bachelor's exchange students with Master's students. That doesn't work, doesn't work. (P16, Interview 8)

O 4SU

55. So, making it difficult to find my way and then it's sometimes challenging because the level of the courses is very different. (P5 nodding) Some courses are really up there and really good and some courses are… there's a lot of Bachelor's students, exchange students in there as well. I am not saying that's the reason that the level is different. But I think it has something to do with it. (P6, Interview 3)

O 4SU

56. So, it's not because they are exchange, but because of their experience. So, it is nothing related to the fact that they (P16: Yeah.) are exchange students, but for them it's the first experience, they are Bachelor level. So, they can benefit from me, maybe you are saying 'Oh, she is a little bit modest.', but I am talking about my experience. So, the question is, I expect also to learn from them, but at this point, I cannot learn anything from them. (P15, Interview 8)

O 4SU

Appendix 11

Example quotations - Perceived responsibilities of perceived stakeholders

57. I think you get lots of support if you ask for it. But you really have to kind of venture out and be brave to ask for help because it is not really signed properly and maybe not in English as well. (P8, Interview 4)

O 4SU

58. Sadly, well-supported in the sense that if you want to reach out to someone, you are able to talk to them (P9 nodding), ask them. But I think the culture is such that you are always directed back to what you want to do (laughing), how do you want to do it, which is important because it's ultimately for you to figure out yourself with the challenges that you have. So, relatively you are own your own in a big bay, but there is still the scope to speak to someone or bounce of a thought or a question or something like that. (P10, Interview 5)

O 4SU

59. For some people it might be difficult to look for help. I particularly don't love looking for help. And I find it really difficult to just approach people and to like 'I'm not managing, or I need more support with that.' Mostly, I'll just like struggle at home, silently… (laughing). Yeah. (P4, Interview 2)

O 4SU

60. But then you have to always think if you are working with multicultural, international groups how much are people really coming to you for help, right? How much do you also have to go to students and meet them maybe halfway? Just saying 'I am here for you.' doesn't really cut it. (P3, Interview 2)

O 4SU

61. I think, the timing of it all was so confusing (P8 nodding, smiling). Like… I didn't know 'Ok, this is how I start and this is how I go.' It was like (making arm movements of

different things coming to her body)... parts thrown at me (P8 nodding) (laughing) and I have to put it together and I still am trying and I am going to start the thesis and everything in a few months. And I have to go back and then… I think the timing of, even the academic reading and writing… the timing of it was like kinda mismatched with what we were going through as a class.

O 4SU (P7, Interview 4)

62. Cause some of the classes, they don't actually match up where… what you supposed to have, a topic and everything, a proposal, but you don't have any classes on how to do this. (P7 nodding). So, that was kind of confusing for us in the first year. (P7 nodding)

O 4SU (P8, Interview 4)

63. Or anyone's needs for that matter. I am not completely sure whose needs are addressed. (...) Because I feel like that they don't really many times know what our backgrounds are, how long we've been here, what kind of courses we've had before. Professors are asking me 'Have you had already this course?' and I am like 'You should know. I don't have to tell you that.'

O 4SU (P4, Interview 2)

64. But it's not really tailored to the student's needs. It is quite extensive.. So for people who don't really know anything about it, it could be nice, especially if you want to go in that direction.

O 4SU (P6, Interview 3)

65. Ähm, you were saying that it would normally according to that person, it would cater to the individual needs. I don't think that's happening, except for the thesis supervision. In the courses, I mean yes, (name of an orientation and language studies course), we still looked, like we got individual feedback from the teacher and we looked at how we work. But generally, it was the same for everybody. There was no like looking at 'Ok, what's your background, have you done research before, what's your knowledge in academic reading and writing?' and build upon that. It was more like 'Everybody has to do this.', which I don't think makes sense. I know that some of my classmates said 'This class doesn't help me at all.', others they were kinda lost because as I said their English level wasn't high enough to be able to read a lot and write a lot at the beginning already. So, yeah. So, I think it depends on what you are talking about if you can say you are satisfied or not.

O 4SU (P9, Interview 5)

66. I would like to add putting in more methods courses and taking into account previous experiences as well. For example, in my undergrad, I have done a couple of research classes and then, I have done these and I've also been a teacher for a while and I've got a lot of experience and none of it was recognized when I came here whereas European students, theirs was all recognized. So, they didn't have take these, some of these research courses.

O 4SU (P13, Interview 7)

67. I kinda wish that there would be language tutor that anytime I go there and ask the person to proofreading so that I could just help, get help easily.

O 4SU (P5, Interview 3)

68. When you ask questions, but when you ask for feedback, that's a different matter, yeah.

O 4SU (P8, Interview 4)

69. I have had this kind of experiences, teachers sending 'Ok, you get from the exam or presentation, ok you got this grade.' and then there is not much like written feedback, but some teachers have like written feedback on a like group presentation.

O 4SU (P12, Interview 6)

70. So, there is differences between teachers and lecturers (P11: Yeah.) and like how much and in what way they give feedback to the students (P11: yeah.)

O 4SU (P12, Interview 6)

71. But unfortunately, we don't get much feedback specifically on the assignment (P10 slightly nodding). I did get some, but it was like 'Yeah, this point was good, this point was good, this point was good.', but nothing like 'Ok, you could have done better on this point or next time try to improve this and that.'. There is no such feedback ever for me. I don't know if it would work if I just contact the teacher and ask, but like normally it's just the grade in the Korppi system and that's it. Yeah.

O 4SU (P9, Interview 5)

72. I cannot really tell if I improved my academic reading and writing. I guess, I did, but since there is only grades as feedback and no like actual feedback on maybe the outline of the whole article or your language choice, things like that. I don't know. So, I think that's really important to like see how you improve yourself and where you can like improve even more because then looking at the thesis, which is a big project you want to deliver it well, well-written thesis there, it's good to know that already because you write so much throughout the four semesters until you get to your thesis. So, I think that's super important.

O 4SU (P9, Interview 5)

73. What makes it so frustrating for me in particular is, the way feedback is given here, which I think is like deeply connected to the Finnish like way of communicating, I guess because I have to know if I write a, mess up in an essay or my presentation is shit, I have to know. I have to get feedback and I feel like people give shitty presentations and then the lecturer says 'Oh yeah, thank you for your contribution today, it was very interesting.' I am in the audience and I don't know, do I have to cross check everything the guy just said or you know, what to take form it very difficult for me.

O 4SU (P11, Interview 6)

74. And everybody is right in a way and there is like, we don't have any standards by which we are kind of assessed or "measured" like even if an opinion is valid or not.

O 4SU (P11, Interview 6)

75. I've talked with T11 about this one day and I think she was rather surprised at my comment because I said I feel like the standard grade is a five. You know what… where we have those little stalls with free hugs, I feel like in Finland, Finland is a one big stall of free fives.

O 4SU (P4, Interview 2)

76. I think those feedbacks that came were very precise, elaborate, very clear. Especially for this particular course. I think the one I was kind of disappointed with was, although it was a grade 5, the feedback I got was 'You know what, you got a big fat 5' and I was very unhappy (laughing) hearing that statement because for me it's no longer about grades so much (P9 nodding). (...) I asked can I get some feedback from like how useful (P9: Yeah.) it is as a tool or something in that sense. Sadly, I don't think she is very like

motivated about what she does. I haven't heard anything from her, so. These were kind of like, a bit too disappointing. (laughing) (P10, Interview 5)

77. (General) Maybe just… and academically more contact hours in general because I have seen the advisers and the professors like in the programme much much much less than I expected to. And that has really decreased my motivation and yeah, I think contact is important. In classes, in the thesis, in the advising.

O 4SU   (P2, Interview 1)

78. I miss having more classes. I feel like if the course… because it's rather frustrating that you come to another country to study and basically what you are doing is you reading at home. I could read at home, from home. (P3 agreeing) I didn't give up my life in (home country P4) I didn't give up everything. 'Cause I did give up everything: I had to sell furniture, apartment, cars… like everything 'cause I was like I need money to go to Finland and now I am making this huge investment to start life here. When I come here, I have four meetings and lot of readings and I am like 'That's not what I came for.' Does that make any sense to you?

O 4SU   (P4, Interview 2)

79. I am doing a Master's degree here, why only three sessions? Don't I have to more deepening my…

O 4SU   (P16, Interview 8)

80. But we have a class, we met three times for two hours total and then we did a group presentation during the third time. So, basically two class meetings and then one meeting a presentation. And there were six people doing a 20-minute group presentation, so way too many people, too small of a time period (P14 nodding) and it was five credits for this class and everybody in this class got a five except for one group, who the professor really didn't like.

O 4SU   (P14, Interview 7)

81. And also, there was some courses like (name of a research methods course). Nothing. I have learned nothing, 5 ECTS, I got 5 doing nothing. So, it, the ECTS it is not equal with the workload.

O 4SU   (P16, Interview 8)

82. He starts to rearrange the groups but he doesn't rearrange the groups before coming to class. He rearranges the group in class and… (P4)
And that takes up most of the time… (P3)
I have never seen him do it in any less than thirty or forty-five minutes.

O 4SU   (P4, Interview 2)

83. It was long because the teacher let us alone to do a task. It's better to cover these three hours, not to leave us do things.

O 4SU   (P16, Interview 8)

84. One more thing I would like to add, is the way of presentation, the way of conducting the class. I mean we talk about different environments and creating them and stimulating the kids and giving them opportunities to do different things while we are just sitting (P8 commenting, not understandable) and looking at presentations. (P7 and P8 laughing)
(P7, Interview 4)

85. Ok, of course it should be our responsibility to learn, but it is quite hard and if people are busy, it can lead to exactly what P1 said… the lessons are not really effective because people don't see the point in doing all the readings all the time … yeah.

O 4SU   (P2, Interview 1)

86. Yeah. And it feels like we don't do much with those articles. It's like.. You assign them and you should go home and read them and then most of the time we never talk about them again. So… yeah, there is like… yeah, there is a lack of follow-up.

O 4SU   (P2, Interview 1)

87. Ah.. that's a good point. Maybe that's why they don't really teach but then also some teachers… they are like, they give you like articles to read until next class and then during the class, they talk about the article. (P3) …
But, they repeat what's in the article. So, what's the point? (P4) …
Exactly, so we are like… 'why are we reading this?' (P3) …
Exactly. (P4) …

O 4SU   After that I am like.. 'I am not gonna read the article anymore.' (P3, Interview 2)

88. Yeah, yeah.. Oh, how I have perceived this, although it's done by the same lecturer, but since the focus was different. Although the same knowledge, but then according to the focus for example, according to the lecture title educational change or global educational view… so the topic, I think it was different, but still the root is quite… still shared similarity because of the same lecturer. For me (smiling), I always had a challenge to comprehend one lecture itself (laughing) because of my capability to understand it, but the bare understanding if I go this lecture, it tells me to develop to me. But I also do understand what you are trying to say cause if it is too overlap, it could be inefficient (P6 nodding), spending same time for the students. I see what your point is.

O 4SU   (P5, Interview 3)

89. (...) and what I wanted to see is more practical, not about 'This is our theory, so.. mission, vision..' What I wanted to see … so how have it really work in practical example. I wanted to listen real principal comments and listen about what is really their challenges.

O 4SU   (P5, Interview 3)

90. How would you describe your study experience so far? Interesting (smiling). I kinda came here expecting not much, but some kind of stimulating environment that, you know… puts us in that position of experiential learning (P8: Yeah) or anything that we learn in theory. We will experience it, but that wasn't that much here.

O 4SU   (P7, Interview 4)

91. I think one other recommendation I would have, is… it's not like Finland is devoid of challenges in the education system (P9 nodding), there are plenty that can be looked at and we could look at one real problem that exists locally and actually as a leadership cohort take that as a case study (P9 slightly nodding) instead of taking something from your own imagination (...) or something from your previous experiences. (...) Yeah, I think it actually tests to some extent the openness, the stress levels that we talk about in this education system. We could take one real problem and develop something as a group and I feel that would be far far more satisfying individually and even for the

faculty (P9 nodding) itself. You actually contribute something.

O 4SU   (P10, Interview 5)

92. Yeah. I think courses could be… professors could use various methods of teaching when giving a lecture 'cause some courses you just like 'Why I am there?' - a lot of course like that. And then you lose motivation on the topic, which is so sad. In the beginning, I am so excited, I am like… get it done. So, yeah…

O 4SU   (P3, Interview 2)

93. But at the same time, there is also courses that… where during the course I couldn't really see the point of it. So, I didn't really know where it was going and then there was some assignments here and there. I felt like… 'Ok. So, what I am doing?'. (P5 nodding)

O 4SU   (P6, Interview 3)

94. I only have one experience where it was kind of rough, I guess. It was a research class methods thing, which I don't understand why I have to do it.

O 4SU   (P8, Interview 4)

95. What I needed support the most, was during the… there was a personal development plan session, course (P8 nodding). I kinda expected more there, but it was just…. I didn't get any clarity about myself out of it. I didn't understand the point out of it.

O 4SU   (P7, Interview 4)

96. And yeah, there was maybe one example, I had a class with T11, (name of the course), that I just did not get the purpose of that class and I, until today, I just don't get it how that helps to make education better in any way, to do that what we did in that class, I don't get it and that also kind of reflected in my essay, which was maybe the only one that I wasn't like really happy with. But, yeah.

O 4SU   (P11, Interview 6)

97. I think for most of the students, they have never they have never done a thesis before, they find it very difficult. I think that's something that you need to support, one to one.. Or at least where you have an open access to kinda have a discussion more freely.

O 4SU   (P8, Interview 4)

98. Yeah. I am planning on one semester delay and most… at least 80% of the people I have talked to, it seems they are doing the same thing and that seems to be a huge problem in the department, we touched on the idea of having like monthly thesis meetings. (P2, Interview 1)

99. It does to at least 50% of… I think, just get a whole lot of the topic. You don't go really deep into the topic. I think the way the programmes are structured here are in the sense that it's a lot of your own individual work. The more you dwell into a topic and go deeper into it, the more you get out of it. From just the classes, I think it's just like… at a very base level you have ideas (P9 nodding) because there is only so much you can do in the number of hours you actually meet as students. There is not much you can do. But you can introduce a lot of things. So, it is up to you really. (P10, Interview 5)

100. So, that I have to prepare to have my own motivation, my own strong interest, but it seems for me…. It is a challenge in itself finding my own interest.

O 4SU   (P5, Interview 3)

101. For me I think, it was in the sense that I exchanged ideas on assignments we had to do and like how to move forward or what did you do, what was kinda your idea to understand what you were supposed to be doing (P10 slightly nodding) because sometimes it's quite vague, the task and to figure it out.

O 4SU   (P9, Interview 5)

102. I think in a group, I also… I think I had a help a lot (laughed) 'cause catching the class was not easy for me and if I do personal assignment, it took me a long time. Now I see I am kinda slow pace. I need time and I work really slowly. But when I am in a group work, it always complete in a right time. (laughing)

O 4SU   (P5, Interview 3)

103. Yeah. I volunteer this time because I couldn't meet them and we couldn't form a group bond thingie. So, I volunteered that I will do this, this and this and you guys help with this and if anything more has to be done. It was distributive and it was very smooth for me. Individual assignments were more difficult than group for me (slightly laughing). (...) Not just the energy, but also the information to do the assignment. When I am doing by myself, sometimes I could miss out on things because it's bound to happen with me, but in a group I get reminded about (P8 nodding) all the aspects and I focus more.

O 4SU   (P7, Interview 4)

104. So we work on that and because we didn't know how to paraphrase the report, we submit the same answers, but it wasn't individual, it wasn't a group work, we collaborate because we didn't know how to do it and after all, we received an email that you have done a fraud and you can have a counsellor and you will pass a hearing and at the end, we have to do again the assignment with new data, new questions. But it's university's fault because you don't know, you didn't do a good class, you gave permission for extra class from our classmates. So, that was the only thing.
(P16, Interview 8)

105. Yes. It felt like I am sitting there and being there and watching the lecture. I was understanding… I was able to understand, but not completely acquiring really knowledge.

O 4SU   (P5, Interview 3)

106. (...) and if it's a topic I don't quite understand, I tend to use my native English speaker status and abilities and make my language much more flowery (P14 laughing), so that's more difficult to understand and kind of upscale what I am actually writing (P14 nodding) and based on the fact that I am a native speaker and I am very active in class (P14 nodding), I usually get the benefit of the doubt in my writing and so, my grades usually 'Oh, if they don't understand, They'll interpret that and know what I am saying.' Maybe the professor doesn't quite understand what I am saying. So I do that sometimes.

O 4SU   (P13, Interview 7)

107. Especially looking at some of our classmates, who maybe are not as fluent in English as we are, who had trouble reading the articles because they are not so fluent in reading and it took them a long time to read.

O 4SU   (P9, Interview 5)

Appendix 12

Example quotations - Summary of the findings

108. (...) in a context in the Finnish context of your, you know like… (P3: Learning is a process, yeah.) it's your own learning, your own pace, it's your process (P3: Exactly.) You want to penalize me for not having finished the six page when I think that I had a learning process that equals a grade of ….? (P4) That kind of conflicts with the whole Finnish philosophy. Yeah.

O 4SU   (P3, Interview 2)

109. Or just even give us the flexibility to choose for example. I don't think this class is important for me, I don't think I am gonna learn much here. I just have to submit the assignment and that's a choice I am making. Isn't the Finnish system all about, you making your own choices and making your pathway.

O 4SU   (P4, Interview 2)

110. Yeah, a bit. But also that… sometimes the lecturer just didn't seem sure of what they wanted with it. And… It's not always easy to work with. I mean… again, it's related to the freedom 'cause they .. the lecturers want to give you as a student a lot of freedom, what you want to do, how you want to do it. But sometimes they go too far in it and then it makes them seem very insecure and then I feel like 'Well, you are still the.. You are supposed to be the professor, you are supposed to be the teacher.

O 4SU   (P6, Interview 3)

111. (...) like the whole Finnish system is about learning process, journey, your own learning autonomy and all that flexibility, then why do they even give grades? If it's about your learning, how can they judge your learning process? Oh, your learning process is just a three right now. Or is just a four. Or like… so, it kinda conflicts. I know like, in the bigger global society you need to be graded, I am guessing, but in this especially Finnish context like it doesn't really make sense (P4 nodding). And if the grade either motivate or demotivate people, then why is it even there.

O 4SU   (P3, Interview 2)