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Marina Melikhova 2012

**FOREIGN STUDENTS AT ROVANIEMI
UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES**



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Marina Melikhova

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Supervisor: Ritva Junna

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The main goals of the thesis were to study why foreign students are interested in studying at RAMK, their satisfaction with the university and channels for promoting RAMK abroad. Moreover, the employment situation among foreign students in Finland was examined. The interest in this topic has risen after my student exchange in 2010 in Spain.

A quantitative research method was used in this study. The research was done among exchange students and international degree students by using an online questionnaire. The questionnaire included open-ended and close-ended questions.

The theoretical part of the thesis describes the marketing research process, the methods of the marketing research, studying abroad, the Finnish culture and the employment situation in Finland. The practical part describes the findings of the study done among exchange and international degree students.

The results of the study show that the foreign students come to study at RAMK because of the good location of the school, its interesting degree programmes and recommendations of their fellow students, friends and relatives. Most of the students were satisfied with their studies at RAMK. However, some of them would like to have more practical work and small changes in the study curriculum.

According to the exchange students' opinions, presentations, reports, banners, brochures and videos would be good channels to promote RAMK. These could be published on the Internet, for instance on YouTube or Facebook. International degree students consider Internet, newspapers, television and schools abroad are the best promotion channels for RAMK. It was also discovered that the unemployment rate among foreign graduate and undergraduate students is very high and serious steps should be undertaken to improve the situation.

Keywords: Foreign students, International students, Marketing research.

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1 INTRODUCTION

Rovaniemi University of Applied Sciences (later referred to as RAMK) is a higher education institution, which has approximately 3,000 students. The university offers degree studies in fields of Business Administration, Tourism and Hospitality Management, Information Technology, Forestry and Rural Industries, Health Care and Social Services, and Sports and Leisure. The programmes are taught in English and Finnish. The university also offers a one-year specialisation programme in International Project Management in English. There are many foreign students at Rovaniemi University of Applied Sciences which are conducting their degree or exchange studies. In the autumn 2011 approximately 300 international degree programme and exchange students were studying at RAMK.

RAMK students have good possibilities for going to student exchange abroad. The university offers exchange programmes in different fields of study. RAMK has partner institutions in many countries. It is also possible to do practical training overseas. (Rovaniemi University of Applied Sciences 2011.) I am an international degree student at RAMK and I was to student exchange in Spain in spring 2010. Studying abroad is a nice and interesting experience but at the same one has to be flexible and willing to adjust to the new culture, behaviour and attitudes etc. After my student exchange I started thinking how the exchange students and foreign degree students feel about studying at RAMK and living in Finland.

The main goals of the thesis were to examine the reasons why foreign students come to study at Rovaniemi University of Applied Sciences, the best channels for promoting RAMK at the students' home towns and universities and their satisfaction with the university. It was also studied how the possibilities for foreign students staying in Rovaniemi after graduation could be improved.

There are two categories of foreign students at Rovaniemi University of Applied Sciences: international degree students and exchange students. At first, I made a survey among the exchange students concerning why they chose RAMK as a place for exchange studies. I determined their level of

satisfaction with studying at RAMK and the best channels for RAMK promotion at their home universities. Second, I conducted a survey among international degree students. I determined why they chose RAMK as a place to study, where they got information about RAMK, what the best channels for advertising RAMK in their home towns would be, what their level of satisfaction with studying at RAMK was, if they have plans to stay here after graduation and what would affect their decision to stay in Rovaniemi after graduation. I also studied what the main challenges are which international degree students meet in Finland. The survey was conducted by using an on-line questionnaire.

2 MARKETING RESEARCH

2.1 Marketing research process

Marketing research is a systematic process of gathering, analyzing and interpreting information necessary for the company. It is important for managers to get relevant information in order to produce products or services, which would satisfy the needs of the customers. Some of the companies have their own marketing research department and some hire firms in order to do research. (Kotler 2001, 90.)

Marketing research process includes the following four steps: defining the problem and research goals; developing the research plan for gathering relevant data; implementation of research plan- gathering and analyzing information as well as interpreting and reporting the results. Marketing managers of the company have to be knowledgeable in the field of the marketing research in order to identify the research problem and its objectives clearly. It is also advisable to involve marketing researchers at this stage. They have to be able to help the manager in defining a problem and to suggest the best methods of the research. (Kotler 2001, 92.)

The next step of the marketing research process consists of identifying the needed information and developing a plan for collecting information effectively (Kotler 2001, 92). For instance, a student of RAMK conducted a research on television watching in Finland. The objective of the marketing research was to analyze consumer perceptions of television channels and programmes. In order to achieve the objective it was necessary to gather the following information: what kind of programmes consumers would like to see more on television, what are their favourite programmes and if people use television for learning purposes. It was also important to determine how often people watch TV, their opinion concerning reality television shows on TV and their opinion on the fact that most of the programmes on the television are in English.

There are two ways to conduct a marketing research: primary and secondary research. Secondary research involves data which has been collected by

someone else. It means that researchers will use different kinds of studies, reports, articles and other secondary sources in order to make a conclusion. (DJS Research Ltd, 2011.) For instance companies can use commercial data sources. The company called Nielsen Marketing research sells information on brand shares, retail process and other. Online databases and Internet data sources are also available for the researches. According to the survey, about 81% of the researchers use online databases. The most common ones are Dialog, Lexis – Nexis, CompuServe and Dow Jones News Retrieval. The main advantage of the secondary research is that data can be collected faster and at less cost than in primary research. (Kotler 2001, 93 – 95.) On the other hand the researchers have to accept the definitions, methodologies and questions which have been designed by another person (Smith 2010, 50).

Primary research consists of gathering information which does not exist yet for specific needs. The most common primary data source is a survey. Surveys help to get specific information about certain group of people. Usually surveys are conducted by using questionnaires. For example the company Bombardier can conduct a survey to determine how people feel about their products. There are many different ways to conduct surveys. For instance it is possible by personal contacts with respondents, by telephone, or by distributing a questionnaire via postal mail and e-mail. (Smith 2010, 50.)

Well designed questionnaire is one of the key points to make the survey valid and reliable. To begin with it is important to consider what kind of information is needed in order to solve a research problem, what kind of people should be interviewed and what kind of survey method has to be used. The content of the question has to be considered very carefully, especially issues such as: is the question necessary, are the questions understandable, does the respondent have information and knowledge to answer the questions. Respondents have to be aware that answers to the questions will remain anonymous and confidential. (Proctor 2005, 190 – 209.)

There are two types of questions: open- ended and closed- ended. Open-ended questions are design in order to get full answers, to discover why, to encourage the respondent to tell about own feelings. In closed – ended

questions the respondent has to choose one of the given answers. This type of the question is easy to interpret. Leading and negative questions have to be avoided. For instance: most of the people think that Rovaniemi is a nice town. Do you?. You do not like brand "Pirkka", do you?. Furthermore general, hypothetical and double – barreled questions need to avoid. For example: how much money do you spend for chocolate per month or what would you buy if you won one million Euros or do you think the teachers at RAMK are flexible and efficient? (Proctor 2005, 190-209.)

The questions have to be clear, easy and flow in logical order. Moreover familiar language should be used. The sentences need to keep as short as possible. The questionnaire should not be too long. However it should contain different fonts, spacing and color in order to attract the attention of the respondents. The questionnaire has to be accurately introduced to the respondent. Interviewers must introduce themselves and tell about the aim of the study. (Proctor 2005, 190 – 209.)

The next step of the marketing research process is implementation of the research plan. It includes gathering and analyzing information. It can be done by the firm's marketing department or an outside company can be hired. Usually the firm's employees keep more control over the whole process and the quality of their work is very high. However the outside company is able to do job faster and at less cost. The process of gathering information is the most expensive part of the marketing research. In this phase also errors are happened quite often. (Kotler 2001, 102.)

The final step of the marketing research is interpreting and reporting the results. It means that in this stage the researchers must to interpret findings, make conclusions and to inform about them to the managers. The reports should be clear and easy to understand. However sometimes it might be difficult to interpret data and a lot of discussions have to be done between the researcher and manager in order to find a solution and make a right decision. (Kotler 2001, 102.)

2.2 Quantitative Research

Quantitative research is about numbers and statistics. For example: A researcher may ask RAMK students to rate teachers' methods at RAMK as either excellent, good or poor. The most important issue in this type of the research is that every respondent is asked the same questions. The most common tool to conduct the quantitative research is a questionnaire. This type of the research involves large amounts of interviews. (DJS Research Ltd 2011.)

2.3 Qualitative Research

Qualitative research is about understanding people's feelings, behaviours and thoughts toward to a certain product or service. For example: a researcher can ask a customer in the shopping mall what kind of candy he usually buys and why. This type of the research focuses on a small sample size in order to get full and detailed answers. There is no fixed set of questions but, instead, a discussion guide. Qualitative research is usually done by face-to-face. (DJS Research Ltd 2011.) The interviewer must to have special skills in order to make an interview effectively. Nowadays this type of the research is becoming more popular than before due its low cost and deeply understanding why people buy a particular product or use a particular service. However it has been criticized due its small sample and time consuming to interpret the findings. (Proctor, 222.)

3 BEING AN INTERNATIONAL STUDENT

3.1 Studying abroad

Nowadays student exchange programmes are becoming more popular than before. Students are spending one or two semesters in another country. It is also common that the students go to study abroad in order to get a Bachelor's or Master's degree. It is a good opportunity to learn a new language, understand a new culture, meet new people and gain educational benefits. It is also a good chance to learn more about oneself and to develop personal skills. It gives a good opportunity to develop the international perspective. This experience will help students in their future career, particularly those who are interested in working in international companies after graduation. After returning to their home countries many students start dreaming about moving to another country, choosing new activities for their free time and changing their dressing style. Students can change their perception of life as a result of the new experience. The world has a variety of people and cultures and many people want to experience it. (Hansel 2007, 3.)

In some countries in order to go for a student exchange, students have to take part in a competitive selection process. However, the most common way is that the students have to get recommendations from their teachers and to write a motivation letter to the host university. In order to become a degree student in another country students usually have to pass an entrance exam. (Hansel 2007, 5.)

3.2 Role of international student in community

In most universities international students have an orientation week upon the arrival. During this week the students become familiar with the university. Students also get to know each other.

Particularly in the beginning people may ask a lot of questions from the foreign students about a home country. The answers for that kind of questions should be direct and serious. Being an international student does mean sharing yourself with people. Every person has to remember that he is unique. Everyone plays a unique role in this society. It is important to find the best way

in order to fit into the host country and to create a role that is right. (Hansel 2007, 11-13.)

International students have the possibility to live with a host family, in a dormitory or rental apartment. In case of living with a local student or a host family the students will be able to learn the language and understand the culture. Local people usually want to help foreign students to feel comfortable in their home country. Different culture, language and people do not necessarily mean problems. (Hansel 2007, 15-16.)

3.3 Cultural issues

Culture is the collection of values, beliefs, customs, behaviours and attitudes that differentiate one society from another. The culture is learned since the childhood. Parents explain their children the way of making friends, how to behave in particular situations, how to greet other people, etc. Every culture is different. When people are in another country they have to consider the factors such as can you ask personal questions if the people do not know each other very well, which kind of situations it is acceptable to tell a lie, is it necessarily to make a call in advance in order to visit a person, what sort of people should be avoided. (Hansel 2007, 31-32.)

People who know only their own culture may not understand that people in other cultures are thinking differently. It is possible that doing the same thing in one country is right, but in another it is wrong. Each culture has its own views on how to make greetings, make friends or start a conversation. The silence during a conversation can have different meaning in each culture. When people come to another country, they are not familiar with a new culture. In order to fit in a new society people have to learn the local language, customs, values and such. However it is important to remember that learning a new culture is not as simple as learning history. (Hansel 2007, 32-33.)

3.4 Connections back home

Nowadays it is much easier to communicate with people all over the world than before due to new technologies. Just some time ago it was possible to

send a letter only by post and phone calls were very expensive. In our time most of the international and exchange students have an access to internet at their hosting universities, dormitories and cafes. Some of the students use universities' computers and some of them carry own laptops. They can send letters and photos via email and call via Skype or some other voip programs to their parents or friends. It is possible to have a video chats with people. (Hansel 2007, 51.) These days it is quite easy to stay in touch with relatives and friends. The new world of technologies has changed totally the experience of going abroad.

However there are two sides of this situation. On the one side parents and friends can give support and an advice when the student needs it. From another side the relatives and friends would give the advice based on understanding the own culture and habits and it might be wrong. It is quite difficult to understand the situation completely over the distance in order to give a right recommendation. Since the cultures are so different the students have to adapt to a new culture and experience it. (Hansel 2007, 51.)

It is important to remember that the students go abroad in order to get a new experience and friends, to learn a new culture and language. Therefore they should be in touch with their parents and friends in a home country not too often. Students have to discover a new life. It is recommendable to use internet only for 30 minutes per day in order to check emails, to write a letter and read some news from a home country. The rest of the time should be used for doing homework, meeting friends and learning language. It is much better to watch TV with a host family or read news with a host person trying to translate it than to stay alone with a computer. Sometimes it is nice to have a group video chat with parents or friends and the host family. It is also advisable to stay "invisible" in chat. There is no need to be available to everyone who is online. It is much nicer to spend more time with friends in a host country. Moreover in order to save time it is possible to send last news via web blog or a group newsletter to the friends. It would be good to tell about the new country, the culture and how it feels to live their. It should not be too simple or too personal. However it is important to spend as much as possible

time with a host family and friends. It is only a one way to get a new experience. (Hansel 2007, 53-55.)

3.5 Adjustment cycle

The adjustment cycle includes the following stages: preparation, arrival excitement and fatigue, homesickness, deepening the relationship, culture shock and the last weeks. The preparation stage is very emotional. Students have a lot of dreams and fantasies about a new country. When I was preparing to go on student exchange to Spain Costa Blanca I was dreaming about a warm weather in the winter, beautiful beaches, getting new friends, learning the Spanish language, travelling a lot and many other things. However, at the same time I was thinking, how I can communicate with people without knowledge of the local language, if I can pass all courses at the host university and if the relationship with my boyfriend endures the long distance. (Hansel 2007, 58-59.)

Many students feel very happy upon the arrival in the host country. It feels like the dream comes true. Some of the students may feel more nervous than happy. (Hansel 2007, 60.) I had some difficulties after arriving in Spain. It took more time to find a nice apartment than I expected. The heating systems and the insulation of the apartments were not good. In the beginning I was not able to communicate with local people due to the language barrier. At the university the teaching methods were different compared to RAMK. However, in some weeks I managed to overcome the problems and I was very happy to be in Spain.

Many students can feel homesick in a few days or even weeks after the arrival in a new place. It may happen because students feel lonely without support of their relatives. It is important to find new hobbies, get new friends, learn the new language and just enjoy every moment of the new experience. It is just one way not to feel homesick. (Hansel 2007, 61-62.)

Some of the students live with host families. It is a difficult process to develop trustful relationships between the student and the host family. Usually it takes time and patience. They should learn from each other and be interested in

developing good relationships. If the students can accept the family rules, learn the new culture and understand the values of a host country, they can feel themselves as a part of the host family. (Hansel 2007, 63-64.)

Many students can have a cultural shock in a foreign country. The culture shock is a feeling of discomfort and uncertainty when moving into a culture different from a home culture. It happens because people are not familiar with values and a way of life of a host country. Other reasons also might be fear of not getting new friends and a fear of communicating in a foreign language. (Investopedia, 2011.) The culture shock may be accompanied by headache, stomach and appetite problems and difficulties with sleeping. For example, the Spanish culture is very different from the Finnish culture. People are more open and talkative, small talk is common, food is very important, silence during a conversation should be avoided and the personal space is small. It is important to learn values, traditions, beliefs and social norms of the host country. However, when students learn more about a new culture, they would feel more self-confidence and are ready for new challenges. (Hansel 2007, 65-71.)

In the last weeks before leaving a host country most of the students have mixed feelings. On one hand it feels exciting to see quite soon one's own family and friends, on the other it feels very sad to leave new friends and the new school in the foreign country. During the time while students have been living in the host country they have met many new people, have learnt many new things and most of them have travelled a lot. For sure they will keep memories from studying abroad for their whole lives. (Hansel 2007, 73.)

4 ETIQUETTE AND CUSTOMS IN FINLAND

4.1 Customs in Finland

There are two official languages are spoken in Finland: Finnish and Swedish. Approximately 93 per cent of the population speaks Finnish and 6 per cent Swedish. Sauna plays an important role in the Finnish society. Most of the Finns have sauna at home. Handshakes are the most common form of greeting in Finland. It is done with a direct eye contact and a smile. People are expected to bring some small gifts when they are invited to a Finn's house. It might be flowers, chocolates or a good wine. It is more common to be invited for a cup of coffee than for a dinner party. (kwtessential 2011.) Finns do not have a celebrity culture (Swallow 2008, 101). Most of them do not celebrate a birthday every year like many other cultures do. Usually wedding parties are not large, there are no big crowds. It is not common to invite friends or relatives for a dinner on the weekend. Finnish people are very punctual; therefore it is important to arrive on time. It is essential to take shoes off before entering a house. The business matters should not be discussed at home. It is particularly impolite to ask about a person's salary or - in the case of a reindeer herder - the number of reindeer he has. (kwtessential 2011.)

Finnish culture is very individualistic. People are honest and goal oriented. Finns are very hard working people. Usually there is no hierarchy in the companies; everyone has a right speak with the boss. It is common that the opinions of the employees are taken into the consideration, but the decisions are done by the boss. Most Finns are reliable, they always keep their promises. Usually they would never cheat their partners. Finnish culture is characterised by direct communication. It is important to say exactly what you mean. Finns prefer to have a clear and a direct statement compared to some other counties where direct no is considered to be rude and impolite. (Swallow 2008, 62-67.)

It is essential to know that personal space is extremely important in the Finnish culture. The history plays a big role in this. Earlier most of the Finns lived in small villages, where they contacted just with a few people. Their life was very lonely. In spite of that nowadays many Finns live in towns they like to

be alone and in peace. Many Finns prefer to spend their holidays in the summer cottages instead of travelling abroad. They love to be close with a nature. Finnish people like to be silent. Most of them speak only when they have something to say. It is unusual for Finns to have an eye contact during a conversation. (Swallow 2008, 71-102.)

Most of the Finnish people are dressed very casually. They prefer to wear clothes which are simple and comfortable. It is unusual to see that a Finnish woman would wear a skirt and a lot of make up. It is not common to give a comment about a new dress, earrings or a pair of shoes. (Swallow 2008, 93.)

Finns are not emotional people; it is not common to show how you feel. It is not common to kiss, hug or holding hands in the public places. Many foreigners consider Finns closed and too calm. For example if an Italian or Spanish fall in love they show it, their emotions tell everything to everyone without words.

4.2 Business etiquette in Finland

Employees of the Finnish companies are very high qualified people. There are hard working, accurate and attentive to details, honest, knowledgeable and friendly. It is common to go straight down to business without a small talk. Finns usually do not ask many questions; therefore it is important to give complete information about the product. Relevant facts, figures and technical characteristics should be presented. Usually decisions are made quite quickly in Finland. It is important to remember when doing business with a Finn is necessary to be honest and to fulfil promises. (Swallow 2008, 223-233.)

Most of the Finns prefer to use email rather than face to face contact. It is important to make an appointment in advance and not plan meetings during the summer time because many employees are on the holidays. All meetings start and finish at time which was agreed before. Finns plan their working days very accurately and try to perform as many things as possible. Finns are interested in creating long-lasting relationships. Business dress should be conservative. It is appropriate for a man to wear a dark suite and for a woman – suit or a dress. (kwintessential 2011.)

5 STUDYUNG AND WORKING IN FINLAND

5.1 Education in Finland

The main aim of Finnish Education is to provide the equal rights and opportunities for all citizens in order to get an education. Moreover is to reach a high performance of education. (Finnish national Board of Education 2011.)

The Finnish education system consists of voluntary pre-primary education; compulsory basic education which lasts nine years; post - compulsory upper secondary or the vocational school which usually lasts 3 years, and then polytechnic or university. There are sixteen universities in Finland where the students can get Bachelor's, Master's, licentiate and doctoral degrees. There are also twenty six Universities of Applied Sciences where students can get Bachelor's and Master's degrees. In order to get a place at the university it is necessary to pass an entrance exam. Full-time students should get 60 ECTS credits per year. Finnish Education is free of charge and there is no age limit. (Study in Finland 2010.) International programs are becoming more popular in Finland nowadays. Finnish institutions offer more than 450 English-speaking degree programs. There is no power distance between teachers and students in the Finnish universities. (International graduate 2009.)

According to the survey done by the International Student Barometer, almost 90 percent of graduate and exchange students are satisfied with their studies in Finland. The most satisfied students are from Russia, India, Lithuania, Latvia and Czech. The most negative comments about Finnish education come from American, Hungarian and Ukraine students. International students are especially satisfied with conditions of computer classes, libraries, laboratories and IT services. Moreover foreign students are happy to stay in Finland because it is a safe country. The biggest concerns for students is to find a job after graduation .The survey shows that the most of international students would be interested not only in getting a degree or student exchange but also in finding a job after graduation. Twenty three Finnish institutions have taken part in the research. (Study in Finland 2011.)

5.2 Employment in Finland

According to statistics, there were approximately 192,000 unemployed people in Finland in July 2011. It is 14,000 people less than in July 2010. The unemployment rate was 6.9 per cent, which is 0.6 per cent less than a year ago. At the same time the amount of employed people was 2,578,000. It was 29,000 higher than a year ago. Approximately 6,000 more men and 23,000 more women had jobs in July 2011 than the year earlier. (Statistics Finland 2011.) Below you can see a graphical representation of the unemployment rate and the trend of the unemployment rate from January 1989 to July 2011 (Figure 1).

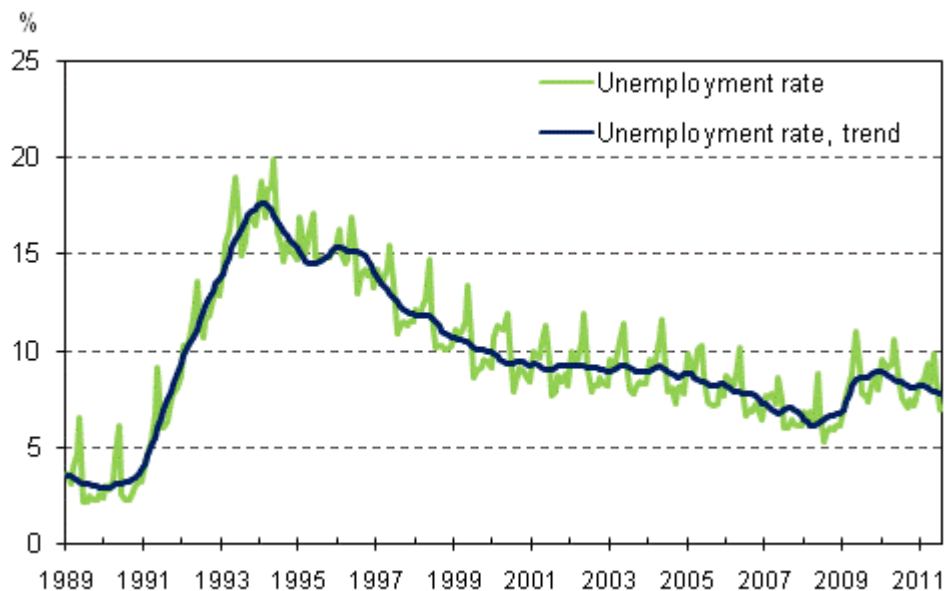


Figure 1. Unemployment rate and trend of unemployment rate 1989/01 – 2011/07 (Statistics Finland 2011)

The total amount of foreigners in Finland were 167,954 people in 2010, which is 12,249 persons more than in 2010. The major groups of foreign people were from Estonia and Russia. The number of Estonian people was 29,080 and Russians were 28,426. (Statistics Finland, 2011.) Below you can see a table of all groups of foreigners in Finland (Figure 2).

Country of citizenship	2009	%	Annual change, %	2010	%	Annual change, %
Estonia	25 510	16,4	12,9	29 080	17,3	14,0
Russia	28 210	18,1	4,8	28 426	16,9	0,8
Sweden	8 506	5,5	0,8	8 510	5,1	0,0
Somalia	5 570	3,6	13,2	6 593	3,9	18,4
China	5 180	3,3	12,1	5 559	3,3	7,3
Iraq	3 978	2,6	22,9	5 024	3,0	26,3
Thailand	4 497	2,9	14,4	5 021	3,0	11,7
Turkey	3 809	2,4	11,1	3 973	2,4	4,3
Germany	3 628	2,3	3,6	3 715	2,2	2,4
India	3 168	2,0	15,8	3 468	2,1	9,5
Others	63 649	40,9	8,0	68 585	40,8	7,8
Total	155 705	100	8,7	167 954	100	7,9

Figure 2. Foreigners in Finland. (Statistics Finland 2011)

The unemployment rate among foreigners was 25.2 per cent at the end of 2009. At the same time the unemployment rate among Finnish citizens was more than double less. (Helsingin Sanomat, 2010.)

According to Statistics Finland, the most common jobs for foreigners in 2006 were cleaner, salesperson, transport driver and construction worker (Yle.fi, 2008). The average salary among foreigners in 2007 was 2,579 Euros while at the same time the average salary among Finnish citizen was 2,737 Euros. The situation was worse in the sector of public care, cleaning and construction, where the salary of the Finns was more than 9% higher than the one of the foreigners. (Statistics Finland, 2009.) One of the main problems in Finland for foreigners is that even high qualified people have huge difficulties in finding jobs according to their qualifications (Helsingin Sanomat, 2010).

5.3 Employment among international graduates in Finland

Nowadays there are more and more international students who come to study to Finnish universities. For example in 2007 there were 1,332 foreign graduate students but a year later only 67% of them were still in Finland. In 2009, there were already more than 14,000 international degree students in Finnish universities. However, international students comprise only 2.2 % of the Finnish universities, while the average number of international students in OECD countries is 5.3 %. (Ylioppilaslehti, 2011.)

The Ministry of Education and Culture of Finland aims at increasing the amount of foreign students in Finnish universities up to 85% by 2015. The unemployment rate for Finnish men in 2008 was 6% with tertiary education, but for foreign men it was 11%. The employment situation among women was even worse. The unemployment rate for foreign females was 19.1% while for Finnish females it was only 6.3%. (Ylioppilaslehti, 2011.)

However, if the chances of finding a job after graduation are very small, why Finnish universities should increase the intake of foreign students. According to the research, the lack of language skills and the lack of a network of contacts are the main barriers in finding jobs among foreigners. Moreover, some employers are unaware of the competences of foreign students and afraid that they can slow down their job processes. In order to improve the situation in the Finnish job market for international students, the following steps should be taken: universities should provide more lessons of the Finnish language and offer sufficient career services to the students. Finnish companies should be informed about the high competences of the international students. Moreover, foreign students should be educated how the Finnish system works as a whole. (Ylioppilaslehti, 2011.) It is important to understand and remember that internationalisation is a key factor in the worldwide competition (Finnfacts 2011).

6 EMPIRICAL STUDIES

6.1 Collection of information

The survey was conducted in March, April and October 2011 via online questionnaire. Two separate questionnaires were designed for international degree students and exchange students. The questionnaires consisted of 28 and 20 questions. The questionnaire for exchange students included in the beginning 18 questions and two more were added in October 2011. They were added in order to determine what kind of information sources could be useful in RAMK promotion at exchange students' home universities.

6.2 Finding among exchange students

19 males and 27 females took part in the survey. They came to study to RAMK from different European countries and also from Asia. The amount of responses was different on each question. However, it was not less than 42 replies for the questions from 1 to 18, and for the final two it was received 22 and 24 answers. Most of the respondents are 18-25 years old and they study Tourism at our university. The number of the students who stay at RAMK for one semester is 28 and for two semesters 16.

The survey shows that RAMK is not well known at the students' home universities. Only four students answered that they fully agree with the statement "RAMK is well known at your home university", 16 students partly agree, 9 students partly disagree and 14 students fully disagree (Figure 3).

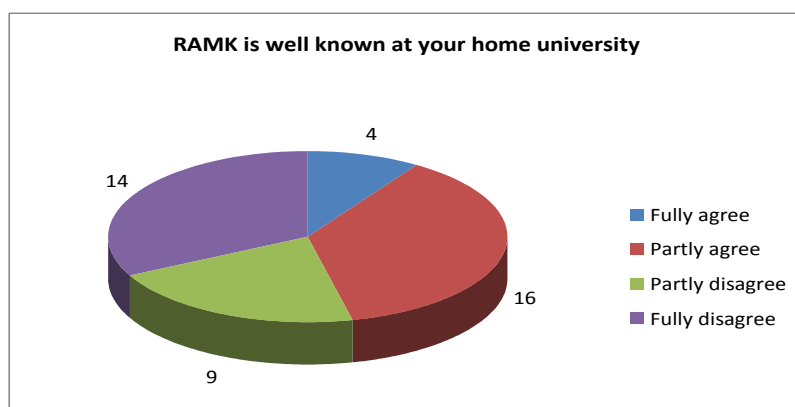


Figure 3. How well known RAMK is at the students' home universities

More than third of the students answered that they chose RAMK for their studies because of a good location of the school and 9 students because of its interesting degree programmes. This research shows that the word of mouth is also very important since 11 students chose RAMK as a destination for their exchange studies based on the recommendations of the fellow students (Figure 4).

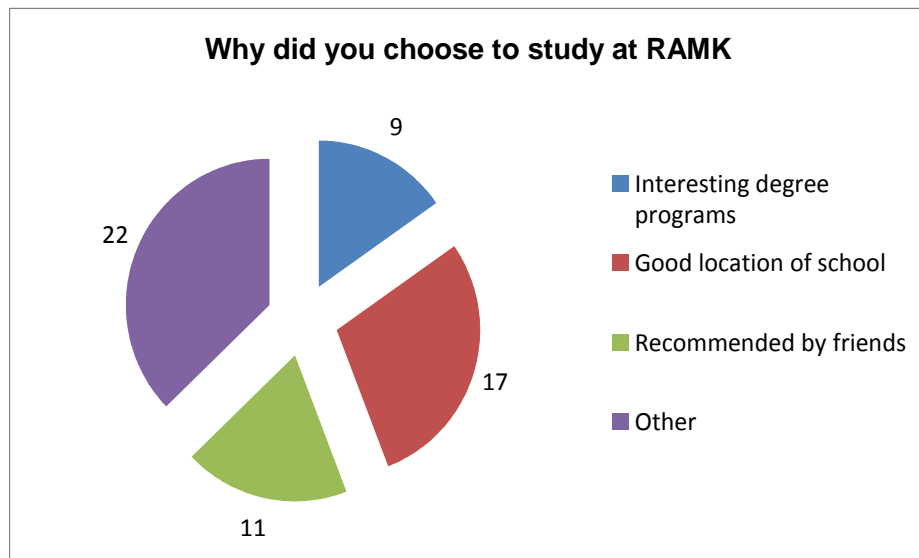


Figure 4. Reasons why the exchange students choose to study at RAMK

Most of the students said that teaching methods are good at RAMK; lectures and practical work are in balance. However, a few students said that they would like to have a bit more lectures and 8 respondents would be interested in having more practical work. Yet no one said that they would like to have more assignments and self supervised work (Figure 5, 6).

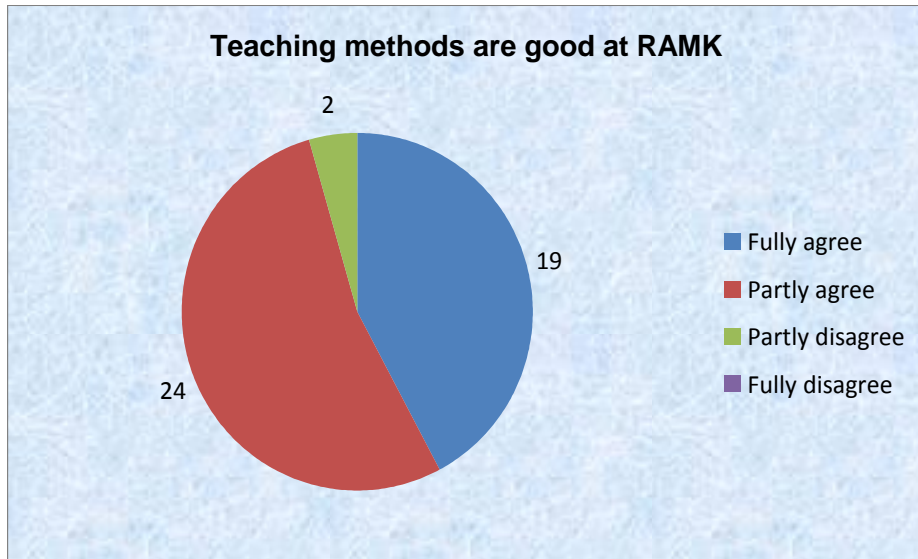


Figure 5. Students' satisfaction with teaching methods at RAMK

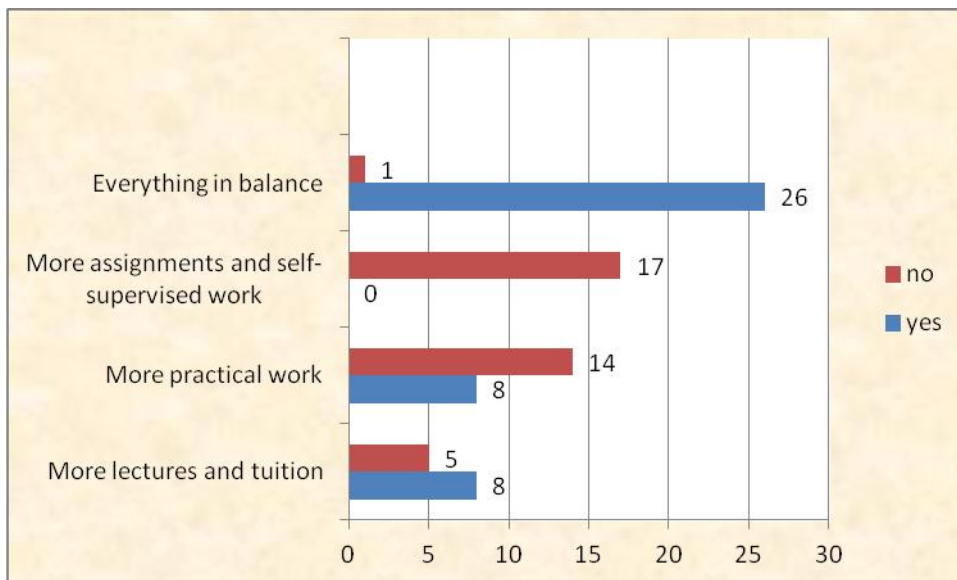


Figure 6. What kind of teaching methods the students would be interested in.

25 students fully agree with the statement "Teachers at RAMK are flexible" and 17 students partly agree (Figure 7).

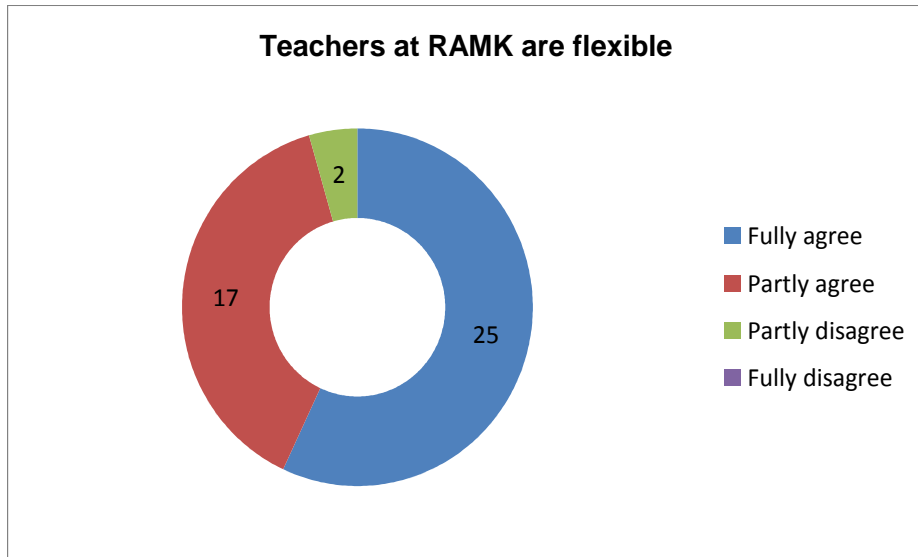


Figure 7. Teachers' flexibility

17 respondents fully agree and 19 respondents partly agree that the library of RAMK offers a wide range of materials useful for their studies. However, seven students definitely would like to have more study materials in the library (Figure 8).

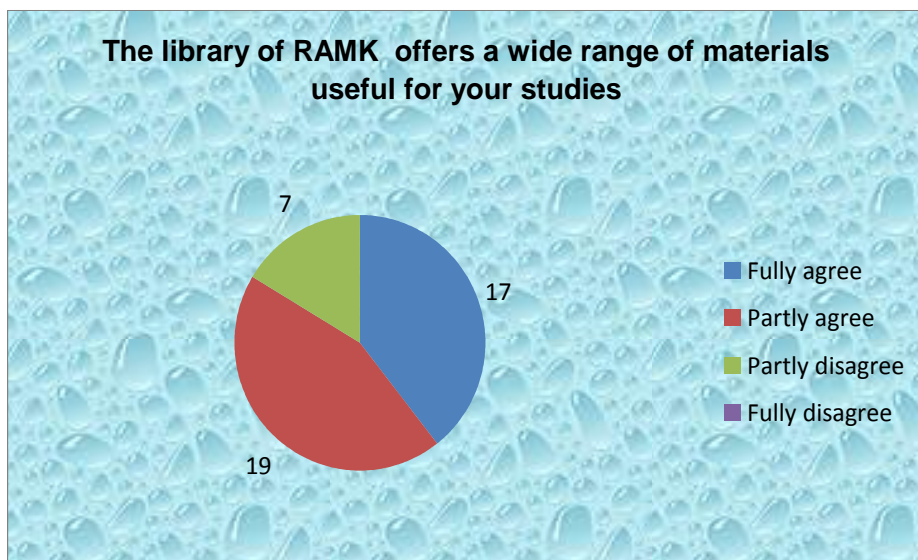


Figure 8. Study materials at the library of RAMK

Almost all of the students answered that the computer classes are well equipped (Figure 9).

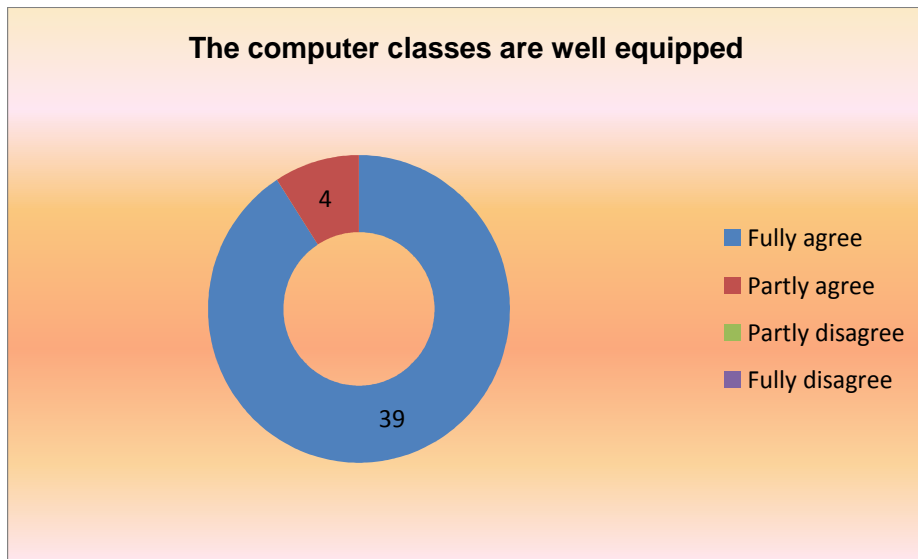


Figure 9. Equipment in computer classes

44 students said that they would recommend RAMK to their fellow students (Figure 10).

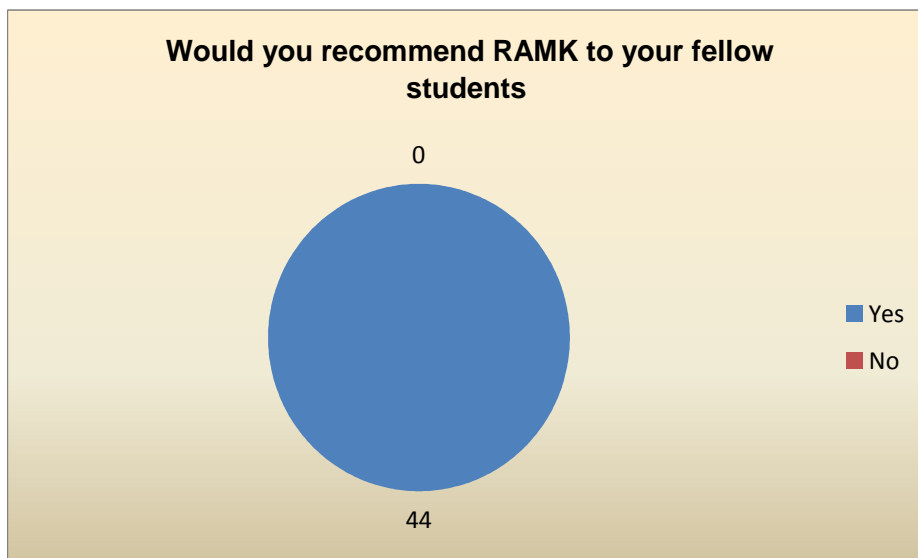


Figure 10. Amount of students recommending RAMK

It was interesting to know an opinion of the exchange students on the question “Did a country image (academic reputation, development level, security, living costs) influence on your decision to study at RAMK”, because a survey has been already done on this topic and it was said that a country image influences on an institution image. According to the results of the survey done

among exchange students of RAMK, 9 respondents fully agree with the statement “Did a country image influence on your decision to study at RAMK” and 11 partly agree (Figure 11).

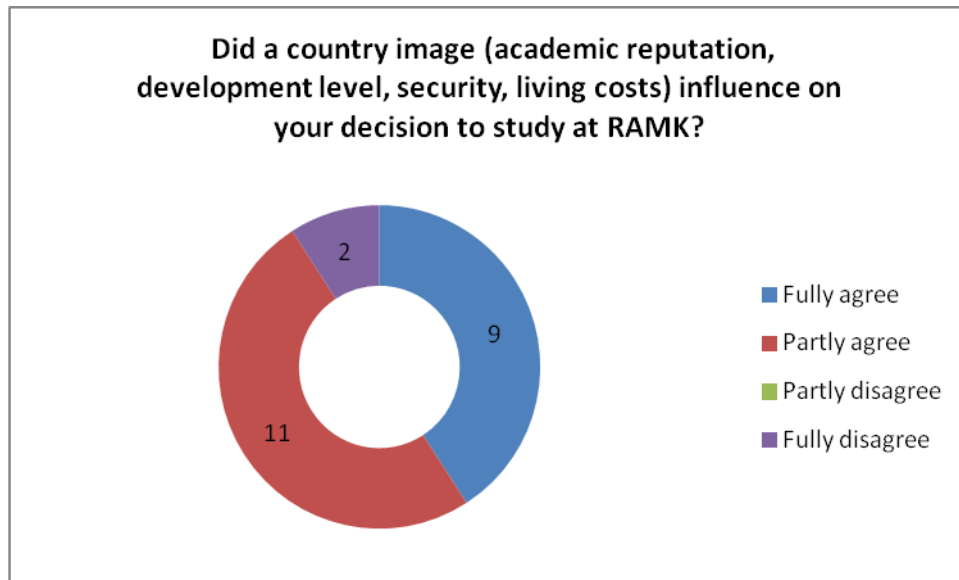


Figure 11. Influence of a country image on students' decision to study at RAMK

The following question concerning the RAMK promotion was asked: “In your opinion what kind of information sources could be useful for RAMK promotion at your home university”. Most of the respondents said that a presentation about RAMK and reports of former exchange students at RAMK would be the best options to promote RAMK at their home universities. According to the findings, the following things would be also good in order to promote RAMK: banners about RAMK around the students' school, possibilities in getting brochures about RAMK from an international coordinator and videos about RAMK on YouTube and Facebook. Publishing articles in English about RAMK in a school newspaper would not be the best option to promote RAMK, because only five students said that it was a good idea (Figure 12).

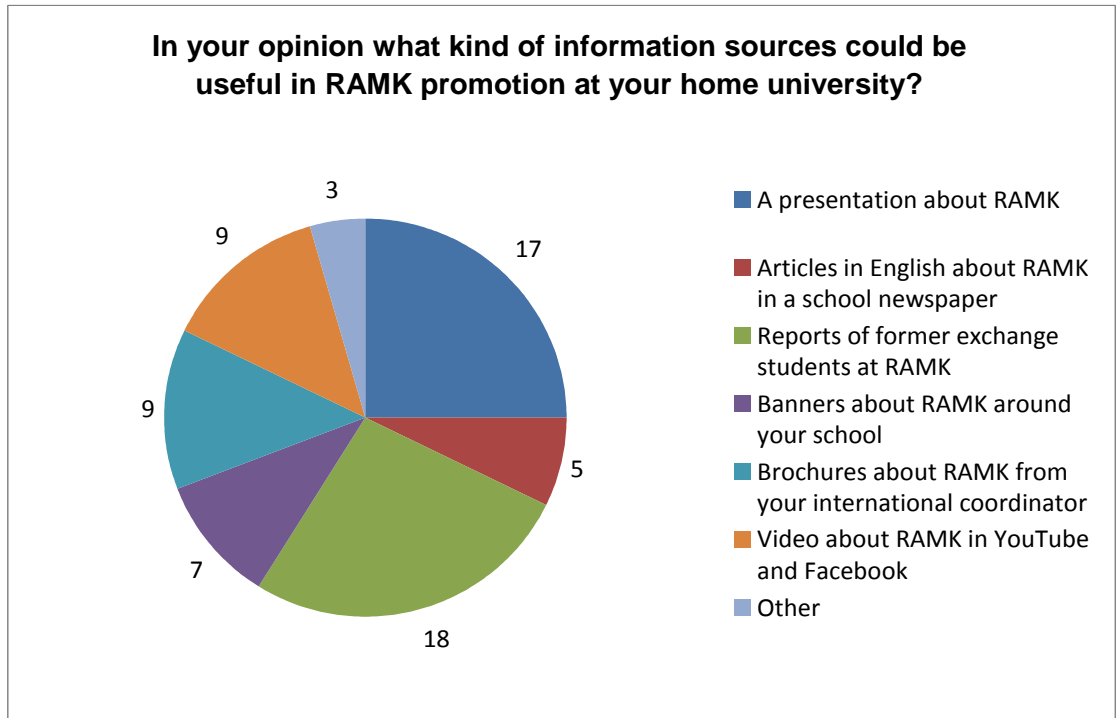


Figure 12. Information sources in order to promote RAMK at students' home universities

6.3 Findings among degree students

49 students took part in the survey. They came to study to RAMK from different counties all over the world. The number of responses varied from 47 to 49 per question. Most of the respondents study Innovative business services at our university, 13 students study Information Technology, 9 students study Tourism and 7 students – International business (Figure 13).

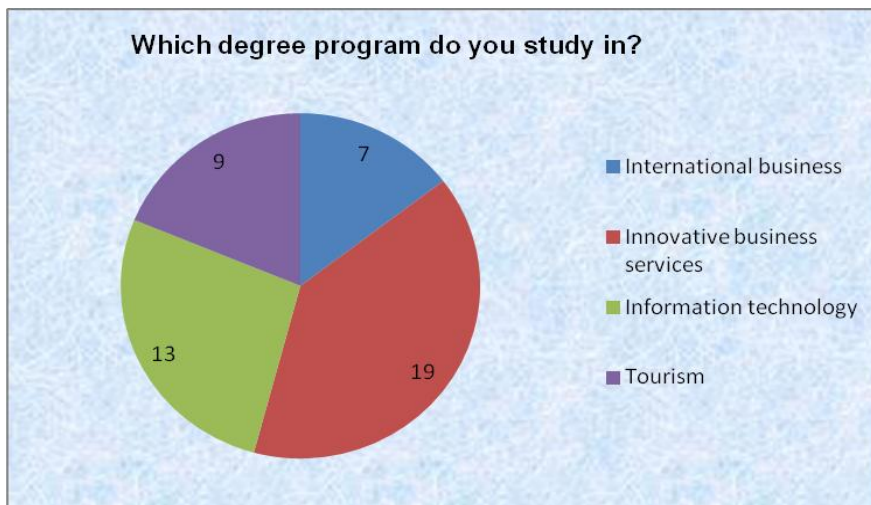


Figure 13. Degree programs of international students

30 students found information about RAMK from the Internet. The word of mouth also plays a significant role in a decision making since 30 respondents got the information about RAMK from their friends and relatives. The rest of the respondents discovered RAMK via newspapers, schools and other media sources (Figure 14).

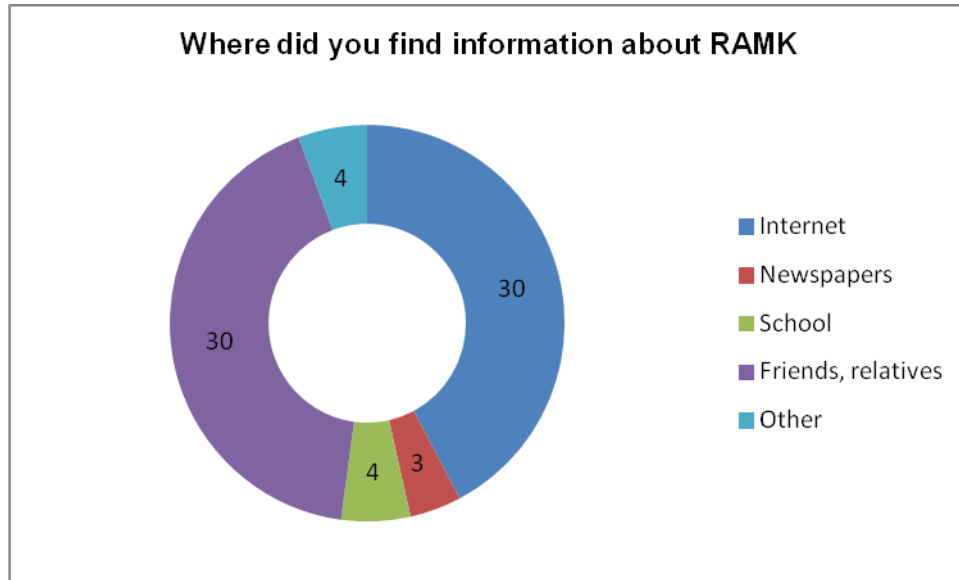


Figure 14. Information sources about RAMK

Most of the respondents said that the Internet would be the best media for advertising RAMK. Newspapers, schools and TV would play also a significant role in promotion RAMK according to the students' opinions (Figure 15).

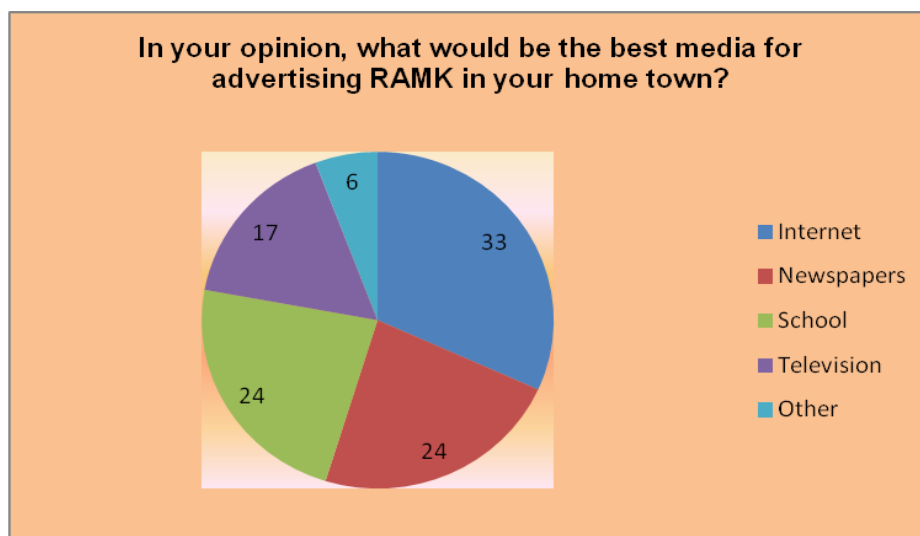


Figure 15. Best Information sources in order to promote RAMK

25 students chose RAMK for their studies because its interesting degree programmes. 17 students decided to study at RAMK because it was recommended by their friends or relatives and 13 students due to its good location (figure 16).

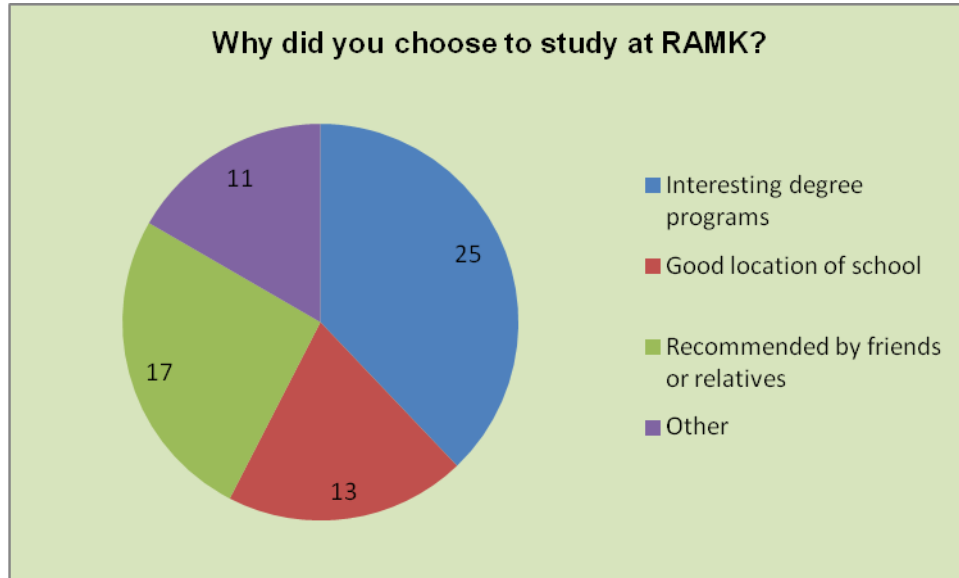


Figure 16. Reasons to study at RAMK

Teaching methods at RAMK are quite good, since 8 students fully agree and 31 students partly agree with the statement “Teaching methods are good at RAMK”. Only 7 respondents said that they partly disagree and 2 students fully disagree (Figure 17).

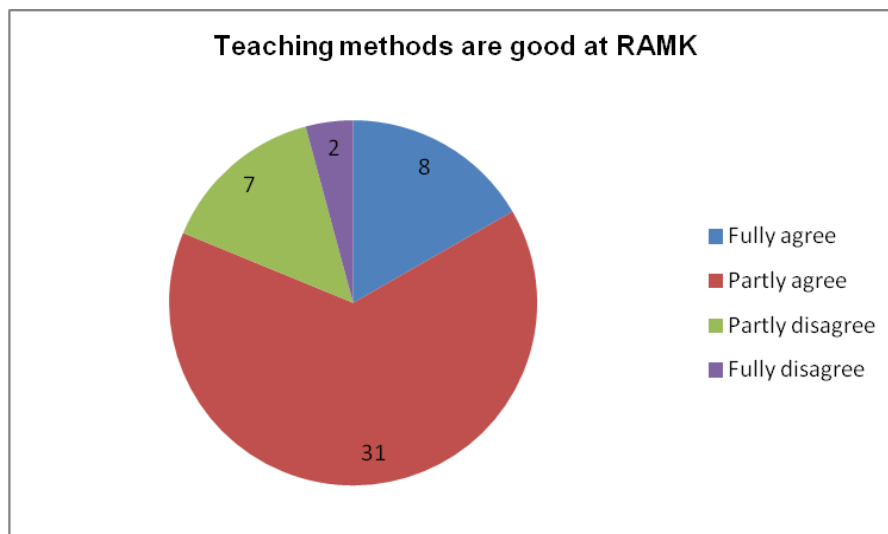


Figure 17. Students' satisfaction with teaching methods at RAMK

According to the results, the teachers are quite flexible since 24 students fully agree and 23 students partly agree with the statement “Teachers at RAMK are flexible” (Figure 18).

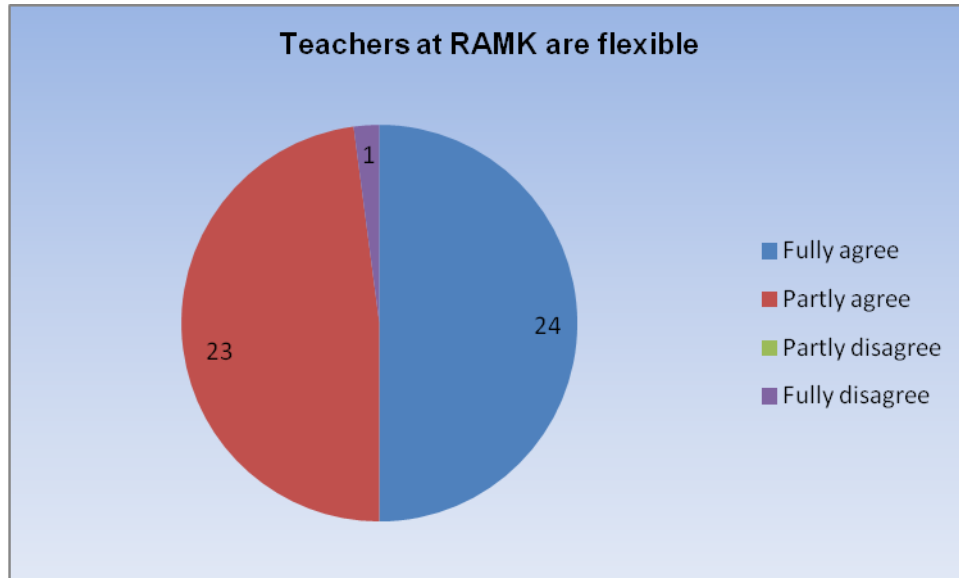


Figure 18. Teachers' flexibility

Research shows that some of the students would like to have changes in their degree program curriculum since 16 students fully agree, 24 students partly agree, 5 students partly disagree and 4 students fully disagree with the statement “The curriculum of your degree program is design well” (Figure 19).

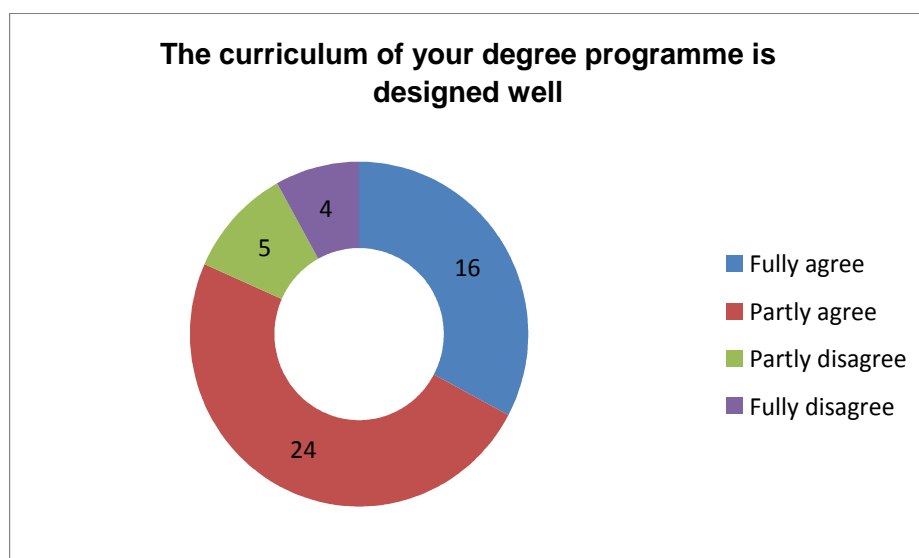


Figure 19. Students' satisfaction with the curriculum of their degree programme

28 students fully agree, 18 students partly agree and only three students partly disagree that the library of RAMK offers a wide range of materials useful for their studies (Figure 20).

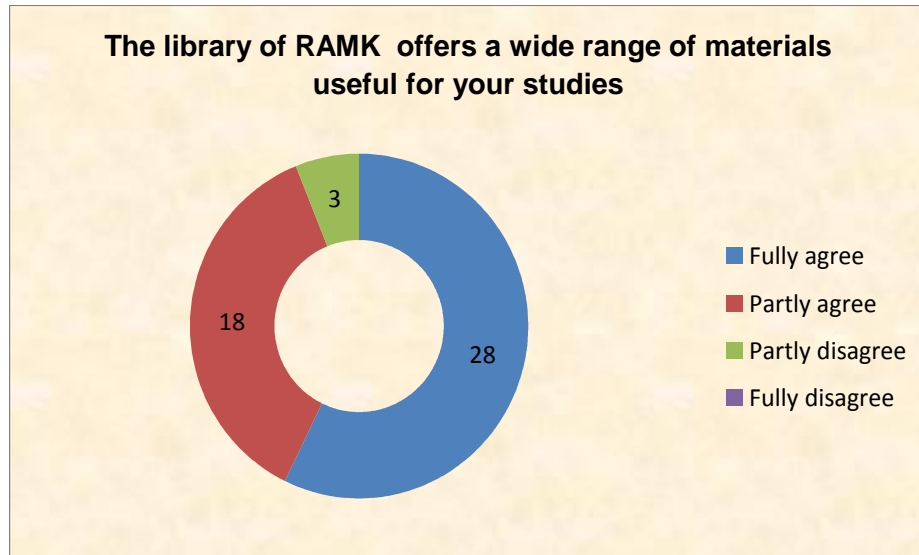


Figure 20. Study materials at the library of RAMK

Almost all of the respondents said that the computer classes are well equipped (Figure 21).

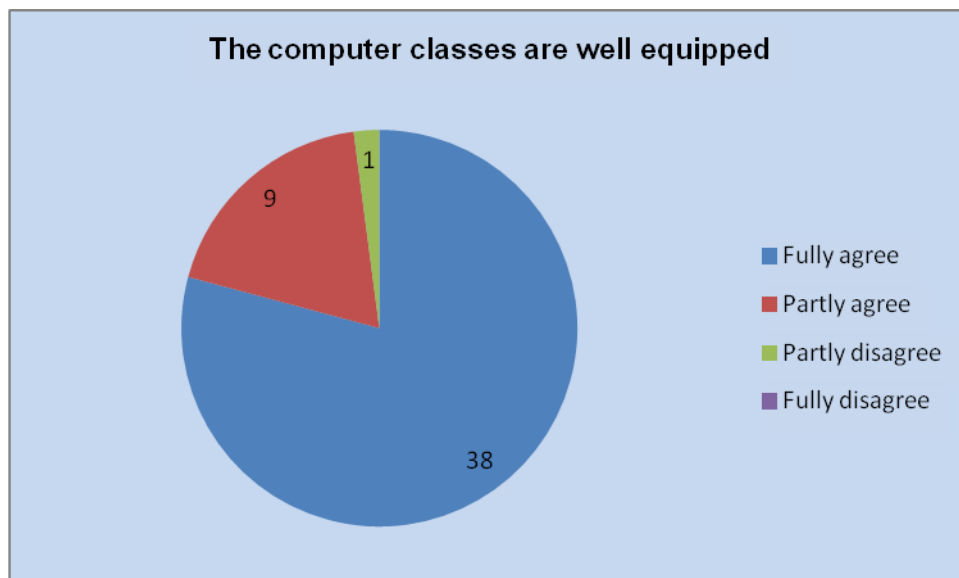


Figure 21. Equipment in computer classes

It seems that free time activities at RAMK are not well organized since only 7 students fully agree, 18 students partly agree, 13 students partly disagree and 11 students fully disagree with the statement "Free time activities are organized well at RAMK (sport, parties).

40 students out of 49 said that they would recommend RAMK to their friends (Figure 22).

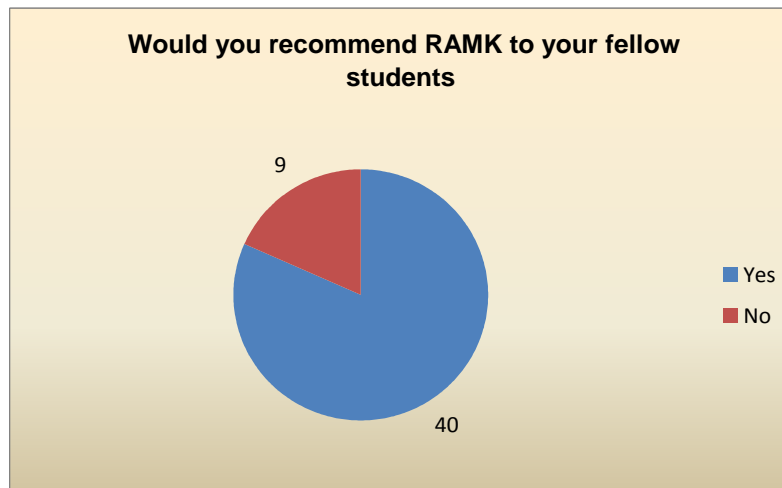


Figure 22. Amount of students recommending RAMK

31 respondents out of 49 currently have or have had a job in Rovaniemi. However, only 14 students have or have had the job in the field of their specialization (Figure 23, 24).

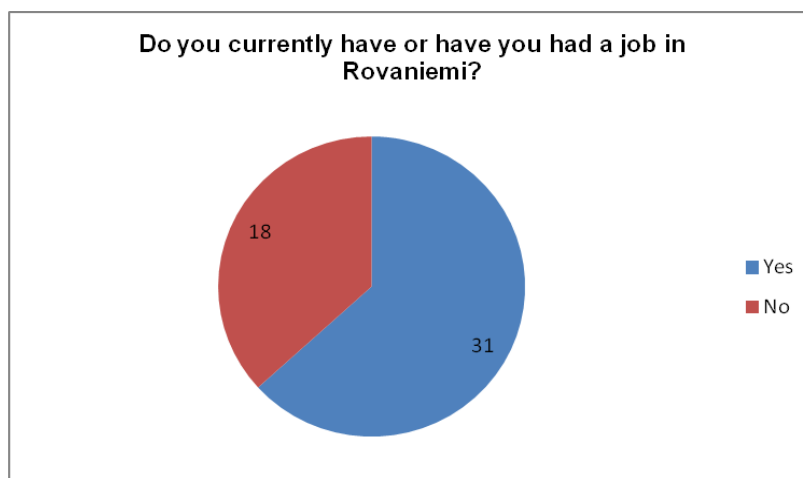


Figure 23. Number of students who have or have had a job in Rovaniemi

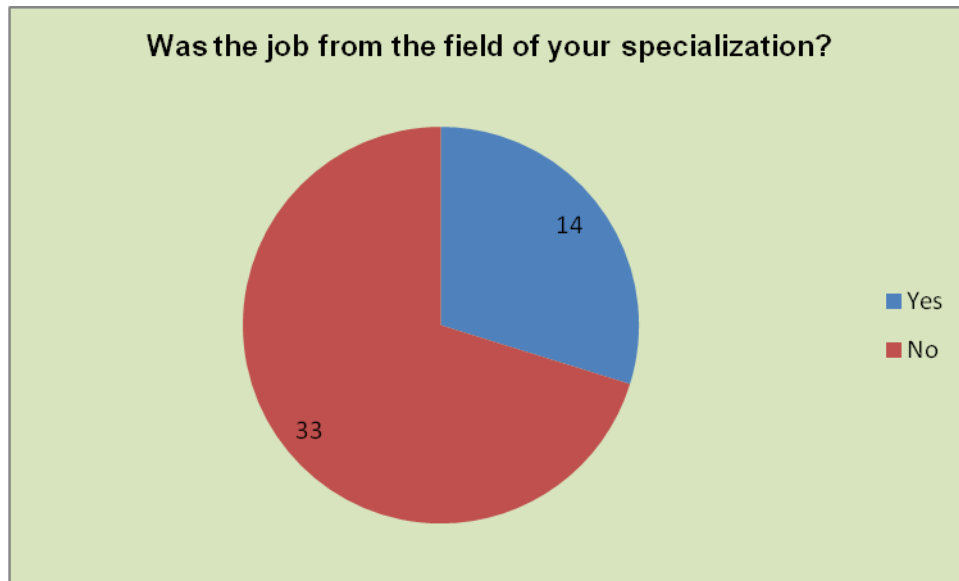


Figure 24. Number of students who have or have had a job in Rovaniemi in the field of their specialization.

According to the findings, the main challenges in finding a job in Rovaniemi are the lack of jobs and lack of language skills. Moreover, issues such as not having enough work experience, racism and different culture reduce the chances of getting a working place in Rovaniemi (Figure 25).

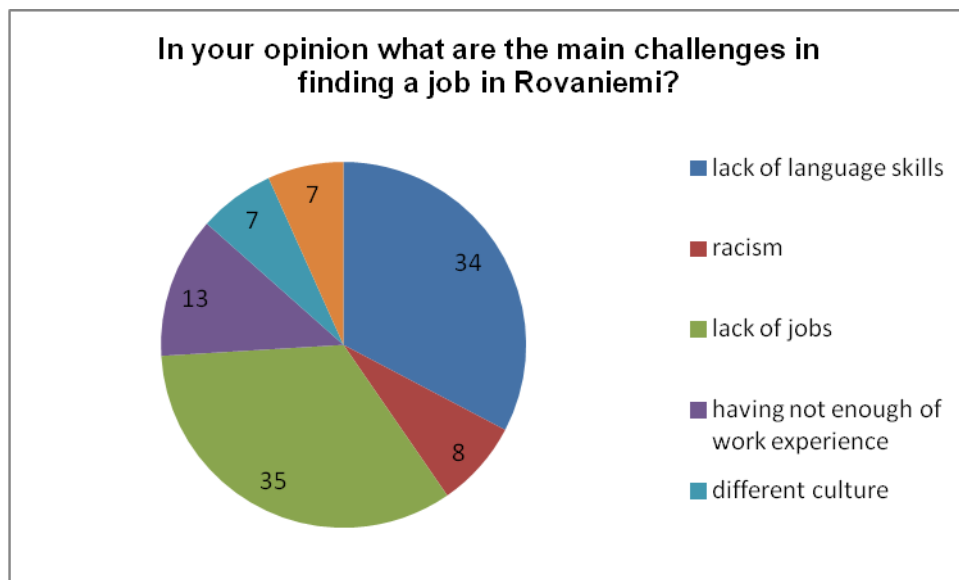


Figure 25. Main challenges in finding a job in Rovaneimi

Most of the students believe that the knowledge of the Finnish language plays a significant role in finding a working place in the Rovaniemi region since 36 students fully agree, 8 students partly agree, 1 student partly disagree and 4 students fully disagree with the statement “The knowledge of the Finnish language is very important in finding a job in Rovaniemi” (Figure 26).

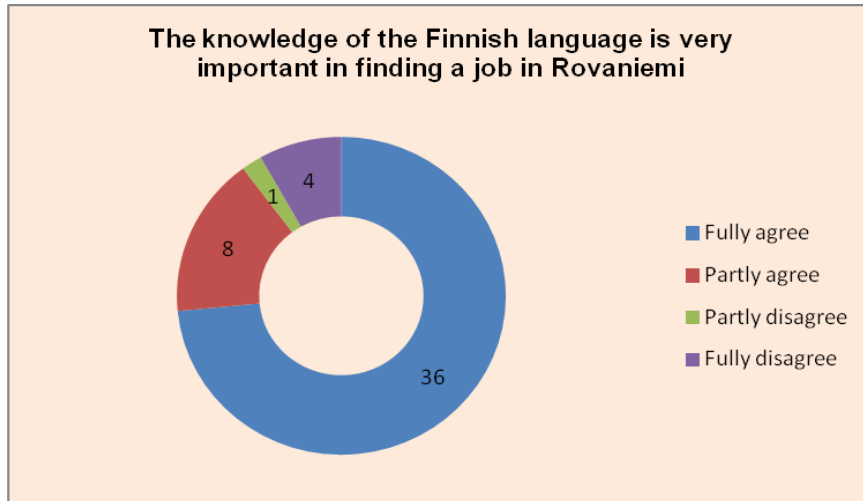


Figure 26. Importance of the knowledge of the Finnish language in finding a job in Rovaniemi.

39 students out of 47 would like to have more lessons of the Finnish language at RAMK (Figure 27).

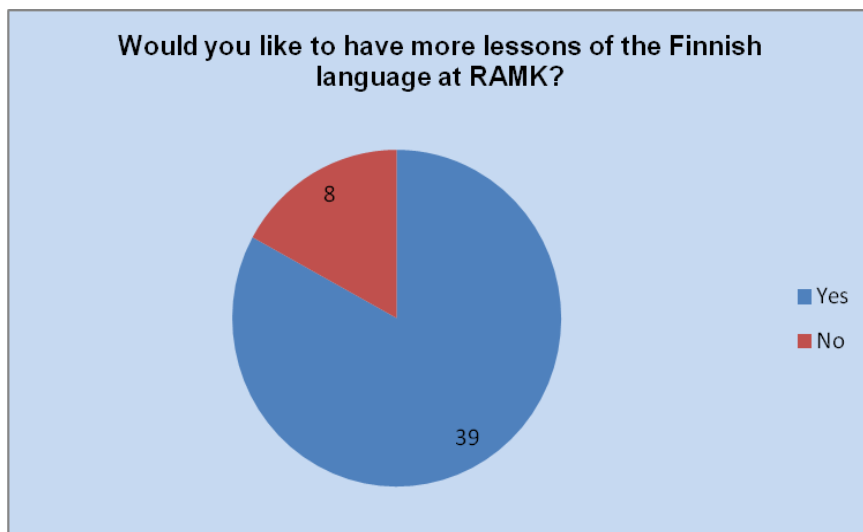


Figure 27. Number of students who would like to have more lessons of Finnish language at RAMK.

More than half of the respondents are considering staying in Rovaniemi after graduation (Figure 28).

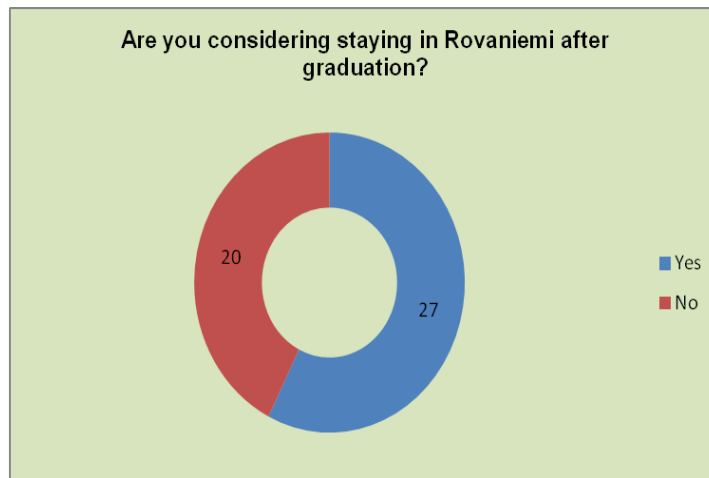


Figure 28. Number of students who are considering staying in Rovaniemi after graduation.

Most of the respondents said that getting an interesting job would be the main issue in order to stay in Rovaniemi after their graduation.

35 students out of 47 would like RAMK to provide more information on issues such as living in Finland, working in Finland, social security in Finland etc (Figure 29).

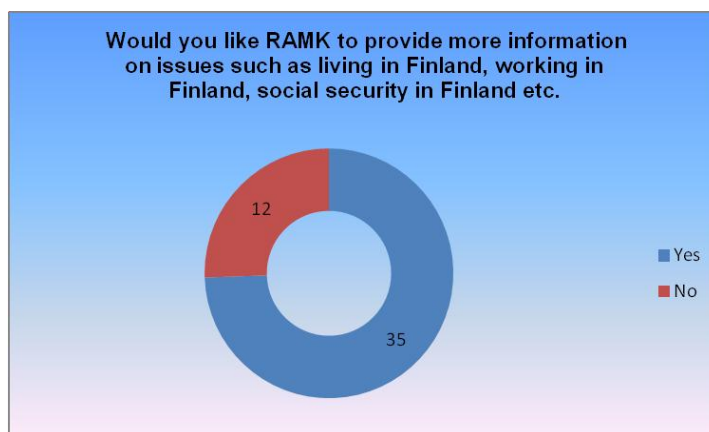


Figure 29. Number of students who would like RAMK to provide more information on issues such as living in Finland, working in Finland, social security in Finland etc

Almost half of the students experienced a culture shock when they arrived in Finland (Figure 30).



Figure 30. Number of students who experienced a culture shock when they arrived in Finland.

According to the findings, the following challenges were met by the foreign students in Finland : language barrier, individualism, silence of people and difficulties to make Finnish friends.

7 CONCLUSION

The study determines the main reasons why foreign students come to study at RAMK, the best channels for RAMK promotion at the students' home towns and home universities as well as their satisfaction with the university. Moreover, it was examined how the chances of the students staying in Rovaniemi after graduation could be improved. The survey was done separately among exchange students and international degree students by using an on-line questionnaire.

The survey shows that the exchange students are quite happy with their studies at RAMK and all of them would recommend RAMK to their fellow students. According to the findings, the exchange students chose RAMK for their studies because of the good location of the school, its interesting degree programmes and recommendations of their fellow students. However, RAMK is not very well known at the students' home universities. Therefore, it is important to take the necessary steps to promote our university effectively overseas. According to the students' opinions, a presentation about RAMK and reports from former exchange students at RAMK would be the best options to advertise RAMK at their home universities. Moreover, banners, brochures and videos about RAMK could be considered as promotion actions.

Most of the international degree students chose RAMK as a destination for their studies because of its interesting degree programmes and the recommendations of their friends. According to the results, the international degree students are less satisfied with their studies at RAMK than exchange students. Some of the students said that they would like to have more practical work and self-supervised work. Besides, a few students would like to have some minor changes in their study curriculum. Additionally, many students said that free-time activities at RAMK are not well organized. However, at the same time most of the students were very satisfied with conditions of computer classes and library services. 40 students out of 49 would recommend RAMK to their friends and relatives. It was also discovered that the Internet, newspapers, television and local schools would be the best channels for promoting RAMK at the students' home towns.

The research showed that the employment situation among international degree students is not good at the moment. Students believe that the lack of jobs and language skills are the main barriers to find a job in Rovaniemi. Most of the respondents said that they would like to have more lessons of the Finnish language at the university. They also would like RAMK to provide more information on how the Finnish system works as a whole. It is also important to offer sufficient career services and organise a practical training for the students according to their field of studies. Most of the students said that getting an interesting job is the main reason for them to stay in Rovaniemi after graduation. The high unemployment rate among foreigners is a big problem in Finland as a whole and therefore serious steps should be undertaken to improve the situation.

The results of the research are reliable and accurate. The questions were clear and easy to understand. However, questions such as “What kind of degree programmes you would be interested in besides the current one”, “Is the food at the restaurant of RAMK good” were not sufficient, because they do not help to reach the goals. The findings of the study can be useful for the RAMK staff and will help to improve services and teaching methods at RAMK. Moreover, it can help to increase the amount of exchange and foreign degree students at RAMK.

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Questionnaire for international degree students at RAMK

1) Gender

- Male
- Female

2) Age

- Under 18 years
- 18-25 years
- 26-34 years
- Over 34 years

3) Where are you from:

Country

Town

4) Which degree program do you study in?

- International business
- Innovative business services
- Information technology
- Tourism

5) Are you

- First year student
- Second year student
- Third year student
- Forth year student
- Fifth or later year student

6) Where did you find information about RAMK?

- Internet
- Newspapers
- School
- Friends, relatives
- Other

7) In your opinion, what would be the best media for advertising RAMK in your home town?

- Internet
- Newspapers
- School
- Television
- Other

8) Why did you choose to study at RAMK?

- Interesting degree programs
- Good location of school
- Recommended by friends or relatives
- Other

9) Teaching methods are good at RAMK

- Fully agree
- Partly agree
- Partly disagree
- Fully disagree

10) Would you like to have:

	Yes	No
More lectures and tuition	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
More practical work	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
More assignments and self-supervised work	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Everything in balance	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

11) Teachers at RAMK are flexible

- Fully agree
- Partly agree
- Partly disagree
- Fully disagree

12) The curriculum of your degree program is designed well

- Fully agree
- Partly agree
- Partly disagree
- Fully disagree

13) What kind of degree programs you would be interested in besides current one:

14) The library of RAMK is offering a wide range of materials useful for your studies

- Fully agree
- Partly agree
- Partly disagree
- Fully disagree

15) Free time activities are organized well at RAMK (sport, parties)

- Fully agree
- Partly agree
- Partly disagree
- Fully disagree

16) Food at the restaurant of RAMK is good

- Fully agree
- Partly agree
- Partly disagree
- Fully disagree

17) The computer classes are well equipped

- Fully agree
- Partly agree
- Partly disagree
- Fully disagree

18) Would you recommend RAMK to your friends?

- Yes
- No

19) Do you currently have or have you had a job in Rovaniemi?

- Yes
- No

20) Was the job from the field of your specialization?

- Yes
- No

21) In your opinion what are the main challenges in finding a job in Rovaniemi?

- lack of language skills
- racism
- lack of jobs
- having not enough of work experience
- different culture
- other

22) The knowledge of the Finnish language is very important in finding a job in Rovaniemi

- Fully agree
- Partly agree
- Partly disagree
- Fully disagree

23) What would be the main issue in order for you to stay in Rovaniemi after the graduation?

24) Would you like to have more lessons of the Finnish language at RAMK?

- Yes
- No

25) Are you considering staying in Rovaniemi after graduation?

- Yes
- No

26) Would you like RAMK to provide more information on issues such as living in Finland, working in Finland, social security in Finland etc.

- Yes
- No

27) Did you experience a culture shock when you arrived in Finland?

- Yes
- No

28) What was the main challenge in integrating to the Finnish society?

Submit



Questionnaire for exchange students at RAMK

1) Gender

- Male
- Female

2) Age

- Under 18 years
- 18-25 years
- 26-34 years
- Over 34 years

3) Where are you from?

Country

Town

4) What is the name of your home university?

5) Which degree program do you study in (here at RAMK)?

- International business
- Innovative business services
- Information technology
- Tourism

6) Are you

- First year student
- Second year student
- Third year student
- Forth year student
- Fifth or later year student

7) Are you staying at RAMK

- One semester
- Two semesters

8) RAMK is well known at your home university

- Fully agree
- Partly agree
- Partly disagree
- Fully disagree

9) Why did you choose to study at RAMK?

- Interesting degree programs
- Good location of school
- Recommended by friends
- Other

10) Teaching methods are good at RAMK

- Fully agree
- Partly agree
- Partly disagree
- Fully disagree

11) Would you like to have:

	Yes	No
More lectures and tuition	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
More practical work	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
More assignments and self-supervised work	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Everything in balance	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

12) Teachers at RAMK are flexible.

- Fully agree
- Partly agree
- Partly disagree
- Fully disagree

13) The library of RAMK is offering a wide range of materials useful for your studies

- Fully agree
- Partly agree
- Partly disagree
- Fully disagree

14) Free time activities are organized well at RAMK (e.g. sport, parties)

- Fully agree
- Partly agree
- Partly disagree
- Fully disagree

15) Food at the restaurant of RAMK is good

- Fully agree
- Partly agree
- Partly disagree
- Fully disagree

16) The computer classes are well equipped

- Fully agree
- Partly agree
- Partly disagree
- Fully disagree

17) Would you recommend RAMK to your fellow students

- Yes
- No

18) Did you experience a culture shock when you arrived in Finland?

- Yes
- No

19) Did a country image (academic reputation, development level, security, living costs) influence on your decision to study at RAMK?

- Fully agree
- Partly agree
- Partly disagree
- Fully disagree

20) In your opinion what kind of information sources could be useful in RAMK promotion at your home university?

- A presentation about RAMK
- Articles in English about RAMK in a school newspaper
- Reports of former exchange students at RAMK
- Banners about RAMK around your school
- Brochures about RAMK from your international coordinator
- Video about RAMK in YouTube and Facebook
- Other

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