

Pair Interview 1

<p>Interviewer</p>	<p>Ok, I would like to welcome and thank you for participating today as part of my Master's Thesis in this Educational Leadership programme on the matter of discussing on what it means to study in an academic environment in a Finnish higher education institution - which in this case is the University of Jyväskylä. Well, you know my name... My name is Christine Niemi and I am a Master's degree student here at the University studying Educational Leadership.</p> <p>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 positive and negative ways.</p> <p>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 the University of Jyväskylä with specific focus on your engagement in academic work and the academic environment.</p> <p>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. Ähm... 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... so, you.</p> <p>So, this should not last longer than an hour. We started now a bit later. Let's see.. We should maybe finish shortly after four... if that's ok.</p>
<p>P1</p>	<p>You have two hours of my life.</p>
<p>P2</p>	<p>(Nodding)</p>
<p>Interviewer</p>	<p>I actually don't know how long this will be because we haven't done that his before.</p>
<p>P1</p>	<p>Yeah.</p>
<p>P2</p>	<p>Yeah, that's ok.</p>
<p>Interviewer</p>	<p>So, this session is video- and audio-recorded. And you have been informed by a consent sheet about this, also about where the data will be be stored in the future. Ok, let's start...</p>
<p>P1</p>	<p>I feel very privileged. It feels so good. (Giggling)</p>
<p>P2</p>	<p>(Giggling)</p>
<p>Interviewer</p>	<p>Ok, we are going discuss or you are going to address and discuss a few themes. This is basically based on individual experiences, group work experiences...</p>

P1	At JYU?
Interviewer	<p>Yeah, at JYU. And support measures which are provided here at JYU for you and I also will give you the space to give basically recommendations as well. You present a part of the diverse students here... P1 is from (home country P1), P2 is from the (home country P2). You bring various teaching and learning backgrounds with you, motivations and experiences as well. So, basically how we start out is like:</p> <p>How do you manage studying here at JYU?  How would you describe your study experiences so far?  What has gone well and what has been difficult? Why?</p> <p>So, very broad start to just share your thoughts on that.</p>
P2	So, how we are managing our studies?
Interviewer	Yes, when it comes to academic environment...
P2	Academic environment...
P1	Let's do question by question...
Interviewer	You can do that, I just start out with like a general approach. You don't have to necessarily go too deep into each one of them, but you can share your thoughts on that. Cause that's kinda a general...
P2	I think the academic program has been and the academic standards have been different than I expected. In some ways they have been more demanding. I think the amount of independent work required in the courses was more than I expected. I expected to spend a lot of time sitting in lectures with professors who have a lot of experience and a lot of contact with them. I expected it to be demanding in that way, but it's been more demanding in the personal discipline and time spent reading alone and working on projects and essays. So, that has been... the independent work has been the hardest part of the academic program for me.
Interviewer	So, it has been rather difficult compared maybe to your previous studies?
P2	Hmhm.. yes. Because my previous studies were more in class hours, contact hours.
Interviewer	Yeah, ok.
P2	Which, I think I developed my learning style towards that.
Interviewer	Ok, and then you came here and you basically had to adapt.
P2	Still adapting...
Interviewer	Yeah, ok... What about you?
P1	Well... for me... I had a long break. Last time I studied it was in 2007. And.. I kinda

	knew it was not going to be easy, but I cannot say that it was hard to study in the Educational Leadership program because of the flexibility of the professors and this individual work that P2 talked about, I completely agree. And I wish that they somehow had more testing for... for example if you have to read certain number of articles, so that the professor could assign a test and then that would make sure that you read all the articles. So, that way it would be more effective for me.
Interviewer	So.. maybe more like in-class approaches like P2 mentioned?
P1	Well... in-class approaches, but not like oral talking.
Interviewer	Ah.. so more like 'official' testing...
P1	More testing... so that you know that you are responsible for yourself. Nobody is going to help, because many times when we had to read, prepare before the class. I've noticed that several times very few people read it. So... but because of we are mature people, we can talk around (smiling), express our thoughts, that helped us out. But... for more productive learning of the subject (P2 nodding), I do believe, it would be better to do the testing.
Interviewer	So, some kind of follow-up of what you actually had to do.
P2	(Nodding) Yeah.
P1	Yes, I always thought of.. This year, I wanted to present as a feedback to the faculty that they introduce kinda small tests.. Five questions.
P2	Quizzes?
P1	Quizzes. Right. Even though I am not a big fan for the multiple choice things, but yeah... something like that.
Interviewer	Ok.
P2	I think, I agree with the accountability aspect that the studies here have been really independent like you have to be independently motivated and independently accountable and that's really hard for... well, maybe in Finland it's normal, maybe students did their Bachelor's like that already, but for international students coming from abroad... 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.
P1	Especially they are heavily academic based.
P2	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.
P1	And because we come from different backgrounds. Someone came straight from

	business, I came from teaching (details on study background of P1). 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.
P2	But I think we had something similar like that. The theme was present in a lot of our classes. We talked about leadership throughout history, theories about it: Yeah, I can't remember now if there was like an explicit introduction course.
P1	It was the one... why I think about that is because I took this... hm, this (name of the minor) and there was an introduction to leadership and management (P2 nodding). That type of thing would be very helpful before the beginning of this, everything.
P2	Yeah.
Interviewer	So, like a real introduction to the whole theme of studies?
P2	Yeah.
P1	Yeah. It could be very very helpful. It's several classes, like five sessions...but it was really helpful and then you read and you get all the basics. Based on that talked about all the distributive leadership in detail and so on. Otherwise we started straight from there...
P2	Yeah.
P1	... and I was like, yeah... I was for a long time a bit lost.
P2	Yeah, there are a lot of assumptions... At least in our programme... a lot of assumptions when we started that everyone has the same definition of what educational leadership is and I think most of us did not have the same definition...
Interviewer	... which is interesting basically because you are all from different backgrounds. That cannot be maybe...
P1	Yeah, that's what I am saying...
P2	I have the feeling we were all not on the same page for quite a while.
P1	Right.
P2	At least like the first semester, we spent figuring out 'what do they mean by educational leadership?'
Interviewer	Yeah, ok. Ok, thanks.  You have already a bit about your backgrounds, at least P1 has .. at least you have said that you have been studying a while back ago, your previous degree. I would like

	<p>to look a bit into the contrasting aspects from your previous degree, because you mentioned as well that you had different kinds of approaches of teaching and learning in your previous degree.</p> <p>Do you think your previous degree, degrees have helped you here? Or... has it prepared it you for the studies here or has it complicated things? You have mentioned a bit the complication that you had to adapt and still adapt.</p> <p>What do you think?</p>
P1	<p>For me it is very difficult to draw a comparison because the education system... at least ten years ago in (home country of P1). As in fact of today, the comparable factors I have, the they are not comparable. Big difference in the mindset of professors, it's not that they only look down upon me, it is not about that, but the way they approach... teaching... you know, only reading, and only coming and being very limited in their material... but, yeah... some professors very pretty broad, but here there was like flexibility, that didn't exist back home. Back home you could express your opinion that freely, but now I understand, we couldn't because we were 20 years old (P2 nodding). I feel that as a 20 year old P1, I didn't have the mindset so that I could express my opinions over a topic, but now at the age of 30 throughout some experiences, I think it's more of my work experience that has kinda been very helpful here. Yeah.</p>
Interviewer	<p>So, not necessarily your studies?</p>
P1	<p>Not necessarily studies, yeah.</p>
P2	<p>Yeah, I think work experience is one thing that would have better prepared me for this programme. Ähm, which when you talk about 20 year old you, I was 22 when I started this programme last year. So, I still don't sometimes don't feel like all of the theoretical stuff is so helpful to me because I don't have any or very little work experience in education or as a leader to apply these theories to. So I think, work experience would have been helpful for my past. But I think my degree in (home country P2), my Bachelor's... it was from a really big university... so, most of my classes were with a lot of people and there were like a lot of like regulations and things in place to make sure that you did what you were supposed to do, make sure that you do your homework. We even had like these... in big lecture classes, we had those remote control clickers. So we could answer quiz questions (looking, pointing to P1) on the screen, yeah. So, that's how professors would take attendance and give extra credit points in lectures with like three to five hundred people. So, even in those...</p>
Interviewer	<p>So, each had your individual (clicker)?</p>
P2	<p>Yeah, and it was registered to your student ID. So, there was always accountability, you could not escape it. And, yeah.. If you started failing too many courses, your guidance counselor would write you and say "Hi, what's up? Come to my office, we need to have a chat." So, it was much less independent I would say.</p>
Interviewer	<p>When you compare it to here because there is attendance here as well, there are</p>

	<p>deadlines and stuff like that... so, do you think...Or like in general, academic work here compared to your home university or home, where you did your degree in.. did it help you, did it prepare you to do your degree here, when it comes to academic writing for example?</p>
P1	<p>For me a crucial year was 2005 and 6, when I studied in (English first language education setting). I think, if didn't studied there... my (home country P1) degree would not be enough for me to handle the situation here. So, within that year I learned basically... Because I noticed that in (English first language education setting) they put too much stress on the critical thinking and analytical thinking... and äh, they also.. Äh.. I learned how to write essay papers there, not in (home country P1). Yeah.</p>
P2	<p>There is a really big emphasis on academic writing in (home country P2) and that is something that did help me. Although, I didn't have to write a thesis when I graduated from my Bachelor's, which is a huge disadvantage now. At my university, different departments have different policies. Generally, the only people required to write Bachelor's theses were people from the "honors college" - that was like the elite, best of the best in the university. It's hard to explain how that system worked. You would never see something like that in Finland, but you had to have like in the top 10 percent grade point average and then you could study whatever you were studying normally in the honors college within the university and it was all more difficult and elite. So, outside of that, it was optional if you wanted to write a thesis. You could get an extra credit on your diploma... but, what kind of 19-year old student is going to volunteer to write an extra like thesis, just for a like line you your diploma. I certainly wasn't. So, I didn't do it, so i didn't have almost like any kind of experience with research. So, I think I didn't even understand what a big part a thesis is of a Master's. (shaking head)</p> <p>But,I did learn pretty good academic writing I think because at all (home country P2) universities if you are a Bachelor's student, you have to take at least two writing classes, basic writing classes... everybody.</p>
P1	<p>Yeah, I didn't take writing classes because I was an exchange student. One thing was a disadvantage back in the day when I studied there for me that I ... it was so new, so different than the (home country P1) education system... back in 2005, that I just took some classes because I really liked their description rather than... we didn't have any specific schedule: I was free to choose whatever I wanted. Yeah.. but still... one thing I really liked in (English first language education setting) that I didn't have in (home country P1) that you have to learn. Something you don't have in Finland... you don't have to learn to pass through the class. And there in (English first language education setting) , P2 said, I also had it... it was my experience.. You have to go to the class, too much important to be within the class to receive your points. Also, if you don't, you miss some material and then you don't get high grades. That's it, yeah.</p>
Interviewer	<p>Can you elaborate what you mean that you don't have to learn in Finland in order to pass?</p>
P1	<p>I mean you don't have to read as I said all the articles and in (English first language education setting), I felt that I had to read. Again... of course not everything, it was</p>

	<p>more... I felt more obliged. There was something that was... the system was like that that it made you read. Because you knew you were going to have this multiple choice test. Even though I am not in favour for multiple choice test, but yes... that's something we had there.</p>
Interviewer	<p>Did this.. P2 mentioned now that she has done her Bachelor's without a thesis basically.</p>
P1	<p>Yeah. Me as well.</p>
Interviewer	<p>You haven't done one either?</p>
P1	<p>I didn't do my Bachelor's with thesis.</p>
Interviewer	<p>Ok, good. Let's go to the next section which is related to individual experiences. Continues a bit this theme. But, I have these two little papers for you. So, basically I am gonna read this out for you as well. Often as part of a course here at JYU, it's your task to write an essay or report in an academic format... So, we have talked about this a bit already. So, this is referred to academic writing. Additionally, the so-called final project.. This is what we talked about... a thesis, it is supervised by professors and senior lecturers. 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. So, this is a direct quote from the university website.</p> <p>And when we look into your individual experiences now here at JYU, not your previous experiences, but what happened or what happens here. How do you approach a given assignment? And I want you to think first about an assignment, which you were pleased with and one you were rather disappointed with.</p>
P1	<p>Can you repeat the question?</p>
Interviewer	<p>Yeah. So, how do you approach a given assignment within a course? And the first example might be that you describe an assignment which you were pleased with. So, this is all JYU-context. And then an example of assignment you were disappointed with.</p>
P2	<p>Disappointed in ourselves, like with our performance? Or disappointed like in general with the instructions?</p>
Interviewer	<p>I think even both... I think it might be related sometimes.</p>
P2	<p>Yeah. Hm, hm...</p>
Interviewer	<p>You can start with an assignment, which went good...</p>
P2	<p>Does it apply to group work?</p>
Interviewer	<p>Not yet. First, individual work and then we can talk in the second section about group work experiences.</p>

P2	The assignments start to blur together in my mind. Do I have to remember specifically the title or the topic? Or just how it went?
Interviewer	Yeah, how it went... How you approach an assignment, and maybe even like assessment, feedback given.. Those kind of things.
P2	I think that when... Like when I have positive memories about assignments, it's when there weren't a lot of other assignments due at the same time, when I had enough time after the course and to reflect about... like more than a few weeks... like maybe at least a month.
Interviewer	Yeah, So, time management?
P2	Yeah... where you had enough time reflect about the course, it wasn't due right at the end of the course. I was happy when I could use outside resources, articles that I chose from somewhere... academic articles are fine. And I was happy when I could pick... when the topic was like... when the area, the question was rather well defined, but I could pick a context that related to me. Yes... so, sometimes I wrote about educational reform in (home country P2) or about a learning organization from my past, I knew off or something.
Interviewer	So, experience-based?
P2	Yes. That was a lot more successful than something very abstract, very vague, with a lot of literature that I couldn't pick.
Interviewer	Vague in the sense of what is communicated to you, or...?
P2	Yeah... like the assignment description... like... please write five to eight pages about educational reform... yeah, and the you have to use these articles, really boring articles. I'd rather liked it when I could bring something from outside and make it more specific.
P1	Since I didn't have any specific academic writing experience... back in the day. I really, I consider in general these two years ... <i>they were really good for developing my academic writing skills</i> . It's quoting, its understanding how to search for information based on citations and so on. One particular case that I was very successful.. like ... yeah, successful for me... it was when I didn't manage to submit the assignment on time, but it was fine, we could have submit it later. But I had to spend the whole week, like seven, eight days doing research... kinda collecting information to understand the topic
Interviewer	By yourself?
P1	By myself.
Interviewer	Not necessarily supported by the course?
P1	No, it was... it was a task to find some education information on our countries. And, because it was pretty difficult for me, because of the lack of resources, but then I



	understood that I only had go for example through citations and then I will find a lot of information. But for a couple of days, I couldn't find and then you find a lot, you don't know from where to start. So, that was kinda ...
Interviewer	So, basically the difficult experience was actually a positive experience?
P1	Äh, yeah.
Interviewer	You learned something.
P1	Yeah, I learned.. Yeah, in general I think this and then it will be more reflected in a year from now... for all of us, how much these two years meant for us (P2 nodding) because I don't believe that we grow straight away as individuals. Our skill sets and later on in life that you say 'Oh, wow.' because you understand that you've gone through this school, you have those skills. In general, I consider it positive.
Interviewer	Ok, but have there been occasions where you were for example put a lot of effort in an assignment and afterwards there was disappointment?
P1	Yeah, recently there was a case. (laughing)
P2	I think I know what you are talking about.
P1	I really put a lot of effort, especially studying for the third exam because I failed the first two and I didn't get it and it was an easy exam, it wasn't a difficult exam and I was more than sure that I had nailed it. Apparently, I didn't.
Interviewer	What do you think are the reasons for that?
P1	Because one task was nine points and out of nine points..., it was for the teacher to decide how many points she wants to put. And I wrote everything that we learned here about this paradigm change and leadership and so... then she said, my thoughts are too much philosophical, I should be more concrete... and, yeah... and then...
Interviewer	Is this from a different programme?
P1	Yeah, from a different programme. Yeah, it's from my minor.
P2	(name of the minor).
Interviewer	So, you basically took your knowledge what you have learned in the educational leadership programme there as well?
P1	Mixed.. Yeah, because the one question was to write... open question... you have to write your thoughts and answer the question they had. Yeah, that was kinda my disappointment... that I studied hard and then it was multiple choice test, open-ended questions, but I never managed to get over the passing point. So,...
Interviewer	Is there a fourth chance?

P1	No.
Interviewer	So, what is happening next?
P1	I have to retake it next year if there is or take something similar.
Interviewer	Ok.
P1	Yeah. That was my disappointment.
Interviewer	So, was it maybe not clearly communicated to you? Was the question vague or why would she or why would the teacher say maybe it is too philosophical? Did she elaborate on that? Like, what her thoughts are?
P1	No, she just said it's philosophical. (laughing). Yeah and I... for example for me... sometimes I have language issues, because English is not my first language, even though you might.. You feel that I speak without an issue. In reading, I might misunderstand thoughts and answer question because I understood something else from the question. Yeah... that also sometimes happens. I lose points. (smiling)
Interviewer	P2, do you have any experience with rather disappointed assignment?
P2	Hm... yes, I have been very disappointed when professors don't reply promptly when assignments are submitted. When the assessment comes weeks or months later or if they lose the email and don't give an assessment at all and then just months later just enter something into the gradebook in Korppi without any feedback. That happened to me...
Interviewer	No feedback at all?
P2	No feedback at all from one certain professor in our programme. So I still have no idea how... well, I know that I passed the assignment, but I have no feedback about it. Or the professor's... that the... yeah.
Interviewer	Because you have mentioned like a bit like this vague formulations and also expectations... maybe it would have been for the professor quite clear to not give feedback and for you it wasn't? Have you heard from other students receiving feedback about the assignment?
P2	(Nodding) Usually that professor gives feedback.... To all the other assignments I had.
Interviewer	Ok.
P2	Ähm, yeah. And I think that has decreased my motivation to submit an assignments and to put a lot of effort into them because I know that... like P1 said, you can pass quite easily without actually learning. Ähm, and the professor doesn't really give any feedback on that. So, if your motivation is just to finish the programme, then it's quite easy to just write assignments and submit them and not really.. If the professor doesn't care about the feedback, then I don't care sometimes... so.

Interviewer	That has maybe impacted also future assignments?
P2	Yeah, mhmh. (yes)
P1	<i>And then it really bothers me because ... whatever she just said and I, based on my words, because... let's take you. More or less you study... well, it was visible, you read, you studied, but then some students they don't do all of that, almost nothing. And they are going to graduate equally with you, you start questioning, how is this possible? That's one question that I don't understand. And I think this kind of testing, could kinda of.... At least make the person sit in front of it during the night instead of being in the internet (P2: yeah), but read... yeah.</i>
Interviewer	Ok.
P2	Yeah, there is like a lack of continuity between the assignments or between the courses. Ähm, it kinda feels like we are just doing each assignment to get the credits for that course to move on, but the courses overlap a lot, they don't really built on each other and...
P1	Because some people just come here not for credits, but for learning you know... and that's kinda very disappointing, you know? (slightly laughing)
Interviewer	Very unfortunate.  Ok, let's move on because I have heard a bit about group work in between comparing like to other people. When you think about group work experiences here. This is a bit the same kind of question... how do you approach group work assignments, maybe give an example you were pleased with and one where you were disappointed with... if you can.
P1	I really... at the beginning, it didn't make sense, the group work because I am not used to it, but then after a year I understood that 'Oh yeah, it's great' like I reflected in some cases because when the group work is successful. But in some group work when the people are not responsible and they just want... don't want their souls into their work... you know... they just do it for credit, nothing else. They don't want to... äh... do more. So, even proofreading.. They say 'Oh yeah, yeah, yeah... it's fine, it's fine', but then you read them and you see that it's not fine and those people... yeah, those kind of cases it's very disappointing and very hard.
Interviewer	Do you ever questioned those people in groups.. Like have you asked them why they are not ...

P1	No, because... for example, if you are working in a group.. There are like five people, three people work hard and those two people don't...no, I haven't done it.. You know because still the works gets done, but how is it done.. That's the question. Very often you come in front of the present... like when you become a presenter and present your group work, it's not visible, who worked how much, you know. But I had group works where basically only I worked, because these people... they just didn't have enough background because of 1) 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...
Interviewer	It gets more complicated...
P1	It's much complicated, you cannot blame the person because he or she doesn't have the skills because they are also internationals, they come from outside, they are doing their Bachelor's here...
Interviewer	So, exchange Bachelor's students?
P1	Exchange... yeah, yeah, yeah... Exchange students, yeah. In those cases... But also, as I said, in some.. yeah...
Interviewer	When it comes to... like, because you mentioned like proofreading and limited, lack of skills. Do you think there is a need for... How would you evaluate this as a teacher because you have five people in front of you and then you say that only one was working and then the other four may have not done much or couldn't have put much input in there because they were lacking certain set of skills. How does the lecturer like... could evaluate that? In the end you may all get the same grade, right?
P1	Yes. We get the same grade. But I don't know how they evaluate. I have never gone into that because actually for me, I receive a five, four or three.. It does not matter, even two. I know, I can receive two... even from the course that I failed, I could receive one, I will still be happy because I know I have studied, I know a lot. So.. for me... I have never thought about that, how do they grade. I often think that some of my grades, knowing me and my input into the class, it can be writing an essay or group work, I know that I didn't deserve that four or five, but I still received it. (P2 nodding)
Interviewer	Ok, why would you say so?
P2	I feel the same exact way.
Interviewer	Yeah, ok.. Could you explain, why?
P1	(whispering to P2) Could you explain?
P2	(laughing) Explain myself... well, mathematically if we look at that number of ECTS, credit hours that are in a five credit course and when it's squeezed in two or three weeks or something like that... äh, just mathematically the amount of hours you are

	<p>supposed to spend studying, I spent maybe ten percent of that or fifteen or twenty something. Never, a hundred percent of the hours that are listed. Ähm, and I still get quite good passing grades. Even that I know that I did it in a rush before like.. <i>I didn't feel like it's my best work but still it was satisfactory enough to get an above satisfactory grade.</i> And, I won't complain about it (slightly laughing), but it has affected... it has made me question like do I really need to spend all as much time, they say I should, because in the end the grade will be the same.</p>
Interviewer	<p>Is it a bit similar for you when you think about the value of the grade towards the work you are putting into an essay? Or is there a different reason behind?</p>
P1	<p>You know, in this very distracting tool that exists now... this is the internet and very distracting in terms of you find answers there, you find what people think about the same topic, you read their thoughts, you compare your thoughts. Again, it's a learning process, but... very often you don't sit and read that twenty five-page article to get the actual complete picture there. You just read the slightly.. So,... in that regard, when you don't read all the required pages and then you just read the overview, you read something from the internet and then you read the discussion part and based on that and also you have your own thoughts, you put it together... <i>I don't think, you deserve the five even though your paper might look good..</i> Yeah.</p>
Interviewer	<p>P2, do you wanna share maybe with us also group work experiences.</p>
P2	<p>Group work. Yeah, I had both kinds of group works, where it went really well with a good mix of people, there was a lot of synergy happening. (P1: yeah) Yeah.. I do like group work because I feel like I can accomplish more, I learn more in a group that I do by myself. Basically I just like the human contact and like building off from ideas from others and I don't get that all when I sit in my room alone writing essays. But with group work, it totally depends on the personalities and like P1 said sometimes you are with really motivated people and sometimes with not motivated people and I have been both types of those people myself depending on how much time I have to put into an assignments. Yeah... I think it just totally depends on the people you get with.</p>
P1	<p>That's totally true.</p>
Interviewer	<p>P1 mentioned this like lack of skills like when it comes to writing, maybe even motivation what you have mentioned as well. Ähm, had you had those experiences as well that there were different kinds of skill sets existing which impacted the whole group?</p>
P2	<p>Yeah... well, I think generally the people I have been... well, generally, the people I have been in groups with have pretty good academic writing and research and I have even learned things from them about formatting, citations and things. Ähm, I haven't had the experience where I am with incompetent people. I have had the experience where I am with people who are rushed and don't have a lot of time or don't really care about the course.</p>
P1	<p>That's also very distracting...</p>

P2	Yeah... but there is not anything that you, the lecturers or anyone can do about this people. I mean, when it comes to the grading of group projects, it... the whole point of a group project, is to get people to work together and if you can clearly divide and you can say 'so and so did this and this chunk and so and so did this chunk' and they are not reflective of each other at all, so they should get independent grades. No, I don't think so. I think that maybe... one way I have done it in some courses, I can't remember if it is Finland or (home country P2), is that... ähm, all the group members anonymously sent peer feedback to the professor. Yeah. And said like... you also scored yourself, like.. You should be honest. Ähm, and also the professor sees if you give yourself a five in your individual work, but all your group mates give you a two...
Interviewer	Then it has some kind of impact...
P1	Did they knew the name?
P2	Then it actually, then... ähm, the grade is averaged between like the peer feedback and professor's feedback and it's all averaged.
Interviewer	So, they don't get like different kinds of grades, but it's all put together?
P2	No, it's all averaged together. Yeah.
P1	And also an important thing in the group work, is their cultural aspects. I don't know ... I haven't had much experience with Asian culture people on working in a group, but just only one case it was. And for me those people, that person was very slow.
Interviewer	Do you think there was a specific reason?
P1	I don't know, I don't know...
Interviewer	Culture?
P1	Yeah, yeah, yeah... 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.
P2	Yeah.
P1	Some people... it is very, very important I think after all. It's not even the skills.. You may not have the skills and you want to learn, but the attitude... you can be, you can have five degrees, but if your attitude is like...
Interviewer	Ok, thanks. Ähm. We will look now into the support, which is provided to you here at the university. So, ideally academic support should be constructed around your needs, the need of the student. So, to what extent have you been supported for your academic work here at the University of Jyväskylä. Are you satisfied with the support

	you receive? And if you explain this maybe, why and elaborate on it. And you could also describe like beneficial aspects, challenges, difficulties. You can go to a particular support you remember, which has helped you a lot or not helped you. Very experience-based now.
P2	And this is about academics?
Interviewer	Yeah.
P2	Ähm, I think the academic reading and writing course was really helpful. probably one of the most helpful classes I've had, ähm.. For getting the thesis started. It was very helpful in my opinion.
Interviewer	That was in the first year.
P2	Mhm.
Interviewer	And then throughout...
P2	Yeah, first and second semester. Yep, that one with T1. <i>Yeah, I liked that. And I think I would be completely lost about the thesis without that course.</i> Ähm,... the research courses... hm, semi-helpful. Yeah, semi-helpful. They were ok, but... ähm, then I guess the only other time when I kind of saw (?) of support in the academic realm is like when I was struggling with some assignments and I wanted to meet with one of our supervisors, ähm from the programme, not my thesis adviser. Ähm, I had questions about classes, whether I should retake one class, assignments I was struggling with, problems I was having with some of the professors - couldn't get a hold of them and she told me...like 'no, we don't need to have a meeting, you just need to do this and this and I will email so and so'. Yeah.. and I said these are the issues in the email.. These are the issues, I wanna make sure everything goes well.. This was the beginning of the third semester. I said, I am struggling, I wanna make sure this year goes well. I am not sure if I have everything that I need in the courses and so on and I have some questions about the courses, if you have time, I would really love to sit down and talk about this, but basically she said like 'no, I will just email and take care about this and so on'. So, we never had this meeting, which was <i>quite disappointing for me.</i> And it affected my motivation a lot. Ähm, but then otherwise I think like.. With my thesis adviser, ähm.. She has been quite supportive and answering questions and having meetings with all the participants. Yeah, those are the main resources I think have.
Interviewer	I think you have also mentioned before that you have also learned from other students.
P2	Mhm, yeah.
Interviewer	As a source basically.
P2	Yeah. Yep, for example in my university in (home country P2) we used MLA-citation. Äh, and here APA. And so some of my classmates know more about APA. So, I

	learned from them as well.
Interviewer	What about P1?
P1	Hm.
Interviewer	Because P2 started with the academic reading and writing. It was only in the first year.
P1	It was also very helpful for me. I learned a lot of stuff, basically I had no idea about academic writing. Äh... about quantitative research: it was a total failure, unfortunately and now...
Interviewer	Can you explain?
P1	Because of the content of the.. The material that was provided was in Finnish (P2 nodding) and the teacher was explaining in English. He was a good professional by himself and especially his academic history is very rich. And he is a good professional in quantitative (research), however explaining to a non-Finnish speaker in English, but given him material in Finnish, and especially it was a new kind of a software (P2 nodding), SPSS, to understand. It was very ... hm... that's where we lost the contact, understanding.
P2	Yeah.
P1	Because... ähm, yeah.. Äh, so in terms of qualitative research, I think... even though it didn't make sense at the beginning... ähm, again.. Because you don't have the experience.. You are like 'what methodology' and so on. Later on, when you start already working, you open the... Hm... the papers and you see that they basically give you the structure with specific explanations, how to follow and write... like your thesis. I think it's helpful more or less. Äh,... has the department been helpful, just the environment. I think the university by itself is very student-oriented, for the academics. For example, you don't have... you can get books, you don't have to buy books (P2 nodding), it's very helpful for students. In terms of the professors meeting: I had some issue with my supervisor because it was T2 (laughing)... Yes, my first year went very unproductive like... the first year, considering from the second and third semesters... they were very unproductive and only this semester, my word was heard somehow... it was a miracle that my supervisor of thesis was changed. With this new one now, we are moving slowly forward. But, yeah.. <i>I have lost a year basically or half year.</i>
Interviewer	So, you basically had issues with your supervisor due to what reasons? Because P2 mentioned that her supervisor for example is planning meetings...
P1	My supervisor was not very communicative. Äh, I don't know why. He only wanted us to write and send it in by email and then he would give feedback. Yeah.
Interviewer	Which is maybe difficult to approach.
P1	Difficult... because some people are lazy in a sense that they need some poking, you know. Some people... not some people, myself... I need more guidance (P2 nodding) because it's totally... even though you take this T1's class, you take T3's class, you



	take T2's class... but in general, when you sit in front of the thesis topic, it's very difficult to understand how... 'Ok, where do I start from? What should I do?' and you know, you need guidance. That's something I didn't have in the beginning, but now they assigned a new supervisor, who is pretty helpful.
Interviewer	Has the supervisor been assigned to you or how did this work shift? Can I ask?
P1	It is an interesting story. There was a girl, who had the same topic as mine, from (home country of mentioned girl). And then I wanted to get questionnaires because I still didn't have the idea on how to make the questionnaires. And then she said 'Hey, ask this professor, he has given to me. If he allows or gives the permission, I will pass you the questionnaire that he has created.' Because it was not even hers, you know. So, I approached the professor, who is right now my supervisor. I approached him and I said 'Hey, there is this girl, she said to get permission from you.' and he said 'Oh yeah, also I am starting a thesis group.' I said 'May I join you? I kind of need a second supervisor, who will help me with.' And then he organized everything. He talked to T2; he basically took me from T2. That's how I understood.
P2	He took you away. (smiling)
P1	Yeah, he took me. He saved me from T2. (smiling) Just joking. No personal...
Interviewer	But for you personally it was better to change the supervisor.
P1	Yes, it was better... because I think something went wrong between the communication with T2. It was not only me, the whole group of people, who he was for that year going to supervise. There was some lack of... misunderstanding in communication and I don't know where it started from basically. But otherwise, I am very... it's not a big problem for me. <i>I knew that sooner or later they would change the thesis supervisor.</i>
Interviewer	P2 has mentioned that she for example also learned from other students. Could you relate to that or not? Because you had a bit of group work.. It seems like you had a bit more struggles than P2.
P1	No... I learned some stuff from other students, from you for example. Not very much, if you take the general group thing. Yeah.
Interviewer	Ok.
P1	Because in many group works I was kinda, I had to push myself, you know?
Interviewer	You have addressed this already that you have learned here about academic environment and academic work a bit. But now in concrete words... In what ways do you think you have developed as a student academically here at the University of Jyväskylä? Could you put that into context.
P2	I think that have learned the significance of internal motivation instead of external or intrinsic motivation, I guess. Learning because you want to learn, not because someone is monitoring you, which I still struggle with. But I think that it gives me a

	<p>better mindset for lifelong learning. Maybe I wasn't like so enthusiastic and interested in the programme that I studied here, but for the future I think I will take away that you don't need to learn... sometimes you do need to study to get a diploma on a paper to get a good job, but in the future, I will learn things because I find them useful or interesting, not for other people. And like... with concrete skills: I have become a better writer because I needed to write that much (slight laughter), I have become a better researcher... well, <i>because I didn't know how to do research at all before</i>. I think it makes me... well, I learned how to read, in T1's class, I learned how to read academic papers. I didn't... they were completely overwhelming to me before. And just the experience of having to read so many. And I am more familiar with the world of research and how PhDs work, like the role of researchers at universities. I had really no idea about that beforehand. Yeah. (Head nodding)</p>
Interviewer	<p>What about you? (Pause) Well, you mentioned in the beginning that also you didn't have too much experience when it comes to academic reading and writing and English maybe even. Your exchange year has helped you abroad. Do you think it has, this study programme specifically and the support you have received... do you think you have increased your skills or developed your skills?</p>
P1	<p>Yeah, yeah... definitely. Because I spent time reading a lot of articles. I can feel that my English has improved, writing of my English has improved. I definitely now know... or I can see the difference between an academic text and non-academic (P2 nodding). <i>Something that I couldn't back in the day</i>. Yeah, of course academically I have grown, but it is very difficult to say to what extent I have grown in comparison to you or P2 for example. I don't know how much is considered much. But I have the general idea and in the future, if someone wants me to write something academically, I will be able to accomplish that task.</p>
Interviewer	<p>So, now I would like to give you a bit of space to maybe make recommendations. So, what would you recommend, what would you like to see more at this university, what would you like to be more supported. For example... the course academic reading and writing, it was only in the first and second semester and if I understood correctly, your motivation was actually decreasing in the third and fourth semester. Would it have been good to have this support throughout maybe the whole year? Or for your thesis? Because you said, you lost half a year due to several circumstances.</p>
P2	<p>I think that the thesis supervision should have been an actual course with scheduled hours. <i>Because as you can see with P1, it depends completely on the thesis supervisor how often you meet, IF you meet. And that's really unfair in my opinion</i>. Just because you wanna study a certain area means that you need to be with that person and then that person may or may not care about ever seeing you in person again. So, I think it would have given better structure to have that as an actual scheduled... like course. (slight nodding by P1) That might be difficult for the thesis supervisors 'cause I don't know what kind of agreement they are entering to when they agree to supervise theses. They may not have so much time, but I think it should be at least like one meeting per month, maybe three hours and it needs to be in Korppi and it needs to be determined ahead of time. Yeah, it needs to be like a regular course.</p>

P1	Yeah, and the you would know that you have to do assignment, otherwise you will fail.
P2	Yeah, maybe there would be some kind of task for each month.
P1	At the same time, but I feel like... because it's a lot of work to do this thesis, I feel that the person should be less academically overloaded, so he can concentrate even on this.
Interviewer	You mean the supervisor? Or the student?
P1	Student, less academically overloaded. So he could concentrate on his thesis.
Interviewer	You for example also said that the research courses, the specific course you mentioned.
P1	Right.
Interviewer	The quantitative course 'cause it very much sounded like it wasn't really helpful.
P1	It wasn't. Yeah, it was not helpful.
Interviewer	How would you like to see that more in context 'cause you sounded like you have never heard about the software before, you have not even maybe been in contact with quantitative studies in that sense.
P1	Never.
Interviewer	So, would you recommend anything to make that better?
P1	With the class?
Interviewer	Mhm. Like, how would you maybe even put it into the context of the programme? Because now everything is separated, you have a lot of chances to go through different courses, but those are mandatory, right? Those research courses.
P2	Yeah.
Interviewer	So, you have to take them.
P2	I feel like in that course in particular with quantitative research, we should have had, we should have created the example data ourselves. We should have done a study in class or in the department.
P1	So, you are familiar with the content.
P2	Yeah, because the content we got was just like someone else's content and we didn't... we weren't familiar with the questions, we could barely understand them because they were half in Finnish and I think we missed the 'why'-question. Why would you wanna do quantitative data collection. What's the point of it... like.

Interviewer	So, like the expectations of the whole.... From the starting point...
P2	Yeah, it was very mechanical and in a humanities programme like educational leadership, you can't just like teach students how to do statistics and expect them... like a lot of us are not number-minded and so if you just tell us 'this is how you use SPSS', it doesn't fit at all in the context of research in education. Like... why would I wanna use that? That what was missing, is the why. But if it was like 'Ok, so guys... what's a situation where you would want like a number-set, where you would want to ask a large number of people questions and get data' and let us create those questions and do it with an example in class or something
Interviewer	What do you think? Would that make more sense to you?
P1	Yeah, it would make sense to me, but it would take... I understand, it's impossible to do in my opinion because for you to create your own data, it shouldn't be like 50 questions, it should be like a significant number of answers and so on. So, in that regard it maybe the class would last for a year instead of one or two months so that you can collect data, and do... but again, I think for a student who graduates, given if that person does quantitative analysis, but if it is a year-long class and then you create, as P2 said, your own database and you can work on it, you will definitely have more idea. Now I do definitely... I didn't have any idea of quantitative research, but now I do.
Interviewer	But did you learn this idea about quantitative research in class or did you learn it by yourself? Because you mentioned that...
P1	Say it again, your question.
Interviewer	Because you mentioned that for example the content really didn't support your understanding of what is quantitative research. What did you...
P1	In general, what I meant ... I said that the questions, they were in Finnish and when the professor was referring to them, it was very difficult for me to understand what he was talking about and that was the miscommunication, where we kinda lost understanding. And that was supposed to be in English because, as P2 said, someone else's research in Finnish for a non-speaker is very challenging. And especially a new programme... so, I think introducing a year-long quantitative.... Where you have to build on your data and then mine your data and find results, would make more understanding of those little Rs and plusses, minuses.. Whatever they mean. Squares and so on. Right now I know them, that something like that exists, but I cannot read the data. I get lost.
Interviewer	But within a two-year programme to have a one-year course. Do you think that this is realistic?
P1	No... that's what I said, it is not realistic.
P2	Yeah, I guess in that case if it's not realistic to like use data that you create yourself. At least use data that's in English and at least start off the course by explaining what's

	the point of quantitative data.
Interviewer	Ok.
P1	It can also be the case of the teacher, you never know.
P2	Yeah.
P1	Some teachers, they have... they can better explain. As far as I know, they have already changed him. He doesn't teach. That's what I've heard.
Interviewer	Somewhat consequences.
P1	Yeah.
Interviewer	Ok. That's basically almost the end. We've talked an hour now. But I have this last question for you basically. What did you feel was the most important thing we talked about today and why? And would there be anything, you felt missing and would like to add. (long Pause)
P1	I think... just general, it was interesting to reflect on the past, almost two years. I will like... I don't know, maybe what I felt was missing.. More joint activities. It's not academic, but general.. More joint activities with the the group that we studied with throughout these two years.
Interviewer	That's more programme-related.
P1	Programme-related.
Interviewer	My question is more referring to what has been missing within this conversation.
P1	This conversation.
Interviewer	Like a topic maybe which I haven't addressed, or which has been missing throughout. We have talked quite a bit about individual experiences, group work experiences, support, quite a bit of recommendations.
P1	I wonder. I have heard that some students, I don't know how true it is because it was new to me, but I've heard that some students from Asia... they use some services to.. they kinda write the essays for them. And that kind of... it is interesting, people do that usually.
Interviewer	Yeah, there have been cases, I have been reading at least about it as well. I don't know any cases here at the university, but I have been reading in literature about this as well. There are people paying...
P1	And I want to know how effective it is for them, for that type of attitude, you know.
Interviewer	Might be interesting to research further, but it's I think a very sensitive topic to talk about, to get someone to talk about it.

P2	Yeah, it happened at my Bachelor's university because we have a lot of students from East-Asia and even I was approached by some friends of mine...
Interviewer	Ok.
P2	... to write essays for money. I didn't do it because I don't like writing that much (P1 and P2 laughing) but yeah, we didn't talk about like dishonesty or plagiarism at all in this conversation. Well.. little bit, you said.. Like kind of... if you go online, you can find opinions and summaries and things, but I don't think that counts as plagiarism, but we didn't talk about that.
P1	No.. it more makes your work easier.
P2	Yeah, yeah, yeah.
Interviewer	Would you like to talk a bit about that? Have you had experiences of any kind of... when you now mention plagiarism here...
P1	No, I haven't had.
P2	No, I haven't had either. I think, I think all the people in our programme have been quite competent. 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.
Interviewer	Ok.
P1	One thing that I would recommend, is to create a portfolio... when you graduate, you have some kind of academic portfolio, you can show. I don't know how, but that would be very helpful. You don't need to have also your certificate, but if you have that portfolio, people can go and see...
Interviewer	.. what you have done.
P1	Yeah, yeah, yeah. Your thoughts...
Interviewer	What you have been interested in.
P1	Yeah, it will be very helpful. Of course there are online portals that give you that opportunity, but the programme hasn't followed up with that. And especially now that they are going to make it, they have introduced tuition. It can be very useful for people.
P2	Yeah. One thing that might be missing is like, maybe asking people, if they are finishing their thesis on time this semester.
Interviewer	Are you finishing your thesis in time?

P2	No. (laughing)
P1	No, I am finishing most probably in December. I do hope.
Interviewer	So, one semester delayed.
P2	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.
Interviewer	More guidance.
P2	Yeah, more guidance because obviously something is not working.
Interviewer	And then you mentioned motivation, which maybe has had impacted that all as well.
P2	Yeah.
Interviewer	Because you have this like intrinsic motivation has maybe (?) and has maybe impacted that a well.
P2	Yeah.
Interviewer	Because you were not motivated, maybe you needed to ask for more...
P1	You kinda wait for it... you kinda assume that someone will send you a message saying 'Hey, come for this meeting, we have to understand how to move on with your thesis.'
P2	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. Yeah, at least once per semester having a meeting, like one on one with.
Interviewer	But, we have...
P2	We did in the beginning, first or second semester or no...
P1	The PSP.
P2	Yeah, the PSP. Yeah, I think that should happen each semester. (P1 whispering 'I hate it it') But we had it twice in the programme. Like, in the beginning and then in the beginning of the second year.
Interviewer	Ok, thank you.

