



# INTRODUCING HOWULEARNPHD

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# HOWULEARNPHD PROJECT

- The aim of the project is to create a digital tutoring and feedback system for PhD students
  - A continuum from Master's studies to PhD studies
- Providing feedback at different levels:
  - Individual-level feedback for PhD students regarding their answers compared to the whole group
  - Doctoral schools get analysed data from the system regarding their PhD students
- Includes sections:
  - Motivation for attending PhD studies
  - Approaches to thesis work
  - Self-efficacy
  - Experiences of the studying and supervision environment
  - Study-related exhaustion
- The contents of the questionnaire were chosen on the basis of the possibility to give feedback
- Part of the UniHow "family"

## THE PILOT STUDY

- The data was collected in fall 2017
- E-questionnaire was sent in Finnish, English, Swedish
  - N=503 (joista N=414 Finnish; N=79 English, N=11 Swedish)
  - Women 70%; men 30%
- Interviews altogether 96

# THE AIM

To explore:

- whether it is possible to identify the approaches to learning at the PhD context
- the validity of the instrument:
  - Do we find similar relations as with approaches to learning? (motivation for attending university studies, experiences of the TLE, self-efficacy, and study-related burn-out)

# INSTRUMENTS AND ANALYSIS

- Instruments:
  - HowULearn questionnaire (Parpala & Lindblom-Ylänne, 2012) contextualised to the PhD context;
  - EEQ (Participation scale - Korhonen, Inkinen & Toom, 2016)
  - (Subject-area affinity scale) (Herrmann et al. 2016)
- Analysis
  - Exploratory factor analysis (Maximum likelihood, promax), computing sum variables, correlation analysis

# APPROACHES TO THESIS WORK

## ■ Deep approach

- While doing my PhD thesis, I often contemplate the ideas and their connections from multiple perspectives.
- I carefully look for evidence to reach my own conclusions while doing my PhD thesis.
- While writing my thesis, I try to make use of different viewpoints on the subject matter as much as possible.
- In my PhD thesis, I try to form a coherent whole of its contents.

## ■ Surface/Unreflective approach

- I often have trouble forming a coherent whole of my PhD thesis.
- Many themes related to the content of my thesis remain disconnected from each other.
- The contents of my PhD thesis feel so complicated that I often have trouble understanding them.

## ■ Organised studying

- I put a lot of effort into my PhD thesis.
- On the whole, I work on my PhD thesis in a systematic and organized way.
- I organize the time reserved for my PhD thesis carefully to make the best use of it.



# PRELIMINARY RESULTS: APPROACHES TO THESIS WORK AND MOTIVATION FOR ATTENDING UNIVERSITY



# PHD APPLICANTS' MOTIVES FOR DOING A PHD

- Personal development (3 items)
  - Opportunity to study and learn; improve intellectual capacity
- Career enhancement (3 items)
  - Interesting and satisfying career; obtain things that are for value; achieving a higher status in society
- Absence of an alternative (3 items)
  - No other choices than to become a PhD student; low perceived value of the importance of PhD studies



# PHD STUDENTS' MOTIVES FOR DOING A PHD AND RELATIONSHIP WITH APPROACHES TO THESIS WORK

	Personal development	Career enhancement	Absence of an alternative
Deep approach	<b>.44**</b>	<b>.21**</b>	<b>-.38**</b>
Surface approach	<b>-.19*</b>	<b>-.16*</b>	<b>.22**</b>
Organised studying	<b>.23**</b>	<b>.16**</b>	<b>-.23**</b>


+/- Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level

++/-- Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level



PRELIMINARY RESULTS:

APPROACHES TO THESIS WORK AND THEIR RELATION TO  
EXPERIENCES OF THE STUDYING AND SUPERVISION  
ENVIRONMENT, INTEREST AND SELF-EFFICACY



# THE RELATION BETWEEN INTEREST, SELF-EFFICACY, PERCEIVED SUPPORT FROM SUPERVISORS AND PEERS, AND APPROACHES TO THESIS WORK

	Peer support	Supervisory support	Interest and relevance	Self-efficacy
Deep approach	<b>.18**</b>	<b>.25**</b>	<b>.43**</b>	<b>.40**</b>
Surface approach	<b>-.05</b>	<b>-.27*</b>	<b>-.39**</b>	<b>-.54**</b>
Organised studying	<b>.15**</b>	<b>.23**</b>	<b>.43**</b>	<b>.41**</b>

\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level



# APPROACHES TO THESIS WORK AND STUDY-RELATED EXHAUSTION



# THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PHD STUDENTS' STUDY-RELATED EXHAUSTION AND APPROACHES TO THESIS WORK

	Exhaustion	Cynicism
Deep approach	<b>-.13**</b>	<b>-.30**</b>
Surface approach	<b>.35**</b>	<b>.43**</b>
Organised studying	<b>-.15**</b>	<b>-.39**</b>

+/- Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level

++/-- Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level

## SUMMARY OF THE PRELIMINARY RESULTS 1/2

- The approaches to learning are also identifiable at the PhD context
- Deep approach to thesis work and organised studying are related to:
  - Personal-intellectual motivation and career-materialist motivation
  - Perceived support from supervisors and peers
  - Seeing the PhD studies as interesting and relevant
  - High self-efficacy
  - Not experiencing study-related exhaustion

## SUMMARY OF THE PRELIMINARY RESULTS

- Surface/Unreflective approach to thesis work is positively related to:
  - doing PhD studies because of an absence of an alternative
  - Not receiving enough support from supervisors
  - Not seeing the PhD studies as interesting and relevant
  - Experiencing exhaustion and cynicism in studies
  - Low self-efficacy