

Chapters or Articles?

Nordic Doctoral Theses in Media, Journalism, and Communication Studies in 2019–2023

Maarit Jaakkola, PhD, Co-director Nordicom, University of Gothenburg, Sweden, maarit.jaakkola@gu.se

Background and Aim

Doctoral students today face a range of choices when it comes to publishing their theses (see e.g. Mason, 2018). To provide a structural overview of doctoral dissertation publishing practices in media, journalism, and communication studies across the Nordic region, we conducted a systematic literature review of PhD theses published in Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden between 2019 and 2023. Searches in national databases yielded a total of 282 titles: 113 from Sweden (40%), 82 from Finland (29%), 49 from Denmark (17%), and 38 from Norway (13%). The research question guiding our analysis was: in what formats and languages are students publishing their work?

Keywords: PhD studies, doctoral thesis, media and communication studies, journalism studies, Nordic countries, doctoral supervision

Results

Dominance of article-based theses

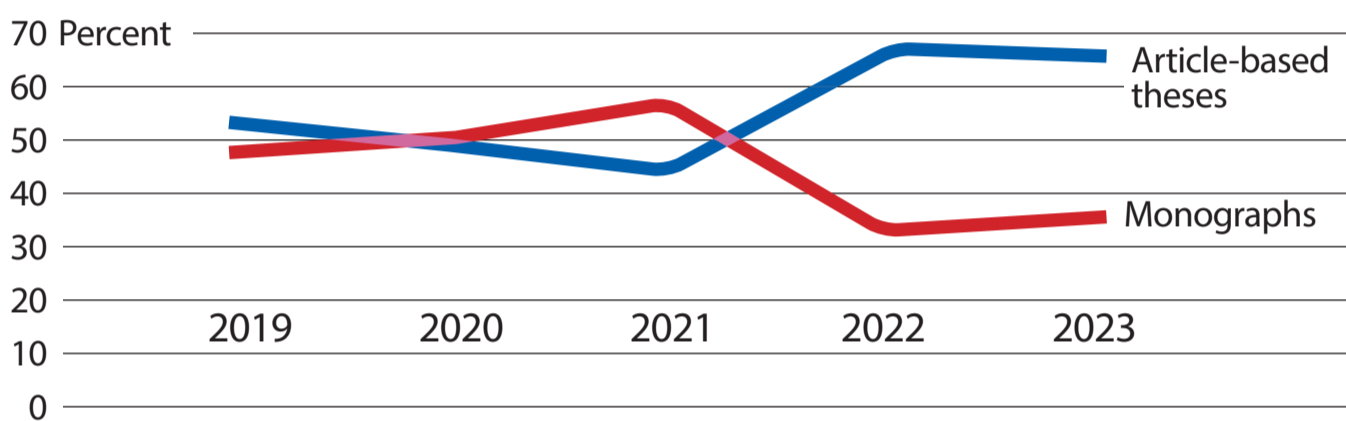
Article-based theses were slightly more embraced than the monographs: 52 percent ($n=148$) of all dissertations were compilation theses and 48 percent ($n=134$) monographs. Choices are subject to large variation, but compared to 2007, from which there is data available (Carlsson, 2008), theses were exclusively monographs. There were 4.1 articles included in the compilation theses on average: 4.4 in Sweden, 4.1 in Finland, 3.9 in Denmark, and 3.8 in Norway.

Shift towards English language

A notable increase in the use of English as the primary language was observed, with Finland and Sweden showing the highest proportion of English-language dissertations (both 87%). On average, only 14 percent ($n=41$) of all PhD theses were written in national languages. Monographs were more likely to be written in English, as 86 percent of all monographs were written in English, compared to 81 percent of article-based theses.

Lacking accessibility of monographs

Despite Nordic policy commitments to open access publishing, 15 percent of theses ($n=41$) were not accessible online, with major differences between countries. In general, non-open access publishing was more common among those who wrote monographs: as many as 25 percent ($n=32$) of all monographs were not accessible online, while non-open access publishing among article-based theses was minimal, only 3% ($n=4$). Potential reasons are challenges with copyrighted materials and the fact that authors may publish parts of the theses as journal articles or turn their theses later into books released by academic publishers.



Methods

Searches were conducted in Finna provided by the National Library in Finland, Digitala Vetenskapliga Arkivet (DiVA) and SwePub by the National Library in Sweden, Pure in Denmark, and Cristin in Norway. Searches were complemented in databases by universities that were not included in the national databases (Lund University, University of Gothenburg, Stockholm School of Economics, Chalmers University of Technology) and validated with lists published by NordMedia Network. A content analysis of the variables thesis format, languages, and number of articles in article-based theses was conducted.

Implications

The results indicate that doctoral study programmes and supervisors need to put an emphasis on mediating knowledge about journal publishing, as well as the practices of editing and peer review. A general awareness of the consequences of different publication formats should be an integral part of doctoral curricula. Moreover, understanding the trends and choices in PhD thesis production is crucial not only for doctoral candidates but also for research funders, academic publishers, and policymakers.

Conclusion

Publishing within doctoral studies is becoming increasingly professionalised and internationalised. Engagement with international publishing practices through peer-reviewed journal articles and monographs issued by established academic publishers integrates students more powerfully into the academic profession. The use of English as the primary language of publication enhances doctoral students' integration into global academic networks.

References

- Carlsson, U. (Ed.) (2008). Doktorsavhandlingar 2007. *Nordicom Information*, 31(3), 77–100.
- Mason, S. (2018). Publications in the doctoral thesis: Challenges for doctoral candidates, supervisors, examiners and administrators. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 37(6), 1231–1244. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2018.1462307>

Watch the Video!

How did the doctoral students motivate their choices between compilation thesis and monograph in a complementary questionnaire?

