Jyväskylän yliopiston julkaisuarkisto
Jyväskylä University Digital Archive

UNIVERSITY OF JYVÄSKYLÄ

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

Author(s): Maunula, Minna

Title: Doctoral studies in global time and change - female doctoral student and individual lifecourse in Finland

Year: 2013

Version:

Please cite the original version:

Maunula, M. (2013). Doctoral studies in global time and change - female doctoral student and individual lifecourse in Finland. In International Conference on Quality in Higher Education, 12.-14.12.2013, Sakarya, Turkey (pp. 212-220). Sakarya University. http://www.icqh.net/proceedings/icqh2013.pdf

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

Doctoral studies in global time and change – female doctoral student and individual lifecourse in Finland

Minna Maunula

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

Abstract

Multiple global changes in the form of knowledge and the change in the doctoral education create the need to examine the current practices of doctoral degree. The change forces discussion about the future of doctoral education and the future of the prospective doctors. The doctoral education has to answer the demands set for it. Forming a comprehensive understanding requires an examination at the micro and macro level.

In this article I examine the lifecourse of the under 40-year-old female doctoral student with a family and the significance of doctoral studies at the individual level. I concentrate on the personal lifecourse experiences of the women and on the chronological stories which are based on them. It is interesting to examine the meeting of the public and individual lifecourse and their constant dialogue. The article is based on my doctoral thesis research in education.

Introduction

In this article I examine the lifecourse of the under 40-year-old female doctoral student with a family and the significance of doctoral studies at the individual level. In the article I concentrate on the personal lifecourse experiences of the under 40-year-old women with a family who study for the doctoral degree, and on the chronological stories which are based on them. In the examination temporality, continuity and comprehensiveness of the lifecourse stages are emphasized. With my definition I direct attention to the lifecourse of women who are living the busy years and to their thoughts concentrating on a family, doctoral studies and work. It is especially interesting to examine the meeting of the public and individual lifecourse and their constant dialogue. The old traditions and norms are no longer suitable for a lifecourse that is individual and coloured by choices. The everyday of the female doctoral student is constant choices according to the individual values.

The article is based on my doctoral thesis research in pedagogy, "The everyday life, lifecourse and future thinking of the female doctoral student with a family". 12 under 40-year-old female doctoral students with a family from three Finnish universities participated in the study. The material is acquired through narrative theme interviews and the analysis of the material is thematic content analysis.

Doctoral studies in time and change

The doctoral students in Finland and even internationally form a heterogeneous group. The graduating doctors meet a very different reality and future compared to how they were in earlier decades. The increase in the number of doctors, the change in the form of information and knowledge and the change in the doctoral education create the need to examine the current practices and grounds of gaining a doctoral degree. The change forces discussion about the future of doctoral education and the future of the prospective doctors. The doctoral education has to answer the demands and expectations set for it, these being set also by the future doctors. (Boud & Lee 2009 1-4.) The subject of the study is rather a topical one internationally and nationally. Often the studies examine doctor education from the macro level with the emphasis on the internationality, financing, effectiveness or the field of science. Doctoral education is a part of the society's operation, which is affected by other development. Forming a comprehensive understanding also requires an examination at the micro level and making visible the doctoral student's experience. Attention ought to be paid to the everyday and concrete level of the operation.

The lifecourse of the under 40-year-old female doctoral student with a family should be examined and an attempt has to be made to understand it as a whole and temporally continuous one, combining the past, the present and future stages. In the lifecourse, individual factors and ones representing the continuity, of which one significant one is the doctoral studies, are construed. The doctoral studies have become more ordinary and within the reach of an increasingly wider group. The doctoral studies are a multi-dimensional process in which the different starting points, contexts and objectives build different entities, everyday life and expertise. In the lifecourse of the female doctoral student with a family, the doctoral studies are individually placed in the ordinary entity. The doctoral studies are not separate from other life and contexts, but they project their wide reflections both on to the ordinary lifecourse of an individual and to the future. At the individual level, the doctoral studies stand for a target-oriented and long-term effort. The expertise that is achieved through the doctoral studies is valuable to the individual, business and society.

The high-quality skills and the centrality of knowledge are emphasized in many ways in the life of an individual and at the same time also on a larger scale, such as in the global economy. Global and social changes are reflected in the universities and in the doctoral education. The productivity of universities is measured in the degrees, publications, quality, internationality and eventually in the money. In Europe the higher education has been unified, along with others, with the help of the Bologna process and Lisbon Strategy and both have a significant role in the doctoral education (Bitusikova 2009, 200).

Expectations which grow internationally are continuously set for the doctoral education. The objective alongside the comparability of degrees is the promotion of mobility, the shortening of graduating times and the education which is of higher quality than before and which meets the demands of different employment quarters. The starting point is an improvement of the appeal and competitiveness of European science in relation to the other continents. In spite of the common aspirations, the doctoral education is still heterogeneous nationally, according to the university and even according to the field. The objective of the universities and the society's interest is to produce even younger doctors, which the universities are directed towards by financing according to the results and by intensifying the practices in supervision (Julkunen 2004).

The changes also touch Finnish science and the doctoral education is in a central position in its development. In Finland the doctoral education has become more common and it has become feminized during the last decades. In Finland about 1600 doctors graduate every year, of whom more than half have been women since 2007,

however, different fields have the majority of men or a majority of women (Hiltunen & Pasanen 2006). Systematized effectiveness and even better relevance to the working life are sought after for the doctoral education. Free doctoral education is arranged in each of the 16 Finnish universities and in principle it is available for everybody, however, the selection for doctoral education is based on the earlier academic performance and on meritorious research plan (Stubb, Pyhältö, Soini, Nummenmaa & Lonka 2010). In spite of the aims for equality the heritability of the level of education is still strong. According to the OECD report (2012) 68% of the Finnish university students' parents are highly educated.

The doctoral degree qualifies the doctor to the different specialist tasks of working life better than before and also the demands of working life towards the doctors increase continuously (Dill, Mitra, Jensen, Lehtinen, Mäkelä, Parpala, Pohjola, Ritter & Saari 2006). The work is often creative specialist work, in which learning new things and at the same time modifying their own skills and occupational identity are a natural and a continuous process. Of the future doctors only a fraction continues their working career in academic tasks, the majority moves to or continues to be employed in other lines of work (Boud & Lee 2009; Baker & Lattuca 2010). According to Julkunen (2004b, 80), leaving the safe context of university for the actual labour market may require more courage and creativity than staying in the familiar environment of the university. The working life does not totally realize the doctors' potential yet, nor do the doctoral students and doctors themselves fully comprehend their wide possibilities. The universities have become aware of the challenge and have taken action to improve the doctoral students' readiness for working life. The cooperation of the universities and economic life is a good option for both the different operators and the students (Aittola 2002, 128-129). According to a general trend the position of research knowledge and skills is emphasized, of which examples are the increased knowledge requirements and the importance of innovations.

Extensive global and social changes become widely realised in the different contexts of life, such as in the women's status in the university, working life and in families. With the development in equality, both men and women earn the appreciation equally at home as well as in the working life (Kiianmaa 2012). The change requires wide adaptation and comprehensive examination. In the families of two careers the challenge is, for example, the insufficiency of time and the constant negotiation for the use of the little time that there is (Julkunen 2004, 116-118; Tammelin 2009.) Nowadays, having a family does not automatically weaken the woman's career opportunities because the individual arrangements are possible. The family is formed of the individuals and of the dynamics of their choices and agreements.

Alongside the changes and objectives, an individual, the doctoral student needs to be considered. In an individual lifecourse the doctoral studies are a significant part of the whole. The diversified lifecourse is strongly a personal project, which consists of different training, relations, networks and family. The diversified lifecourse and the expanded possibilities require matters to be examined as a whole. Orientation to the future by combining the different areas of life opens a wider perspective to life and to adulthood. The different life choices and decisions are the everyday combining of the different areas of the life. (Puhakka 1998, 204-205.) Each decision opens or closes doors, on the other hand the opportunities to reconsider the decisions reduce risks and provide the opportunity for different experiments. Even if the plans do not even come true as such, an attempt is made to adapt to the prevailing conditions and to experience the matters as proceeding according to their own plans (Nummenmaa 1996, 103). Beck (1992, 92-94) emphasizes that the egocentricity is typical when designing one's own life. People want to develop their life as the one they desire and to operate within their own interests and objectives.

Under 40-year-old female doctoral students in particular have simultaneously several projects which require time and input in their lives. Combining work and family life as well as the challenges with time usage are current and significant subjects from both the individual and from society's point of view. Big and significant choices become concrete in everyday life and tell more in detail about the value choices that have been made than the celebratory speeches, visions and strategies. The unstable education and labour markets as well as globalization have promoted the modernization and the weakening of traditional values. The earlier sets of norms and the common traditions have become looser, in which case individuality is emphasized. The rapidly changing situations require increasingly flexible methods of adaptation. (Aittola 1998, 172-173.) In figure 1, I present the central starting points and concepts for the study.

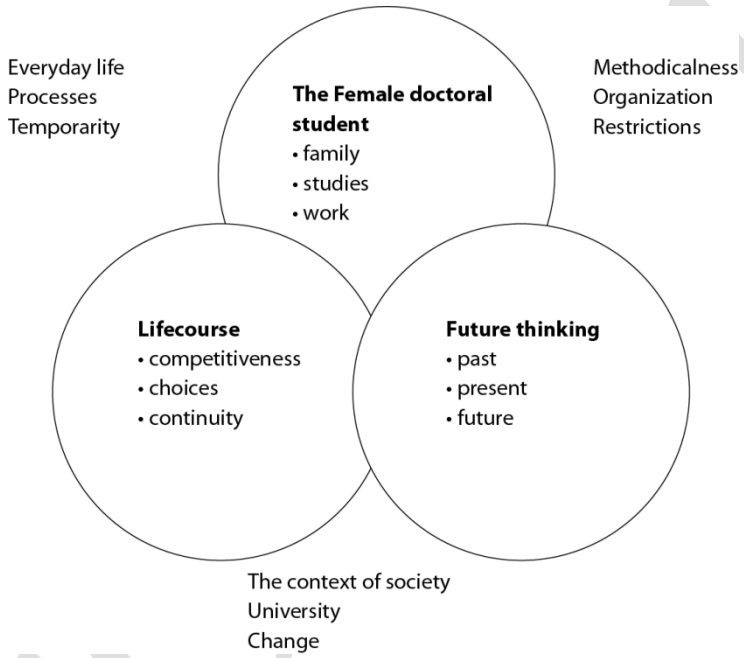

FIGURE 1. Central starting points and concepts for the study.

Methods and procedures

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

Doctoral studies as a part of the wholeness of the lifecourse

The operator who is central in the doctoral studies is a human being, an individual. Often doctoral students are perceived as a homogeneous group: their role is marginal and narrowed to the context of studying. In reality the doctoral students come from individual starting points and they have individual objectives. The mission of this article which is based on my doctoral thesis is indeed to bring out the experiences of a female doctoral student with a family more comprehensively, the individuals have several significant roles simultaneously, the doctoral student's role is only one role amongst many others. The experiences of an individual consist of different starting points, of everyday life and of expectations for the future. In the examination of doctoral education attention must be paid simultaneously to the different levels of operation: the international cooperation and the uniform objectives create a large framework for the development, the national operation combines longer term major definitions of policy and the levels of everyday operation. At the individual level carrying out the major lines is eventually everyday actions. The concrete level and its development are the dialogue of both major and smaller lines.

The core objective of my study is to understand the continuity of the lifecourse and future thinking of the female doctoral student with a family. The results of the study conveyed the comprehensiveness and continuity of the lifecourse told by the female doctoral students with a family. The female doctoral students constructed their life actively as directed by their family and their doctoral studies. The lifecourse is temporally continuous and comprehensive, the different factors and wholeness are in the interaction among themselves, which took shape creating both likenesses and individual features of lifecourse as told personally by the women.

The part stages of lifecourse for the women studying for a doctoral degree were fairly homogeneous. Families of their childhood and early school years were described most often as ordinary. The academic careers began varyingly individually and the early stages were reflected in the future stages of academic and other life. A comprehensive style of operation and a way of organizing everyday life that were adopted during the master's degree studies became fairly static. In the whole lifecourse the time of establishing a family in relation to the stage in the studies was also reflected. The ones who started a family early adopted in their circumstances an efficient organization and diverse activity. The significant separating factors proved to be the starting motives of doctoral studies and understanding the demands of the process of gaining a doctoral degree. The motives of examined female doctoral students for starting the doctoral studies were fairly light: over half started the doctoral studies directed by external motivation factors, such as in order to avoid unemployment or because of the lack of other alternatives. The different factors were tightly connected and formed a dynamic wholeness of lifecourse. The past stages of the lifecourse had significance in the present and future of the lifecourse.

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

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

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

The prospective doctor´s individual lifecourse

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

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

It is beneficial for the one considering the doctoral studies to clarify the stages of doctoral process, advantages and disadvantages beforehand. Studying comprehensively both independently and with supervision helps to form a comprehensive understanding. The female doctoral students of the study were satisfied with the supervision they had received. However, they perceived the supervision to be connected narrowly only to the doctoral thesis. With wider supervision, the mentoring and closer working relationships could be used to strengthen the development of expert

identity, reduce the experienced uncertainty regarding employment and relevance of their own skills in working life. Tighter forms of cooperation between economic life and the university would reduce prevailing uncertainty between different quarters. The wider awareness of the common objectives and of the current state is an advantage for all involved in doctoral education, economic life, university and an individual.

Studying for the doctoral degree is, in spite of its far-reaching framework and its high objectives, operation at the individual level which has individual starting points, objectives and contexts. Doctoral studies are undertaken in a number of different ways. It is advantageous for the doctoral student to realize the demands of the process, the available resources, the opportunities and challenges unfolding in the future and to clarify their own objectives. For reaching the objectives and the effectiveness of the doctor production the supervision has risen in a central position (among others; Lautamatti & Nummenmaa 2008; Soini 2008; Sainio 2010; Pasanen & Hiltunen 2006, 36) Simultaneously the effectiveness of the doctoral studies, quality and the significance of supervision are being questioned by the sporadic, uncertain and meagre financing of doctoral studies.

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

Conclusion

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

The doctoral studies overlap comprehensively with the lifecourse. The female doctoral students with a family arrange and organize their everyday life actively and individually within the conditions that prevail. The everyday life conditions form the wholeness in which the family, doctoral studies and work are at the centre. The organization of everyday life was determined essentially whether the doctoral studies were undertaken as work or in addition to other life. The doctoral studies that were undertaken as work facilitate everyday life, but being paid for the work does not automatically guarantee experienced meaningfulness. Internal motivation towards the doctoral studies and the positive future which is taking shape through them are reflected positively in the everyday organization. In the individual lifecourse the different factors

and stages weave into wholeness. The surprises and unpredictability are part of the lifecourse but rapid changes require continuous planning and spontaneous activity. In the lifecourse of the female doctoral student with a family there are both the factors which represent the continuity and the ones representing the anticipated and unpredictable breaks.

In the different lifecourses the doctoral studies are in any case a demanding project, where the commitment to them is a precondition for success. The female doctoral students experience enthusiasm and commitment towards their doctoral studies even though the future is open and new challenges arising. The doctoral degree makes the participation in the competition possible and guarantees that the competition steps up. (Saarinen 2003, 16, 86.) The process of gaining a doctoral degree is a target-oriented systematic operation which is directed to the future (Lautamatti & Nummenmaa 2008, 107-108). The individual doctoral student needs to realize wider lines of development, to perceive oneself realistically as a part of the wholeness, to draw up the objectives and the plans of the future. If one does not perceive the prevailing trends or know one's own direction, they may be faced by an unclear jungle of demands, the conflicting ideas and lack of clarity of the future possibilities. (Boud & Lee 2009, 1-3.) The doctoral students' thoughts which project to everyday life or to the future have not been really studied, their voices are in the background and in the adaptable role in the studies (Leonard & Becker 2009, 71). However, the major lines and the small implementors should form a dialogical wholeness and pay attention both in the name of meaningfulness and effectiveness.

References

Aittola, T. 1998. Nuorten arkipäivän oppimisympäristöt. Teoksessa L. Laurinen (toim.) Koti kasvattajana, elämä opettajana. Porvoo: WSOY, 172-189.

Aittola, H. 2002. Mitä tohtorin pitää osata? Teoksessa A. Eteläpelto & P. Tynjälä (toim.) Oppiminen ja asiantuntijuus. Työelämän ja koulutuksen näkökulmia. Porvoo: WSOY, 125-144.

Baker, V. & Lattuca, L. 2010. Developmental networks and learning: towards an interdisciplinary perspective on identity development during doctoral study. Studies in higher education 35:7, 807-827.

Beck, U. 1992. Risk society. Towards a new modernity. Käänt. Mark Ritter. London: Sage.

Bitusikova, A. 2009. New challenges in doctoral education in Europe. Teoksessa D. Boud & A. Lee (toim.) Changing practices of doctoral education. 200-210.

Boud, D. & Lee, A. 2009. Introduction. Teoksessa D. Boud & A. Lee (toim.) Changign practices of doctoral education. London: Routledge. 1-9.

Buchmann, M. 1989. The script of life in modern society: entry into adulthood in a changing world. Chicago: The University of Chicago.

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

Julkunen, R. 2004a. Hullua rakkautta ja sopimustohtoreita. Jyväskylä: Minerva.

Julkunen, R. 2004b. Harvinaisesta moninaiseksi – väittelevät naiset. Teoksessa L. Harjula & M.-L. Hyvönen (toim.) Harvinaisesta moninaiseksi. 62-104.

Kiianmaa, N. 2012. Tasa-arvobarometri 2012. Sosiaali- ja terveysministeriön julkaisuja 2012: 23.

Lautamatti, L. & Nummenmaa, A.R. 2008. Jatko-opiskelun työprosessien ohjaus. Teoksessa A.R. Nummenmaa, K. Pyhältö & T. Soini (toim.) Hyvä tohtori! Tampere University Press. 107-126.

Leonard, D. & Becker, R. 2009. Enhancing the doctoral experience at the local level. Teoksessa D. Boud & A. Lee (toim.) Changing practices of doctoral education. London: Routledge. 71-86.

Nummenmaa, A. R. 1996. Koulutus, sukupuoli ja elämänkulku. Nuoruudesta aikuisuuteen yhteiskunnallisessa muutoksessa. Työministeriö. Työpoliittisia tutkimuksia 149. Helsinki: Hakapaino.

Hiltunen, K. & Pasanen, H.-M. 2006. Tulevat tohtorit. Jatko-opiskelijoiden kokemukset ja arviot tohtorikoulutuksesta 2005. Opetusministeriön julkaisuja 2006: 48.

Puhakka, H. 1998. Naisten elämänkulku nuoruudesta aikuisuuteen - koulutuksen merkitys elämän kulussa. Joensuun yliopisto. Kasvatustieteellisiä julkaisuja N:o 42.

Saarinen, J. 2003. Naistutkijat tiedemaailmassa. Kertomuksia tutkimusprosesseista. Lapin yliopisto. Acta Universitatis Lapponiensis 57.

Sainio, J. 2010. Asiantuntijana työmarkkinoille. Vuosina 2006 ja 2007 tohtorin tutkinnon suorittaneiden työllistyminen ja heidän mielipiteitään tohtorikoulutuksesta. Aarresaari –verkosto ja OKM. http://www.aarresaari.net/pdf/Asiantuntijana_tyomarkkinoille_netti.pdf Luettu 20.12.2012.

Soini, H. 2008. Vertaisohjaus akateemisen ohjauksen työtapana. Teoksessa A.R. Nummenmaa, K. Pyhältö & T. Soini (toim.) Hyvä tohtori! Tampere University Press. 127-136.

Stubb, J., Pyhältö, K., Soini, T., Nummenmaa, A.R. & Lonka, K. 2010. Osallisuus ja hyvinvointi tiedeyhteisöissä – tohtoriopiskelijoiden kokemuksia. Aikuiskasvatus 30 (2), 106-119.

Tammelin, M. 2009. Working time and family time : experiences of the work and family interface among dual-earning couples in Finland. Jyväskylän yliopisto.

ICQH 2013