

Bachelor's Degree Program in International Business
Mikkeli Campus

Evaluation of Bachelor's level education at the Aalto Mikkeli Campus

Alumni survey in cooperation with SEFE

Anna Reponen, Joan Lofgren, Mari Syväoja



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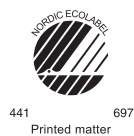
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Anna Reponen, Joan Lofgren, Mari Syväoja

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Julkaisija Kauppakorkeakoulu**Yksikkö** International Business -kandidaattiohjelma, Mikkelin yksikkö**Sarja** Aalto University publication series BUSINESS + ECONOMY 2/2013**Tutkimusala** Kauppatieteet**Tiivistelmä**

Aalto-yliopiston kauppakorkeakoulun (1.1.2010 asti Helsingin kauppakorkeakoulu) Mikkelin yksikkö on järjestänyt englanninkielistä Bachelor-tason koulutusta kauppatieteissä vuodesta 1989 alkaen. Vuosina 1989-2000 aloittaneet opiskelijat opiskelivat Bachelor of Business Administration -ohjelmassa (BBA Program). Vuodesta 2001 alkaen opiskelijat ovat voineet suorittaa kauppatieteiden kandidaatin tutkinnon International Business -kandidaatti-ohjelmassa (BScBA-ohjelma). Vuosien 1996-2002 aikana yksikössä järjestettiin myös yliopistotasoisista MBA-koulutusta (Master of Business Administration). Koulutusohjelmasta on valmistunut yhteensä yli 1400 BBA-ohjelman tai BScBA-tutkinnon ja noin 100 MBA-ohjelman suorittanutta.

Vuonna 2012 yhteistyössä Suomen Ekonomiliiton (SEFE) kanssa toteutetulla tutkimuksella haluttiin selvittää alumnien mielipiteitä koulutuksen laadusta sekä heidän asemaansa työelämässä. Koulutuksen tasokkuudesta kertoo hyvin se, että tutkimukseen vastanneista 307 alumnista 98 % arvioi koulutuksen laadun korkeaksi ja aidosti kansainväliseksi. 97 % suosittelee koulutusta muille. Koulutusohjelmassa vierailee luennoimassa vuosittain kymmeniä ulkomaalaisia ja kotimaisia huipputason asiantuntijoita ja ohjelmalla on laaja verkosto kansainvälisesti arvostettuja yhteistyöyliopistoja eri puolilla maailmaa.

Tutkimus osoitti, että koulutusohjelmasta valmistuneet ovat työllistyneet erittäin hyvin ja työttömänä vastaajista oli vain vajaat 5 %. Alumnit työskentelevät suomen lisäksi 18 eri maassa. Kolmen viikon intensiivijaksoissa toteutettavilla kursseilla ryhmätyö- ja vuorovaikutustaitoja sekä esiintymisvalmiuksia painottavat opetusmenetelmät koettiin tekijäksi, joka on valmistanut hyvin Mikkelissä opiskelleet vaativaan työelämään. Merkittävää on se, että ne valmistuneet, jotka eivät olleet jatkaneet opintojaan Mikkelistä valmistumisensa jälkeen, olivat työllistyneet lähes yhtä hyvin kuin jatko-opintoja suorittaneetkin ja heitä työskentelee myös miltei yhtäläisesti johtavissa tehtävissä kuin korkeammin koulutettuja. Mikkelissä suoritettu Bachelor-tasoinen ohjelma tai tutkinto itsessään on siis antanut valmistuneille hyvät edellytykset työelämässä menestymiseen ja 85 % vastaajista arvioikin jo Mikkelissä suoritettua kandidaatin tutkinnon valmistavan hyvin työelämään. Tähän tutkimukseen on vastannut vain Mikkelin yksiköstä valmistuneita ja näin ollen tätä tulosta ei voida sellaisenaan yleistää koskemaan muista ohjelmista valmistuneita kandidaatteja.

Vastaajista 90 % koki koulutusohjelman antavan hyvät valmiudet jatko-opintoihin. Opetuksen sisältöön oltiin pääsääntöisesti hyvin tyytyväisiä. Lisää opetusta toivottiin muutamilta osa-alueilta (laskentatoimi, rahoitus, akateeminen kirjoittaminen ja tutkimusmenetelmät sekä tietyt työelämässä tarvittavat ATK-sovellukset). Koulutuksen sisältöä on kehitetty jatkuvasti opiskelijoilta ja alumneilta saadun palautteen perusteella ja vain pieni osa viime vuosina valmistuneista näki näissä osa-alueissa parannettavaa. Vuonna 2013 toteutettavassa tutkintouudistuksessa on otettu huomioon tässä tutkimuksessa saatu palaute.

Avainsanat alumni, jatko-opinnot, koulutuksen laatu, työelämä

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1 The purpose of the survey and research objectives

Aalto University School of Business (until January 1st 2010 Helsinki School of Economics) has offered Bachelor's level education in business administration at the Mikkeli Campus soon for 25 years. In the fall of 1989, the Helsinki School of Economics introduced the International Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA) Program in Mikkeli. Between years 1996-2002 the Mikkeli Campus also organized MBA education for five classes. In 2001, the BBA Program was granted formal accreditation by the Finnish Ministry of Education and was converted to a Bachelor of Science degree program in Business Administration (also known as BScBA Degree Program). As was the case with its predecessor, the BScBA Degree Program is conducted in English, with visiting faculty from around the world. In the process of implementing a new degree structure in 2005, the name of the program was changed to the Bachelor's Degree Program in International Business. Altogether more than 1400 Bachelor' level and about 100 MBA students have graduated from the program. From the beginning of 2013 the Mikkeli program will be the only English-language university level Bachelors' degree program in Business Administration in Finland.

As was the case with its predecessor, the BScBA Degree Program is conducted in English, with visiting faculty from around the world. Courses are offered in three-week modules, meeting three hours a day, five days a week. All students are expected to spend a semester in a foreign university. The program has a broad network of partnerships with leading business schools all over the world. As an active exchange partner, the BScBA Degree Program also receives 60-80 exchange students from abroad each year to study in Mikkeli.

The purpose of the survey was to examine the employment situation of Bachelor-level Mikkeli alumni and evaluate the quality of the education they received in Mikkeli. The survey is part of a larger process of improving and strengthening BBA, MBA and BScBA alumni operations. Because the BScBA Degree Program provides teaching on the Bachelor's level, the research focuses on evaluating only the Bachelor's level education received in Mikkeli.

First, the research concentrated on specifying the status of Mikkeli BBA and BScBA graduates in business life and the nature of their jobs. It also provides information about their further education. Second, it concentrates on describing the quality of the Mikkeli Bachelor's level education from the perspective of the BBA and BScBA graduates. Third, through this research it

was also defined what additional value the master's level degree provides for the Mikkeli BBA and BScBA graduates.

The success of the Mikkeli graduates in business life and their further education has not been examined this closely before. Some of the Mikkeli alumni have participated in evaluating the quality of the Mikkeli education also before. During 2010-2011 a group of Mikkeli alumni participated in the Teaching and Education Evaluation (TEE) project which was completed in all programs of Aalto University. The purpose of this process was to gather information for developing teaching and education. Also, the Mikkeli Program Committee includes an alumnus having a PhD degree from Harvard University who has been able to provide valuable working life perspectives and other insights for the development of the Mikkeli program.

Through this research the BScBA Degree Program has been able to gain information about the careers of alumni and quality of the education which are valuable for the development and marketing purposes of the BScBA Degree Program.

2 The sample and data collection

The survey was completed in April 2012 in cooperation with SEFE (The Finnish Association of Business School Graduates). The data was collected by using a web based survey questionnaire. The questionnaire had two themes. One included questions about the education and careers of the graduates and the other concentrated on the characteristics of the Mikkeli program. The survey was open for 3 weeks and conducted from April 17 to May 7, 2012.

Potential respondents were approached two different ways. Personal emails were sent to around 585 Mikkeli alumni by the BScBA program. Also 450 emails were sent through the alumni association of the BScBA (formerly BBA) Program of the Aalto University School of Business. These different databases are partially overlapping including some same members. In addition, the survey was published in two different locations in the internet: LinkedIn and Facebook. Because of these details it is difficult to estimate the actual response rate, because the exact number of Mikkeli alumni receiving the information about the survey is unknown. A total of 307 answers were received.

2.1 The profile of respondents

The sample consisted of 158 female and 149 male respondents, comprising 51 % of female and 49% of male respondents; thus both genders responded to the survey quite equally. Answers were received from all classes graduated from the Mikkeli program. The BBA graduates comprised 52 % of the respondents and BScBA graduates 48 %. Also an important factor to be taken into consideration is the proportion of foreign degree students among the respondents. For example, between 2004 and 2011, a total of 554 students graduated from the Mikkeli program and 49 (9 %) of these graduates were foreign degree students. 307 of the Mikkeli graduates participated in this survey and 22 (8 %) of them were foreign degree students. The survey managed to find this group of the foreign Mikkeli graduates quite well because the proportion of the foreign degree student respondents among all the survey respondents is very close to the actual proportion of foreign degree student graduates among all graduates.

The information gathered through the survey enabled the formation of a quite comprehensive profile of Mikkeli graduates and a description of the Mikkeli program from the perspective of alumni. The actual number and percentage of answers received from each BBA and BScBA class is shown in Figure 1.

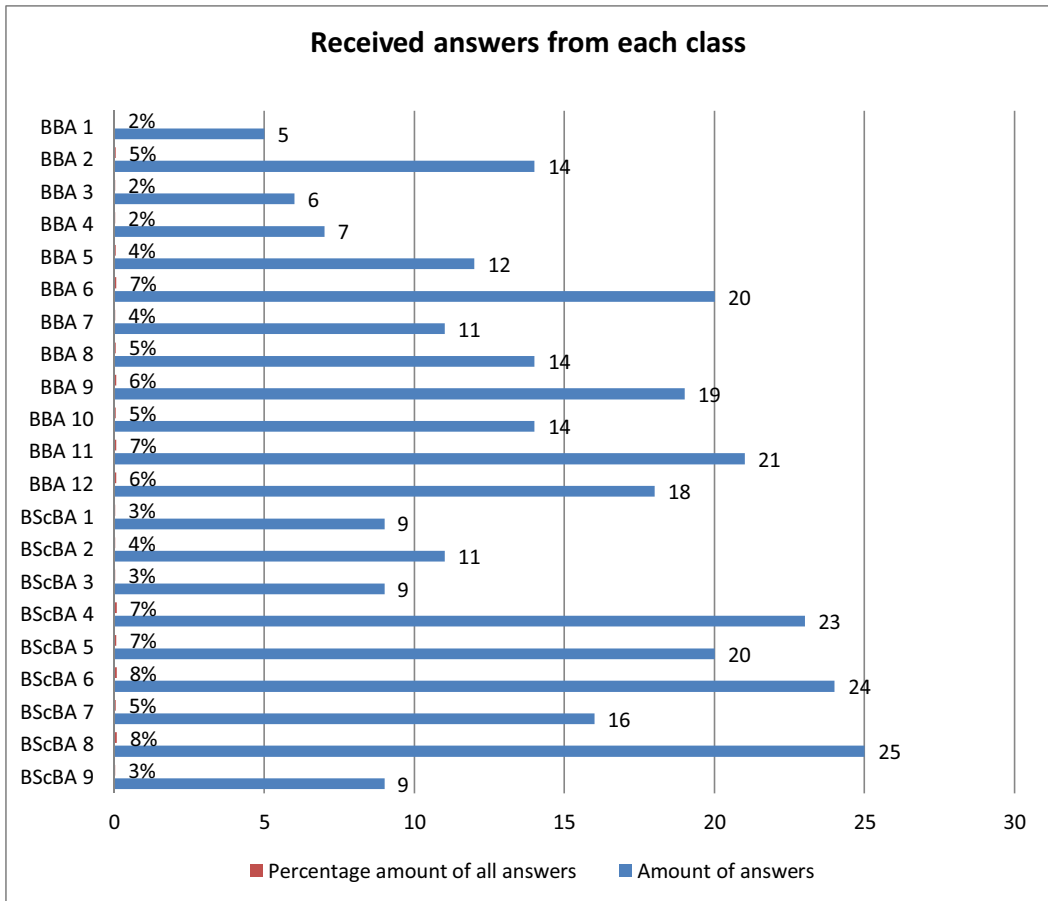


Figure 1: Actual number and percentage of answers from each BBA and BScBA class.

The respondents were also asked to specify their current place of residence. The majority of the respondents, 82 % live in Finland. The most common places of residence outside Finland are the USA, UK and Germany. Even though the majority of the respondents living in Finland are Finnish citizens, some of the foreign degree students have decided to stay in Finland after their graduation.

- The total number of non-Finnish respondents was 22. This group consisted of 8 (includes 1 person with Finnish-German dual nationality) respondents who live in Finland and 14 who live abroad (includes 1 person with Finnish-German dual nationality).
- 245 of the Finnish respondents live in Finland and 40 live abroad.

3 Survey results

This section summarizes the answers of the survey respondents. It describes the further education of the Mikkeli alumni and their position in working life. It also includes an evaluation of the quality of the Mikkeli education from the perspective of graduates.

The BBA graduates comprised 52 % of the respondents. Many changes have been made to the content of the education since their graduation. Because of these improvements, the BScBA graduates scored most of the factors high which received negative feedback and lower scores from the BBA graduate respondents. These differences in the answers of respondents from various classes are explained in more detail in the sections 3.4 and 3.5 concerning the evaluation of the quality of the Mikkeli program.

3.1 Further education of Mikkeli BBA and BScBA alumni

The respondents were asked to specify the degrees they have completed after their graduation from the BBA or BScBA program in Mikkeli and the degrees towards which they are currently studying.

- 43 % of all the respondents had completed and 16 % were studying towards the M.Sc. (Econ) degree.
- 11 % of respondents had completed an MBA degree after their graduation from Mikkeli.
- 4 % of respondents had completed a Master's degree in some other sciences
- 7 % had completed some other studies or degree
- 23 % had not completed any degrees after their graduation from Mikkeli
- 6 % were studying towards or had already completed two degrees after their graduation from the Mikkeli program
- 1 % were studying towards or had completed three degrees after their graduation from the Mikkeli program

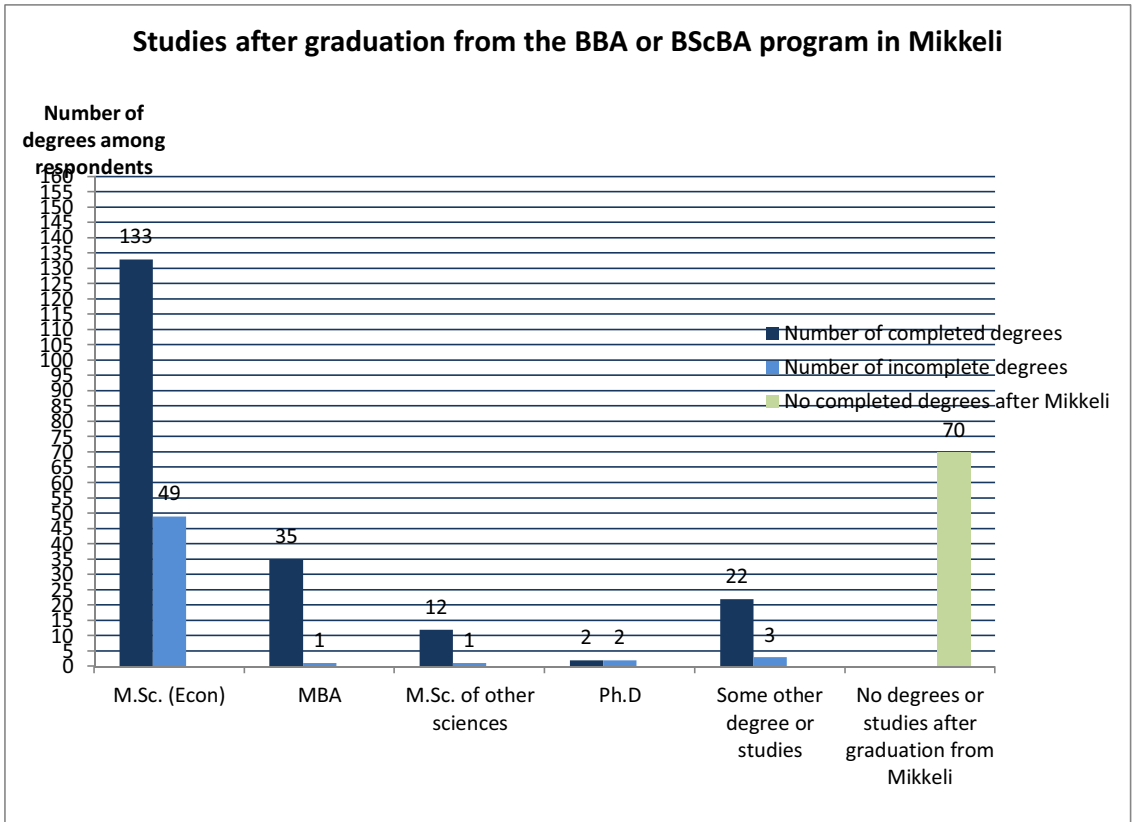


Figure 2: Further studies of the Mikkeli graduates.

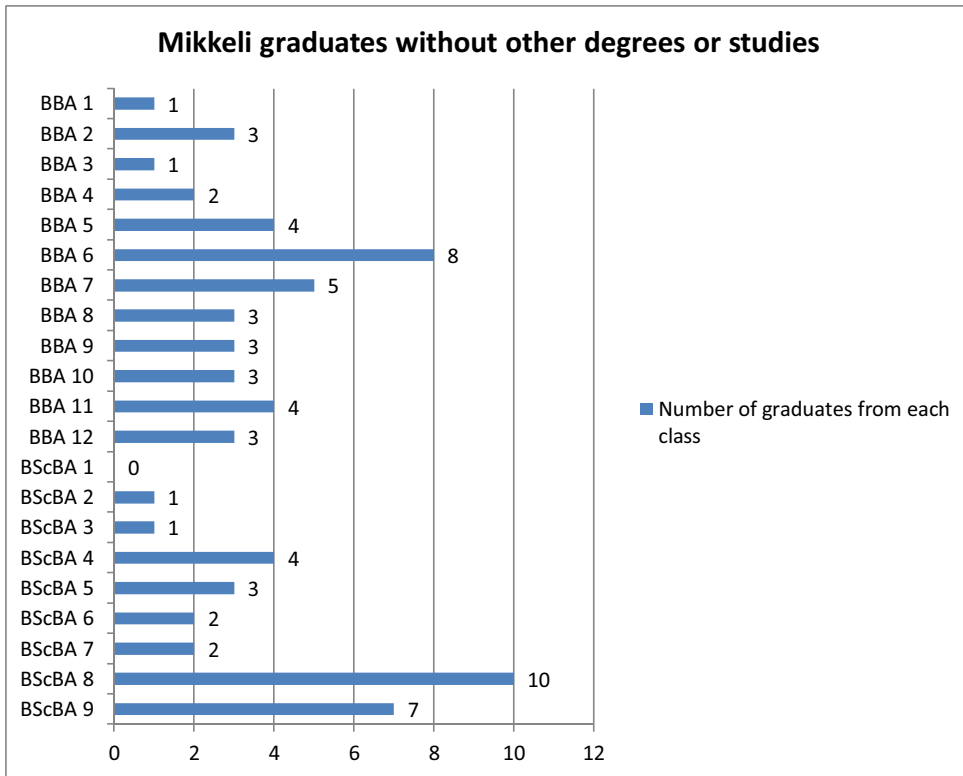


Figure 3: The number of Mikkeli graduates without other education from each class.

40 (57 %) of those 70 people who haven't completed other studies after their graduation from Mikkeli are former BBA students. This suggests that the BBA graduates considered the education in Mikkeli sufficient for success in working life, in contrast to the opinion of many BScBA graduates in this survey who think that a person needs to have a Master's degree. Also, the average age of BBA students used to be higher than the average age of the BScBA students and BBA students often already had working experience when they started their studies in Mikkeli. From this point of view, they were better prepared for working life.

This group of respondents without other education includes 17 (24 %) BScBA students who have graduated quite recently and probably are in a phase of applying for further studies. The remaining 13 of the respondents with the BScBA degree (19 %), have not completed other studies for other reasons.

3.3 The position of Mikkeli alumni in business life and the internationality of their work

In the survey the respondents were asked to specify the domicile of their employer company to gain information about the location of their employers. The majority, 74 % of the respondents, work in Finnish companies, 3 % in American companies and 2 % in English companies. Employers of respondents can be found from 16 other countries: Afganistan, Austria, Australia, Bahrain, China, Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland, Netherlands, Philippines, Russian, Saudi Arabia, Sweden, and Switzerland.

In addition, the level of the internationality in the work of the BBA and BScBA graduates was measured by using the following three factors.

- Usage of English in their work
- The degree of professional contact with people from other cultures
- The amount of travelling in their job

The respondents had to rate these factors on a scale from one to four (1=never, 2=seldom, 3=often, 4=very often, 0= unable to answer). Figure 4 summarizes the average values of these factors.

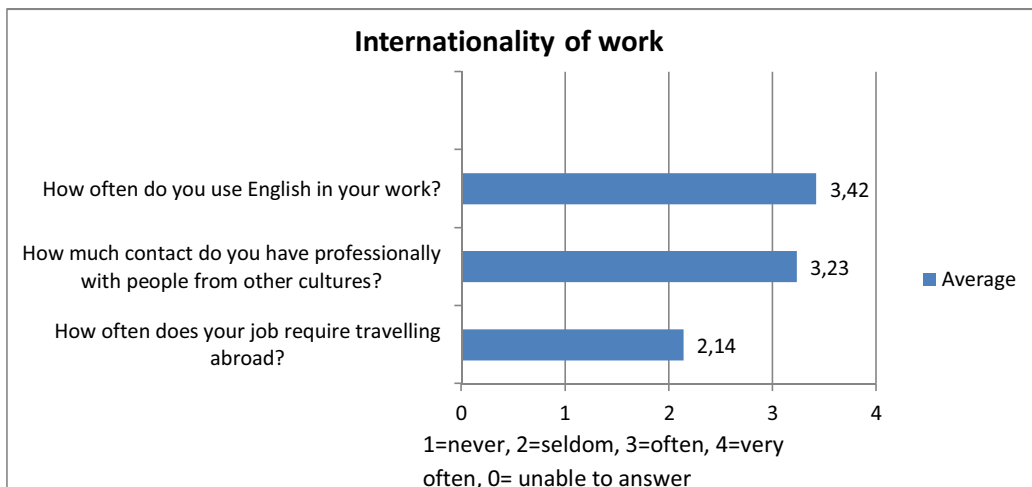


Figure 4: Average values of factors measuring internationality in the jobs of the respondents.

While 82 % of all respondents live in Finland, most of their jobs can nonetheless be described as international to some extent. Figure 5 gives more detailed information about the distribution of the answers related to the internationality of the work. 73 % of respondents are often in contact

with people from other cultures and 67 % use English often in their work. In contrast, only 26 % of the respondents stated their work often requires travelling and 64 % seldom or never travel.

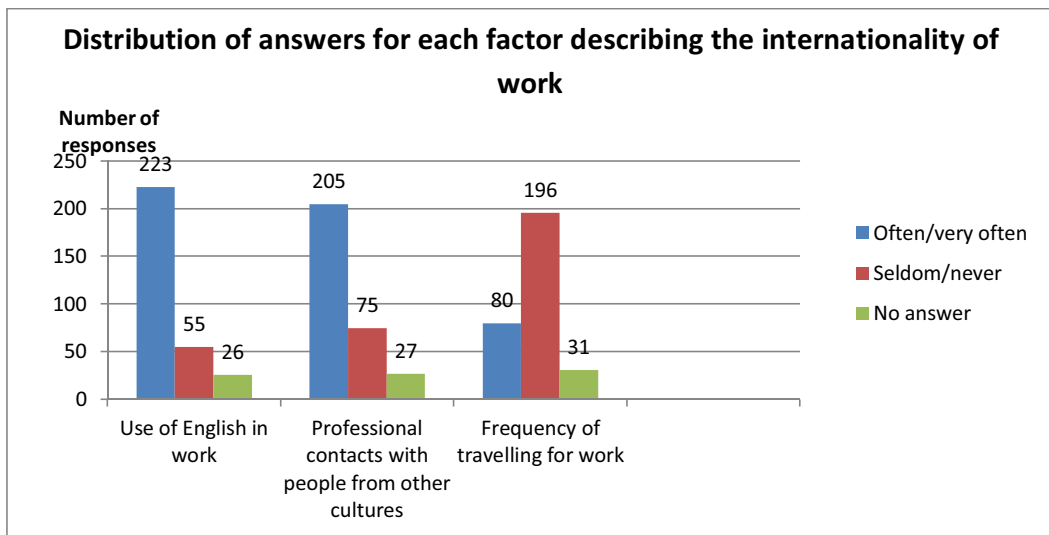


Figure 5: Distribution of answers of respondents for each factor describing internationality of their work.

3.3.1 Employment situation

The employment situation of the respondents can be perceived to be very good. 86 % of the respondents stated that they are satisfied with their current employment situation. 13 % were not satisfied and the rest, 1 % did not answer this question. Respondents were not asked to give additional comments on this topic in the survey questionnaire.

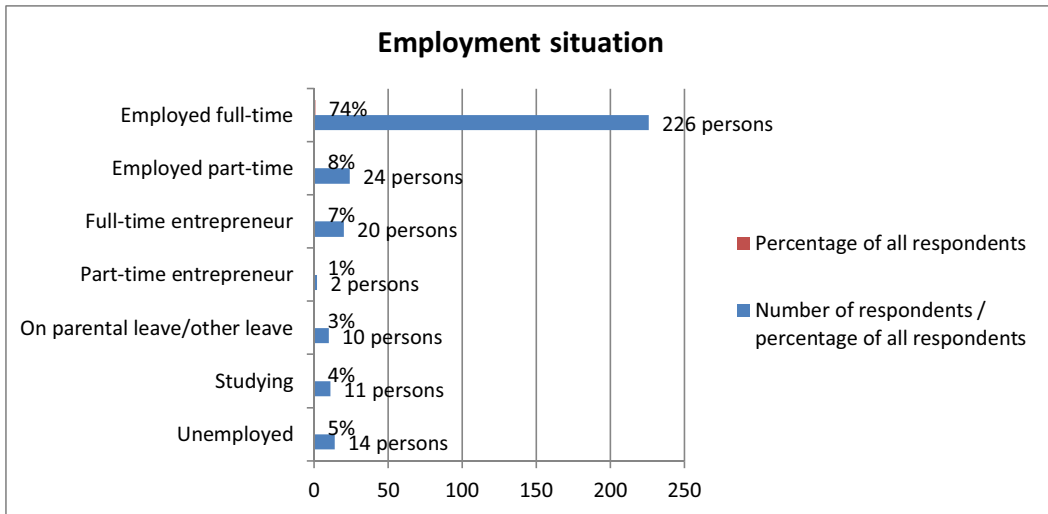


Figure 6: Employment situation of Mikkeli graduates.

Only 5 % of respondents were unemployed. In practice this means 14 people. According to Statistics of Finland (www.stat.fi) when the research was conducted in April 2012 the unemployment rate in Finland was 8,4 %. Compared to this rate, the unemployment rate of the survey respondents can be considered to be very low. No correlation could be made between the lack of a Master's level degree in business and unemployment. In total, 6 of those 14 unemployed respondent had completed a Master's level degree in business and 8 had not. Only one of those 8 respondents mentioned lack of a Master's level degree as a reason for unemployment. In other words Mikkeli graduates have been employed almost equally well whether they have completed a Master's degree in business after graduation from Mikkeli or not. From this perspective, the education in Mikkeli provides a good foundation for its graduates to succeed in working life.

3.3.2 Position in the company

Respondents were asked to specify their position in their employer company. The largest proportion of respondents 32 % categorized themselves as specialists. This group consists also of those who work as planners or project managers. The distribution of positions can be seen in Figure 7.

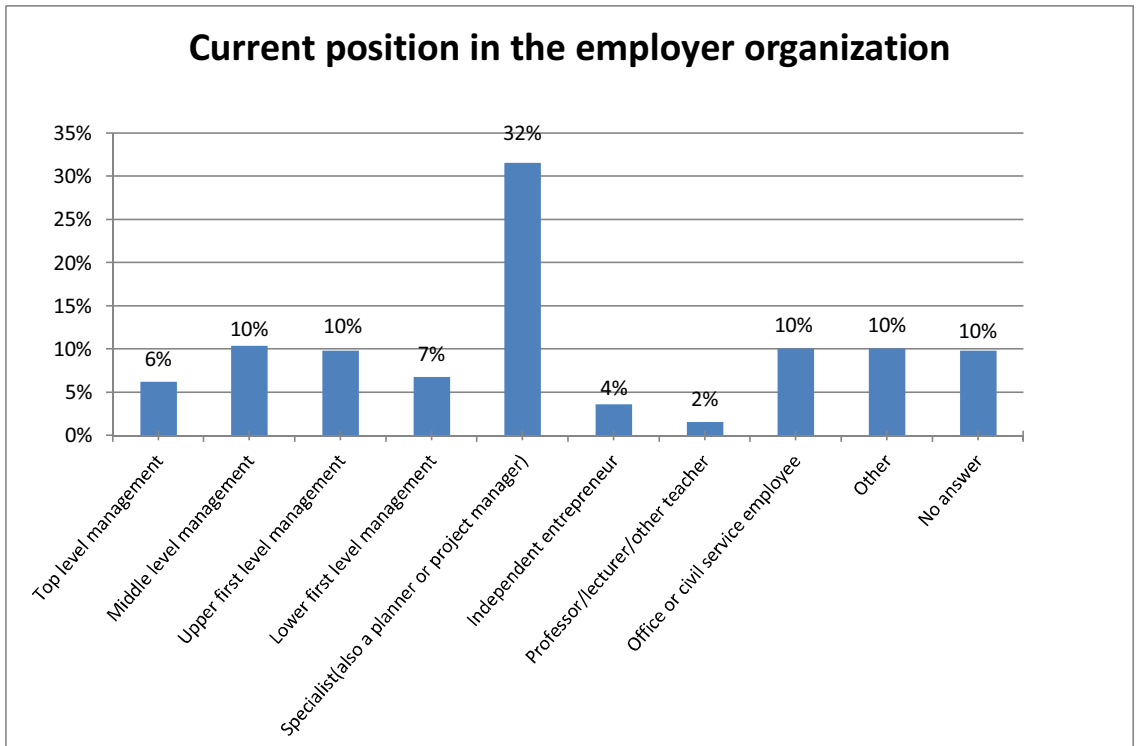


Figure 7: The distribution of positions of the Mikkeli graduates within employer organizations.

Not all the respondents who were employed answered the question about their position in the employer company. 30 of those 293 respondents who defined themselves as employed didn't answer this question even though they were asked to do so. The response rate of this question was therefore 90 %.

3.3.3 The correlation between the level of education and the position in the employee organization

Figure 8 shows the distribution of the positions in employer organizations of those respondents having a Master's degree in business and Figure 9 the positions of those respondents having an MBA degree.

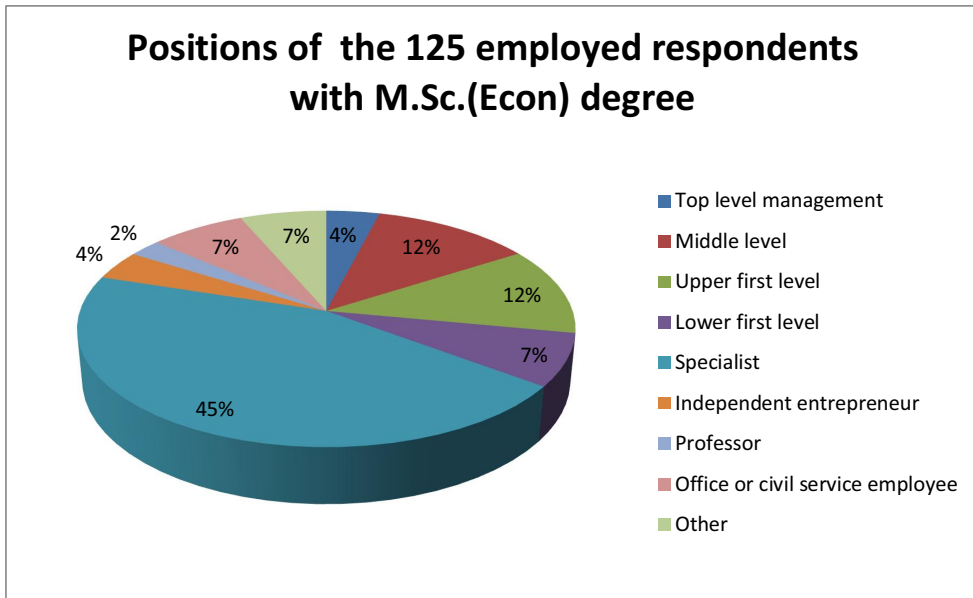


Figure 8: Distribution of positions among those employed respondents having M.Sc.(Econ) degree.

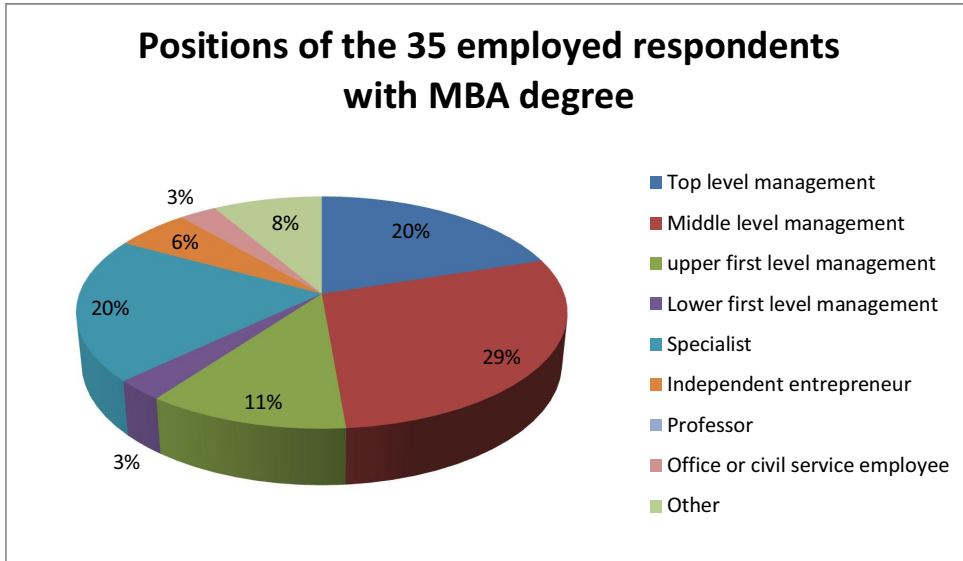


Figure 9: Distribution of positions among those employed respondents having an MBA degree.

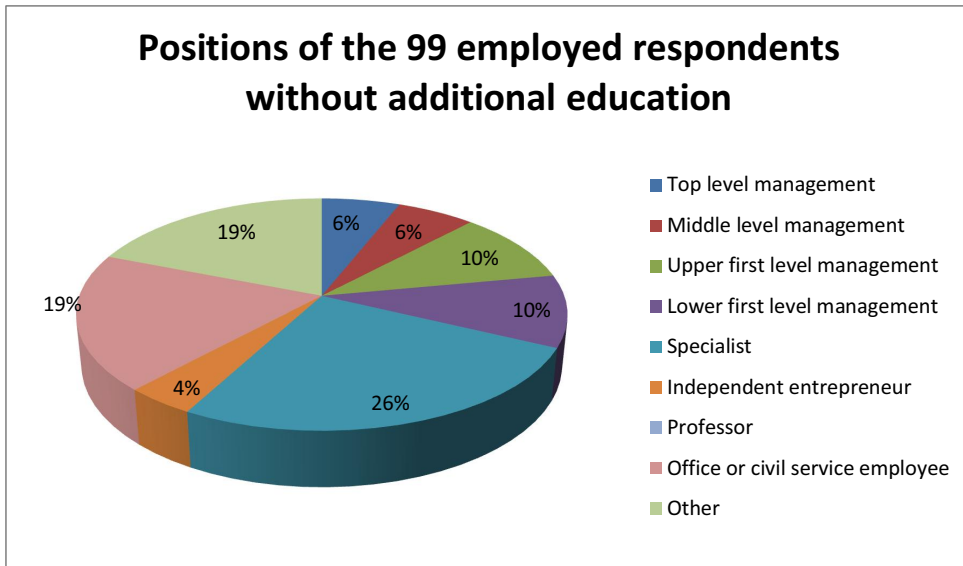


Figure 10: Positions in organizations of those respondents without additional education.

As shown in Figure 9, the group of respondents having an MBA degree has been able to achieve top level management positions very well: 20 % of those having an MBA degree are in top level management positions whereas 4 % of those having M.Sc.(Econ) and 6 % of those without additional education are in top level management positions.

It seems that the group of the Mikkeli graduates who haven't completed other studies after their graduation from Mikkeli have been able to achieve higher positions relatively well in the organizations compared to those with Master's level degree in business, as shown in figure 11. Among those employed respondents who defined their position in their employer organizations:

- 39 % of those respondents who have a Master's level degree in business are in managerial positions compared to
- 32 % of those who have not completed degrees after graduation from Mikkeli

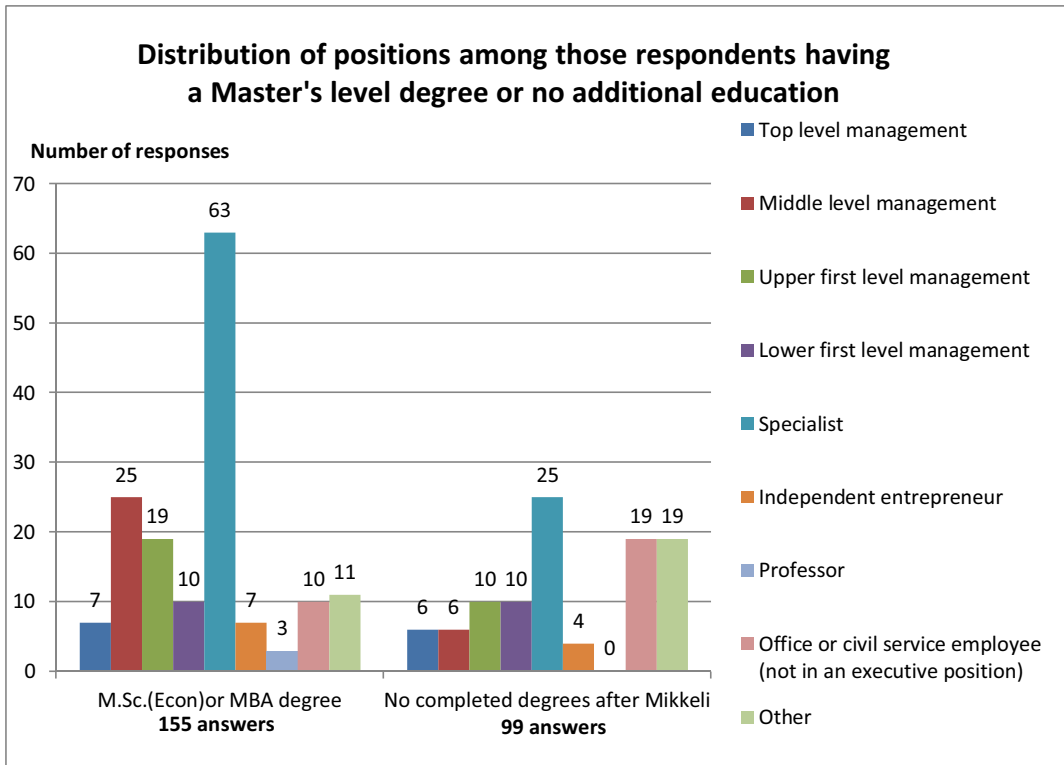


Figure 11: Positions in organizations of those employed respondents who have a Master's level degree in business and those who don't.

It needs to be taken into consideration that 66 % of those respondents in managerial positions who haven't completed other degrees after graduation from the Mikkeli program are BBA graduates. The average age of the BBA students was higher than the average age of the BScBA students. Also, many of the BBA students had already working experience when they started their studies in Mikkeli. The majority of the BScBA students are high school graduates without work experience from the business field. Thus, one could argue that BBA graduates have longer careers compared to the BScBA graduates, which have enabled them to achieve higher positions in organizations. Figure 11 demonstrates this phenomenon.

3.4 Ability of the Mikkeli program to prepare graduates for working life

Although the majority of the respondents have decided to continue their studies after graduation from Mikkeli, 91 % of respondents think that the Mikkeli program prepares graduates well for

business life (37 % think well and 54 % think very well). The number of those respondents who thought that they had been prepared very poorly for business life was minimal, under 1 %.

“Pace of study and positive, but high pressure environment that reflects the pace and demands in a professional working environment. The fact that one was able to learn to adapt and shift to new academic demands at such a pace, prepared students well for most anything employers would throw at them in a high pressure working situation.”

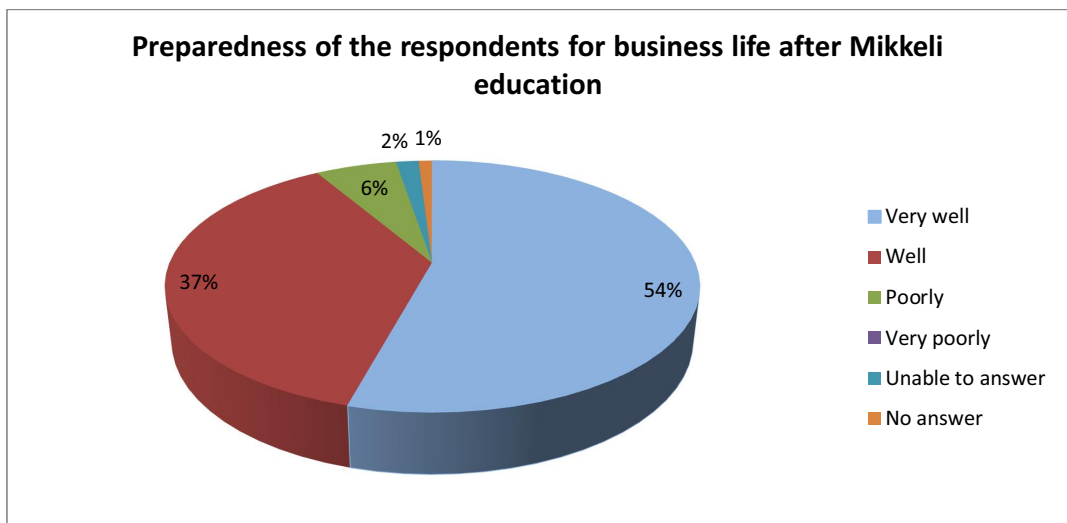


Figure 12: Ability of the Mikkeli program to prepare graduates for business life.

In the survey the respondents were asked to evaluate selected skills needed in the working life. They were asked to rate from one to four to what extent the Mikkeli program has been able to provide each skill (1=describes my attitude very poorly, 2=describes my attitude poorly, 3=describes my attitude well, 4=describes my attitude very well, 0=unable to answer). Figure 13 summarizes the average of answers regarding each skill. If the respondents rated some characteristic low (values 1 or 2) they were asked to specify their opinions.

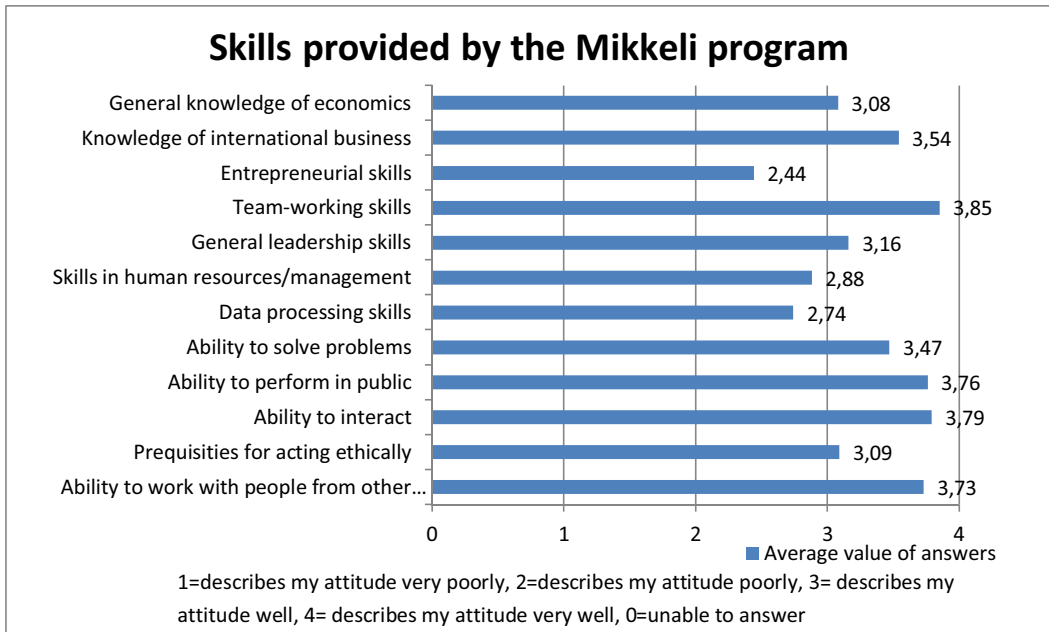
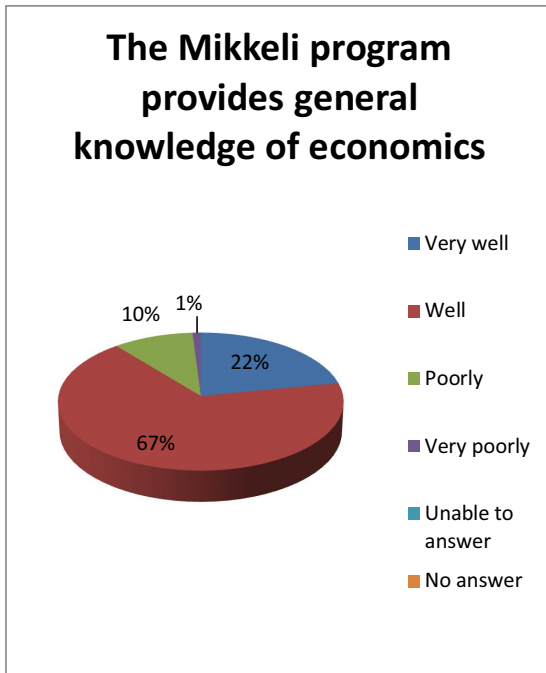


Figure 13: Average values of answers evaluating skills provided by the Mikkeli program.

The respondents ranked the performance of the Mikkeli program high in each skill. The majority of respondents considered that the Mikkeli program has been able to provide all skills for them well or very well.

- 99 % consider they have been able to accumulate team-working skills well or very well.
- 98 % consider they have been prepared well or very well to perform in public.
- 97 % consider the Mikkeli program provides well or very well knowledge of international business.
- 96 % considers that they have been prepared well or very well for problem solving and to work with people from other cultures.
- 89 % think they have received well or very well general knowledge of economics.
- 86 % think they have received well or very well prerequisites for acting ethically.

The Mikkeli program is able to provide a diverse set of skills for its graduates. It provides very well skills related to international business, which is the program's major, but also other general knowledge of economics. All the respondents answered to these questions.



The Figure 14: Ability of the program to provide general knowledge of economics.

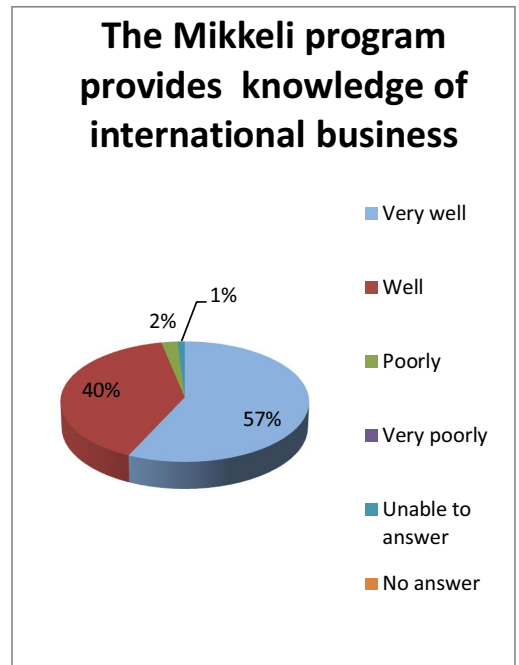


Figure 15 : Ability of the program to provide knowledge on international business.

According to the answers of the respondents, there are three skills regarding which the Mikkeli program could improve its performance: Entrepreneurial skills, skills in human resources/management and data processing. 33 % of the respondents think that the Mikkeli education provides entrepreneurial skills poorly and 8 % thinks they do so very poorly. The ability to provide entrepreneurial skills received the biggest number of written comments. Despite this, the Mikkeli program provides entrepreneurial skills best when examining this issue on a national level:

- 58 % of the respondents who rated the entrepreneurial skills as low were BBA graduates. BScBA graduates scored these skills higher, so the quality has improved in recent years. In SEFE's annual research for Bachelors' level graduates that measures the quality of the education they have received in Finland, the Mikkeli program ranked highest in 2010 in entrepreneurial skills compared to other universities that provide Bachelor's level

education in business. Thus, from a broader perspective, the Mikkeli program provides entrepreneurial skills best.

- In 2011 SEFE conducted their annual survey on the Mikkeli graduates regarding the quality of the education received in Mikkeli and 12 % of respondents commented that they think entrepreneurship should be emphasized more in the Mikkeli program.

Respondents who gave negative comments feel that there should be more courses available that provide tools for individuals to work as entrepreneurs. It was commented that the focus in the Mikkeli program is more on becoming an employee than an employer. Also it was said that on the other hand entrepreneurship needs to be learned in practice and is often internal, so the role of an educational program in creating it is limited. Examples of such comments:

“Entrepreneurial skills - Not necessarily unique to the Mikkeli program, but something that was not clearly enough emphasized as a viable alternative. The universities should try to steer away from producing perfect corporate animals, and actively support students in any entrepreneurial aspirations they demonstrate.”

“Entrepreneurial skills cannot really be taught in theory, but more accounting / finance voluntary courses could be added which could be useful as an entrepreneur.”

The ability of the Mikkeli program to provide data processing skills received the second most negative responses. 26 % of the respondents think that the Mikkeli program could provide these skills more extensively. These respondents think that data processing skills are something that should be emphasized more heavily because that is what the Mikkeli graduates need in working life and in further studies. Also, 9 % of the respondents mentioned in their free comments, that usage of different kinds of software more in the teaching would have been beneficial.

- Despite the improvements which have been made, a real change in the opinions of the graduates can't be seen. In SEFE's annual research 2010 on Bachelors' level graduates that measures the quality of the education they have received in Finland, the Mikkeli program ranked lower than average in data processing skills compared to other universities that provide Bachelor's level education in business.
- About half of those who ranked the data processing skills low were BBA graduates and half of them BScBA graduates. Improvements have been made in recent years and the content

of the data processing course has been changed. In SEFE's 2011 annual survey of Mikkeli graduates regarding the quality of the education received in Mikkeli, 47 % of respondents thought that the Mikkeli program does not provide data processing skills well enough.

"There should be much more focus on excel and other commonly used data processing utilities."

Completing an IT driving license has been a mandatory part of the studies since 2005. This greater need for data processing skills has also been taken into consideration in the planning process of the new degree structure and the studies in Mikkeli will include more courses that support development of these skills better in the future.

Skills in human resource management/management received also some negative responses. 20 % of respondents think that the Mikkeli program provides these skills poorly and 1 % very poorly. Also, 3 % of the respondents mentioned in their free comments that more in-depth knowledge from this area would have been beneficial from the perspective of working life. Many respondents mentioned that leadership skills cannot be learned in a couple of courses without work experience. It was also mentioned that because studies in Mikkeli are on a basic level they cannot really prepare an individual to be an expert on human resources or management.

"I am working in the field of HR and management. Thinking back where I learned those specific topics I have to say that other topics were studied in more depth."

Even though the mentioned sections received negative evaluations and comments, a few things should be taken into consideration that indicate things are clearly improving in the area of management.

- 57 % of the respondents who scored skills in human resources as low were BBA graduates. BScBA graduates scored these skills higher, so the quality has improved in recent years.
- If we examine the Mikkeli program's performance nationwide, it provides the best leadership skills based on information gathered through SEFE's survey in 2010 on Bachelors' level graduates where they were asked to measure the quality of the education.
- In SEFE's 2011 annual survey of Mikkeli graduates regarding the quality of the education received in Mikkeli, 80 % of the respondents thought that the Mikkeli program provides

general leadership skills well. Also 67 % of these respondents thought that the Mikkeli program provides skills in human resources well.

Concerning the skills needed in working life, there was also a separate question where the respondents were asked to specify if there were some other skills they have found necessary in working life that the education in Mikkeli did not provide. Altogether, 4 % of respondents didn't answer this question. 58 % of respondents did not identify such skills and 38 % stated that they have found some skills the education in Mikkeli did not provide but which were necessary in working life.

- Those comments were related to the same topics that were scored lower than other ones in the evaluation of the characteristics (see section 3.5.1), thus no additional shortcomings were found.
- The other factors that were mentioned in the comments of respondents were mainly single ones. They were also more or less connected to some specific jobs and one could conclude that no education could prepare graduates perfectly for all types of jobs.

3.4.1 The importance of a Master's degree for Mikkeli graduates

85 % of respondents think that the Bachelor's degree in general prepares a person well for working life and 13 % don't. The fact that only 43 % of all the respondents had completed and 16% were studying towards the M.Sc. (Econ) degree supports this assumption. Also what can be concluded from the previous section is that the respondents think that the Bachelor's level education received in Mikkeli has prepared them well for working life. The results of this survey, which indicate that the Mikkeli graduates have been employed almost equally whether they have completed a Masters' degree or not demonstrate that Bachelors' level education received in Mikkeli provides a good foundation to succeed in working life.

As mentioned in the previous section the Mikkeli program provides good general knowledge of economics for its graduates. Also, in the Mikkeli program the way in which the courses and teaching are organized differs a lot from other programs in Finland. In the Mikkeli program greater emphasis is placed on team work and case studies than in other undergraduate Business programs. Courses are completed in intensive 3 week modules. This way of studying is widely

perceived to be very good among graduates. It creates an atmosphere relatively similar to working life and this helps the Mikkeli graduates to succeed in business life. 16 % of the respondents mentioned this factor separately in their free comments.

“Very intensive learning modules prepare a person well for hectic business life. Team projects are good practice to learn how to cope with different people in working life.”

However many of those who don't think that the bachelor's degree prepares a person well for working life don't think that any education necessarily can. Master's degree doesn't necessarily give any additional value since most of the skills are anyway learned in working life.

“Studying is very different from working, in general...”

“Jobs are so varying that the things you actually end up doing can be really specific. An education can just give analytical tools anyway.”

Other comments related to the opinion that the Bachelor's degree doesn't prepare a person well for working life were more or less related to the issues that employers rather hire those who have a Master's degree or in order to achieve higher positions in some of the employer organizations, again a Master's degree is needed. According to the statements of the respondents, they think employers often appreciate more individuals with a master's degree and Master's-level studies can also provide more in-depth knowledge from selected areas of specialization.

“A bachelor-level degree is still quite undervalued in Finland..”

“A bachelor's is just not seen as adequate in business life.”

“Generally yes, but in Finland doing the Master's is quite mandatory to proceed in working life.”

The majority, 91 % of the Mikkeli graduates think that a bachelor's degree received in Mikkeli provides a good basis for working life and Masters' degree is not necessarily needed. The facts presented in this chapter support this assumption.

3.5 The quality of the Mikkeli education

The quality of the Mikkeli program was evaluated by using two different groups of questions where the respondents were asked to evaluate selected factors. The first group included general statements concerning characteristics of the Mikkeli program. In the second group the respondents were asked to evaluate how well the Mikkeli program has been able to provide skills needed in working life for the graduates.

3.5.1 Evaluation of the characteristics of the Mikkeli program and their development

In the survey the respondents were asked to evaluate the education received in Mikkeli by rating the statements concerning characteristics of the Mikkeli program from one to four (1=describes my attitude very poorly, 2=describes my attitude poorly, 3= describes my attitude well, 4= describes my attitude very well, 0=unable to answer). Figure 16 summarizes the average values of answers for each question. If the respondents rated some characteristic low (values 1 or 2) they were asked to specify their opinions.

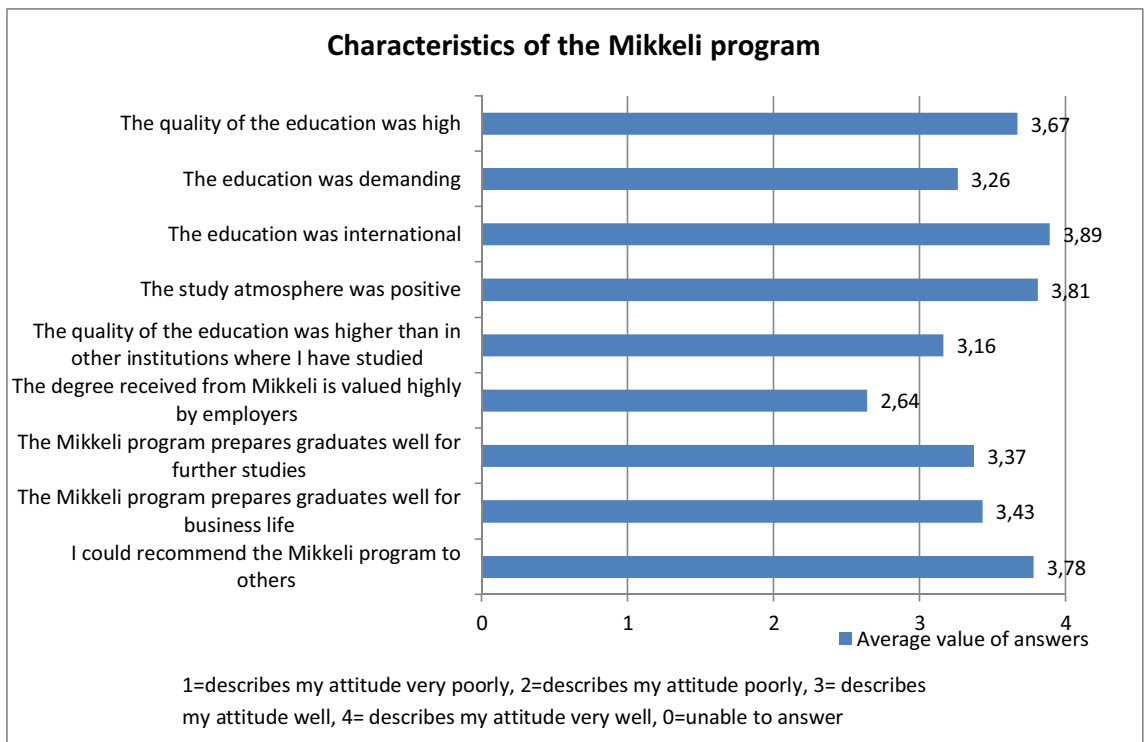


Figure 16: Average value of answers for each characteristic describing the Mikkeli program.

The quality of the education was considered to be high among respondents. 98 % of the respondents think that the overall quality of the education in Mikkeli was high and 82 % perceive that the quality of the Mikkeli education can be considered to be higher than in other institutions in which they have studied.

“The international outlook and the high level of courses as well as professors. In short, teaching was excellent!!”

Because the general opinion among the respondents about the quality of the education received in Mikkeli was so positive, no major weaknesses were found. 97 % of all respondents would recommend the Mikkeli program to others.

“Intensity of courses, atmosphere, the whole school is run by and for the students, and everything is done to make our education as good as possible.”

“High level education. Enthusiastic, dynamic and helpful professors with good presentation skills. Team help – always available. Courses which did not emphasize only theory but also practice through analytical case work.”

“The team work and presentations, the demanding and competitive atmosphere. Friends for life, I would recommend the program to everyone as I was extremely happy with it.”

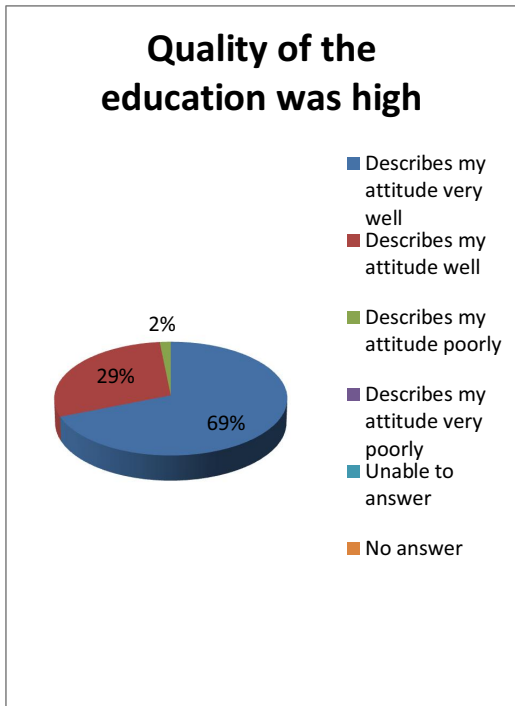


Figure 17: Quality of the education.

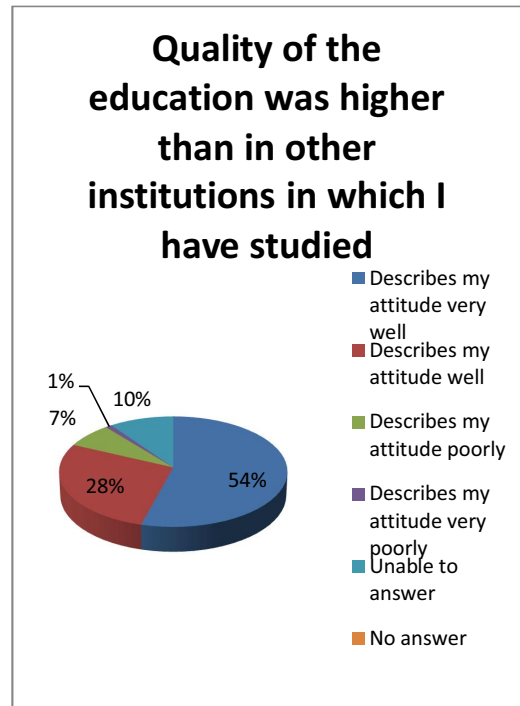


Figure 18: Quality of the education compared to other institutions.

As mentioned, no fundamental flaws related to the quality of the education were identified and only a few negative comments were given, which were related to the following issues:

- 3 % of respondents mentioned that the quality of the accounting and finance courses wasn't good.
- 4 % of respondents commented that there was too much variation in the quality of the courses and that the courses concentrated too much on "soft skills" instead of "core skills". By these "core skills" respondents mean analytical skills that are needed in working life.
- The quality of mathematics courses was seen as low by 5 % of respondents. They stated that in real business life the ability to analyze numbers is highly important and thus could receive more attention in the Mikkeli education.
- 5 % commented that the education wasn't really demanding or it could have been more demanding. Most of the respondents agree that the Mikkeli education was demanding but not especially demanding.

The respondents strongly agreed that the Mikkeli education was international. This is a clear message that the Mikkeli program has fulfilled its mission of being international in every respect. The program offers a unique international learning environment in which the study atmosphere is widely perceived to be positive among the respondents, as shown in figure 20.

“Truly international atmosphere, English language, community spirit, intensive program structure, practicality of the education, lots of doing instead of just reading. In Mikkeli you are in constant motion, which helps you grow and improve.”

“International atmosphere, great spirit!”

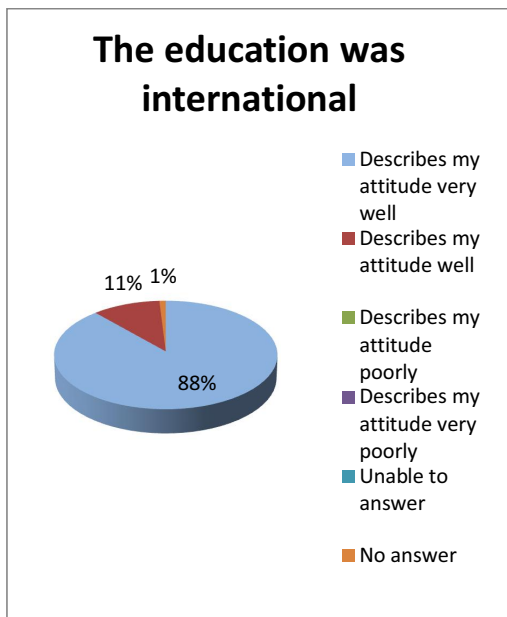


Figure 19: Opinion of respondents on the level of internationality.

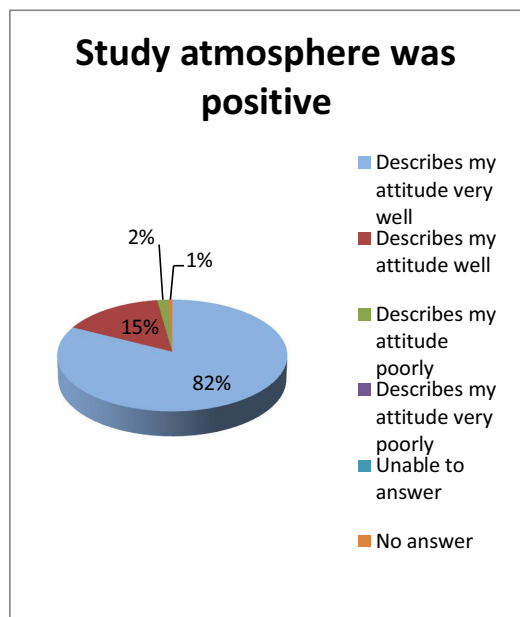


Figure 20: Opinion of the respondents on the study atmosphere.

Overall the respondents agreed strongly that the Mikkeli program prepares graduates well for further studies. 90 % of respondents think that the Mikkeli program prepares graduates well for further studies (38 % think well and 52 % think very well).

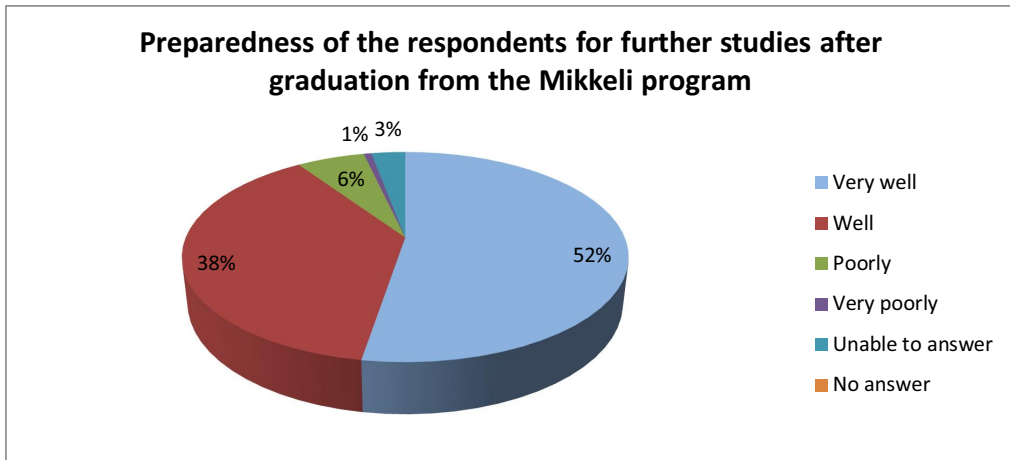


Figure 21: The ability of the Mikkeli program to prepare graduates for further studies.

In addition, respondents were asked to specify possible abilities the education in Mikkeli didn't provide that they have found necessary in further studies. 94 % answered this question. 72 % of respondents didn't find a shortage of these kinds of abilities. 22 % thought there had been some areas that could be improved, but most of these comments were single. In those free comments a few respondents found a greater need for academic writing and research, as well as finance and accounting studies.

- 4 % found a bigger need for academic writing and research studies.
- 3 % found a bigger need for finance studies.
- 2 % found a bigger need for accounting studies.

Some of the graduates think that there should have been more attention paid to academic writing and research because further studies require them. 85 % of the respondents who gave negative feedback related to academic skills were former BBA students who studied in the program between 1990 and 2001. A mandatory course in Advanced Professional Writing has been a part of the curriculum since 2006 and during the last two years additional guidance on academic writing related to the thesis process has been available for the students. Thus, there used to be a shortage of academic writing skills according to the answers of the respondents but the situation has clearly improved during recent years. The respondents who commented on finance and accounting

studies were BScBA graduates. Even though the number of finance and accounting courses available has increased recently, the Mikkeli graduates still see a bigger need for these studies.

The statement that the Mikkeli program is valued highly by employers received the most negative responses. 17 % of respondents don't think that the program is highly valued by employers but there's a clear reason behind this. It is clearly seen that many employers are not aware of the Mikkeli program and thus cannot appreciate the high quality of it. 12 % of respondents mentioned this issue in their free comments. The Mikkeli program is also sometimes confused with other educational programs in Finland, such as the business administration degrees provided by polytechnics.

“Not sure employers are fully aware of the program and the benefits unless BBA / BScBA alumni have promoted it.”

“Mikkeli is highly valued by employers who know the program, otherwise the “main” school gets the most credit.”

3.5.2 Strengths of the Mikkeli program from the perspective of graduates

The respondents were asked to specify what they think was particularly good in the education received in Mikkeli. Altogether 69 respondents didn't answer this question and therefore the response rate was 78 %. The overall experience of the education in Mikkeli was very positive. Respondents specified numerous of factors in their free comments they thought had been especially good in the Mikkeli program. There were a few factors that repeated in many of those comments and thus can be considered to be strengths of the program from the perspective of the respondents. The numbers of such comments are summarized in Table 1.

Strength of the Mikkeli program	Percentage of all respondents
Good professors/lecturers	23 %
Lot of presentations and performing practice	18 %
Fast rhythm and intensive education	16 %
Emphasis on team-work	12 %
Atmosphere in the school	12 %
Study language (English)	10 %
Focus on case studies	5 %

Table 1: Strengths of the Mikkeli program from the perspective of the respondents.

The Mikkeli graduates value highly that the education emphasizes presentation skills and team work. These skills are needed in everyday working life and provide tools for facing different kinds of people and situations.

“Secondly, we were trained well to perform in public which has been a valuable skill in working life, in a managerial position. Often one has to be able to perform well in public although one does not know all details or the subject is somewhat unfamiliar.”

The graduates also appreciate the fast rhythm and intensive education that the program provides in 3-week modules which enables them to concentrate on each subject one by one. The way in which teaching is organized prepares graduates very well for demanding working life.

“Fast pace, strong team approach, work under pressure.”

“Short three week modules, strict schedules, deadlines...all of that have prepared us well for current hectic work life.”

Internationality and talented lecturers who are highly committed to their job are considered to be real strengths of the program. Also, small class sizes enable active dialogue between students and

the faculty. Despite the few earlier negative comments concerning the quality of the teaching in some areas it received the most positive feedback overall.

“The quality of the lecturers was mostly extreme high.”

“Level of lecturers and exercises, professors were committed to teaching.”

“Enthusiastic, not-routined professors who are engaging. Also, the small class sizes are a valuable asset.”

4 Conclusions and future aspects of the BScBA program

The results of this survey show, that Mikkeli graduates are very satisfied with the education they have received in Mikkeli. 98 % of the respondents think that the quality of the education as well as level of internationalization was high. 91 % of respondents think that the Mikkeli program prepares graduates well for business life. They have been employed well and achieved also high positions in organizations. There is no big difference in the rate of employment between those graduates having Master’s level education in business and those who don’t, thus they have been employed almost equally well. Only 43 % of all the respondents had completed and 16 % were studying towards the M.Sc. (Econ) degree. This all demonstrate that already the Bachelor’s level education received in Mikkeli enables to succeed in working life.

From the beginning of 2013 the Mikkeli program will be the only English-language university level Bachelors’ degree program in Business Administration in Finland. The results of this survey support the fact that the Mikkeli program is highly international and the program will ensure this high level of internationalization also in the future by strengthening further its extensive and high quality faculty and partner university networks around the world.

Moreover, the survey data demonstrates that this high quality image of the Mikkeli program should be promoted more among employers to make them aware of the program and also to increase even more the employment opportunities of the Mikkeli graduates. This can be done through marketing activities and by increasing contacts with companies. Alumni of the program play also an important role in this, since they are representatives of the program in working life. Thus, maintaining and expanding the alumni network needs to be continued also in the future.

One step in this process is the development of BScBA ambassador program, where selected group of Mikkeli graduates will market the program to potential students and be valuable contacts in working life.

One priority of the Mikkeli program is to ensure that the graduates are well-prepared when applying for Master's programs. Although 90 % of the respondents think that the Mikkeli program has prepared them well for further studies it seems that there is still room to improve some academic skills. Thus, academic writing and research will be emphasized even more in the new degree structure.

Many changes have been already made to the content of the Mikkeli education based on the information gathered from different sources such as students, graduates and other stakeholders. Some of these changes were explained in the previous sections where the quality of the Mikkeli education was covered. The Mikkeli program also conducted an extensive faculty survey in November 2012 to gain information for the planning process of a new degree structure and other development purposes of the program. The survey results presented here in many ways confirm the development priorities of the program structure and content, including:

- **Increasing focus on core, quantitative skills over “soft” skills and culture:** In the new program structure, students will need to take more courses emphasizing “hard” skills, eg: math and excel, stats, research methods, international economics. Critical thinking is also important as a core skill that supports quantitative research and will be required starting in 2013.
- **Strengthening academic skills** through a writing course and series of workshops, a research methods course, the Bachelor's thesis process, and a new course on critical thinking in the new program structure starting in 2013.
- **Increasing the number and quality of finance and accounting courses** has been underway; courses in both international finance and investment and portfolio management are currently being offered and a managerial accounting elective is anticipated for 2013-14.
- **Entrepreneurial skills:** We have increased the number of guest speakers from, visits to and projects with companies, to increase the contact with business practitioners. Also, in the new program structure, all students will be required to take a course either in innovation or entrepreneurship.

As the Mikkeli program has undergone considerable changes in the past few years, it would be worthwhile to repeat the survey among recent graduates. In this way the effect of the improvements made in recent years could be examined more closely.

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6 Appendices

6.1 Survey questionnaire

A SURVEY ON AALTO ECON MIKKELI BBA AND BScBA ALUMNI

CARRIED OUT IN 2012 BY AALTO UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS MIKKELI CAMPUS IN COOPERATION WITH SEFE

The purpose of this survey is to examine the employment situation of Mikkeli alumni and evaluate the quality of the education they received in Mikkeli. The survey is part of a larger process of improving and strengthening BBA, MBA and BScBA alumni operations. The BScBA program will use the results of the survey for development and marketing purposes. The identity of the respondents will be kept confidential.

The results of the survey will be published on the BScBA Mikkeli Program website in fall 2012. A hotel voucher for two nights will be raffled off among the respondents of this survey.

1 DEMOGRAPHICS

1.1 Gender

1.2 Year of birth

1.3 Current place of residence

2 MIKKELI BACHELOR LEVEL EDUCATION

2.1 BBA, BScBA class

2.2 Year of graduation from Mikkeli

3 DEGREES COMPLETED AFTER MIKKELI

Specify here the degrees you have completed after your graduation from the BBA or BScBA program in Mikkeli and the degree towards which you are currently studying.

1 M.Sc. (Econ)

1.1 Educational institution

1.2 Year of enrolment

1.3 Year of graduation

1.4 Expected year of graduation

2 MBA

2.1 Educational institution

2.2 Year of enrolment

2.3 Year of graduation

2.4 Expected year of graduation

- 3 M.Sc. of other sciences
 - 3.1 Educational institution
 - 3.2 Year of enrolment
 - 3.3 Year of graduation
 - 3.4 Expected year of graduation

- 4 Ph.D.
 - 4.1 Educational institution
 - 4.2 Year of enrolment
 - 4.3 Year of graduation
 - 4.4 Expected year of graduation

- 5 Other higher education degree

Please specify: _____

 - 5.1 Educational institution
 - 5.2 Year of enrolment
 - 5.3 Year of graduation
 - 5.4 Expected year of graduation

4 CURRENT EMPLOYMENT SITUATION

4a. Define your current employment situation

- 1 Employed full-time
- 2 Employed part-time
- 3 Employed as a full-time entrepreneur
- 4 Employed as a part-time entrepreneur
- 5 On parental leave /unpaid maternity leave/other leave
- 6 Unemployed

What do you consider to be the most important factor leading to your unemployment?

- 5.1 I haven't been applying for jobs actively
- 5.2 Current economic situation
- 5.3 Current work situation in the living area
- 5.4 Lack of work experience
- 5.5 Lack of skills needed in working life
- 5.6 Other reason, please specify: _____

4b. Are you satisfied with your current employment situation?Yes No

If not, please explain why?

4c. If you are employed, please answer the following questions concerning your current position:

- 1 Employer organization
- 2 Company location
- 3 Position in the company
- 4 Duration of employment in the current position
- 5 Duration of employment in the current company

Through the following questions rate the internationality of your work from one to four.
(1=never, 2=seldom, 3=often, 4=very often, 0=unable to answer)

- 6 How often do you use English in your work?
1 2 3 4 0
- 7 How much contact do you have professionally with people from other cultures?
1 2 3 4 0
- 8 How often does your job require travelling abroad?
1 2 3 4 0

5 MORE DETAILED QUESTIONS ABOUT THE MIKKELI PROGRAM

Through these questions we want to measure the quality of the Mikkeli education received based on the experience gained after graduation in further education and in business life.

5.1 Rate the following statements to measure the education received in Mikkeli on a scale from one to four.

(1=describes my attitude very poorly, 2= describes my attitude poorly, 3=describes my attitude well, 4=describes my attitude very well, 0= unable to answer)

The quality of the education was high	1	2	3	4	0
The education was demanding	1	2	3	4	0
The education was international	1	2	3	4	0

The study atmosphere was positive	1	2	3	4	0
The quality of education was higher than in other institutions I have studied	1	2	3	4	0
The degree received from Mikkeli is valued highly by employers	1	2	3	4	0
The Mikkeli program prepares graduates well for business life	1	2	3	4	0
The Mikkeli program prepares graduates well for further studies	1	2	3	4	0
I could recommend the Mikkeli program to others	1	2	3	4	0

If you rated any of the items above with a 1 or 2, please specify which and explain why. Your answer will help us improve the program.

5.2 Rate the extent to which the Mikkeli program prepared you for working life from one to four.

(1=describes my attitude very poorly, 2= describes my attitude poorly, 3=describes my attitude well, 4=describes my attitude very well, 0= unable to answer)

General knowledge of economics	1	2	3	4	0
Knowledge of international business	1	2	3	4	0
Entrepreneurial skills	1	2	3	4	0
Team-working skills	1	2	3	4	0
General leadership skills	1	2	3	4	0
Skills in human resources/management	1	2	3	4	0
Data processing skills	1	2	3	4	0
Ability to learn new things	1	2	3	4	0
Ability to solve problems	1	2	3	4	0

Ability to perform in public	1	2	3	4	0
Ability to interact	1	2	3	4	0
Prerequisites for acting ethically	1	2	3	4	0
Ability to work with people from	1	2	3	4	0

other cultures

If you rated any of the items above with a 1 or 2, please specify which and explain why. Your answer will help us improve the program.

5.3 What was particularly good in the education you received in Mikkeli?

5.4 Were there some skills the education in Mikkeli didn't provide that you have found necessary in working life?

No Yes Which ones?

5.5 Were there some skills the education in Mikkeli didn't provide you have found necessary in further studies?

No Yes Which ones?

5.6 Do you think that the bachelor's degree in general prepares a person well for working life?

Yes No

If not, please specify why?

6 MIKKELI PROGRAM AMBASSADOR OPERATIONS

The Mikkeli degree program is planning to launch an ambassador operations for marketing purposes. A Mikkeli program ambassador is a Mikkeli alumnus/alumna who through his/her own experience wants to spread the word about the program among potential students in Finland/abroad.

Would you be interested in serving as a Mikkeli program ambassador?

Yes No

If you answered yes, we will follow up with more information on becoming a Mikkeli program ambassador.

7 The 25TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE MIKKELI PROGRAM IN 2014

The Mikkeli program will celebrate its **25th ANNIVERSARY** in 2014 and the Mikkeli program is planning a **major event for alumni to be organized in 2014**. A chronicle of the program including interesting stories will also be published.

Are you interested in receiving more information on alumni events?

Yes No

8 CONTACT INFORMATION

Please fill in your contact information so we can stay in touch with you about alumni activities.

Name:

Address:

Email:

Phone number:



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