

# Short Essay about Dissertation Writing

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## Phases

I interviewed Xiaoshi Xu, who graduated in the early 2023 with the thesis of *Management practices and innovation – the role of paradoxical tensions and national context*. Her doctoral journey took around 5 years. The phases are essay-based involving writing three successive essays. For each essay, the author went through the process of conceiving ideas, topic selection, considering implementation ways, data collection, data analysis, and writing.

Among them, data collection orientation is an essential element to lead to phase difference. As the author intended to try comprehensive research methods, her three essays collect, respectively, meta-analytical data, qualitative data, and quantitative data. Each of the three essays is based on one of the three datasets. Therefore, she started data collection for the first essay early from the first year. While she mentioned that some people prefer to use the same database, which is more linear for the dissertation, for instance, ethnography related research. They structuralize the overarching themes and gather holistic data for all the three essays. For them, data collection is often prolonged and goes throughout the first two or three years, and thesis writing may start in the last two years.

Briefly, after the research plan is settled, the timing of completing the whole thesis largely depends on data collection, during which researchers can often face setbacks. It is often not a linear process and concerns for example, contacting and finding the target cases. As for the interviewees' information security concerns, companies usually sign NDA with researchers beforehand.

## Main research question and task

The author suggests that a main research question is usually broad. We shall find different points and theories to address it. Her task is to find solutions to improve firms' competitiveness through innovation. Specifically, the overarching question is, how can managers best facilitate technological innovation in firms that operate in different cultural and other institutional contexts. Centered on this main theme, the dissertation consists of three essays that examine the issue from different theoretical and methodological perspectives.

Essay 1 is a meta-analytical literature review to identify management practices that promote technological product and process innovation, considering firm-level, industry-level, and national-level factors. The analysis reveals that firms' innovation practices are influenced by the institutional and industrial environment and the innovation type.

Essay 2 delves into an in-depth study, focusing on multiple cases of managing sustainable new product development in diverse contexts. The author narrowed the focus to sustainable innovation in the garment industry. The study acknowledges the role of innovation type, national institutions, and industrial environment in moderating the relationship between management practices and innovation. A deeper understanding of how internal and external factors interact in successful innovation management is gained.

The findings from Essay 2 and Essay 1 lead to the formulation of the research question for Essay 3, which is a survey-based quantitative study to test the impact of pair-wise paradoxical management practices on product innovation outcomes and the moderating role of national culture.

Although nearly no research can give the universal or general rule about how firms can successfully innovate. The doctoral thesis addresses the task from three breakthrough points. It illuminates the complexities of innovation management and provides a comprehensive perspective on efficiently overseeing the innovation process. It emphasizes the significance of balancing conflicting tasks and goals, managing tensions, and considering the national context for achieving successful innovation management.

### **Factors to finish the dissertation**

The most important thing is to find our interested areas and then find the relevant direction. Having a common interest with our supervisors can let us get better support. At the first year we should actively read and attend seminars, brainstorm, and describe which area of IB we are interested in, then ask for supervisors' help based on it.

Be sustainable. We're expected to make plans, balance everyday life, and step forward routinely. Set and break goals into smaller ones, try to do little everyday instead of striving too hard and being concerned about everything in a time.

Other factors are such as getting used to rejections regarding publication and conducting interviews/surveys, having frequent contact with supervisors and co-authors to share progress and get necessary support even in an imperfect stage of the paper, and so forth.

### **Why the dissertation is like it is**

In the final dissertation, we need to compose compilation theses with a kappa (comprehensive summary) and separate original essays. The kappa serves as a consolidation of the interrelated essays, thus should be substantial and containing additional analysis. Meanwhile, the dissertation content mainly composes of introduction, theoretical approaches, methodology, summaries, and discussion with three essays at the attachment.

Theory choice can be a phenomenon-driven process. Dynamic capability theory, paradox theory, and institutional theory are chosen to offer a holistic view. When we witness an IB phenomenon and check the collected data, we can consider which literature can explain. The author went through an abductive rather than linear approach. She read literature and find potential theories that might apply to her research topic; she further examined which theories are suitable for themes that emerge from the data or whether the data happens to make up for the research gap, then develops theory based on it.

The datasets provide the dissertation with rich evidence, although her supervisor suggests using maximum two datasets, the dissertation was based on three: 1) meta-analytical coding data from 143 articles; 2) a qualitative dataset including 20 interviews with representatives of 3 companies in Finland and China, and company documents and external resources; 3) a quantitative, survey-based, cross-sectional, and multi-country dataset involving 200 firms in China, each with two respondents, as well as 164 firms in Finland and Sweden.

Empirically, the dissertation offers a comprehensive analysis of innovation management by integrating a meta-analytical literature review, qualitative case study, and quantitative survey. The meta-analytical review uncovers managerial strategies that enhance innovation outcomes, revealing variations based on the institutional and industrial context. In Essay 2, a qualitative case study delves into the diverse strategies employed by firms in handling performance and organizational aspects during sustainable new product development. This highlights the influence of the institutional environment and the presence of contradictory tensions. Essay 3 delves into the effects of contradictory management practices on product innovation and their moderation by national culture. The findings indicate that implementing contradictory practices positively impacts product effectiveness, while organizing such practices enhances process efficiency. The research also uncovers the significant role of the national context in managing contradictory tensions in new product development.