



**ASSESSMENT AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE DEGREE  
PROGRAMME IN TOURISM IN TAMPERE UNIVERSITY  
OF APPLIED SCIENCES**

Janita Nurmi

Kaisla Saastamoinen

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## ABSTRACT

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The objective of this thesis was to determine if the results of the research unearthed any areas of the Degree Programme in Tourism of Tampere University of Applied Sciences which require improvement and, if so, how they could be developed for the benefit of the quality of the Degree Programme. The research investigated the experiences and opinions regarding the studies of the current second and third year students of the Degree Programme. The Degree Programme was launched in 2007, so it is fairly new and has not had any extensive evaluation completed of it, thus making it an interesting subject of research. Also, the curriculum of the Degree Programme is currently under revision, which has added to the topicality of the research.

The focus of the research was to examine what the general experiences of the students had been and, especially, how their expectations had been fulfilled and goals reached during their studies. The 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> year students of the Degree Programme were given a questionnaire, which included questions on various topics concerning their studies. The teachers of the Degree Programme in Tourism were given a similar questionnaire in order to obtain a wider perspective of the operations of the Degree Programme. The questionnaire consisted mainly of structured questions, with an addition of some semi-structured and open questions aimed at clarifying the quantitative data gathered through the structured questions. The results were analysed through the grounded theory approach based on a modified customer satisfaction analysis.

The main results found through the research were focused on three areas requiring development: English as a teaching language, course contents and coordination, and the necessity for additional resources. There were also concrete development ideas and recommendations developed on the basis of the results, which could be used in the future development of the curriculum as well as the Degree Programme in Tourism as a whole.

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Key words: Tourism education, curriculum development, customer satisfaction

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

In this thesis the opinions, expectations and experiences regarding the studies of the second and third year students of the Degree Programme in Tourism in Tampere University of Applied Sciences are being investigated. The teachers' perspectives are also included in the thesis to support and contest the views of the students, in order to get a broader view of the degree programme. The experiences and perspectives of the two parties are examined, compared and connected to find development possibilities as well as to discover the positive experiences of both the students and the teachers of the programme.

The purpose of the thesis is to examine the students' and teachers' general experiences concerning the Degree Programme in Tourism, as well as to locate the possible places of improvement to be able to produce concrete recommendations and development ideas for the future development of the programme. The results of the research may help in planning and developing the programme to meet the demands and goals of the student body as well as the institution and its associates.

Being established in 2007 the Degree Programme in Tourism is fairly new and is, therefore, an interesting subject of research. The popularity of the degree programme has significantly increased since its beginning, making the functionality of the programme even more important and topical. The curriculum of the programme is currently being adjusted. Therefore, the development ideas and recommendations derived from the results of this research can shortly prove to be useful.

## 2 RESEARCH PLAN

In this chapter we will introduce the research conducted for this thesis. The focus of the research will be presented, and the concepts and theories behind it briefly explained. We will specify the research questions as well as the research methods and data used. The content of the thesis will be outlined in the final sub-chapter.

### 2.1 Focus of the research

The topic of the thesis is the assessment and development of the Degree Programme in Tourism in Tampere University of Applied Sciences. The goal of the research was to investigate the teachers' and second and third year students' experiences and opinions on the Degree Programme, and to examine how these results can be used for the benefit of the future students. This topic was chosen because during the researchers' studies in the programme some problems concerning the quality of the curriculum and the use of English as a teaching language emerged. This research comes at an opportune time, as according to the Head of Degree Programme Heikki Toijala the course content and curriculum will be adjusted in 2012 (Toijala 2011). In the joint application in the spring of 2011 Degree Programme in Tourism was the most popular choice of the programmes conducted in English in Tampere University of Applied Sciences (TAMK 2011a). Therefore, it is increasingly important to ensure the quality of the Programme and its ability to respond to the expectations of the students.

### 2.2 Concepts and theories

The main concepts of this thesis are curriculum development and customer satisfaction analysis. The understanding of the idea of curriculum has changed with time, and is at present usually comprehended as a broader concept than syllabus that usually refers solely to the contents of courses, leaving out “the relative importance of its topics or the order in which they are to be studied” (Smith, 1996, 2000). Despite the features and definitions of curriculum slightly changing also with the current trends of psychology and the way learning and human behaviour have been seen in different eras, the

common idea of curriculum development is the optimal development of the ways to make people learn the desired things. Naturally it is to remember that the meaning of the term also changes with the context it is used in. It has been stated by Auvinen et al. (2005), that the basis of the curriculum is changing from subject-centered plans that have been developed from the point of view of the teaching towards a curriculum that considers the overall development and supports the professional growth of a person. The basis for the curriculum development is the imaginary learning process of the student that is then supported by the construction of learning situations to back up the students' learning and operation. (Auvinen et al. 2005, 51.) In the sense as seen in this thesis, curriculum can be defined as the systematic planning and guidance of all aspects concerning the teaching and learning that is taking place inside or outside the school or university, including the support of the development of lifelong learning capabilities and professional development of the students.

According to Auvinen et al. (2005, 131), it is to note that the curriculum is constantly incomplete and its development requires continuous evaluation. In a degree programme of a university of applied sciences the curriculum can be said to be constantly incomplete for example due to continuous changes in working life as well as teaching methods preferred at the time. A practical definition as found in the Glossary of Education states that curriculum development means "activities such as conceptualizing, planning, implementing, field testing, and researching that are intended to produce new curricula or improve existing ones" (Education.com, Inc., 2011).

Customer satisfaction analysis is a way to measure how well a product or service meets the expectations of a customer. It can be used for finding places of improvement in the quality of the operation, as well as maintaining the current level of operation. (Rope & Pöllänen 1994, 61.) All customers have different expectations concerning the operation of the business. These expectations have been formed through former experiences, word of mouth, or e.g. marketing communications. Besides the expectations of the customers, also the experiences of the operation that influence their satisfaction are different. Customer satisfaction is thus relative and always subjective, a personal point of view. As customer satisfaction consists solely of the customer's subjective experiences of the operation or object, it is greatly tied to a specific time. (Rope & Pöllänen 1994, 58–59.)

It is to note that also the level of expectations affect the experiences, as one for example generally expects different service from a two star hotel as opposed to a five star hotel. The same level of operation can therefore lead to disappointment when the expectation level is high, and to a positive surprise when the expectation level is low. It is essential to also remember that the expectation level of a person varies according to the image they have of the operation or object in question, the image being formed through their personal basis of attitudes and set of values. (Rope & Pöllänen 1994, 29–30, 33.) In this case the measuring of customer satisfaction is targeted at, or directed to, the functionality and success of the Degree Programme in Tourism, making the students the “customer” whose expectations and experiences of the programme are being investigated and analysed.

Previous studies concerning assessment and development of degree programmes were examined. To get a broader view of the topic we also studied publications on teaching, pedagogy, experiences of students in Finnish Universities of Applied Sciences, laws and regulations concerning the Universities of Applied Sciences in Finland, and objectives of education in Finland as reported by the Ministry of Education and Culture.

The main theory used in this thesis is grounded theory. It is a theory developed inductively from a collection of data. The basic steps of using the grounded theory in research are gathering of information relevant to the subject of research, examining the data gathered, finding and listing of common nominators in the data gathered, discovering similarities and differences in those nominators, and lastly combining and comparing the common themes found. It was originally invented by Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss in 1967. The goal of grounded theory is to create a theoretical entity of the research data. (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2009, 92, 95.) Grounded theory will be introduced and examined more closely in sub-chapter 3.5.

### 2.3 Research questions

The main questions behind this case were: what have the students' general experiences of the Degree Programme in Tourism been? And, in particular, how have the students' expectations been fulfilled and their goals reached? Also, we wanted to determine how

the results of these questions could be used for future development of the programme. For a complete evaluation the perspectives and experiences of the teaching staff were included, in order to see if there are similarities or differences between them and the students' perspective and experiences.

## 2.4 Data and methods

The data used in this thesis consists of the students' and teachers' answers to a questionnaire on the Degree Programme in Tourism. The questionnaire was handed out in paper form to the second and third year students and their teachers. The students' questionnaire consisted of 42 questions regarding the background and English skills of the students, as well as questions on language studies, motivation, curriculum and general opinions on the Degree Programme in Tourism. The teachers' questionnaire consisted of 31 questions on similar topics. The questionnaire form was designed by the researchers on the basis of their research questions, the literature studied on quantitative and qualitative data gathering, as well as on the basis of their own experiences of the Degree Programme in Tourism.

Questionnaires are intended to enable communication, however brief, between the researcher and the object of study, and they are always driven by the researcher's own agenda (Davies 2007, 82). The questionnaire formed for this research consisted of structured questions with two or more response options, as well as some semi-structured questions aimed at clarifying the prior answers to the structured questions. There were also a few open questions in the questionnaire.

The results of the questionnaires were inserted into the statistical analysis program Tixel in order to process the quantitative data. The results from the open questions were analysed according to the grounded theory, based on the literature acquired. Both qualitative and quantitative research can deliver the research objectives of describing, monitoring and investigating the object of research. However, both methods will produce different kinds of descriptions. (Davies 2007, 26). In this thesis both research approaches were used to complement each other, and to support the resulting data from both structured and open questions of the questionnaire.

## 2.5 Content of the research

Chapter 3 describes the background of the research. It also introduces the grounded theory and its relation to our case, explaining it in more detail. In chapter 4 the results of the students' questionnaires are presented and analysed. The function of each section of the questionnaire is also briefly explained. In chapter 5 the results of the teachers' questionnaires are examined and analysed. Chapter 6 presents the conclusions and introduces the development ideas and recommendations based on the research. The limitations of the research are also discussed in chapter 6.

### 3 BACKGROUND OF THE RESEARCH

In chapter 3 the background of the research is examined. The main theory behind this research, grounded theory, is presented. Chapter 3 also briefly presents the history of the Finnish Universities of Applied Sciences, the regulations and laws concerning them, Tampere University of Applied Sciences, and the Degree Programme in Tourism in TAMK including the curriculum and the students and teachers of the programme.

#### 3.1 The Finnish Universities of Applied Sciences

The Finnish system of higher education consists of two sectors: the universities and the polytechnics (universities of applied sciences). The mission of the traditional universities is to conduct scientific research and provide instructions and postgraduate education based on the research, whereas the polytechnics focus on training professionals in response to labour market needs. The main aim of the polytechnics is to conduct research and development of various areas of expertise, and particularly promote the development in their respective regions of operation. (Ministry of Education and Culture 2011a.)

The Universities of Applied Sciences were first introduced to the Finnish education system in 1992 following the renewal of the education system throughout Europe. The first 22 temporary polytechnics were established by combining 85 vocational, post-secondary educational institutions. By legislation issued in 1995 the first nine universities of applied sciences were granted permanent status, and currently there are 26 polytechnics which all have a permanent operating license in the higher education system. (Ministry of Education and Culture 2011a, 2011b.)

Polytechnics are multi-field regional institutions focusing on regional development and contacts with the professional fields of the working life. The objective of the studies leading to a polytechnic degree is to provide the necessary knowledge and skills and professional expert functions on the basis of the requirements of the working life and its development needs. Polytechnics have close contact with the regional work

environment, and their aim is to develop the content of education to suite the regional needs of workforce and development. (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2011b.)

Admission to the polytechnics requires the completion of either a general or a vocational upper secondary education, or a corresponding international or foreign qualification. The students' application process begins through the joint national application system. The polytechnics determine the student admission principles independently, and, in many cases, the process includes an entrance exam. However, the basis for admission is the previous study and work experience record of the students. (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2011b.)

### 3.2 Governing the Finnish Universities of Applied Sciences - The Ministry of Education and Culture

The Ministry of Education and Culture operates as a part of the Finnish government and legislative system. The ministry's field of responsibilities range from promoting education and culture to e.g. science, the well-being of the people and students' financial aid. The Ministry is responsible for the preparation of educational legislation, the necessary decisions and its share of the state budget of the Government. (Ministry of Education and Culture 2011b.)

The Finnish universities are state-owned, and therefore directly subordinate to the Ministry of Education. However, the polytechnics have autonomy to some extent in their internal affairs. Their educational mission, fields of education, student numbers and location are authorized by the Ministry. The Ministry reviews and approves the decisions made within the universities, and provides funding accordingly. The share of the state budget is allocated by the Ministry for the core funding of the polytechnics. The allocation of funding is based on project and performance-based funding, as well as the unit costs per student. (Ministry of Education and Culture 2011b.)

Legislation concerning academic degrees is written in the Decree on the System of Higher Education Degrees (464/1998). The decree stipulates the objectives and scope of degrees, their general structure and content and the distribution of educational

responsibility between universities. The new Polytechnics Act (351/2003) and Decree (352/2003) were approved in the spring of 2003, and it defines e.g. the status, mission and administration of polytechnics. As stated in the Decree and Act, the Ministry of Education confirms all degree programmes. The Polytechnics Act modified the structure of the degree programmes to its current structure in 2005. (Ministry of Education and Culture 2011b.)

### 3.3 Tampere University of Applied Sciences

Tampere University of Applied Sciences has nine campuses in the Pirkanmaa region; Tampere, Ikaalinen, Virrat and Mänttä-Vilppula. The University is administrated by Pirkanmaan ammattikorkeakoulu Ltd. Tampere University of Applied Sciences was united in 2010 with the Pirkanmaa University of Applied Sciences, which the Degree Programme in Tourism was previously a part of. (TAMK 2010a.)

Tampere University of Applied Sciences has six different departments: School of Art, Music and Media, School of Business and Services, School of Construction and Electrical Engineering, School of Industrial Engineering, School of Wellbeing and Social Services and School of Health Care. In addition, there is the School of Vocational Teacher Education. (TAMK 2010a.)

The performance agreement between Pirkanmaan ammattikorkeakoulu Ltd., Tampere University of Applied Sciences and Ministry of Education and Culture states the number of students for the period of 2010-2012 at an estimated 7900. There are 800 members of staff in Tampere University of Applied Sciences. (TAMK 2010a.)

TAMK`s strategy for 2010-2019 states as its vision “keys to success by creating new and international expertise”, and its mission as the production of “up-to-date expertise by means of education and related user-centered research, development and innovation”. In the strategy the values of TAMK are defined as sense of community, respect of individuals and differences, sustainable development and the appreciation of expertise and entrepreneurship. Its profile and focus are stated as “a multidisciplinary and international university of applied sciences, which concentrates on promoting

wellbeing and health, economy and production, as well as learning and creativity”. (TAMK 2010a.)

### 3.4 The Degree Programme in Tourism in Tampere University of Applied Sciences

The degree programme being investigated and evaluated in this thesis is the Degree Programme in Tourism of Tampere University of Applied Sciences. The programme is fairly new, having started in 2007 with an adult education group while it was still a programme of Pirkanmaa University of Applied Sciences. The first youth group started in autumn of 2008. In the beginning of 2010 the two universities were united, the Degree Programme in Tourism thereby transferring to be of Tampere University of Applied Sciences. The first students of the programme have graduated in 2011. There are about 20 to 25 students taken in each year. So far the majority of the students are Finnish and about 30-50% are international students coming from abroad.

The teaching staff consists of a Senior Lecturer, full-time lecturers of the Degree Programme in Tourism, lecturers from several other campuses of Tampere University of Applied Sciences, as well as visiting lecturers from various tourism enterprises. The diploma attained in the programme is Bachelor of Hospitality Management. The programme consists of 210 ECTS credits, which takes approximately 3.5 years to complete. (TAMK 2010b.) The teaching methods of the programme include lectures, project works and assignments, seminars and workshops as well as company visits (TAMK 2011b).

The mission of the Degree Programme in Tourism, as stated on the website of Tampere University of Applied Sciences in 2011, is as follows:

In the Degree Programme in Tourism, students will gain a wide-ranging, specialised training in the different fields of tourism, focusing on congress studies and business. The aim is to provide students with the competences needed in order to work in demanding tasks ranging from customer services to managerial jobs in tourism companies and organisations both in Finland and abroad. The degree is comparable with equivalent degrees in other EU countries. Tourism graduates have the skills needed in the planning, implementation, follow-up, and development of tourism. (TAMK 2011b)

### 3.4.1 The Curriculum of the Degree Programme in Tourism

The curriculum of the Degree Programme in Tourism has remained nearly identical with the original curriculum of the beginning of the programme in 2007, with only slight changes in some courses (PIRAMK 2007; TAMK 2010b). The basic entities and study modules have remained the same. The curriculum consists of basic studies, professional studies, elective studies, practical training, and bachelor's thesis. Basic studies include orientation to studies, basic information technology, as well as communication skills. The professional studies are divided into several parts, the main ones being languages, Tourism and Operational environment, Business and Tourist Service Management, Research, Intercultural communication, Hospitality for Congress customers, and Nature and Adventure studies. (TAMK 2010b.) The elective studies each student can decide by themselves, depending on their own interests and goals. In this section of the curriculum the students can have for example extra language courses, first-aid, or destination analysis that is an intensive international programme familiarizing the student with the different aspects of European tourist destinations.

There are two compulsory practical trainings in the curriculum of Degree Programme in Tourism in Tampere University of Applied Sciences, both of 15 ECTS credits. At the moment there are no regulations whether the students should do the trainings in Finland or abroad. Besides the practical trainings, the course Working in Tourist Enterprise aims at familiarizing the students with the practicalities of the working life. (TAMK 2010b.)

### 3.4.2 Students of the Degree Programme in Tourism

The students whose experiences and opinions were being investigated for this thesis were the second-year and third-year students of the Degree Programme in Tourism. The third-year group that is also the first youth group in the programme started their studies in 2008 and the second-year group in 2009. Both of the groups have students from several countries, however the most being originally from Finland. The rest of the students were originally for example from Spain, Russia, Pakistan, Cameroon, Hungary,

Tanzania and Philippines. Some of the international students had come to Finland already before studying in the programme, and some moved to Finland specifically for the studies. All of the students went through a similar application process including an entrance examination and an interview.

### 3.4.3 Teachers of the Degree Programme in Tourism

In the Degree Programme in Tourism the teaching staff have different backgrounds. Despite being an international programme taught in English, nearly all of the staff is Finnish. English is the mother tongue of only one of the lecturers. There are lecturers that come from different campuses of Tampere University of Applied Sciences, as well as experts and teachers from outside the university. The experts from outside the university are found via various contacts and chosen according to their competence in an area relevant to the course subject. All teachers of the Degree Programme in Tourism must have adequate English skills. However no testing is done to evaluate the language skills but self-evaluation is used.

### 3.5 Grounded theory

As briefly explained in sub-chapter 2.2, grounded theory is the main theory behind this research. Originally invented by Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss in 1967, grounded theory is an approach where the theory is inductively developed from a collection of data. The objective of grounded theory is the creation of a theoretical entity from the collection of data. In this thesis grounded theory has been adapted to this case according to the literature studied by the writers of this thesis.

The guidelines in using grounded theory approach as stated by Tuomi and Sarajärvi (2009, 92) are:

1. Deciding what to focus on in the data collected
- 2.a) Examining the data collected, separating and marking the material that is important from the researcher's point of view
- 2.b) Leaving out all the material that is not useful for the researcher
- 2.c) Collecting together the results marked as important and separating them from the rest of the data collected
3. Categorising the material that is left
4. Summarising the results.

(Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2009, 92)

Before step 1, however, the decision concerning the main topic of the research has to be already done, in order to start gathering the data from a relevant area and by methods that are useful for collecting the data needed. Also in step 2.a) it is worth noting the need of finding and listing of common nominators in the data, in order to find the important material to separate it from the rest of the data. In step 3 categorising the material can be also explained as combining and comparing the common themes that have been found in the data. Finding of common themes in the data is done by the researchers. Therefore, as perceiving the common nominators in the data is left for the researchers to decide on, it is to remember that the research concentrates on the matters seen as important from the point of view of the researchers themselves.

## 4 STUDENTS' QUESTIONNAIRE: RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

In order to obtain an overall view of the students' opinions of the Degree Programme in Tourism in Tampere University of Applied Sciences, they were given a questionnaire. The questionnaire comprises 42 questions designed to investigate the background and English skills of the students, as well as examine their opinions on the language studies, motivation, views on the curriculum, and opinions on the Degree Programme in Tourism in general (see appendix 1).

The students' questionnaire was handed out in paper form to 36 second-year and third-year students of the Degree Programme in Tourism of Tampere University of Applied Sciences. Two questionnaires were sent via email to students who wanted to reply to the questionnaire but were abroad at that time. The response rate to the questionnaire was 72 %, meaning that in total 26 students returned it. The high rate of replies indicates a strong interest among the students towards the topic of this thesis. In the following subchapters the answers of the students are stated and analysed.

### 4.1 Background

The goal of the first part of the students' questionnaire was to briefly investigate the background of the second and third year students of the Degree Programme in Tourism in Tampere University of Applied Sciences. This was important in order to find out what kind of people had applied and been accepted to the programme.

The results of the 26 questionnaires showed that 17 of the respondents had started their studies in 2008 and nine of them in 2009. All the respondents were between 18 and 36 years of age, the majority being between 24 and 29 years old. Nine of them were male and 17 female students. More than half of the students were Finnish, the rest coming from eight other countries within Europe, Asia and Africa. The answers of the respondents showed English as the mother tongue of only one student.

The educational background of the respondents corresponded to the indications of the Polytechnics Act (351/2003), which state that applicants with a high school diploma or

equivalent and applicants with former vocational school degree or equivalent are equally eligible for admission to any University of Applied Sciences in Finland. 12 respondents had a high school diploma and five of the respondents a vocational degree, while three respondents had both a high school diploma and a vocational degree prior to the studies in the Degree Programme in Tourism. Only one respondent had a previous University of Applied Sciences degree, whereas five students had a University degree prior to the studies in the programme.

Internet had been the main medium that had informed the respondents about the Degree Programme in Tourism in Tampere University of Applied Sciences, with 21 of the students listing it as the source of discovering the programme. Only a few of the respondents had heard of the programme from their friends, former schools or read about it in the newspaper. The importance of online advertising is something to consider in the future advertising of the degree programme, especially as social media is constantly growing.

When asking the students of their motives for applying to the Degree Programme in Tourism in Tampere University of Applied Sciences, an interest in the tourism business was predictably the biggest reason for nearly all of the respondents. Besides telling about the respondents' personal interests, this can also be a result of the constant growth of tourism field as “one of the fastest growing economic sectors in the world” (UNWTO 2011). Other considerable reasons were being able to study in English, studying in an international group, and gaining international job prospects, all of which options were chosen by about half of the respondents.

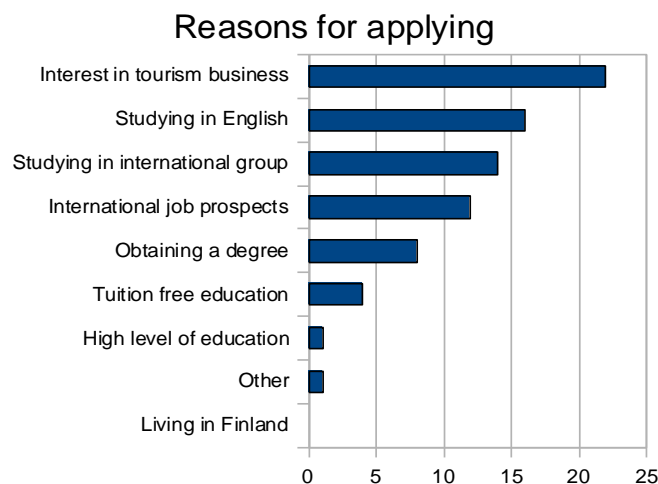


FIGURE 1. Students' main reasons for applying to the Degree Programme in Tourism.

Eight of the respondents also chose obtaining a degree as one of their main reasons in applying for the programme. This raises the question whether these students had the goal of obtaining any university level degree without caring too much about what the subject is or what they were going to actually learn and do in the studies. If this was the case, these students would probably not have cared too much about the quality of the studies or other matters as much as the students who were specifically interested in a challenging international tourism degree programme in English. However this result can also tell about these students' appreciation of university level education as such due to personal opinions or family's or future employer's supposed opinions, or even tell about the attitude of the modern society of valuing education in general.

Being able to study in a tuition free programme was also a motive for four students to apply for the Degree Programme in Tourism in Tampere University of Applied Sciences. All of these respondents were originally from abroad. This was predictable as all the Finnish universities and Finnish universities of applied sciences are tuition free: therefore the tuition free education would not have been a reason for the Finnish students to choose specifically the Degree Programme in Tourism in Tampere University of Applied Sciences.

In the main three reasons, high level of education was a motive for only one of the respondents to apply for the programme. Perhaps this tells about the respondents automatically expecting high quality education in all universities, including universities of applied sciences, and therefore not even thinking about the high level as one main reason for applying. Also the reputation of the education in Finland is rather good, at least in the earlier years of schooling as Finland has gained attention with its excellent results of the PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) tests in the past years (PISA 2011). Still, it is possible more students did not choose this option as one of their main reasons to apply because they did not care about the level of education in the programme as much as they did about other matters, such as the international atmosphere of the programme or getting a degree as such. Living in Finland was not stated as a main reason by any of the students.

The next question concerned the motives of the students to study specifically in English compared to a similar degree in another language. 14 of the respondents mentioned improving their language skills or other language related reasons, such as challenging oneself with English, for their choice of education in English. A degree completed in English was also chosen by seven respondents due to gaining better job opportunities after graduation. Reasons for better opportunities according to these students were both English being the most important business language at present, making the degree internationally well recognised, as well as the internationality of the programme aiming to offer a different and perhaps wider perspective on tourism than a Finnish one. One of these students also mentioned the degree in English preparing the students better for the future working life due to the importance of internationality specifically in tourism business.

Three of the respondents named internationality as such as their main reason to study in English, without mentioning its affect on the future job prospects. For one student internationalization was important due to their background that is not particularly multicultural, one wanted to gain a more international point of view as such, and one simply told having chosen a degree in English because “it is the language to communicate with internationals”, leaving it unclear whether the said communication was to happen during the studies with fellow students or after the studies in the working life.

Three of the respondents had external motives for choosing the degree in English. For all of those three students the studying language had been chosen due to the circumstances rather than their own urge to study in English. Two of these students said that they chose the degree programme in English because it was a language they could understand as opposed to Finnish, and one chose the programme because a similar programme was not available in Tampere in Finnish. However this last student also mentioned having studied in English as a possible advantage later on in working life. The answers of two students were so vague that it was not possible to understand their original meaning. The responses to these two last questions, the students' original motives to apply for the programme as well as their reasons for studying in English, were used as guidelines when examining whether the respondents' goals had been fulfilled in the programme, in order to analyse the customer satisfaction of the students.

## 4.2 English skills

In the second section of the questionnaire the respondents were asked a series of questions concerning their own, their fellow students' and their teachers' English language skills and abilities. As the teaching language of the Degree Programme in Tourism is English, it is essential for the efficiency and quality of the studies to ensure a satisfactory level of English used throughout the educational operations of the programme.

### 4.2.1 Former experience of English

The students were asked to report all previous experience concerning the use of the English language through studies, training and other experiences they have had prior to starting their studies in the Degree Programme in Tourism. The majority of 22 students had marked education through high school or college. Also, primary and secondary school education was marked by 17 students. Six students had completed a previous university level degree. English as a second language was chosen by four students, and eight had gained education in English through language courses. 18 students had used English in their previous jobs, and 15 reported living abroad as one of the experiences of using English language. Although some of these answers may have been from the foreign students studying in the programme, thus living abroad during it, it can be assumed that also the other students of the programme have an interest in living and working in a foreign environment. This implies that the students who replied to the questionnaire, and possibly the type of people who apply to the programme in general, are interested in gaining experiences abroad and like interacting with different nationalities with various cultural backgrounds.

When asked of preparing for the studies in the Degree Programme in Tourism, the majority of students replied as not having done any extra preparation. This may comply with the fact that the admittance exam for the degree programme doesn't include written material or required reading given previous to the entrance exam. However, five students had done some extra preparation in the form of e.g. a language course, a previous degree completed in English, and an overall view of the field through a

tourism website. One of the five students had done some preparation for the entrance exam, but did not define what it had included.

#### 4.2.2 Self-evaluation and fellow students' influence

The students were asked to evaluate what their level of English skills had been at the start of the studies in the Degree Programme in Tourism. The majority of the students, 16 altogether, evaluated their English level as good. Nine students evaluated themselves as fluent, and only one as on a moderate level. The lack of answers to a poor level of English skills implies that the students who apply to the programme feel they have adequate skills in English to be admitted, or that those with inadequate English skills have not been successful in the entrance exam. Also, in this instance it must be taken into consideration that the students have all used self-evaluation in answering this question, which is always dependent on multiple factors of the person's continuously changing qualities, and can therefore not be relied upon as an absolute truth.

The students were also asked to evaluate their fellow students' English skills in an open question in the questionnaire. The general level of English language of the other students was described by the majority respondents as good. In many of the comments the fellow students' English skills were also described as being very good, excellent or even on a fluent level. A few respondents had mentioned that some students' level of English was perceived as reaching higher than that of the teachers'. Despite the mainly unanimous opinion, one student had commented on some of the other students having big problems with grammar. Another had mentioned some problems occurring during e.g. project work due to language problems. Thus, it can be assumed that there is some variation between the students' skill levels.

In many of the comments the international nature of the group was brought forward: there had been some communication problems due to misunderstandings, difficulties in understanding different accents, and cultural differences resulting in problems. However, the problems were seen as a positive aspect of studying in a multicultural group. The students had felt they had been helped by their peers if needed, they had learned from each other and also gained knowledge on understanding different cultures

and accents, as well as improving their general communication skills by having to find a common tone among the students. Many had also mentioned to have noticed improvement in their own English skills through communication with the other students, although one student had mentioned that they mainly speak Finnish among classmates.

#### 4.2.3 Students evaluating teachers' English skills

The students were also asked to evaluate the teachers' English skills. Four students had rated the English skills as poor, 13 as moderate, and eight as okay. One had not replied. The main point that was drawn from the students' written comments attached to this question was the existence of a problem in delivering the lectures, mostly concerning the understanding and being understood between the students and some of the teachers. The problem was not reported in being with the incorrect use of grammar as such, or misunderstandings due to different accents (although both were mentioned), but in the fact that while the teachers may be experts in their respective fields and have excellent professional skills, some of them simply lack the skills to translate and forward their knowledge into the English language. There was also mention of problems in the written English on PowerPoint presentations and other written material provided by some the teachers, as some of the material had been incomprehensible from the point of view of the students. However, according to many of the students' comments there was also mention of three or four teachers of the programme who have excellent English skills.

In this instance it must also be taken into consideration that the human mind is prone to remembering the negative on any given issue before focusing on the positive. Thus, the results of this particular question must also be presented with keeping the former in mind. However, the comments of the students were somewhat similar and focused on the same few main points, implying that the majority does feel there are major problems in the English skills of some the teachers.

Although the degree programme's main aim is not the perfection of the English skills of its students, the professional development of the students is too intertwined with the

teaching language as a development tool that its level and efficiency cannot be overlooked. The importance of some level of fluency in English is essential in a degree programme in which the teaching language is English, because the level of language has a straightforward effect on the quality of studies, not to mention the outcome of the professional learning process, of the students. Thus, when the teaching language is reported as inadequate by the students, it is important to try to find solutions to improve it. The current situation allows the teachers to participate in voluntary language courses offered by Tampere University of Applied Sciences, of which there are three courses: two conversation courses of different levels and a summer course in teaching in English. However, as the courses are not included in the teachers' workload, which is immense as it is, the participation of the teachers on the courses cannot be ensured. Therefore, it would be very beneficial for the development of the teachers and the quality of studies for the students to integrate at least one mandatory language course into the teachers' work schedule.

The following question was if the teachers' language skills had in fact affected the students' learning, and if so, how. The majority of students, 19 in all, had said the language skills did have an effect on their learning, and six had said they didn't. All of the students who had reported an effect on their learning had written an additional comment which indicated a negative, rather than a positive, effect.

Similar issues surfaced in the replies to this question of effect on learning as to the previous one on general English skills of the teachers, such as some of the lectures being difficult for the students to follow due to the teachers' language skills. There had been instances where some of the teachers and students both struggled with understanding questions and answers, and the students finding some of the explanations to some issues confusing. It was also again mentioned in various replies that the students feel some teachers have trouble in expressing themselves and explaining things in the same way they might be able to in their native language. This was reported by some students as leaving them feeling like they missed some important points of the topic and that the teachers had "cut corners" when they did not know how to adequately explain some issues. However, it was also again mentioned that the teachers are obviously experts in their own fields, but some are substantially lacking in their English skills. One student had commented: "I believe some teachers have the knowledge but no appropriate skills to express it in English". Thus, it can be concluded that the majority

of the students felt there is a problem in communication and delivery of information, which then resulted in a negative effect on their learning. It must also be emphasized in this context that one of the pedagogic development aims in the concept of the universities of applied sciences has been the change in moving from the traditional classroom learning into more independent methods of learning, and by shifting the majority of responsibility of learning from the teacher to the student (Mikkola & Nurmi 2001, 69). Therefore, as important as the lectures are to the student's learning process, the emphasis of its success remains with the student, not the teacher.

In a few of the replies the students had reported a decrease in the level of interest and study motivation due to the inadequate English skills of the teachers. According to a definition on the motivation factors in the interaction between the teacher and the student (Ruohotie, Leino & Rauhala 1993, 62), there are five different dimensions that can be mentioned. One of the five dimensions, which affect the students' experience and motivation, is the clarity of teaching: how understandable, clear and structured the students experience the teaching, and to what extent the teacher takes into account the differences in the students' learning abilities (Ruohotie et al. 1993, 62). Therefore, the loss of interest and decrease in motivation reported by some of the students can be explained through the simple fact of not perceiving the teaching as adequately understandable and clear.

Despite the evaluation of the teachers' English skills and their effect on the students' learning, the majority of students reported that their own English skills had somewhat improved during their studies. Only two of the respondents assessed their skills as somewhat worsened, and eight assessed their skills as the same as when starting the studies. Despite the criticism on the content of the English language courses, they may have still played a role in the improvement of the students' English skills. Other contributing factors in the improvement may be the students' use of English on a daily basis, the lectures given by the teachers who were mentioned having good English skills, or the individual work done by the students in the form of assignments, projects and presentations.

### 4.3 Language studies

In the language studies section of the questionnaire the students were asked to reply to various questions concerning their English, Swedish and Finnish language courses and their content, as well as any additional language studies. The aim of the section was to determine whether the students find the language training provided in the Degree Programme in Tourism as efficient, adequate and beneficial to their professional development.

A clear majority of the students, 20 in total, replied that the amount of English language courses was satisfactory. However, the same number of students replied that the contents of the courses had not been satisfactory for the proper development of the students' professional English language skills. The students had commented that the courses could be more challenging than what they had been, and that the level of English did not reach their perception of university level English, but remained at what they felt had already been studied on a basic secondary school level. The course contents had also been mentioned as not being on par with the students' level of education and English skills. A more professional and industry-focused approach was wished for, as the students felt there was not enough professional use of the language taught during the courses. Also, the students wished the course contents would include more focus on grammar, business terms and vocabulary, as well as business correspondence, meetings, and other interactive methods of conducting business through real-life simulations of the working life. This desire of the students is supported by Brinton et al. (1989, according to Jaatinen 2003, 76) stating that often the method of studying teaches us more than the topic under study. Through, and surrounded by, the action, atmosphere, structure of action and different methods of working of a human community the student learns how to perceive him/herself as a person, a learner, and a future professional, as well as learning how to act according to the aforementioned traits. The most effective learning comes from living, doing and experiencing. (Brinton et al. 1989, 16-17 according to Jaatinen 2003, 76.) It is also appropriate in the teaching of professionally oriented language skills to practice such situations which the students are likely to experience in their work, and to practice them as such as the students imagine them at that moment. The goal is always communication which is as authentic as possible. (Jaatinen 2003, 85.)

The globalizing economy, increased intercultural communication, fast development of information technology, networking and the reorganisation of the working environment have all had a substantial impact on modern society, and, therefore, on the modern working life (Auvinen et al. 2005, 57). As a result, the importance of possessing professional language skills is growing. The expectations on the future professionals' high level of language skills have increased through the unification of Europe and the internationalisation of the Finnish companies (Kotila 2003, 187). Thus, it is essential for the students of the Degree Programme in Tourism to gain language skills through which they can develop their professionalism in their field. According to Kotila (2003, 192) the languages taught in universities of applied sciences represent a teaching term Languages for Specific Purposes (LSP). In practise it means the language is taught with certain practical requirements in mind, where the student is provided with field-specific vocabulary and linguistic education. LSP aims to equip the student with specified language skills required for succeeding in professional situations in their future working life. (Kotila 2003, 192.) A similar viewpoint has been expressed by Jaatinen (2003, 78) who states that in the professionally oriented teaching of a foreign language the forms and content of the subject should be considered by the students' future working life situations and the language used and needed in them.

One of the main reasons for applying to the programme by many students was the desire to improve their English skills. In this context it can be concluded that the students wished to build a professional level on top of their already existing basic knowledge of English, but as according to the replies to the question those expectations were not adequately met, thus leaving the majority of students dissatisfied. However, according to Rope and Pöllänen (1994, 30), there are three types of expectations: the ideal, the preconceived and the minimum expectations, all with different aspects in, and levels of, satisfaction. In this case it cannot be defined which of these have not been fulfilled in the customers', i.e. the students', minds. Also, the factors leading to dissatisfaction are not always mirrored with those which lead to satisfaction. The main producer of a satisfactory experience is a positive surprise experienced by the customer. (Rope & Pöllänen 1994, 165.)

In regard to the Swedish language courses available for the Finnish students of the programme, the majority was satisfied with the amount of courses and their contents. However, one student had commented that there should be more than the current three

courses of Swedish available, because they are not enough in learning a comprehensive amount of professional vocabulary related to the tourism field.

The Finnish language courses for foreign students had mostly been satisfactory, although the students who had reported not being content with the courses had called for more advanced courses to be offered on top of the basic courses currently available. The advance level courses would enhance the students' ability to form a more professional vocabulary and, thus, enable the students to find future employment in local businesses. This would also promote regional development, one of the missions of the universities of applied sciences (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2011b), if more of the foreign students graduating from the degree programme would find suitable employment and remain in the Pirkanmaa region.

The last question concerning language courses asked if there are enough other language courses on offer, such as German and Spanish currently available through the programme. 12 of the respondents were satisfied with the amount of other language courses offered, and 10 were not. Four of the answers to this question could not be interpreted, as those four respondents had not answered the question clearly in accordance to the instructions given. The students who were not satisfied had mentioned that there should be a wider choice of languages on offer, such as Russian, German and French. The students also wished for more advanced level courses on some particular languages, e.g. Spanish. It must, however, be taken into consideration that the students of the Degree Programme in Tourism can participate in language courses provided in other programmes of Tampere University of Applied Sciences, as well as language courses organised in the University of Tampere. Possibly this option has not been adequately brought to the attention of the students, or they have not been able to take part in the other institutions' language classes due to difficulties in organising their timetables and avoiding overlapping of classes and lectures.

It was also mentioned by a few of the students that studying a third language should be made mandatory. According to the Polytechnics Act (351/2003) the language studies of the Universities of Applied Sciences should, in addition to the second official language, provide written and oral skills in one or two foreign languages, which are seen as relevant in the students' future profession and beneficial to the development of the students' professional skills. Although the requirements of the Act are fulfilled in the

programme through the mandatory English, Swedish and Finnish courses, the inclusion of a mandatory third language in the curriculum should be considered. As the tourism industry, the field of study of the degree programme, is undoubtedly international and global, adding a mandatory language might benefit the students' future employment possibilities. Also, integrating the mandatory third language into the course curriculum would eliminate the problem of the possible difficulty of scheduling elective language courses into the student's individual study plan.

The importance of Russian language skills within the domestic tourism industry should be acknowledged and emphasized in the programme, as according to the Finnish Tourist Board (MEK) Russia was on the top of the list in foreign visitors' overnight stays in Finland by country of residence in 2009. The Finnish Tourist Board reported a 10 percent growth in the overall overnights of foreigners in Finland from 2010 to 2011, of which the overnight stays of Russians had increased by 36 percent (MEK 2011). Thus, as the future professionals in the tourism field in Finland, the students of the degree programme should be offered Russian language courses which would be integrated into their timetables to ensure the possibility of participation to the classes.

#### 4.4 Courses and curriculum

The curriculum of the Degree Programme in Tourism is divided into five categories: basic studies, professional studies, elective studies, practical training, and bachelor's thesis (see appendix 2). In this section of the questionnaire the students were asked their opinions on their expectations of the curriculum, the course contents and other matters related to the curriculum content and functionality.

As mentioned in the sub-chapter 2.2, the curriculum is constantly incomplete and therefore requires constant evaluation to develop (Auvinen et al. 2005, 131). The objective of this part of the questionnaire was to find the places of improvement, if any, in the current contents and implementation of the curriculum from the students' point of view. According to Auvinen et al. (2003, 132–133), to ensure the high level of education there are several issues to consider in the constant assessment of the curriculum.

The issues to consider in the assessment of the curriculum that were the basis of this part of the students' questionnaire were:

1. The contents and objectives of the education being up-to-date:
  - Are the objectives and contents up-to-date in relation to the new demands of the working life as well as to the field of study?
  - Are the course contents concentrating on the right issues?
  
2. The structure of the education and the adaptation of the curriculum to its purpose:
  - Is the integration between the study modules functioning?
  - Does the curriculum support the integration of the main objectives of the universities of applied sciences?
  - Is the learning adequately supported by e.g. assessment and guidance?
  
3. The proportion of the study modules in relation to the contribution needed:
  - How is the workload of the students?
  - Is the workload divided evenly between the study modules and in the different stages of the studies?
  - What factors affect the workload of the students?
  
4. The use of teaching methods:
  - Are the teaching resources adequate and are they being used in the most useful way?
  - How is the workload of the teachers and do they cope with their work?

(Auvinen et al. 2005, 132-133.)

The first question of this section asked the students how well the courses have matched with their expectations of them. Two students replied the courses had not matched their expectations at all. 15 students reported the courses had somewhat matched their expectations, and four said the courses had been matching enough. Three students reported the courses as mostly matching. As stated by Rope and Pöllänen (1993, 59), expectations are always subjective and depend on many factors concerning the individual. Therefore it is difficult to draw conclusions as to what the general expectations concerning the courses had been.

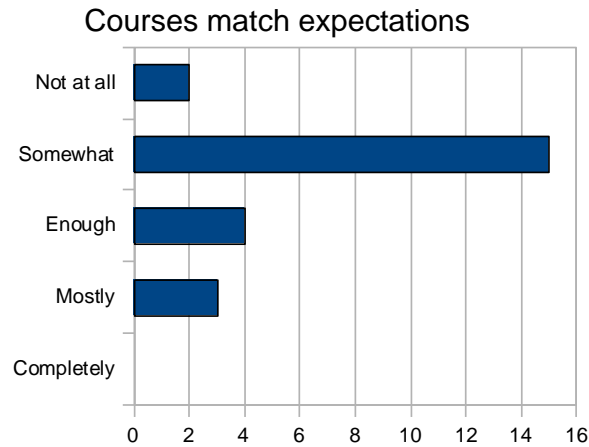


FIGURE 2. Courses matching the students' expectations.

An exact half of the respondents had felt there had been enough courses on their particular field of interest within the tourism industry. The other half's replies varied greatly, which can be explained with the affect of each individual's background, education and experiences in the formation of their expectations. In the comments of the students who had not been satisfied there could not be a common nominator found between them. However, there were comments where specific course topics were suggested, as well as comments from a wider point of view concerning the overall selection and content of courses. In some comments of the students the content of the courses was requested to be more relevant to the tourism field through e.g. travel agency procedures and tour organising. Also a few students had wanted more courses on intercultural communication skills, languages, marketing (especially online), sustainable and ecotourism, and nature, adventure, sport and health tourism. Specific requests for course topics included front desk management, service quality, airline operations, professional booking system courses (Fidelio, Opera and Amadeus) and management and development planning. On a wider view some of the students had commented on wishing for less theory on business operations and a more practical approach to the everyday operations within the tourism industry.

The students were asked if they felt there had been too much focus on one subject during their studies. 14 students, which amounts to just over half of the respondents, replied that there had been too much focus on various subjects. The focus had appeared through repetition between the course contents: most comments were concerning the

excessive amount of marketing in separate courses, as well as repetition in the restaurant and catering business topics, as it was not seen as relevant to the field of study. In two of the students' replies they had mentioned that they thought two courses of the curriculum, Event management and Hospitality for congress customers, had similar topics and theoretical material, and, therefore, had been repeating each other.

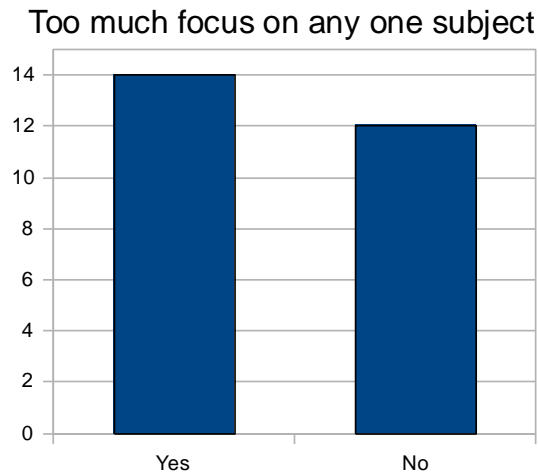


FIGURE 3. Too much focus on any one subject.

Similar replies appeared in the following question of the questionnaire, where the students were asked if they felt the courses had been effectively coordinated in relation to each other. As in the previous question, 14 students had thought the courses had not been well coordinated, and in all written comments the repeating contents of courses was mentioned. The reason for this could be found in the lack of cooperation between the teachers of the degree programme. It was stated in a background interview with a member of the teaching staff that the teachers do not have information on what the other teachers are teaching or what they have included in their course contents, as they do not have scheduled meetings where they would discuss such issues and have the possibility to coordinate their courses.

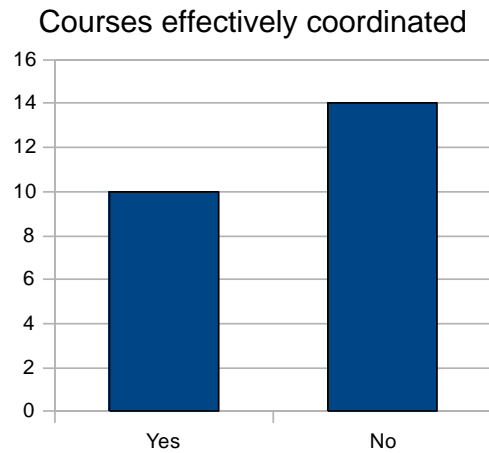


FIGURE 4. Courses being effectively coordinated in relation to one another.

The results to both of the aforementioned questions concerning the focus and coordination of the courses show place for improvement regarding the functionality of the integration between the study modules, an important issue to consider in the assessment of the curriculum as mentioned in the beginning of the chapter 4.4 (see page 30, point 2.).

When asked of their own ability to efficiently schedule the study programme according to their own wishes, the majority of students were satisfied with it. Some students, however, felt that the schedules would have been more efficient had there not occurred as many changes and cancellations in the schedules, or if the courses had been more evenly divided throughout the academic year in order to balance the workload over each period. A few students had commented on the fact that some of the courses are only organised once a year, thus making them wait to complete them had they for any reason happened to miss one. However, as the Degree Programme in Tourism will be doing closer cooperation with the Degree Programme in International Business in the future (Toijala 2011), the students will have more choice and opportunities to take courses in accordance to their own wishes. One student had also wished for more freedom in compiling the study schedule, as is done in the traditional universities. One student who had been satisfied with the scheduling commented that there had been enough freedom to participate in courses meant for the class a year ahead if the timetable allowed it, and also had the ability to work alongside the studies. One student had not been satisfied with scheduling the study programme due to personal reasons.

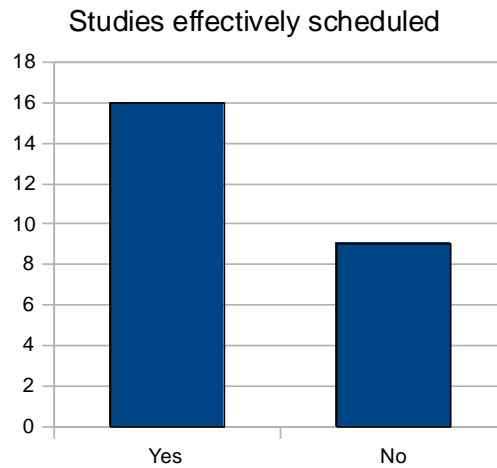


FIGURE 5. Scheduling the study programme effectively.

The keyword and main challenge in the development of universities of applied sciences is the connection with practicality. The emphasis of the universities of applied sciences is in the balance between the provision of theoretical knowledge and practical skills, which are offered as an alternative to the traditional universities' clearly theoretical focus (Mikkola & Nurmi 2001, 69). Therefore, it was important to investigate how the students of the Degree Programme in Tourism feel the aforementioned balance has been achieved. Nine of the students felt there had been adequate connection with the working life, and eight said there is also enough theoretical knowledge provided. More interestingly, to both questions regarding the working life connection and the theoretical basis provided respectively, the majority of students had replied to both as not having enough of either.

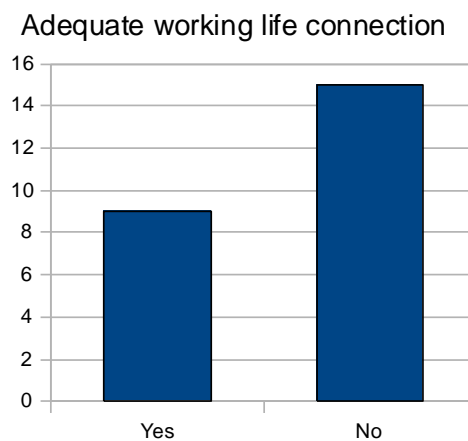


FIGURE 6. Courses being practical enough and connected with working life.

Enough theoretical knowledge in course:

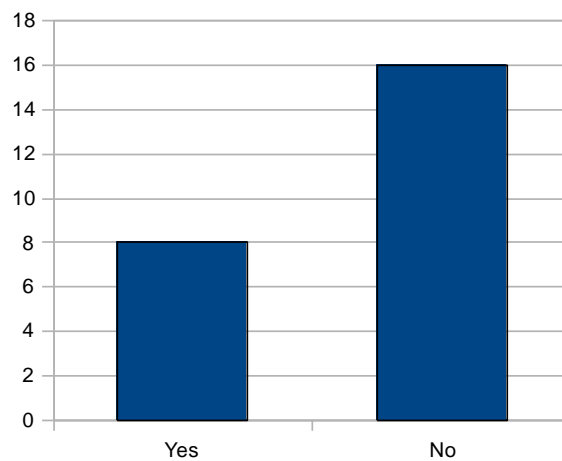


FIGURE 7. Enough theoretical knowledge in courses.

In the comments regarding the connection between the course contents and the working life, the students had mentioned that there were not enough practical examples of the working life provided, and that the examples that were given were somewhat outdated and unrelated to the modern working environment. It was commented that some practical examples given had been from decades ago, thus leaving the students with no up-to-date information on the situation now. This introduces the problem of the contents and objectives of the education not necessarily being up-to-date, one of the main points to examine when assessing the curriculum as seen in the beginning of the chapter 4.4 (see page 30, point 1.). According to Kotila (2003, 277) the prerequisite of a competent teacher of a university of applied sciences is not only the possession of knowledge of content and communication skills, but also the aspect of professionalism which includes the up-to-date knowledge on one's own field of expertise. Such knowledge is possible to obtain and maintain through regular periods of work in the field, maintenance of relations to the working life and participation in the research and development work conducted between the institution and the working life. (Kotila 2003, 277.)

The students also commented on having experienced some direct connection to working life through e.g. few projects, courses and intensive courses, but more often than not the students did not know where the connection to working life could be found. According to Auvinen et al. (2005, 58–59) the universities of applied sciences were formed on the foundation of secondary level vocational institutes in response to the constantly developing needs of the society and working environment. The main aim, and

challenge, is to respond to these needs by training a new type of professional expert through the University of Applied Sciences. However, it may be that the defining of the aims and goals of the renewed education was left somewhat unfinished, and the planners of the curriculum and the teachers are not always connected with the new aims and the challenges that the renewed definition of them brings to the implementation of the education. (Auvinen et al. 2005, 58–59.)

The fact that reportedly the students were not constantly aware of the direct connection to the working life does not mean the connection was nonexistent. During the courses from first to third year of studies there have been visits during the courses to e.g. local hotels and trade fairs. Also, the external teachers of the programme from local businesses and other areas of expertise create a connection, although a less obvious one. The mandatory practical training integrated in the curriculum, comprising of as much as 30 ECTS credits, has a big role in connecting the student with the practical working life. The Polytechnic Act (351/2003) states that the aim of practical training is to familiarise the student, under supervision, to specific practical tasks relevant to the professional studies of the student, and to provide means to apply the knowledge and skills gained through the studies. It may be that the respondents had not considered all the aforementioned aspects of the working life connection, but had focused merely on the course contents, which in turn must have some amount of theory imbedded in them to create the balance between practicality and theory. According to Mikkola and Nurmi (2001, 123) the studies' connection with working life and its perception is undoubtedly an area of the studies where the students must be active and motivated in order to establish the connection through their own initiative.

The students had mentioned in their replies that more cooperation with businesses would be beneficial through e.g. assignment of projects and research tasks to the students. Thus, the local businesses would profit from the student work force, and the students would not only gain valuable hands-on experience of their field, but also find possibilities of future employment or, at least, possible practical training placement opportunities.

One student had commented on the courses being useless, and had referred to a specific course taken in the first year of studies. The studies in the universities of applied sciences are divided into different categories, the first one consisting of the mandatory

basic studies. The aim of these courses is to provide general knowledge, orientate the student to the studies in a university, give information on available tools for studying, and lay the ground for the lifelong learning process, one of the main themes of the education system of universities of applied sciences (Mikkola & Nurmi 2001, 72). The lifelong learning in the university of applied sciences system aims to provide students with adequate skills for continuous learning in the changing work environment. The basic studies are university-specific, but always mandatory. The general knowledge provided through the basic studies has been criticized as unnecessary in the universities of applied sciences, as they are perceived to aim in revolving more around professional development and practicality of the studies than in offering wider general knowledge. However, it can be assumed that the changing work environment will require more flexible and all-round expertise in the future. Thus, the common basic studies in all educational fields are partly in place to ease the students' placement in the future work environment. (Mikkola & Nurmi 2001, 76.)

One of the main issues to consider when assessing the functionality of the curriculum is the relationship between the proportion of the study modules and the contribution needed (see chapter 4.4, page 30, point 3.). With this in mind, the students were also asked if they feel the ECTS credits obtained match with the workload of each course. 11 students replied yes, they have matched, and 12 replied they had not. As defined in one of the comments in the teachers' questionnaire, one ECTS (European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System) credit consists of 27 hours of work done by the student, of which 50% consists of contact teaching and studying literature, and 50% of other work, such as writing essays and completing assignments. The students commented on the workload as comprising of varying amounts of work between courses for a different number of credits gained. They felt the workload was not always in balance with the obtained amount of credits. Some had commented that on some courses there was very little work in comparison to the credit amount, and on some the workload was heavier than what the credits would imply. One student had replied yes and no to the question, and commented that it depends on the teacher. According to the replies it could be speculated that also here the closer cooperation between teachers could steady the workload and ensure all courses include the appropriate workload consistent with the amount of credits obtained by the students. Despite, or perhaps due to, the perceived variation in the workload and obtained credits by the students, the majority rated their own level of achievement in their studies as good. Some students had evaluated their

own achievements as okay, and two students had felt their level of achievement had been excellent.

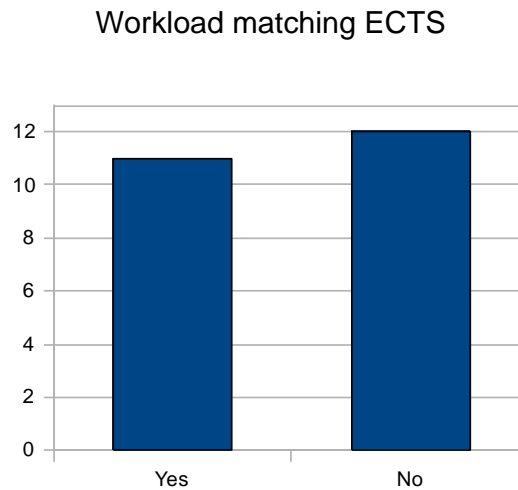


FIGURE 8. ECTS credits matching students' workload.

The last question of the courses and curriculum section asked the students if they have been satisfied with the teachers of the courses. One respondent had been satisfied, the rest had not. The main issues reported in this question were in accordance with the problems reported in the previous chapters and paragraphs concerning mainly the language skills of the teachers, the course contents and their coordination, and the communication skills and delivery of lectures.

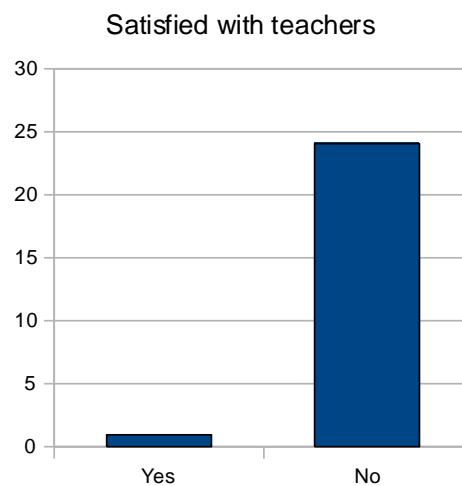


FIGURE 9. Students' satisfaction with the teachers of each course.

In the comments of the students many had said some teachers' lack of English skills had not been adequate and, possibly due to this, the teachers had not seemed prepared or professional in their lectures. There was also mention of some teachers seeming unmotivated or even bored. It was also mentioned in the comments that some course contents had not been what the student had expected, the lectures had been perceived as irrelevant to the topic of the course, or the teacher had not succeeded in presenting the lecture topics efficiently. One student had also commented that enough explanations to PowerPoint slides had not been given during lectures. Yet again, these points may refer to the language issue and the problem of some teachers' inability to express themselves as they wish in English. There was also mention in the comments of the repetition between course and essay topics, which had frustrated some of the students, therefore inducing dissatisfaction with the teachers. Thus, even more emphasis is needed for the coordination and specification of the course contents by the curriculum planners and teachers, and the insurance of all teaching staff working under the same common guidelines and schedules.

According to the Polytechnics Act (351/2003) the mission of a fulltime teacher in a university of applied sciences is the teaching and guidance tasks and the completion of other tasks related to them. In addition, the teachers should develop the teaching of their respective fields, follow the development of the working life in the field of expertise, participate in the compilation of the curriculum and student admittance, and take part in any training provided by the employer concerning maintenance and development of professionalism, familiarization with the working life, as well as participate in the research and development department's work if, and as, required by the institution.(351/2003.) The teachers' responsibilities and obligations reach further than what the students experience through contact lessons, and are professionals in a wider field than possibly the students perceive.

The teaching environment has changed dramatically throughout the development of the universities of applied sciences and the requirements of the teachers today are multifaceted. As opposed to the old-fashioned method of teaching through presenting information and ensuring its reception, the modern tasks of the teachers in university of applied sciences level are emphasised more on the creation of self-guided learning possibilities for the students, steering their independent studies and supporting their learning process in various ways. (Kotila 2003, 276.) The studies in the Degree

Programme in Tourism may have been perceived as somewhat secondary school-like, with fixed timetables, small groups and classrooms, as opposed to the general perception of a university with more people and huge lecture halls. Thus, it could be contemplated whether the students have been relying on the teachers of teaching them all they have to know, in the old-fashioned sense, instead of fully embracing their responsibility in taking charge of their studies and learning, like they automatically might have done in a traditional university environment. However, the response results, whatever the reasons behind them, undoubtedly conclude that there are problems and issues in the Degree Programme in Tourism as a whole which need to be acknowledged and addressed.

#### 4.5 Motivation

According to Mikkola and Nurmi (2001, 101), learning motivation affects the formation of opinions and thereby the students' general satisfaction regarding the studies. The objective of this part of the students' questionnaire was thus examining the students' motivation with questions concerning their starting motivation, their personal motivators in the studies, as well as the possible motivation changes during the studies.

Most of the students rated themselves as highly motivated in the beginning of the studies. Six of them rated their starting motivation as somewhat motivated while one did not answer the question. None of the students rated themselves as poorly motivated at the start. In the students' answers to the question what motivates them, obtaining knowledge and developing one's skills, having better job opportunities in the future, as well as general interest in the tourism field were chosen the most. The main motivators were therefore education itself, developing oneself, and ensuring good future prospects while following personal interests. The better job opportunities that the majority of the respondents chose as one of their motivators could be either due to the assumption that completing a degree improves one's chances of being hired in the future, or as well due to the thought that the programme being completed in English would enhance their work opportunities especially internationally.

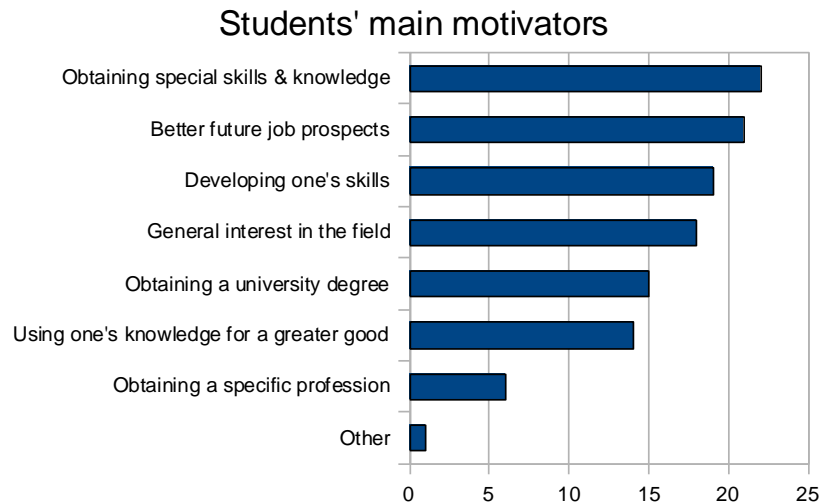


FIGURE 10. Students' main motivators.

In this multiple choice question more than half of the students also chose “getting a university degree” as one of their main motivators. This reason came up earlier as well when asking the students about their reasons to apply for the Degree Programme in Tourism. The result could either be a sign of the students' or even the society's appreciation of education and university level degrees as such, or on the other hand tell that some students were perhaps motivated merely because of obtaining any degree, whatever the subject of study. The reasons behind the latter option could be for example linked with the future job opportunities: having a university degree often does help with finding work compared to not having one, leaving the field of study itself a less important factor than the degree completed in the end of the studies. Perhaps some of these students had applied to other degree programmes as well without a concise interest in the tourism field itself.

A noticeable result was also more than half of the students choosing “using their knowledge and skills for a greater good” as one of their main motivators. It could be seen as a result of the rise in popularity of sustainable development in many areas of modern life, or just tell about these specific students' personal interests and their personality. This would in any case indicate that integrating sustainability - whether environmental, economical or social - to the courses of the programme is not only backed up by the general trend in the world as well as in the tourism field itself, but also by a strong interest amongst the students toward this. However, due to the results of this study being only applicable to this specific situation at this specific time, we could not

draw conclusions about the existing or growing need for sustainability courses in the future. Therefore it is left as something for the curriculum developers and teachers to consider in their own work when assessing whether the course contents are concentrating on the right issues (see chapter 4.4, page 30, point 1.).

Obtaining a specific profession was chosen as one of the motivators by a couple of students. However unfortunately it was not mentioned which professions these were, and as it was an anonymous questionnaire there was no possibility to ask it from the respondents later on. One respondent also chose “other” as one of the motivators, it being “money and women”.

When asking the students whether their motivation had changed during the studies, 22 of them answered yes. Four of the students had answered that their motivation had not changed during the studies, and seven of the students who answered yes did not specify whether the change was for the better or worse. 15 of the respondents however did specify that their motivation had decreased, for some students even significantly. The reason to this, according to many of the respondents, was mostly dissatisfaction because of the course contents, classes or lack of useful assignments of the programme. Some of the students who named the course contents or classes being the reason for the decrease in their motivation told simply that the course contents did not match their expectations. In these answers it remained somewhat unclear why the expectations of the students had not matched the course contents - it could have been purely due to the student in question expecting more of their personal area of interest in the course, or it could have been due to the level of the courses generally not meeting expectations, meaning the transmission of information from the teacher to the students not being satisfactory due to a number of reasons that were already mentioned earlier on in the results to questions concerning the course contents, teaching and so on.

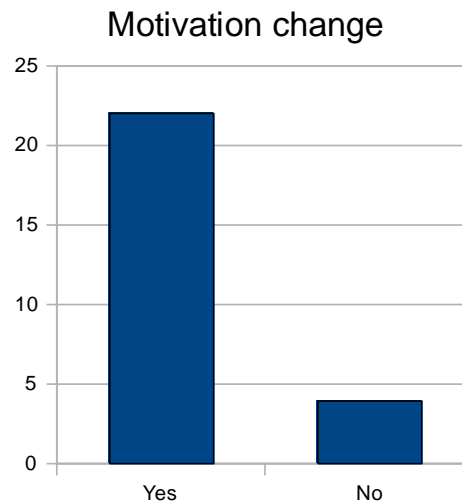


FIGURE 11. Students' motivation change during the studies.

Specifically teaching was also mentioned on a few occasions as the reason for motivation change. Still, only one of these respondents mentioned the poor level of teaching of some teachers, while the rest only stated their motivation as changed because of the teaching, leaving out if the change was for better or worse. Issues on teaching and the students' opinions on it were discussed more closely in the previous subchapter 4.4. Also general dissatisfaction was a reason for some respondents' motivation change. One student told the inconsistency between the courses being a reason for the motivation drop, and another had wanted the studies to be more challenging than they had been. Three of the students gave no specific reason for the decrease in their motivation, simply stating that their level of motivation had dropped.

#### 4.6 General opinions

The last part of the students' questionnaire was designed to investigate the students' general opinions of the Degree Programme in Tourism in Tampere University of Applied Sciences. The questions in this part concerned the students' general satisfaction regarding the studies, the students' level of achievement, receiving and giving of feedback, support and guidance in the studies, practical trainings and student exchange, the students' future plans, and finally the possibility of recommending the degree programme to others.

#### 4.6.1 General satisfaction

The majority of the respondents evaluated their general satisfaction with the studies so far as not completely satisfied. A few students chose enough satisfied and a few mostly satisfied. One was absolutely satisfied while one respondent said to be not at all satisfied. The main reason stated for dissatisfaction was lack of confidence in own knowledge gained during the studies. This was in some students' opinion a direct result from the level of education in the degree programme not being as expected. Here it is worth returning to the customer satisfaction analysis that emphasises the link between the expectations and the experience of satisfaction of a person (Rope & Pöllänen 1994, 30–31), as the original expectations of these students have clearly affected their experience of satisfaction in the programme. For some reason the expectations of these students have not been met in the degree programme, resulting in the students, in other words the “customers”, not being satisfied. Rope and Pöllänen (1994) also claim that experiencing the expected level of operation does not generate real satisfaction as such. Instead, the expected level of operation would be the basic assumption of people. Satisfaction would therefore be generated by a factor that the customer has seen as a positive surprise. (Rope & Pöllänen 1994, 165.) This could partly help explaining the high number of respondents stating their dissatisfaction in the programme: the studies and other matters in the programme could have been mostly as expected, but the positive addition or surprise seems to have been missing.

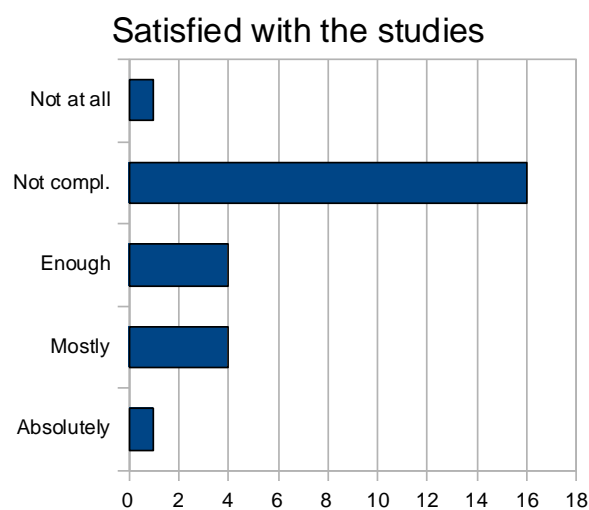


FIGURE 12. Students' satisfaction with the studies so far.

One student also said the reason for not being completely satisfied to be their own lack of effort in the studies. The positive things mentioned in the answers to this question were the internationality of the student group having prepared the students well for an international work environment, or comments on specific courses that the student in question had felt were interesting and important. The teachers who motivated the students and had “high level teaching” were mentioned in the answer of a student who answered to be mostly satisfied with the studies. Some respondents who said to be not completely satisfied with the studies so far told this to be a result from many courses being demotivating, the level of education not being university level as expected, and the good grades having been achieved too easily. Students' opinions on the relationship between the workload needed in and the grades achieved from courses were discussed in more detail in subchapter 4.4 concerning the ECTS credits and students' workload.

One reason for the respondents' dissatisfaction could however be independent from the courses, teachers or level of education in the programme. Especially for the second year students, although possibly also for some third year students, the professional growth in the studies can still have been yet to complete at the point of filling in the questionnaire. As according to Auvinen et al. (2005) the learning process is a continuous process and some parts of it happen subconsciously, it is likely that some students have not become aware of their whole professional growth yet at that point. This can have resulted in some students not recognising their own growth and therefore evaluating the whole studies as less satisfactory than they would in the end of the studies when the whole learning process as for the studies has been completed. The whole learning and growth process itself still continues after graduation. (Auvinen et al. 2005, 81–83.) One thing to support this view is the writers' of this thesis realization of their own professional growth only after having started the thesis process and having gone through and analysed their own expectations and experiences of the programme.

#### 4.6.2 Feedback

According to Kotila (2003, 276), the biggest obstacles in the student's road to success in the studies are the deficiencies in the feedback, meaning that the demand for contact has

not been met. The students have the need of discussing the contents of the study modules and their interpretation and analysis. (Kotila 2003, 276) More than two thirds of the respondents answered that they had not received enough feedback on their own work from the teachers. The rest of the students felt that they had gotten enough feedback. The answers from the students who were not satisfied with the amount of feedback received were consistent with the psychological aspects of the importance of receiving feedback for the development of a person. According to one respondent, “it's hard to develop yourself if you don't know what's the part that needs improvement. One number doesn't tell anything.” As many students mentioned, seeing only the final grade leaves the students without the knowledge of what is required of good performance, and thereby prevents the students from developing as a learner (Poikela & Poikela 2008, 36). Without more detailed feedback, the students are left with no guidelines of how they could have improved their performance, naturally assuming that all of the students are not flawless in all of the courses and that there indeed would be room for some improvement. If the students were able to see the assignments and exams corrected, they would know what areas they should improve. This would not only make the students better learners in the future but also ensure the areas that need more improvement would not necessarily be left as they are like they are left at present. Without detailed feedback the students can manage to pass the courses time after time with no knowledge on a specific thing, if their points in the exam or assignments are high enough for passing the course.

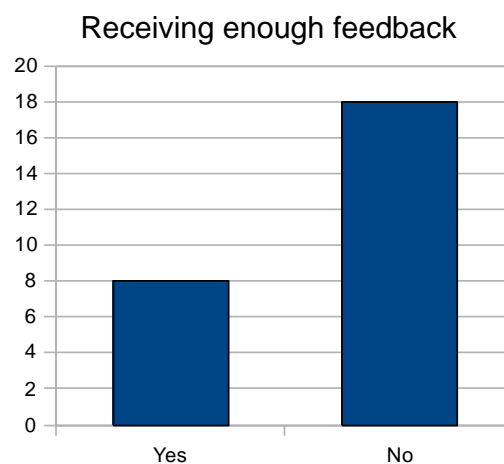


FIGURE 13. Students receiving enough feedback on own work.

One respondent mentioned that especially in the beginning of the studies more feedback would have been needed to guide the students in their studies. One was frustrated because of the lack of feedback, as sending in the essays without receiving any feedback felt like nobody ever read them. One student said having never received feedback from any teacher since the start of the studies. However, it was also mentioned that a few of the teachers do give feedback very well. One answered that they had gotten enough feedback, most of it positive. One respondent who answered yes to the question specified: “well, if I asked...”. As the students had reported varying motivators, it is worth assuming that also their goals regarding the studies and their own learning vary. For some students learning new things and developing themselves seemed to be of high importance, and for these students more detailed feedback would be necessary in order to develop. However it seems that there are also students with only the goal of passing the courses and graduating as fast as possible in the group. For these students the current feedback of solely the final grade serves the purpose. This variation in the students' goals can explain why some students do not state the wish for more detailed feedback on their work. (Poikela & Poikela 2008, 37–38.) Still it is worth remembering, as stated by Auvinen et al. (2005, 105–106), that constructive feedback and criticism develop conceptual understanding, and thereby help with directing one's learning in the right direction in order to reach one's objectives.

One notable reason for the lack of feedback from the teachers is the limited resources they have. According to one teacher, they would often be willing to give feedback to the students but, due to the shortage of time available for it after completing the rest of their work, this seems to be close to impossible. As the students' experiences showed the lack of sufficient feedback affecting their development as learners, it would be worth considering the enabling of a feedback system by ensuring it was a part of all teachers' work. Integrating the giving of feedback in teachers' timetables and resources would be supported not only by the students' experiences and requests, but also by Auvinen et al. (2005) in their recent book on curriculum development in the Finnish Universities of Applied Sciences that states that assessment and guidance are important parts of the student's learning process, as they greatly affect what and how the students learn. Therefore, assessment and guidance methods are to be solidly integrated in the professional growth of the students. (Auvinen et al., 2005, 129.)

According to Auvinen et al. (2005, 104–105), teachers' objective and summative evaluation based on the students' learning results as measured in a written or spoken examination has been traditionally used as the evaluation method in education. This summative method concentrates solely on the final outcome. It results in the situation where learning is seen as the increase and remembering of information, and the main goal of evaluation is to ensure that the student has achieved the required level of knowhow. If the objective is also to reinforce the student's self-guidance and continuous learning skills, as it should be according to the general objectives of Finnish universities of applied sciences (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2011b), these traditional evaluation methods need to be modified. Besides the summative evaluation, continuous formative evaluation that enhances learning is needed, as it helps the student grow and develop as a person as well as a professional. One-sided evaluation and controlling of learning often lead to external motivators for students, which does not support the strengthening of self-guidance and development of internal motives later on in working life either. Therefore, the general goal of education being the development of a professional who is capable of independent decision-making, and who is able to set themselves objectives and evaluate their own performance according to those objectives, more multifaceted evaluation methods would be needed. (Auvinen et al. 2005, 104–105.)

In the question of students giving feedback, the respondents were slightly more satisfied than in the question of receiving feedback. When asking the students if they were satisfied with their opportunities to give feedback during the studies, 13 of the respondents answered yes and 12 answered no. One respondent chose both yes and no. The ones answering no told their dissatisfaction being mainly a result of the uncertainty regarding who and how to give feedback. Some students told about the possibility of giving feedback online but not seeing it affecting anything in the studies, while one respondent said to be satisfied with the current email feedback system. Also the anonymity of the online feedback was questioned, and the lack of space for own comments in the feedback form criticised. For one student it was unclear whether the online feedback system is still in use or not. Frustration was visible in some of the answers of the dissatisfied respondents due to the feeling that the comments or criticism have not been heard. One respondent would have appreciated the opportunity to give feedback throughout the whole course as opposed to giving feedback solely at the end of each course.

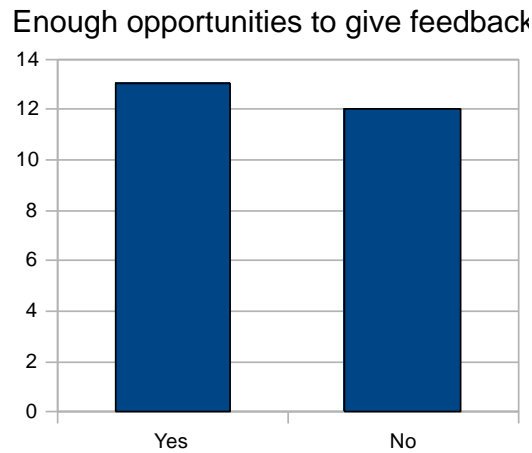


FIGURE 14. Students having enough opportunities to give feedback.

Despite many respondents requiring more opportunities for giving feedback in their studies, it has been the case that only a minority of the students in general do fill in the feedback forms (Toijala 2011). This could be the reason for the feedback of these few students not having a visible influence on the matters concerning the studies, as the opinions of most of the students have not been voiced in the first place. Therefore, the students who are eager to give feedback to have their voice heard should perhaps encourage their fellow students to act likewise.

#### 4.6.3 Support and guidance

Thirteen of the respondents felt they had received enough support and tutoring from the institution regarding their studies. Two of them had specified their answer: one stated that they had not felt the need for any support, and one wrote “only that teachers are too busy”. The twelve respondents who felt they had not received support and tutoring as much as they wanted, wished for more easily accessible personnel and clear instructions for who to contact when needing help. An example of a situation where support was needed was when searching for practical placement. Some students also reported not having any tutors in the first year, or the information gotten from different sources being “confusing and uncertain”. One respondent had not answered this question.

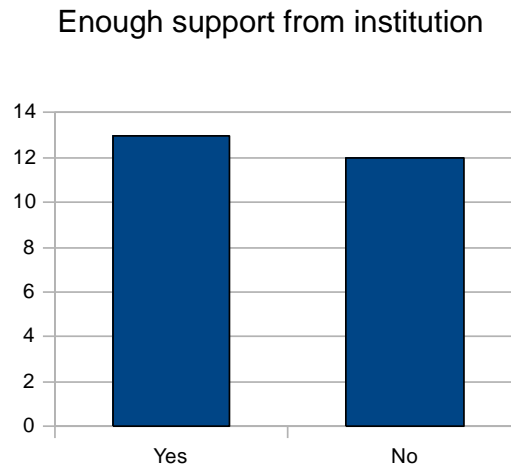


FIGURE 15. Students receiving enough support in their studies from the institution.

The support students receive in their studies is an important matter to consider in the assessment of the curriculum, as seen in chapter 4.4 (page 30, point 2.). This support includes for example the guidance and assessment during the studies. As approximately half of the respondents did express their need for more support, the importance of ensuring basic support and guidance in the studies is not to be underestimated. According to Auvinen et al. (2005, 99), when discussing professional education, guidance means supporting the student in their learning process, professional development and life situation. Guidance helps the orientation to new situations as well as facilitates the making and controlling of different transitions. Examples of these transitions are starting of the studies, the beginning and the end of the learning process, leaving for the student exchange, or even simpler, working in a new study module. It is advisable to use the resources reserved for the guidance as carefully as possible. This is possible by planning the goals and methods of guidance beforehand, and by finding the points of the students' learning process where guidance is especially needed. (Auvinen et al. 2005, 99.)

When asking the students specifically about the guidance for practical trainings, a clear majority of the respondents would have wanted more guidance. Only five respondents were satisfied with the guidance they had gotten when finding and arranging the matters concerning the placement. From these two questions a conclusion could be drawn that the students do wish for more support, tutoring and guidance in general and especially

when it comes to the practical training. However, as with the feedback issue as well, the realisation of an active support system could be challenging due to the already heavy workload of the teachers. Especially as there are only few fixed members of staff in the campus of Kuntokatu where the lessons of the Degree Programme in Tourism take place, it can be difficult to find people who have both the time and the possibility to be available for the students. Due to many teachers coming from other campuses or enterprises, it is understandable that it can be challenging to reach them. Nevertheless, to ensure that students are provided with the support they need, some action would be needed from the institution. Perhaps cooperation with local and international enterprises, even a quota of some sort, could be one solution to the problem of finding a practical placement for students. More practical trainings could for example be done in projects of different companies or institutions. Also the recommended advanced Finnish language course, discussed earlier in the subchapter concerning the language studies, would be a tool to help the international students with finding a placement in Finland.

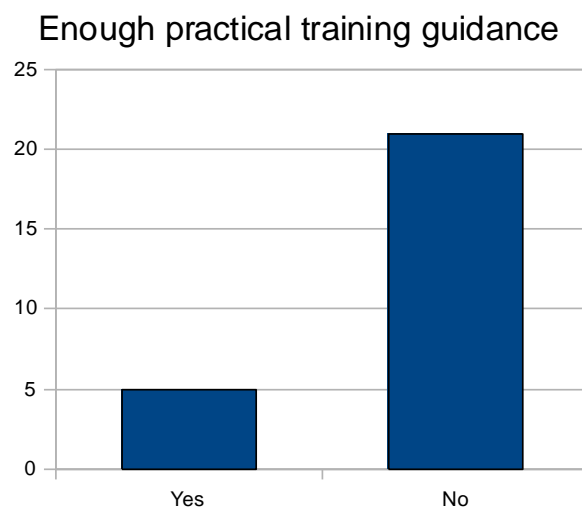


FIGURE 16. Students receiving enough guidance for practical placement.

#### 4.6.4 Practical trainings and student exchange

The students had varied experiences regarding their practical trainings: seven respondents had completed both of their trainings in Finland, four had done both abroad, eight had carried out one in Finland and one abroad, and seven did not know yet where to do their trainings. It was also asked whether the students thought that all should go abroad to do their training. 20 respondents answered yes, while six said it was

not necessary or advisable to make it obligatory. The students who were in favour of everyone completing a training abroad supported their views with the international experiences and new perspectives, as well as improved language skills obtained abroad as opposed to a training done in Finland. This was in accordance with the statement by Kotila (2003) that practical training abroad can provide the student with a possibility of independence, professional knowledge, and enhancement of language skills in authentic work situations (Kotila 2003, 206). Still, many students mentioned the training abroad being recommended only when the situation of the students allowed it. Therefore the family situation, financial state, and other personal issues should be taken into consideration when deciding whether to make a training abroad obligatory or only strongly advisable. However when it comes to the financial aspect of the training, the students can get funding for the trainings from their university and the European Union as well as from Kela, the Social Insurance Institution of Finland. Therefore the financial side would probably not be a problem for most of the students, unless they had permanent work in Finland in addition to the studies.

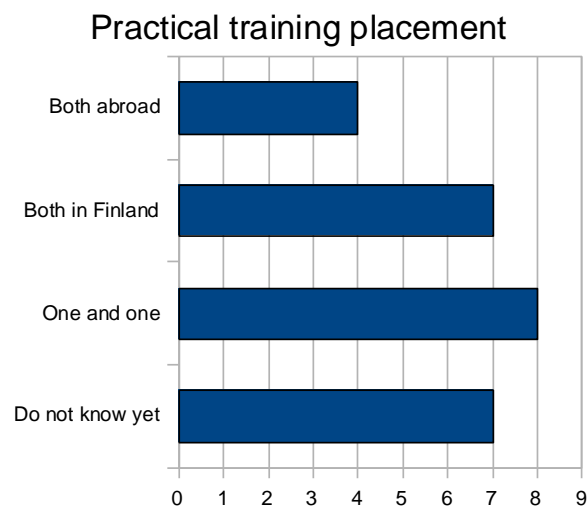


FIGURE 17. Students' practical training placements.

Also some students mentioned the advantage of familiarising oneself with the tourism practises in some other country as well as “seeing the places themselves” when doing a training abroad. One student answered a training abroad being a great opportunity, but due to the possibility of student exchange it was unnecessary to make it mandatory. Thus, the conclusion drawn from these results was that there should be strong emphasis on at least one of the two trainings done abroad in order to obtain a broader view on different cultures and people as well as learning about oneself. Especially in the tourism business that is rather international it would be an advantage for the students to have

some experience of working abroad before proceeding into working life. For the students who are not able to complete a training abroad due to their situation at that time, doing a training in Finland in an international environment would be advisable.

Ten of the students who responded to the questionnaire had been or planned to go on student exchange. Some of the students who answered that they had not been and were not planning to go on exchange explained this to be due to personal reasons such as not having the time or money required. Also the possibility of destination analysis courses abroad was mentioned as a chance to study abroad. One student had not answered the question.

#### 4.6.5 Future plans

When asking the students about their plans after graduating from the Degree Programme in Tourism in Tampere University of Applied Sciences, the majority were planning to work in the tourism industry. Eight respondents had not decided yet what to do in the future, while five had planned further studies after graduation from the programme. Only two students had planned to work in another industry after graduation. Some students also had many plans for the future, including work as well as studies and other things. For one student the plans had always been unclear.

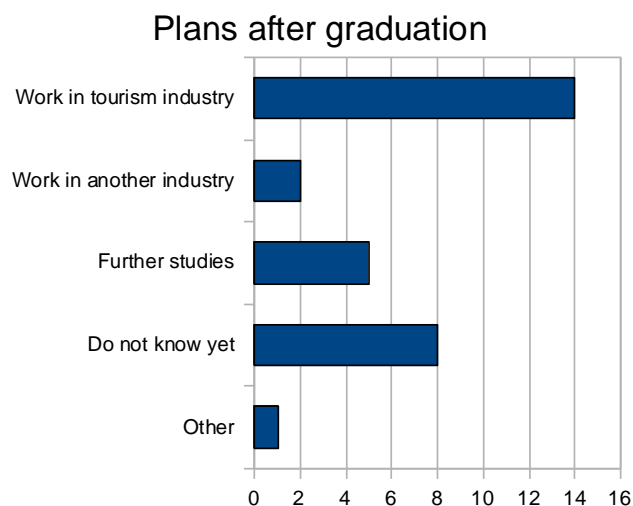


FIGURE 18. Students' plans after graduation.

Nine of the respondents reported that their future plans had changed during the studies. For sixteen the plans had remained the same, and one respondent did not answer the question. The reasons stated in the respondents' answers for the plan change could be roughly divided into three groups: general life changes, change of interest, or due to dissatisfaction regarding the degree programme. General life changes were reasons that had changed the future plans of some students regardless of the degree programme or even the student themselves. A change of interest was reported in some papers, and also these answers were not connected to the degree programme itself as much as to personal changes of views or preferences that had only happened during the studies. Two of these respondents told having realised a change of interest from a previously presumably interesting field to another, without mentioning the reasons for this change. One however reported having missed marketing in the programme and had realised they wanted to work in marketing rather than tourism. Two students reported lack of professional confidence due to the education in the degree programme not being as comprehensive and profound as expected. However, it is worth keeping in mind that the students of the programme should not solely blame the education of the programme for their lack of professional confidence. As stated by Mikkola and Nurmi (2001), it is essential that the background and former experiences of the students, and the influence of the degree programme, are not to be separated when reflecting on the professional abilities of the students graduating and entering the working life. The outcome is affected by both the students' preparedness, experiences, expectations and motivation, as well as the frames for professional growth as provided by the institution. (Mikkola & Nurmi 2001, 19.)

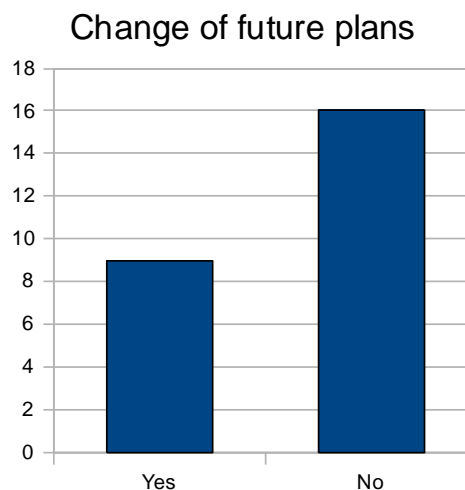


FIGURE 19. Change of students' plans for the future.

#### 4.6.6 Recommending the Degree Programme in Tourism

Fifteen of the students who responded to the questionnaire would recommend the Degree Programme in Tourism in Tampere University of Applied Sciences to people who are interested in studying tourism in an international atmosphere, while ten students would not recommend it. One student chose both yes and no. Several students mentioning the internationality of the programme as a reason to recommend it to others shows that their expectations, regarding the internationality of the programme as stated in their original reasons for studying in English, had in fact been fulfilled.

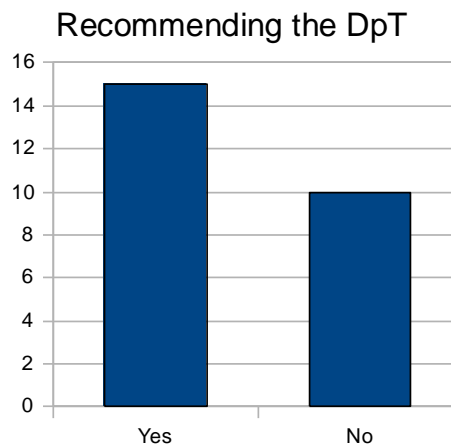


FIGURE 20. Students recommending the Degree Programme in Tourism.

Besides the internationality of the programme, other positive matters mentioned in the answers of the students were the possibility of working along with the studies, and the marketability of the degree at the moment. However, the need for improvement was also mentioned in some of the responses of students who would recommend the programme to others.

Most negative answers to this question were given due to the need for improvement in areas such as course coordination and content, and teaching. Even though the inadequate level of English was brought up as one of the main problems in the degree programme in many answers to different questions throughout the whole students' questionnaire, not one student mentioned it as a reason for not recommending the programme. The conclusion drawn from this is that however large the problem of

communication in the programme had been during the studies, it was not large enough to be mentioned as a reason for not recommending the degree programme to others. However it is also to note that no respondents mentioned the English language as a positive reason to recommend the programme either, even though it had been a considerably important reason for many students to having applied for the programme themselves. This could either tell about the disappointment in the level of English used in the programme, or it could also be due to the students already being that used to using English daily that they did not consider it as an advantage anymore.

## 5 TEACHERS' QUESTIONNAIRE: RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

In the following subchapters the answers of the teachers are stated and analysed. The teachers' questionnaire was sent in paper form to 17 teachers of the Degree Programme in Tourism of Tampere University of Applied Sciences (see appendix 3). Eight of the teachers returned the questionnaire, the response rate being 47%. Due to such low response rate, the opinions and experiences of the teachers are not to be taken as a rather comprehensive overview but as opinions that can either support or conflict the students' opinions on the situation.

### 5.1 Background

All of the teachers responding to the questionnaire had former teaching experience. However the length of the experience varied greatly. All respondents also had former experience on other fields of work, mostly in their area of expertise depending on the teacher. All of the teachers who replied to the questionnaire had university degrees. Most of the respondents had chosen teaching in the Degree Programme in Tourism in Tampere University of Applied Sciences due to personal motives such as gaining new experiences and challenges, teaching an international group, personal interest, and improving their English. Five had also chosen sharing their knowledge as one of the main reasons for teaching in the degree programme. However two of the teachers had chosen employer's decision as a reason for teaching in the programme, one of which had chosen this as the only reason. Colleagues' recommendation, interest in tourism business, and developing education in Tampere University of Applied Science were each chosen once.

### 5.2 English skills

In the second section of the questionnaire handed out to the teachers they were asked to evaluate their own English skills and outline their previous experience of using the English language. The teachers were also asked to evaluate the students' English skills and their possible effect on the teaching in the Degree Programme in Tourism.

When asked to evaluate their level of English at the beginning of teaching in the Degree Programme, three teachers evaluated their level as moderate. Another three had evaluated themselves as fluent, and one as good. One answer had been put somewhere in between moderate and good. All of the respondents had previous experience of English through a university degree. Many also mentioned work experience and language courses, and a few had experience through living abroad.

As mentioned previously, Tampere University of Applied Sciences offers its teaching staff three courses of training in English: two conversation courses of consecutive levels, and a summer course in teaching in English (Toijala 2011). The courses are all voluntary. The teachers were asked if they had been offered the aforementioned courses or any other training by the institution prior to teaching in the Degree Programme. Four of the respondents had been offered the courses, but three of the respondents had not been offered any training or courses by Tampere University of Applied Sciences. The respondents who had been offered the courses had also participated in them. In addition, some of the respondents had participated in other language courses in various other institutions in Finland as well as abroad.

In the evaluation of the students' English skills the majority of five teachers evaluated them as good. One teacher evaluated them as moderate, and another as okay. One answer was situated in between moderate and good. However, in the additional comments the wide variation between individuals was mentioned; some students had excellent command of the language, and some only moderate. Another point that emerged from the comments was that the varying levels in the students' skills had caused problems in e.g. the giving of instructions for projects and assignments.

Five teachers replied to the students' English skills having an effect on their teaching and three said they had no effect. The teachers who reported an effect commented that they had to consider their choice of words in the spoken language as well as in written language, such as on PowerPoint presentations, in order to ensure that everyone understands. The previously mentioned variation between the students' skills was mentioned to be more obvious in written work than in spoken language. One teacher had mentioned that some of the students are from abroad and their language skills are not very fluent.

The students' and teachers' evaluation of each other's English skills are quite contradictory. The teachers evaluated their own skills as good and those of the students the same, but when asked from the students the general level of the teachers' English skills was set at moderate or okay, i.e. lower than good. Of course, the response rate to the questionnaires must be taken into consideration, as the rate was not a complete 100 percent, but it can still be concluded that there is possibly room for improvement in both parties' language skills, even on the basic level of understanding and being understood. Ensuring that both of the two parties, the students and the teachers have sufficient understanding of each other linguistically is vital, as the current situation supports the view that the absence of a common language may cause many problems and tension in the interaction relationships (Hämäläinen and Sava 1988, 45–46 according to Talib, Löfström & Meri 2004, 130).

The professional language training on a higher education level aims at the interaction between people through proficiency in the language, which can be defined as the ability to produce and understand the language, to interact through it with production and reception of words, and as the ability to interpret messages from one language to another (Kotila, 2003, 191). Thus, the proficiency level of English is what should be concentrated on in both the admission of students and recruitment of teachers to ensure the adequate level of communication skills, which currently seem inadequate according to the students', and some teachers', responses.

The students had reported some problems in understanding each other due to different accents and cultural backgrounds, so it may be concluded that this is the problem with the teachers as well. As the students spend more time with each other than the teachers, it is only natural that they develop a mutual understanding void of misconceptions due to multicultural issues. Thus, there appears to be room for more effective communication between the students and teachers, and the introduction of multicultural communication training into the teachers' work schedule could be beneficial to both parties. Other possible reasons for the misunderstandings between the teachers and the students of the programme are that the teachers may use such language and terms which students from other cultures or social classes might not understand, or it may prove difficult for the teacher to understand the concepts and use of language by students with different cultural or social backgrounds (Talib et al. 2004, 130).

The teachers had also evaluated the improvement in their own English skills during teaching in the Degree Programme. Two teachers reported their skills had stayed the same, five had somewhat improved their skills, and one had noticed a significant improvement.

### 5.3 Curriculum

In the third section of the questionnaire, the teachers were asked to reply to a series of questions concerning general information concerning the curriculum of the degree programme, such as the scheduling and implementation of their courses, and the contents and coordination of them.

The teachers were asked whether they had been able to carry out their courses according to their plans. Five of the respondents said yes, and two no. One had replied yes and no. The teachers, who had replied no, explained the reasons with issues such as the participation rate of the students: some felt the students had been absent too much, whether it had been due to overlapping lectures or other reasons. Also, due to the aforementioned absences and the flow of exchange students it was at times impossible to know the exact amount of students actually taking the course. One teacher complemented the sufficient freedom in planning and implementing the courses, and another commented on not being able to carry out the courses as planned due to some difficulties with different cultures, and their skill levels.

The content of the courses are outlined in the curriculum, but to investigate how they are constructed in practise the teachers were asked how the content of their courses is decided. The replies concluded that the course contents are decided mainly through independent decisions made by the teacher of each course based on the curriculum. A few of the teachers mentioned they have made the decisions through teamwork with colleagues. It was also mentioned that it was unclear who the teachers could contact for more extensive instructions for the compilation of the content of courses.

In the question of adequate coordination of the courses three teachers thought the courses are well coordinated, and four thought they are not. One had not marked either. Mainly the teachers commented on the overlapping contents of the courses, where the teachers do not know what the others are including in their courses and, thus, reported on the overlap in some fields of study. The overlapping of timetables and early starts to practical training periods resulting in students' absence from class was also mentioned as a lack of effective coordination.

To solve the issues regarding the problems concerning the course contents, timetables and coordination of the courses, more cooperation between the teachers is needed. As the teaching staff of the degree programme is relatively small, and the teachers are based in various campuses of the institution, the implementation of such meetings seems somewhat problematic. However, as the need for consistency within the programme has surfaced in the teachers' replies, as well as in the students' opinions concerning problems with the course contents and scheduling as stated in subchapter 4.4, an increase in the cooperation of the teaching staff is called for. The remaining problem is that the teachers' workload is already extensive, and their resources limited. Thus, the institution of Tampere University of Applied Sciences should consider how the resources of the teaching staff could be modified to ensure the possibility for overall improvement within the Degree Programme in Tourism.

The efficient scheduling of the teachers' own courses was satisfactory to two teachers; the rest had commented that the schedule is given so the scheduling is not included in their job description. However, some had also commented that there are always some changes to the schedules and compromises had needed to be made regarding it. The teachers were also asked if they feel they have been able to efficiently pass their knowledge on to the students. Generally most of the teachers felt they had, and one had replied both yes and no, commenting that it varies. One teacher had commented on hoping so, bringing up the difficulty of knowing whether the efficient passing of knowledge has actually happened or not.

The teachers were asked if they feel the workload given by them to the students matches with the ECTS credits the students gain. All but one teacher felt the workload and amount of credit is matching, who also commented that the workload could possibly be somewhat heavier. However, the students had replied to the same question in their own

questionnaire in subchapter 4.4, stating that the workload is inconsistent depending on the course and the teacher, does not always match with the amount of credits obtained.

#### 5.4 Motivation

In this section of the questionnaire the teachers were asked questions regarding their level of motivation. The motivation and approach of the teachers reflect in those of the students, and crucially affects the work of an institution and its results (Ruohotie et al. 1993, 62).

When starting the teaching in the Degree Programme in Tourism, two of the respondents were reportedly somewhat motivated, and six highly motivated. However, at the time of filling out the questionnaire three of the teachers reported a change in their motivation. Reasons for this change were accredited to the continuous overlapping of courses resulting in student absences, as well as the weight of the workload, which was commented as not matching with the resources of the teachers. Here it is worth remembering that the teachers' resources and workload effect the functionality of the curriculum as mentioned in chapter 4.4 (see page 30, point 4.). Therefore, providing the teachers with adequate resources and ensuring they are coping with their workload as well as possible is highly important in order to enable the curriculum to function in the most efficient way.

According to Ruohotie et al. (1993, 62) research was conducted to establish the connection in motivation between teachers and students, which showed that the motivation of the teachers has a differential effect on the students' learning experience. The students in the research, whose teachers had been highly motivated for professional growth, had experienced the teachers as being more supportive and inspiring and their teaching as more clear and structured, than those with less motivated teachers. (Ruohotie et al. 1993, 62.) Thus, it can be argued that the motivation of the teachers, and its maintenance on sufficient levels, is not only beneficial to the teachers' own wellbeing, but to the learning process and professional growth of the students as well.

## 5.5 General opinions

The majority of the teachers who responded to the questionnaire evaluated their general satisfaction in the programme as “mostly satisfied”. The reasons for not being completely satisfied were partly the same as in the previous question of change of motivation, for example the workload of teachers being heavier than expected or students having more than one course at the same time. Other comments on this were speculation over the students' motives to study in the programme: perhaps some students were in the programme to learn English rather than of their interest to tourism specifically? Also the curriculum development group was mentioned, lack of which had been a reason for decreased general satisfaction for one respondent as they could not have developed and affected the matters concerning the programme in the way originally planned. However at the moment there are meetings held concerning curriculum development in the Degree Programme in Tourism, hopefully solving some of the teachers' problems concerning the lack of common guidelines as well as the students' issues resulting from the lack of cooperation between the teachers and the consistency between courses.

In the answers to the question concerning the support from the institution it was discovered that most of the respondents had received enough support during their teaching. Some respondents however would have wished for more support. The places for improvement stated in the answers were the lack of regular teachers' meetings and common guidelines for the teachers of the programme. Especially as in the Degree Programme in Tourism in Tampere University of Applied Sciences there are several outside experts from local enterprises as well as teachers from other campuses of the university, some guidelines would most likely be appreciated. This would facilitate the teachers' and other lecturers' adaptation to the programme, as well as ensure that the students got the most out of the teaching. The regular teachers' meetings on the other hand would enable both the teachers and the outside lecturers to have discussions about the teaching and other matters affecting the programme, and would perhaps improve the working environment in the programme. Thereby the teachers not having regular interaction with each other and not having profound introduction to the job in the beginning of their teaching, as is the present situation due to the shortage of resources, would improve. All in all, the conclusion that is possible to draw from these answers was that there indeed would be some room for improvement in the support system of

the teachers of the programme. Enhancing cooperation between the teachers and developing common guidelines for teaching would not only be beneficial for the teachers themselves, but also for the students. This is also supported by the statement that successful teaching can be actualised when the teachers have a common outlook on what the professional expertise and knowhow required in the working life actually is (Kotila & Mutanen 2005, 55).

All of the respondents thought that all students should complete at least one of their practical trainings abroad. This was in accordance with the opinion of the students, most of them also deeming it beneficial as seen in sub-chapter 4.6.4 (see page 51). There results of the two parties together indicate that the opportunities and beneficial effects of a practical training abroad should perhaps be further emphasised.

According to some respondents, teaching a multicultural group would require specific multicultural training. Teaching a multicultural group was mentioned to be a challenge, and therefore it would be beneficial for the teachers without previous experience and knowledge to be prepared for it specifically. As the students currently have the courses Intercultural communication skills and Cross-cultural communication and project management, the teachers would probably also benefit from similar courses. As seen in the earlier results of both the students' and the teachers' questionnaires, there are multiple experiences of communication and language or cultural problems between the two parties. A course on intercultural communication could help the teachers to relate to their students in a different way and provide them with tools to facilitate the intercultural interaction. In a multicultural learning environment it is fairly common for the teachers to subconsciously prefer one, usually their own, culture with its habits and ways of thinking to the ways of other cultures. This can cause problems, as the teachers can see the students from a different culture than themselves as less competent than the students from a culture they are familiar with and can easily understand. According to Talib et al. the cultural skills of the teacher help in recognizing the similarities and differences between the behavior patterns of different and one's own culture. To avoid labeling these differences as mistakes, it is important for the teachers to try to observe how well they understand the diversity of different cultures and do justice for the students representing them. This aim requires multicultural competence of the teacher, i.e. the ability to positively handle cultural differences and disparities, which is in part a question of communication skills. However, cultural competence is mostly about

knowledge and understanding of the different social and cultural processes that exist. These processes and structures in particular build the basis of what type of communication it is in fact possible and realistic to aim for. Also it is important to note that in studies conducted of teachers' multicultural experiences it has become evident that especially the lack of training and experience, as well as the lack of time and resources, are typical factors in increasing the frustration, and thus the intolerance, of the teachers. (Talib et al. 2004, 5, 83, 148–149.)

The majority of the teachers who responded to the questionnaire would recommend the Degree Programme in Tourism to other teachers. However in the replies to this question as well as to some previous ones the need for cooperation between teachers was called for. There was also a statement in which the programme was deemed not recommendable until some changes are made. One respondent would recommend the programme as “a great experience and you get to know lots of different kinds of people”.

## 6 CONCLUSIONS

By the evaluation of the students some of the teachers' English skills were not adequately sufficient. The main problems were not due to lack of grammatical knowledge or different accents, but the overall understanding of lectures and students' questions. However, the teachers had rated their own English skills as good, which creates a conflict between the two responding parties. The teachers had evaluated the general level of English skills among students as good, although plenty variation between individuals' levels was stated in the replies. Despite the overall level evaluated as good, the teachers still reported that the English skills of the students had a negative effect on their teaching. As the students and teachers have opposing views on each other's skills, it poses a question of whether the problem lies in the actual English language skills of either party, or possibly in the lack of communication skills and mutual understanding required in a multicultural learning environment.

When asking the students to assess their fellow students' English skills, the respondents rated them generally as good or even excellent. Some mentioned the fellow students' level being higher than the teachers'. However, a few respondents also reported communication problems due to differences in accents and cultural background. Different accents, cultural differences and intercultural communication were also mentioned as positive aspects of the programme - the multicultural studying atmosphere had prepared the students for possible future international work environment.

According to the answers of the respondents there were enough English language courses in the programme at present. However, the course contents seem not to match the expectations of the students. Several respondents called for more business vocabulary and in general more practical exercises such as business meetings simulations or writing of business letters. The courses were also stated as not challenging enough according to some students. Still, in general most students regarded their level of English as somewhat improved during the studies. From these findings it can be speculated that the improvement of the English skills can be accredited to individual projects and other work, teachers with adequate English skills, as well as communicating in English on a daily basis with for example fellow students. From these results the conclusion can be drawn that the goal of improving their English skills of about a half of the respondents was indeed reached.

Regarding other language studies offered, the students were generally satisfied with the courses. However, a wider selection of languages was desired, such as the possibility to study e.g. Russian and French. It was also mentioned by some of the students that the language courses already on offer should extend to a more advanced level in order to enhance the professional level of language skills, mostly in regard to Spanish courses as well as the Finnish courses provided for the foreign students.

The conclusion drawn from the students' responses to the question concerning the courses of the programme in general was that they do not match the expectations enough for satisfaction. About a half of the respondents also reported dissatisfaction regarding the courses concentrating enough on their personal field of interest. The replies about what was missing were however inconsistent, perhaps due to the varied expectations and background of the students. In the results of the students' questionnaire it became also apparent that there would be room for improvement in the coordination of the courses. Unnecessary repetition and similarities both within and between the courses were mentioned in several answers of the students. This had resulted in a situation where the many students' original expectations regarding the contents of the courses in the programme have not been met, thus affecting their satisfaction of the programme.

The respondents seemed to have a rather vague conception concerning the suitable amount of practicality and theory in the programme. When asking the students whether the courses were practical enough and well connected with the working life, the majority of the respondents answered no. When they were asked whether the courses had enough theory, the majority again answered no. Perhaps this was due to the students' uncertainty about what the balance between theory and practise in the programme should have been.

The workload between courses varied greatly according to the students' opinion. It was mentioned that on some courses the ECTS credits were easy to obtain, whereas on some the workload was much heavier. However, the majority of students rated their own overall performance and grades as good despite the variation in the workload of each course.

The students were mostly satisfied with the scheduling of their studies, although some stated that the courses should be more evenly divided throughout the academic year. The possible improvement in the schedules was suggested to be found in the coordination between course contents to minimize repetition of topics, as well as in the more efficient control of cancellations of lectures.

It became apparent that the students lack in feedback of their own work. A clear majority wished for more feedback from the teachers, which is an integral part of the learning process for the personal as well as professional development of the students. The problem with giving feedback lies in the resources of the teachers, as currently they do not have the time allotted for providing the students with adequate feedback. Half of the students also felt they were also not been provided with enough opportunities for giving feedback on the studies. The same amount of students wished for more support and tutoring from the institution regarding their studies, but, again, the problem is in the teachers' resources; their workload was stated as not matching with the resources they are provided with. More guidance in practical training placements especially was requested by the majority of the students.

The main motivators for students were obtaining knowledge, gaining better job prospects in the future, developing personal skills as well as having a general interest in the tourism field. Most students had rated their motivation level as high when starting the studies in the Degree Programme, but an even larger majority had reported a negative motivation change during the course of the studies. The reasons for the change were mentioned to originate from the course contents, assignments and classes, as well as teaching. Some had no specific reason for the change in motivation, and a minority had reported it being due to general dissatisfaction.

All but one of the respondents reported dissatisfaction regarding the teachers. The main problem reported in the replies was the general level of delivering lectures. This was suggested to be due to either lack of preparation, experience or motivation, or the teachers' English skills. Despite the results of the students' feedback, the teachers rated their own performance on average as good. As these results somewhat contradict each other, it is evident that sharing the teachers' knowledge has not been seen as efficient enough from the students' point of view.

The general satisfaction of the students was stated as not completely satisfactory by the majority of the students. However, a few had also reported being enough and mostly satisfied. The main reason for the dissatisfaction appeared to be the lack of confidence in the students' own knowledge gained during their studies, due to the level of education not reaching as high as they had expected. This result may have various reasons behind it, as there are multiple factors involved in the generation of satisfaction, such as the person's own background, expectations, motivation, etc. Also, for some students the process of professional growth, which is one of the important aspects of the polytechnic studies, may not yet have been complete at the time.

The teachers' general experience was sufficiently satisfactory, although some problems were reported concerning the lack of cooperation between teachers resulting in the overlapping of course contents, as well as the overlapping of courses in the timetables. All of these problems had a negative effect on the level of motivation of the teachers, as the overlapping of schedules affected the attendance of the students when having simultaneous lectures. Also, the flow of exchange students was reported as confusing, as they seem to come and go at random intervals. It became apparent that more cooperation between the teachers is needed for ensuring the continuum of course contents. Regular teacher meetings integrated in their work schedule was reported as necessary to provide the teachers with common guidelines to ensure the consistent quality of teaching.

The majority of the respondents planned to work in the tourism industry after graduation. Some were still unsure about their future plans. Mostly the plans had not changed during the studies. For some a change of interest, general life changes or dissatisfaction with the Degree Programme in Tourism had changed the plans.

Most of the students would recommend the Degree Programme in Tourism in Tampere University of Applied Sciences to tourism oriented people who would like to study in an international atmosphere. The respondents who were not willing to recommend the degree programme told this to be due to the problems in the course contents and coordination as well as the teaching. Despite the English language problems reported in several answers in the questionnaire, the students did not mention the level of English in the programme as a reason for not recommending the programme to others.

## 6.1 Development ideas and recommendations

As requested in many comments of the students, the content of the English language lessons should include more interaction and real-life simulations. The possibility of adding a course in business communications to the curriculum would be beneficial, as the students feel they do not gain the necessary professional language skills through the existing English language courses. The course would include written assignments, such as practise in writing business emails, letters of enquiry, quotations and other written communication conducted between businesses in order for the students to gain professional vocabulary as well as practical knowledge of the protocol of written documents in the business world. In order to improve the communication and interaction skills of the students, the course would also entail simulated official business meetings, during which each participant would play a specific role in accordance to written instructions. It would provide the students with practical skills on how to bring across their opinions and thoughts in a professional manner.

Another development idea is the possibility of introducing an entrance level test to test the admitted students' English skills. According to the results of both the students' and teachers' questionnaires, there is a need to control the level of the students' English skills in order for the both parties to fully benefit from the programme. Despite the testing of basic English skills in the current entrance examination, the situation in the programme has been that students with not fully adequate English language skills have been admitted to the programme. This leads to the conclusion that there should perhaps be another testing done after being admitted to the degree programme. The results of this test would direct the students to one of two different level English language courses - one course for the students who still needed some training of more basic level with for example spelling and grammar, and another for the student whose needs were already slightly more advanced. A similar policy is already in use with the Swedish language courses. This arrangement would help to level the differences in the students' English skills, and thereby make learning easier for all the students when it comes to for example group works. It would also facilitate the teachers' work by assuring some basic level in all students' English, making for example the correcting of assignments and examinations easier for the teachers.

The Finnish language courses provided for foreigners need to extend to a more advanced level in order to offer the foreign students the ability to reach a professional level of the Finnish language. The foreign students' fluency in Finnish would contribute to the regional development, one of the main objectives of the universities of applied sciences, as thus more students might decide to stay in the Pirkanmaa region after completing their degree. The more advanced level of Finnish skills would also improve the foreign students' possibilities for obtaining internships in local businesses, as well as for a wider choice in future employment.

It would be worth considering the introduction of intercultural education for the teachers. As according to the results of this study, there were several difficulties reported in the communication between the students and the teachers of the programme. Likely some of these problems could be avoided by all the teachers getting the sufficient education needed in order to cope with the multicultural groups they are teaching.

As the English skills of the teachers were mentioned as inadequate in various responses of the students, improvement is evidently required. As a solution, the teachers' level of English skills should be controlled with testing during recruitment, followed by the provision of mandatory language courses by Tampere University of Applied Sciences. The courses must be integrated in the teachers' working hours, thus ensuring participation. For this purpose alone, an extension to the resources of the teachers is required from Tampere University of Applied Sciences. Also, the possibility for teachers' cooperation via scheduled meetings and discussions is absolutely necessary for the improvement of not only the teachers' motivation and quality of work, but also for improving the content of courses and, therefore, the professional development of the students. The addition of resources would also enable the implementation of an efficient feedback system between the students and teachers, which is vital for the learning process of the students.

The Degree Programme in Tourism requires more detailed and efficiently scheduled cooperation with local businesses, e.g. in the form of predetermined contracts between Tampere University of Applied Sciences and the proprietors. The students could be offered a chance to participate in various project assignments and internships, which would solve the problem of difficulty in finding placement for the practical trainings.

The possibility of completing the internships abroad should be enabled and emphasised by the institution, providing the student's own current situation, such as finances and family relations, allow it. A practical training period completed abroad would be beneficial to the students' development, especially considering the international and multicultural nature of the Degree Programme in Tourism, as well as the tourism industry as a whole.

## 6.2 Validity and reliability of the research

As the research was based on the data gathered from the questionnaires completed by the students' and teachers', all of the answers have to be seen as only the opinions and experiences of those specific people. The process and reliability of self-evaluation is always problematic, as the result is filtered through one's own set of values, conceptions, and attitudes (Rope & Pöllänen 1994, 33). Thus, such results cannot be stated as absolute facts. Also, reliability of the research is an issue worth considering in qualitative research in general. Reliability of the research suggests that the research should be as objective and realistic as possible. The way to control this would be repeating the research and getting consistent or considerably similar results. However, this idea of repeatability suggests that an objective reality with facts that can be constantly repeated does exist. In social sciences the general view has been that reliability cannot be obtained without considerable debate, if at all. After all, social sciences are about people. Therefore qualitative studies in social sciences are not to be fully objective, objectivity here meaning being independent from people. Leaving out the physical features of people, the rest is more or less unpredictable. As this study is about a specific situation at a specific time with specific people, it is impossible and unnecessary to want to repeat it later or with a different group. (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2009, 136.)

The concept of validity in research in this instance refers to the perception of the researchers; do they see what they think they see? The basic problem in the assessment of the validity in qualitative research is to specify the link between the relations under study and the version of them provided by the researcher. The assumption in the research made of an existing reality independent of social constructions, such as

perceptions, interpretations and presentations, could be of lesser importance than the question of the researchers' ability to empirically ground the specific constructions in the subject under research. There are three main errors that may occur during qualitative research, which can affect the validity of the results. Firstly, a relation or a principle maybe seen where they are not correct; secondly, the relations or principles may be rejected where they indeed are correct; and finally, the questions asked throughout the research may have been wrong (Flick, 2006, 371.) In this thesis, the former three errors were taken into account and avoided to the best of the researchers' abilities.

Some aspects which require examination through the validity and reliability perspective of the research came up during the research process for this thesis. Firstly, the response rate to the questionnaires handed out was not 100 %. Thus, the results cannot be presented as an absolute truth or a completely valid situation analysis of the Degree Programme in Tourism, but only as the view and opinion of those who did reply to the questionnaire. Secondly, some respondents had either misunderstood or ignored the response instructions in the questionnaire, therefore rendering some answers unusable, as they could not be relied upon without excessive interpretation on the researchers' part. Some answers given in both students' and teachers' questionnaires were also impossible to interpret due to problems in understanding the written language of the replies. Also, it is not possible to determine whether the exchange students' accents or language skills had been included in the overall evaluation of the students conducted by the teachers.

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## APPENDIXES

## APPENDIX 1: 1(8)

**Questionnaire**

## Assessment and Development of the Degree Programme in Tourism

We, Janita Nurmi and Kaisla Saastamoinen, are writing our thesis on the DpT. Our aims are to voice your opinions and experiences regarding your studies, and to determine whether your feedback could be used in the future development of the programme.

Please read each question carefully according to the instructions. We hope that you are completely honest with your answers. The information given by you in this questionnaire will be completely confidential and anonymous.

We will also be doing anonymous interviews based on the results of this questionnaire. If you are willing to participate, please state your name here:

\_\_\_\_\_

If you are chosen for an interview, we will be in contact later. Thank you!

**BACKGROUND**

**1. Starting year of the studies** (*circle the correct one*): 2008      2009

**2. Age** (*circle the correct one*): 18-23   24-29   30-36   37-42   43-48   49-54   55-60   61-

**3. Gender** (*mark the correct one*):

Female

Male

**4. Nationality:** \_\_\_\_\_

**5. Mother tongue** (*If bilingual, choose the strongest one*):

\_\_\_\_\_

**6. Previous completed education** (*mark the highest degree*):

High School diploma

Vocational degree

University of Applied Sciences degree

University degree

**7. How did you hear about the Degree Programme in Tourism?**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**8. Why did you apply for DpT?** (*mark up to three reasons in order of importance with numbers 1-3, 1 being the most important and 3 the least important*)

Interest in tourism business

Tuition free education

Living in Finland

Studying in an international group

Studying in English

To get a degree

High level of education

International job prospects

Other? Please specify \_\_\_\_\_

(continues)

## APPENDIX 1: 2(8)

**9. Why are you studying in English?**


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**ENGLISH SKILLS****10. How would you evaluate your English skills before starting the studies? (Choose one)**

- Poor  
 Satisfactory  
 Moderate  
 Good  
 Fluent

**11. What kind of studies/education/training/experience did you have of English beforehand? (Mark all that apply)**

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> None                       | <input type="checkbox"/> Previous university degree |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Primary / secondary school | <input type="checkbox"/> Living abroad              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> High school/college        | <input type="checkbox"/> Second language            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Work experience            | <input type="checkbox"/> Language course(s)         |

**12. Did you do any extra preparations, courses etc., before starting to study?(Choose one)**

- No  
 Yes

If yes, what? \_\_\_\_\_

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**13. How would you evaluate the English skills of the teachers during the courses? (Choose one)**

- Poor  
 Moderate  
 Okay  
 Good  
 Excellent

**Please explain/give a few examples**

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## APPENDIX 1: 3(8)

**14. Did the teachers' English skills affect your learning? (Choose one)**

- No  
 Yes

If yes, how? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**15. How would you evaluate your fellow students' English skills, and have they affected your learning? Please give a few examples.**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**16. How would you evaluate your English skills after the courses/at this point of your studies? (Choose one)**

- Got worse significantly  
 Got worse somewhat  
 Remained the same  
 Improved somewhat  
 Improved significantly

**LANGUAGE STUDIES**

**17. In your opinion, are there enough**

- **English language classes? (Choose one)**

- Yes  
 No

If not, why? \_\_\_\_\_

- **Finnish/Swedish classes? (circle the one you study)**

- Yes  
 No

If not, why? \_\_\_\_\_

- **Other foreign language classes? (Choose one)**

- Yes  
 No

If not, please specify which language(s) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**18. Do you feel the content of the English language courses has been satisfactory for the proper development of your professional language skills? (Choose one)**

- Yes  
 No

If not, please specify \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX 1: 4(8)

**COURSES AND CURRICULUM**

**19. Did the courses match your expectations? (Choose one)**

- Not at all
- Somewhat
- Enough
- Mostly
- Completely

**20. Do you feel there are enough courses on your particular field of interest in tourism? (Choose one)**

- Yes
- No

If not, what would you wish for? \_\_\_\_\_

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**21. Was there too much focus on any one subject? (Choose one)**

- No
- Yes

If yes, briefly specify what and why \_\_\_\_\_

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**22. Do you think the courses are effectively coordinated in relation to one another (e.g. overlapping, similarities)? (Choose one)**

- Yes
- No

If not, why? \_\_\_\_\_

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**23. Have you been able to schedule your study programme in an efficient way (each week, each period etc.)? (Choose one)**

- Yes
- No

If not, why? \_\_\_\_\_

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**24. Do you feel the courses are practical and well connected with the working life? (Choose one)**

- Yes
- No

If not, why? \_\_\_\_\_

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## APPENDIX 1: 5(8)

**25. Have the courses given you enough theoretical knowledge to base your practical skills on?** (*Choose one*)

- Yes  
 No

**26. Do you think the workload matches the ECTS credits obtained?** (*Choose one*)

- Yes  
 No

If not, why? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**27. Have you been satisfied with the teachers of each course?** (*Choose one*)

- Yes  
 No

If not, why? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

### **MOTIVATION**

**28. What motivates you?** (*mark up to five reasons in order of importance with numbers 1-5, 1 being the most important and 5 the least important*)

- Developing your skills  
 Getting special skills and knowledge  
 Obtaining a specific profession  
 General interest in the field  
 Getting a university degree  
 Better job prospects in the future  
 Using my knowledge and skills for a greater good (e.g. developing communities, environmental issues)  
 Other, what? \_\_\_\_\_

**29. How would you evaluate your motivation before starting the studies?** (*Choose one*)

- Poorly motivated  
 Somewhat motivated  
 Highly motivated  
 I don't know

**30. Did/has your level of motivation changed during the studies?** (*Choose one*)

- Yes  
 No

If yes, please specify how and why \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX 1: 6(8)

**GENERAL OPINIONS**

**31. Are you satisfied with the studies so far? (Choose one)**

- Not at all
- Not completely
- Satisfied enough
- Mostly yes
- Absolutely

Specify (optional)

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**32. How would you rate your own level of achievement (grades etc.)? (Choose one)**

- Poor
- Moderate
- Okay
- Good
- Excellent

**33. Have you received enough feedback on your own work (e.g. essays, exams, projects) from the teachers? (Choose one)**

- Yes
- No

Specify (optional)

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**34. Do you feel you have had enough opportunities to give feedback on matters affecting your studies? (Choose one)**

- Yes
- No

Specify (optional)

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**35. Do you feel you get enough support in your studies from the institution (tutor teachers/students)? (Choose one)**

- Yes
- No

If not, briefly specify

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## APPENDIX 1: 7(8)

**36. Did/will you do your practical trainings abroad? (Choose one)**

- Both abroad
- Both in Finland
- One in Finland, one abroad
- I don't know yet

**37. Do you think all students should do at least one of their practical trainings abroad? (Choose one)**

- Yes
- No

Please specify \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**38. Did you receive enough guidance from the institution in finding practical placement? (Choose one)**

- Yes
- No

**39. Did you go / are you going on exchange? (Choose one)**

- Yes
- No

Please specify \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**40. What plans do you have after graduating? (Choose one)**

- Work in the tourism industry
- Work in another industry
- Further studies
- I don't know yet
- Other, what? \_\_\_\_\_

**41. Have your plans regarding your future changed during the studies? (Choose one)**

- Yes
- No

If yes, please specify how and why \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_



## APPENDIX 2: 1(2)

CURRICULUM OF THE DEGREE PROGRAMME IN TOURISM IN TAMPERE  
UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES (TAMK 2010b)

Code	Name	1	2	3	4	Total
<b>BASIC STUDIES (N-1E)</b>						<b>10</b>
Y029-8	Communication skills		5			
Y030-10	Learning to be a professional					5
Y030A-10	Orientation to studies and internal entrepreneurship	2				
Y030B-10	Information technology	3				
<b>PROFESSIONAL STUDIES (N-2E)</b>						<b>140</b>
C700-10	Tourism environment					10
C700A-10	Introduction to tourism	4				
C700B-10	Environmental factors	3				
C700C-10	Introduction to Finnish law	3				
C701-10	Operational environment					10
C701A-10	Internal environment	2				
C701B-10	External environment	5				
C701C-10	Profitability I	3				
C702-10	Business management I					17
C702A-10	Business mathematics	2				
C702B-10	E-business	2				
C702C-10	Introduction to entrepreneurship	3				
C702D-10	Basics of financial and management accounting	5				
C703-10	Introduction to marketing	5				
C704-10	English					9
C704A-10	English in tourism I	3				
C704B-10	English in tourism II		3			
C704C-10	Academic writing			3		
C705-10	Swedish					9
C705A-10	Tourism in Swedish I	5				
C705B-10	Tourism in Swedish II		2			
C705C-10	Tourism in Swedish III			2		
C706-10	Basic Finnish in tourism					9
C706A-10	Basic Finnish in tourism I	5				
C706B-10	Basic Finnish in tourism II		2			
C706C-10	Basic Finnish in tourism III					
C707-10	German					6
C707A-10	Basic German in tourism					
C707B-10	German in tourism					
C708-10	Introduction to research					8
C708A-10	Introduction to research I	5				
C708B-10	Introduction to research II			3		
C709-10	Business management II					23
C709A-10	Leadership I		6			
C709B-10	Marketing of tourism services and tourism communications		6			
C709C-10	Management accounting		5			
C710-10	Event management		5			
C709H-10	Tourism Law	3				
C711-10	Intercultural communication					15
C711A-10	Intercultural communication skills	5				
C711B-10	Cross-cultural communication and project management		10			
C712-10	Tourist service management					14
C712A-10	Service activities and product development of tourist enterprises			5		
C712B-10	Working in tourist enterprise			5		
C712C-10	Marketing research			4		
C713-10	Hospitality for congress customers					10
C713A-10	Profitability II			2		
C713B-10	Leadership II			2		
C713C-10	Accommodation and catering services for conference and congress customers			6		
C714-10	Nature and adventure tourism					10
C714A-10	Adventure tourism			5		
C714B-10	Nature tourism			5		

(continues)

## APPENDIX 2: 2(2)

<b>FREE-CHOICE STUDIES (N-3E)</b>					<b>15</b>
<a href="#">VB19E-10</a>	<a href="#">[Not translated]</a>				
<b>PRACTICAL TRAINING (N-4E)</b>					<b>30</b>
<a href="#">C720</a>	<a href="#">Practical training 1</a>		15		
<a href="#">C721</a>	<a href="#">Practical training 2</a>			15	
<b>BACHELOR'S THESIS (N-6E)</b>					<b>15</b>
<a href="#">C910-10</a>	<a href="#">Bachelor's thesis</a>			15	
<b>Total course provision per academic year</b>		<b>68</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>30</b>
					<b>210 cr</b>

## APPENDIX 3: 1(6)

**Questionnaire**

## Assessment and Development of the Degree Programme in Tourism

We, Janita Nurmi and Kaisla Saastamoinen, are writing our thesis on the DpT. Our aims are to voice the teachers' and students' opinions and experiences regarding the degree programme, and to determine whether their feedback could be used in the future development of the programme.

Please read each question carefully according to the instructions. We hope that you are completely honest with your answers. The information given by you in this questionnaire will be completely confidential and anonymous.

We will also be doing interviews based on the results of this questionnaire. The information gathered will be reported anonymously. It would be very helpful if you were willing to participate in an interview.

**Thank you!**

Your name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Campus: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Own area of expertise: \_\_\_\_\_

**BACKGROUND**

**1. Starting year of teaching in DpT:** \_\_\_\_\_

**2. Age (circle the correct one):** 18-23 24-29 30-36 37-42 43-48 49-54 55-60 61-

**3. Gender (mark the correct one):**

- Female  
 Male

**4. Nationality:** \_\_\_\_\_

**5. Mother tongue (If bilingual, choose the strongest one):**

\_\_\_\_\_

**6. Education (mark the highest degree):**

- High School diploma  
 Vocational degree  
 University of Applied Sciences degree  
 University degree

**7. Previous**

- **teaching experience (what, where, how long):**

\_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

(continues)

## APPENDIX 3: 2(6)

- **work experience in other fields (what, where, how long):**

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**8. Why are you teaching in Degree Programme in Tourism?** (mark up to three reasons in order of importance with numbers 1-3, 1 being the most important and 3 the least important)

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sharing my knowledge            | <input type="checkbox"/> Improving my English         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Teaching in English             | <input type="checkbox"/> Colleague(s) recommended     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Employer's decision             | <input type="checkbox"/> Interest in tourism business |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Teaching an international group | <input type="checkbox"/> Personal interest            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> New experience/challenge        | <input type="checkbox"/> Developing education in TAMK |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other? Please specify _____     |   |

**9. Why are you teaching in English?**

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### **ENGLISH SKILLS**

**10. How would you evaluate your English skills before starting the teaching?** (Choose one)

- Poor  
 Satisfactory  
 Moderate  
 Good  
 Fluent

**11. What kind of studies/education/training/experience did you have of English beforehand?** (Mark all that apply)

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> None                       | <input type="checkbox"/> Previous university degree |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Primary / secondary school | <input type="checkbox"/> Living abroad              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> High school/college        | <input type="checkbox"/> Second language            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Work experience            | <input type="checkbox"/> Language course(s)         |

**12. Were you offered any training, courses etc. by TAMK before starting to teach in the Degree Programme in Tourism?** (Choose one)

- Yes  
 No

If yes, what? \_\_\_\_\_

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## APPENDIX 3: 3(6)

**13. How would you evaluate the English skills of the students during the courses? (Choose one)**

- Poor
- Moderate
- Okay
- Good
- Excellent

**Please explain/give a few examples**

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**14. Did the students' English skills affect your teaching? (Choose one)**

- Yes
- No

If yes, how? \_\_\_\_\_

---

**15. How would you evaluate your English skills at this point? (Choose one)**

- Got worse significantly
- Got worse somewhat
- Remained the same
- Improved somewhat
- Improved significantly

### **CURRICULUM**

**16. Have you been able to carry out your course(s) the way you had planned? (Choose one)**

- Yes
- No

Please specify \_\_\_\_\_

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**17. How have the contents of your course(s) been decided?**

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**18. Do you feel there have been enough opportunities for you to affect the matters concerning your teaching (course content, timetables, teaching methods etc.)? (Choose one)**

- Yes
- No

Specify (optional)

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## APPENDIX 3: 4(6)

**19. Do you think the courses are effectively coordinated in relation to one another (e.g. overlapping, similarities)? (Choose one)**

Yes

No

If not, why? \_\_\_\_\_

**20. Have you been able to schedule your course programme(s) in an efficient way (each week, each period etc.)? (Choose one)**

Yes

No

If not, why? \_\_\_\_\_

**21. Do you feel you have succeeded in passing on your knowledge to the students in an efficient way? (Choose one)**

Yes

No

If not, why? \_\_\_\_\_

**22. Do you think the students' workload in your course(s) matches the ECTS credits obtained? (Choose one)**

Yes

No

If not, why? \_\_\_\_\_

### **MOTIVATION**

**23. How would you evaluate your motivation before starting the teaching? (Choose one)**

Poorly motivated

Somewhat motivated

Highly motivated

I don't know

**24. Has your level of motivation changed during the teaching? (Choose one)**

Yes

No

If yes, please specify how and why \_\_\_\_\_

### **GENERAL OPINIONS**

**25. Are you satisfied with teaching in DpT so far? (Choose one)**

Not at all

Not completely

Satisfied enough

Mostly yes

Absolutely

## APPENDIX 3: 5(6)

Please specify

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**26. How would you rate your own performance in teaching in DpT? (Choose one)**

- Poor  
 Moderate  
 Okay  
 Good  
 Excellent

**27. Have you received enough feedback on your own work**

- **from the students?**  
 Yes  
 No
- **from the institution?**  
 Yes  
 No

Specify (optional)

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**28. Do you feel you get enough support and directions for your teaching from the institution? (Choose one)**

- Yes  
 No

If not, briefly specify

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**29. Do you feel you have received enough guidance/support/information/training from the institution for teaching in a multicultural environment? (Choose one)**

- Yes  
 No

Please specify

---

**30. Do you think all students should do at least one of their practical trainings abroad? (Choose one)**

- Yes  
 No  
 I don't know

Please specify

---

**31. Would you recommend the Degree Programme in Tourism to other teachers? (Choose one)**

- Yes  
 No

Briefly specify

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