



# **STUDYING IN AN INTERNATIONAL DEGREE PROGRAMME**

## **From expectations to reality**

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Abstract <p>The purpose of the thesis was to find out what it is like to study in an international degree programme. The topic was examined from the students' perspective by finding out what kinds of expectations they had concerning studying in an international degree programme and how the reality corresponded with these expectations. Also the major advantages and disadvantages related to studying in an English Language degree programme were discovered. The consignor of the study was Jyväskylä University of Applied Sciences, School of Tourism and Services Management.</p> <p>Eight third and fourth year students of the Degree Programme in Facility Management and Consumer Communication at Jyväskylä University of Applied Sciences participated in the study. The research method used was a semi-structured interview. The interviews were recorded and transcribed into a Word-format, after which they were analyzed.</p> <p>The results showed that in general the reality did not correspond very well with the students' expectations of the programme. The students were disappointed with a low number of native English teachers and foreign students. The quality of education in the programme was considered to be on an average level. The biggest problem was the inadequate language skills of the teachers. Other problems were related to guiding and tutoring of the studies and the interaction between the students and the personnel. The biggest benefit of the programme was the development of students' language skills. Other advantages included the international aspect of the programme, the exchange period abroad and better employment opportunities abroad.</p> <p>The university of applied sciences should pay attention to the problems brought out by the thesis and thus pursue to improve the programme. Significant matters include teachers' language skills, level of teaching, the number of foreign students and teachers and the significance of the English language.</p>		
Keywords English-Language degree programme, service quality, education quality, expectations		

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Tiivistelmä <p>Opinnäytetyön tarkoituksena oli selvittää, millaista on opiskella kansainvälisessä koulutusohjelmassa. Asiaa tutkittiin opiskelijoiden näkökulmasta selvittämällä, millaisia odotuksia heillä oli opiskelemisesta englanninkielisessä koulutusohjelmassa ja millä tavalla todellisuus vastasi näitä odotuksia. Myös englanninkielisen koulutusohjelman suurimmat edut ja haitat selvitettiin. Toimeksiantajana oli Jyväskylän ammattikorkeakoulun matkailu-, ravitsemis- ja talousalan yksikkö.</p> <p>Kahdeksan kolmannen ja neljännen vuosikurssin opiskelijaa Jyväskylän ammattikorkeakoulusta, koulutusohjelmasta Degree Programme in Facility Management and Consumer Communication osallistui tutkimukseen. Tutkimusmetodinä käytettiin puolistrukturoitua haastattelua. Haastattelut nauhoitettiin, minkä jälkeen ne litteroitiin Word-formaattiin ja analysoitiin.</p> <p>Tulokset osoittivat, että yleisesti ottaen koulutusohjelma ei vastannut kovin hyvin opiskelijoiden odotuksia. Opiskelijat olivat pettyneitä englantia äidinkielenään puhuvien opettajien sekä ulkomaalaisten opiskelijoiden vähäiseen määrään. Koulutuksen laadun arvioitiin olevan keskitasoa. Suurin ongelma oli opettajien riittämätön englannin taito. Muut ongelmat liittyivät opintojen ohjaukseen ja tukemiseen sekä vuorovaikutukseen henkilökunnan ja opiskelijoiden välillä. Koulutusohjelman suurin etu oli opiskelijoiden kielitaidon kehittyminen. Muita etuja olivat ohjelman kansainvälisyys, vaihto-oppilasaika ulkomailla ja paremmat mahdollisuudet töiden saamiseen ulkomailta.</p> <p>Ammattikorkeakoulun tulisi kiinnittää huomiota opinnäytetyössä esiin tulleisiin ongelmiin ja pyrkiä sitä kautta parantamaan koulutusohjelmaa. Huomioitavia asioita ovat mm. opettajien kielitaito, opetuksen yleinen taso, ulkomaalaisten opettajien ja opiskelijoiden määrä sekä englanninkielen merkitys.</p>		
Avainsanat (asiasanat) Englanninkielinen koulutusohjelma, palvelun laatu, koulutuksen laatu, odotukset		

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

Internationalisation is a growing trend which affects people's lives in many ways. Its importance has increased also in the educational field. During the previous decade the internationalisation of higher education has experienced a considerable upswing and as a consequence international degree programmes instructed in English have become more and more common in higher education institutions around Europe (Maiworm & Wächter 2002, 17). As a student of an English degree programme I find the issue very interesting and therefore decided to study it further. As Grönfors (1982, 40) points out, one of the most important factors when choosing a subject or a research problem is the researcher's personal interest towards a certain issue or a target group. Degree programmes taught in English have been the subject of some studies both internationally and in Finland. These studies offered theoretical background to the matter and helped in developing the research questions for this thesis.

After considering the resources available for the thesis it was decided that this research would focus on the Degree Programme in Facility Management and Consumer Communication. The programme is offered by Jyväskylä University of Applied Sciences, the School of Tourism and Services Management, which is also the consignor of the study. The fact that this thesis would benefit the school increased the motivation to pursue this study. As a fourth year student of this programme, with a lot of experience and knowledge about it, it was quite easy to choose a topic and a viewpoint to the matter. The purpose of this thesis was to find out what it is like to study in an English degree programme. The subject was examined from the students' perspective, through their expectations and experiences about the programme. The research questions were defined as follows: *What kinds of expectations do the students have concerning studying in an English language degree programme and how does the reality correspond with these expectations? What kinds of advantages and disadvantages are related to studying in an English language degree programme?*

The research method used was a semi-structured interview. Eight third and fourth year students studying in the Degree Programme of Facility Management and Consumer Communication were interviewed for the survey. The answers to the research questions are based on the material gathered from these interviews and on the theoretical background.

The thesis begins with a theoretical part which presents general information about English-Language degree programmes in Europe and in Finland, and also introduces the degree programme in Facility Management and Consumer Communication. Secondly, previous research findings about English degree programmes both in Europe and in Finland are presented. Thirdly, the concepts of service, service quality and quality in education are discussed thoroughly. The second part of the thesis consists of the empirical part of the study, including the research methods used and the results of the study. To sum up the report, the central research results are presented and discussed with respect to the theory.

## 2 ENGLISH-LANGUAGE-TAUGHT DEGREE PROGRAMMES

### 2.1 English degree programmes in European Higher Education

Internationalisation of higher education has increased its importance remarkably in recent history. Traditionally internationalisation in the academic world has been more or less equivalent with the mobility of students and professors. In the 1990's internationalisation became more and more important and new forms of international activity emerged. These included for example the internationalisation of the curriculum and the use of new information and communication technologies. One of the new forms of internationalisation are higher-education programmes taught in English in countries where English is not the native language. (Maiworm & Wächter 2002, 17.) In order to facilitate this development school practices have to become more flexible and the needs of individual students have to be taken into consideration better (Hirvi 1994, 4).

The phenomenon of English-Language-Taught Degree Programmes (later referred as ELTDP) has been much discussed, but due to the lack of a systematic overview of these programmes the Academic Cooperation Association (ACA) in collaboration with the Gesellschaft für Empirische Studien (GES) prepared a study in 2002 that was devoted to English-Language-Taught Degree Programmes provided by European higher education institutions in countries where English is not the 'natural' medium of instruction. The study covers those higher education institutions which were awarded an 'Erasmus Institutional Contract' in 2000/2001. This includes universities and colleges in all EU countries except Ireland and the United Kingdom, and Luxemburg, and all countries belonging to EFTA (European Free Trade Association) except Liechtenstein. In addition the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia were included in the study. The study covers programmes taught entirely and partly (min. 25%) in English. (Maiworm & Wächter 2002, 9–10.)

According to the research, in 2002 there were 725 ELTDPs offered by higher education institutions that participated in the study. Germany has the most (180) followed by the Netherlands (115) and Finland (85). Iceland, Spain, Slovakia, Austria and Greece all have fewer than 10 ELTDPs, Portugal has none. When the number of ELTDPs is measured against the overall number of degree programmes offered in a certain country, the average proportion of ELTDPs ranges between two to four per cent. The

Netherlands has the highest proportion, followed by Denmark, Belgium and Finland. All southern European countries are at the bottom of the list. (Maiworm & Wächter 2002, 27–28.)

The number of ELTDP students in Europe is roughly 28 000. In relation to the overall number of students enrolled, this represents an average proportion of 0.47 % (optimistic scenario) or 0.22 % (pessimistic scenario). According to the study there are about 5000 ELTDP students in Finland, which is from 2.05 % to 2.61 % of all students studying in Finland (the per cents represent a pessimistic and an optimistic scenario respectively). Switzerland, the Netherlands and Hungary are next on the list. In the average ranking of individual countries as providers of ELTDPs Finland ranks as number one followed by the Netherlands and Czech Republic. Three indicators were used in calculating the sum of each country's rank: a) Institutions offering ELTDPs b) Degree Programmes taught in English and c) Enrolment of students in ELTDPs. (Maiworm & Wächter 2002, 29-31.)

## 2.2 English degree programmes in Finnish Universities of Applied Sciences

Universities of applied sciences (Ammattikorkeakoulu, AMK in Finnish) were previously known by the name *polytechnic* in Finland. The Rectors' Conference of Finnish Universities of Applied Sciences (Ammattikorkeakoulujen rehtorineuvosto; ARENE Ry in Finnish) decided in its meeting on the 9th of December 2005 to recommend that the English name of AMK institutions in Finland would be university of applied sciences instead of polytechnic (ARENE Ry 2006). In this thesis only the term university of applied sciences is used, even though the term polytechnic is used in some of the reference material. According to the Ministry of Education (2006) universities of applied sciences are multidisciplinary and regional by nature and regional development and connections with working life are emphasized in their operations. They train professionals in response to the labour market needs and conduct research and development which supports instruction and promotes regional development.

The system of universities of applied sciences is still quite new. The first schools started to operate on a trial basis in 1991–1992, and the first university of applied sciences was made permanent in 1996. By the year 2000 all universities of applied sciences

were working on a permanent basis. The number of young and mature university of applied sciences students is 130,000. Universities of applied sciences award over 20,000 Bachelor's degrees and 200 Master's degrees annually. The system of higher degrees was put in place after a trial period in 2005 and the number of Master's programmes in universities of applied sciences is expected to grow in the future. (Polytechnic education in Finland 2006.)

Internationalisation has been an essential part of the operations of universities of applied sciences in Finland from the beginning of their existence (Kantola & Panhelainen 1998, 7). The number of programmes taught through a foreign language has been growing rapidly during the last years in Finland and this development has been supported financially by the Ministry of Education (Hämäläinen 1999, 3). The programme for Development of International Activities in Higher Education was formulated by the Ministry of Education in 1987. It included recommendations for improving the opportunities of students to participate in international student exchange. It also recommended that study modules taught through foreign languages should be further developed in order to attract more foreign students since reciprocity is one of the preconditions of student exchange. Active promotion of international cooperation and increasing interaction were stated as the priorities of the development of the educational system in the 1990s. (Tella, Räsänen & Vähäpassi 1999, 6.) According to the Higher Education Policy in Finland (2000, 22) international cooperation is to be intensified at all levels of education and approximately every third higher education student is expected to take part of his/her degree abroad.

At the moment in Finland there are 29 universities of applied sciences in the sector of Ministry of Education. Seven of them are run by local authorities, 11 by municipal education consortia and 11 by private organisations. In addition there is also Åland University of Applied Sciences in the Province of Åland and a Police College which is subordinate to the Ministry of the Interior. The universities of applied sciences offer studies in the following fields: Humanities and education, Culture, Social sciences, Business and administration, Natural resources and the environment, Technology, Communication and transport, Natural sciences, Social services, health and sport, and Tourism, catering and domestic services. (Ammattikorkeakoulut 2006.) According to the AMKOTA-database maintained by the Ministry of Education, there are about 670 different study programmes in Finland that offer a bachelor's degree to students. The

majority of the studies are offered in Finnish but there are also degree programmes offered in Swedish, English and German. There are 77 English degree programmes offered by universities of applied sciences in 2006 (bachelor level). The field of Business and administration offers 30, Social services, health and sport 19, Technology, communication and transport 18, and Tourism, catering and domestic services 8. Both Culture and Natural resources and the environment offer one degree programme taught in English. (Ammattikorkeakoulujen koulutusohjelmat 2006.)

### 2.3 English degree programmes in Jyväskylä University of Applied Sciences

Jyväskylä University of Applied Sciences (JAMK) is one of the most popular universities of applied sciences in Finland. The school has over 30 study programmes in seven different fields of study, and it provides education for almost 7,500 students. The study units are School of Cultural Studies, School of Business Administration, School of Engineering and Technology, School of Information Technology, School of Natural Resources, School of Health and Social Studies, and School of Tourism and Services Management. The school offers also vocational teacher education. In addition to degree-awarding education, JAMK offers continuing education, as well as research and development services, for trade and industry. The university's strengths include workplace-driven learning, vocationally oriented higher education, several second-cycle polytechnic degrees, strong international orientation, close cooperation with working life and business, and a high employment rate. (E-Study Guide 2006–2007, 2006.)

Jyväskylä University of Applied Sciences has a strong international orientation. The school offers students the opportunity to deepen and extend their professional, cultural and language skills during their studies in a multicultural learning environment either in Finland or abroad. The opportunity of internationalization at home is provided by the Finnish students and staff together with international degree and exchange students, guests and lecturers from outside Finland. The students can complete part of their degree studies outside Finland. The extensive partner network of JAMK makes it possible for the students to choose a destination from among several European countries, or Latin America, Asia, Australia, and Africa. Every year 200 to 300 students take the opportunity to extend their know-how abroad, either through studies and/or

practical training. Accordingly, the same annual amount of international students come to study in JAMK bringing their own international perspective to the university's learning environment. JAMK offers five degree programmes that are taught entirely in English. These degree programmes offer an opportunity for internationalization and contacts with various cultures, as well as developing language skills. About one third of the students in these programmes are non-Finnish. The international degree programmes are:

- Degree Programme in Music Management, School of Cultural studies, 270 ECTS
- Degree Programme in International Business, School of Business, 210 ECTS
- Degree Programme in Logistics Engineering, School of Engineering and Technology, 240 ECTS
- Degree Programme in Nursing, School of Health and Social Studies, 210 ECTS
- Degree Programme in Facility Management, School of Tourism and Services Management, 240 ECTS. (E-Study Guide 2006–2007, 2006.)

#### 2.4 Degree Programme in Facility Management and Consumer Communication

The Degree Programme in Facility Management and Consumer Communication (FMCC) is a four –year (240 ECTS) programme offered by the School of Tourism and Services Management of Jyväskylä University of Applied Sciences. The annual intake of students is 20. The students who started their studies in the Academic year 2003–2004 were able to choose from two specialisation lines, Facility Management and Consumer Communication. Since the autumn 2004 Facility Management has been the only study area, and the name of the degree programme was changed to a Degree Programme in Facility Management. In this thesis the old degree name and curriculum, including both Facility Management and Consumer Communication, are used as a basis because the majority of the respondents participating in the study have studied according to the old curriculum.

The Degree Programme in Facility Management and Consumer Communication trains the students to be professionals for executive and consulting jobs in the supporting

activities of companies and organisations, as well as professionals of communication, i.e. of facilities and consumer services. The students will acquire practical know-how of facility and consumer services, basic business activities and tourism and hospitality. The studies comprise basic studies (52.5 ECTS), professional studies (127.5 ECTS), elective studies (15 ECTS), an internship (30 ECTS) and a diploma project (15 ECTS). *The basic studies* will orientate the students to studying and provide tools for it. They include orientation studies, language and communication studies and other basic studies such as job orientation, nutrition, ergonomics and cross cultural aspects of tourism and hospitality, to mention but a few. *Professional studies* are different for consumer communication and facility management students, and tourism and hospitality acts as an interface between these two lines of specialisation. In the first stage of the learning process the students will get acquainted with different operations in the field, as well as with the basics of the subject field. The emphasis is on understanding the main characteristics and activities of the fields. In the second stage the students will get acquainted with developing, planning, and managing of the operational level of activities. The central areas of learning include membership of the learning organisation, team and project work, and creativity. In the third and fourth stages the main emphasis lies on practical applications of management, strategic development and product development of services. The students will get acquainted with research work and organisational cooperation. The students are expected to participate in the second year studies provided by Hanzehogeschool in Groningen, Holland. The studies are not provided by Jyväskylä University of Applied Sciences. *Elective studies* give the students an opportunity to deepen and extend their knowledge and know-how. *The internship* i.e. work placement takes place after the second year, in a field related organisation. It is recommended that the internship is done abroad. The aim of the placement is that the students will develop an insight into the organisation's work routines and into the knowledge and skills needed in them. *The diploma project* or Bachelor's Thesis will train the students for investigation, critical work, and creative thinking, also giving them opportunities for realising concrete development plans within the industry. The students may include credits done in Finnish in their degrees for certain reasons. The maximum number is 15 ECTS and such credits should strongly support the core content of the degree. (Handbook for international students 2003–2004, 2003.)

### 3 PREVIOUS RESEARCH FINDINGS ABOUT ENGLISH-LANGUAGE DEGREE PROGRAMMES

#### 3.1 General characteristics of ELTDPs in Europe

According to the study of the Academic Cooperation Association (2002) some general characteristics can be distinguished in ELTDPs in Europe. In the following part some of these are discussed in more detail.

**Subject areas:** The research showed that almost half of all ELTDPs are offered only in two subject areas; management studies/business administration (24 %) and engineering (22 %). Other disciplines with a share of 5-10 % are social sciences (8 %), mathematics/informatics (8 %), natural sciences (6 %), medical sciences (6 %) and agriculture (5 %). Other disciplines remain under five per cent. However, there is no discipline, and probably hardly any specialisation, which is not available as an ELTDP somewhere in Europe. (Maiworm & Wächter 2002, 53.) Finnish Universities of Applied Sciences offer ELTDPs in various fields. The field of Business and administration accounts for the highest number (30) followed by Social services, health and sport (19), Technology, communication and transport (18), and Tourism, catering and domestic services (8). Both Culture and Natural resources and the environment offer one degree programme taught in English. (Ammattikorkeakoulujen koulutusohjelmat 2006.)

**Degrees:** Most ELTDPs are predominantly postgraduate programmes; 68 % provide a second-cycle degree i.e. a Master's Degree or an equivalent qualification while 25 % provide a first-cycle degree i.e. a Bachelor's Degree or an equivalent. Five per cent provide the opportunity to earn both a Bachelor's and a Master's degree, and the remaining two per cent award other degrees, such as a Ph.D. or a certificate. The level of the degree depends strongly on the type of the higher education institution offering them. The majority of non-university institutions provide ELTDPs leading to a Bachelor's Degree (52 %) while the corresponding proportion among the universities is rather low (10 %). However, the number of non-university institutions offering second-cycle degrees is surprisingly high (45 %). A considerable number of non-university institutions used the ELTDPs to widen the range of offers to what is commonly

perceived as “university level”. (Maiworm & Wächter 2002, 57–58.) In Finland, the non-university institutions i.e. universities of applied sciences offer almost exclusively first-cycle ELTDPs. At the moment there are only two ELTDPs offering a Master’s Degree (Ammattikorkeakoulujen koulutusohjelmat 2006.)

**The duration and admission requirements:** The duration of ELTDPs ranges between one and six years depending mainly on the type of the degree offered. The duration comes very close to the duration of the corresponding domestic language degree. Therefore achieving a Bachelor’s Degree requires on average 3.4 years of study and achieving a Master’s Degree a further two years. For the majority of ELTDPs leading to a first-cycle degree (92 %) the minimum educational admission requirement is a secondary-school-leaving certificate at advanced level or the general eligibility to enter into higher education. Most second cycle ELTDPs (87 %) require an undergraduate degree for admission. Only about 10 % of second-cycle ELTDPs accept secondary school leavers directly. In addition to the standard educational admission requirements, almost all programme coordinators have additional requirements for entry: 68 % require a Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), 44 % require an entrance examination test, 22 % demand “extraordinary disciplinary, artistic or intellectual potential”, 18 % demand professional work experience and 12 % require an extraordinary personal and social potential. These extra admission requirements differ substantially between countries (Maiworm & Wächter 2002, 58-60.)

**Characteristics of the curriculum:** English as a medium of instruction, ELTDP curricula is characterised by further features typical for these modern and internationalised programmes: 94 % of Programme Coordinators claim that their ELTDP has an “international dimension”, 85 % use a credit system, 74 % of ELTDPs provide language training, 66 % of curricula are based on a modular structure, 60 % of programmes include a study period abroad, 50 % include an internship or work placement and 33 % of Programme Coordinators report the offer of courses aimed at bringing the students to a homogenous academic level. The international dimension of ELTDPs can be justified by the following issues. According to programme coordinators: Most (79 %) ELTDPs award an internationally recognised type of a degree, such as Bachelor or Master. Half of the ELTDPs prepare the students for international employment and careers and also half of the programmes are on international subject matter, e.g. International Relations. 45 % of curricula address cross-cultural communication issues

and provide training in intercultural skills, and 42 % extend traditional subjects by means of an internationally comparative approach (Maiworm & Wächter 2002, 66–67.)

### 3.2 Benefits of studying in an ELTDP

Studying in an English degree programme has its problems, but there are also many benefits for the students. One of the most important of them is often considered to be the language aspect; the students' language skills, both written and verbal, improve during the studies. The students learn to use the language in new ways and naturally they gain a lot of new vocabulary and specialized language skills through their studies. According to Räsänen (1999, 24) content delivery through a foreign language is seen as an important factor in facilitating target language learning. Another benefit concerning the language is that the learning tasks are authentic and relevant both for the content and for the language. The role of the language will be dealt with more closely in chapter 3.5.

Internationalisation is clearly a benefit for the students and one of the reasons why these kinds of programmes were originally established (See e.g. Maiworm & Wächter 2000, 17; Tella et al. 1999, 6–7). Many international students do either an exchange period or a practical training, or both, abroad. International student exchange offers a lot of benefits for the students. It gives the opportunity to study courses and contents that are not available in the students' own institutions. Sometimes the teaching abroad can be of a higher level than in Finland. Employers appreciate experience from abroad, thus an exchange period abroad may prove beneficial for the students when they enter the labor market. Studying abroad offers the students a chance to enrich their world view by learning from other culture. This has an influence on the development of the students' personality and accordingly to their later careers. (Kantola & Panhelainen 1998, 27–28.)

International degree programmes offer the students a great multicultural environment in which the students are able to meet people from different cultures, and learn from each other. According to Kantola and Panhelainen (1998, 29) Finnish students, who study in international degree programmes, value the fact that foreign students partici-

pate in these programmes. When there are foreign students involved it is natural that the teaching has to be done in the foreign language. Without the presence of foreign students, Finnish students find it a bit weird to study through a foreign language guided by a Finnish teacher. According to the research of Maiworm & Wächter (2002) the percentage of foreign students enrolled in the universities and colleges in Europe is still fairly low, 6.8. In Finland the percentage is even lower, 3.9. According to the study, the fact that Finland is among the more advanced countries regarding the introduction of ELTDPs is seen as a means to counter-balance the effects of a particular competitive disadvantage, i.e. the rarely spoken language. The language issue, in part, explains the low number of foreign students in Finland. (Maiworm & Wächter 2002, 45.)

Vartiainen (2000) studied the experiences of international nursing students in her Bachelor's Thesis. The study aimed at exploring and interpreting the students' experiences with the means of qualitative research, attempting to find out how they experience their education and what is of significance for them in it. Students from five different universities of applied sciences participated in the study by writing an essay titled: "What is it like to be an international nursing student in Finland?" The informants were given the freedom to decide what they wanted to discuss about in their essays. According to study international nursing students studying through a foreign language (English) see that their education improves their personal and professional resources in terms of language skills, cultural skills, cultural experiences and understanding, preparation for internationalization, and coping skills for working abroad. The most important benefit of international studies was considered to be clinical placements abroad. Nursing students are motivated to gain good language skills for their profession, and pay a lot of attention to the language and its role in the education. The foreign language used in teaching distinguishes the students from other nurse students, and the participants feel that the language skills gained through education give them better opportunities in the future. International nursing students have a high motivation to study through a foreign language and the students have a bright inside to their future as care professionals. (Vartiainen 2000, 57–60.)

### 3.3 Problem areas among ELTDPs

Räsänen (1999, 23) points out that evaluating programmes taught through a foreign language (FL) is very difficult because there are many factors involved and issues to be addressed in each individual situation. In addition there are in each case both subject specialist areas and language and communication involved, and finding the balance can be problematic. There are some research findings, both Finnish and international, about the potential problems among the participants in the foreign language (FL)-medium teaching and learning process. Räsänen (1999, 23) summarizes them in the following way:

- 1) Mismatch between the aims, implementation forms, and expectations
- 2) Mismatch between the pedagogical approach and learner beliefs and experiences
- 3) Mismatch between learner skills and requirements
- 4) Inadequate language proficiency of teachers
- 5) Lack of collegial co-operation and administrative support
- 6) Unsatisfactory information flow within the institution
- 7) Disregard of cultural issues
- 8) Lack of training and development
- 9) Lack or inadequacy of available support systems

Similar findings to those mentioned by Räsänen (1999, 23) concerning problem areas were found in Vartiainen's (2000) study. The students expressed a need for teachers with sufficient language proficiencies; many groups lacked native teachers who are linguistically capable of teaching through English satisfactorily. Some students were concerned about gaps in their professional skills that inadequacies in the standards of education may produce, and stated that more responsibility should be required from those who are planning and setting up international groups. Some respondents even questioned the educational standards of international education. The results implied that the inadequacies in the practical implementation of the education severely influence the students' motivation, also having an impact on their perceptions about their studies and professional competence. One problem brought into attention by the study was that the students feel somewhat alone with their problems. This is due to the al-

tered role of studying which has led to an increase in self-studying and need for more independence. (Vartiainen 2000, 57–60.) Inadequacy of available support systems was also mentioned as a problem by Räsänen (1999, 23). Other problems that came up in Vartiainen's (2000, 55) study were difficulties in the information flow, difficulties deriving from planning and implementation of the curriculum and the programme, experiences in false expectations about the programme and difficulties in practical placement.

Nahan-Suomela's (2001) survey deals with the attitudes teachers and students have towards teaching the subject matter in English and also towards the International Business Degree Programme at Vaasa University of Applied Sciences. The results were obtained through open-ended questionnaires to teachers and students, lesson observations, discussions between the researcher, the content teacher and the students of the course. Personal and focus group interviews were also conducted with some of the teachers. The results showed that some students would have hoped the programme to be more international like it was promised when the students applied to the programme. The teachers' command of English varied from excellent to bad, and students expressed the need for teachers with better language skills. Most of the students also hoped to have more native English teachers. Some of the teachers were considered to be exceptionally good and efficient in their specialising subjects and others were not qualified to teach at all. However, most of the teachers who participated in the survey evaluated their own work quite high as they estimated that the students were somewhat satisfied with the job they were doing. The survey also showed that the majority of the students was not satisfied with the traditional teaching methods used and the order of the courses offered. According to the survey, the overall opinion about the programme was that it is considered to be good and it should be kept running. The teachers felt that internationally oriented students are needed. Many issues, such as problems regarding language skills, communicative skills, and social skills were shared both by the teachers and the students.

### 3.4 Previous studies about the FMCC programme

The Degree Programme of Facility Management and Consumer Communication has been the subject of research in a couple of occasions, and some problem areas have

been identified by these studies. Munaita (2002) studied the students' experiences in the programme and Galambosi's (2002) thesis concentrated on the contents update of the degree programme's website. Piraux and Leppänen (2004) studied the role of communication within the programme. Communication was also the subject of Beenen's (2002) study.

According to the results of Munaita's (2002) thesis, the majority of the students were not satisfied with the degree name compared with the studied subjects. It was also mentioned that the study programme did not offer in depth studies, particularly consumer studies. The students were not satisfied with the fact that they gained little knowledge from many areas, mainly consumer studies, facility management studies and tourism studies. The majority did not see a link between these subject areas and stated that a complete separation of the three study areas would be more successful in the future. 70 % of the respondents also recognized a gap between the name of the programme and the contents. Similarly to Vartiainen's (2000) study, many students also had problems with their practical placement, including difficulties in finding a place or ending up with a placement not suitable for them. One of the most important issues arising from Munaita's research was that the proper definition of the degree which corresponds to the studies offered is of highest importance in order to eliminate misunderstandings among the students.

The thesis of Piraux and Leppänen (2004) aimed at pointing out the main problems related to communication within the degree programme and analyzing the communication methods and channels adopted by the students and staff. The results showed that the students had faced some problems concerning communication. The main communication channel used within the degree programme was e-mail, which was found efficient by the students because everyone has access to it and it is a fast and easy way to reach people. However, the study showed that there was a lack of control about sending e-mails; students got too many irrelevant messages and many Finnish e-mails were confusing to the foreign students. Also some important messages were sometimes unnoticed by the students because of an unsuitable communication channel.

Galambosi's (2002) thesis aimed at finding out how the Facility Management and Consumer Communication website contents should be updated, and how the role of the Internet within the marketing communications of the degree programme and the

school of Tourism and Services Management could be enhanced. The research about the website content was carried out by first creating a preliminary contents, and based on that, a questionnaire was prepared and filled in by some German students as well as Facility Management and Consumer Communication (FMCC) students. The results indicated that potential and new FMCC students were relying on incomplete and partially misleading information. Out of 11 contents that were considered most important by the students participating in the study only two were found on the current website. Updating the website and using it in the marketing of the programme would result in better-informed applicants with higher commitment and motivation to their studies. The biggest obstacle in the effective use of the Internet in marketing communications was the low quality of contents and the inadequacy of the information for the stakeholders of the School of Tourism and Services Management. With proper contents the website could be exploited better for expanding existing international co-operation and creating new contacts.

Beenen's (2002) study was conducted in order to improve the communication between the school and the students of the Degree Programme in Facility Management and Consumer Communication. She concentrated on the communication process that takes place before, after, and especially during the exchange periods and work placements abroad. The results showed that the main communication problems the students faced were overlapping information, wrong timing of information, difficult access to information when abroad and a lack of tutoring when staying abroad. International students who do not speak Finnish had problems because a lot of the information was delivered only in Finnish. Overall the students wanted more information about work practices abroad, studying abroad and other practical matters about living abroad. However, the students had positive opinions on the degree programme in general, and they thought that the communication between the teachers, staff and students was working well when the students were in Jyväskylä.

### 3.5 The role of the language in ELTDPs

Teaching and learning in a foreign language (FL) is the object of considerable discussion and concern. In the survey of ACA (2002) institutions were asked to indicate the relative importance of nine possible problems concerning language problems. Diffi-

culties of domestic students with English were rated as least important out of nine potential problem areas; 6 % of Finnish institutions saw this as a significant problem. Difficulties of foreign students with English were rated as of medium importance. In Finland 38 % of institutions considered the English language skills of foreign students to be insufficient. Insufficient English language proficiency of teaching staff was seen as a significant difficulty by 21 % of the Finnish institutions participating in the survey. The most serious problem according to the survey was the problems foreign students have with the domestic language. This highlights the important fact that teaching in English does not do away the language barrier of the host country. (Maiworm & Wächter 2002, 93–96.)

According to the study, in most cases problems with the English language concern a minority of the students only. In ELTDPs English is not a subject of study in its own right. The language is regarded as a tool, which must be mastered at a level where it does not interfere with the process of understanding and learning. The communication going on in ELTDP classrooms might often offend the ear of linguists, but is mostly fit for its purpose. (Maiworm & Wächter 2002, 96.)

The language requirements concerning higher education in Finland are relatively generally stated. Most often the requirements are something like “adequate skills” or “sufficient skills needed in the profession or in the studies”. Therefore it is the institution and department whose task is to specify what “adequate” and “sufficient” might mean from the point of view of the subject matter, degree, and professional image in question. So far it is quite rare that the aims of the development of FL proficiency of either higher education teaching staff or students involved in Teaching Through Foreign Language (TTFL) instruction are specified in detail. However, the increased use of FL is likely to contribute to this development. International research indicates that although FL fluency may be greatly improved by increased experience, FL accuracy – which might be required e.g. in writing and in the pronunciation of professional terminology – does not seem to improve sufficiently through mere exposure to the foreign language if conscious attention is not involved. In order to achieve sufficient accuracy, there has to be specified aims for the language to be learnt, and measures must be taken to achieve these aims. (Räsänen 1999, 18.)

Content based language teaching has three major aims: content mastery, language development and the development of the learner's thinking skills / academic skills. Focus on the academic skills means systematic development of e.g. learning strategies and other cognitive and metacognitive skills that are necessary for academic achievement in all levels of education. (Räsänen 1994, 20.) According to Räsänen (1999) the research into the practice and research of teaching content through a foreign language indicates that the solutions used in teaching vary very much according to the teaching situation and context in which the instruction is given. Perhaps the only area in which there is a consensus concerning the different approaches and solutions of teaching content through a foreign language is that the ultimate aim is for both content learning and language learning to take place during the educational process. Language proficiency is developed through a continuous interaction between knowing about language and how it operates as the mediator of the subject matter in question (declarative knowledge) and knowing how to use the language for one's own purposes in relevant and meaningful situations (procedural knowledge). The curriculum is implemented in such a way that the learners are able to develop their language knowledge and skills to the level required by the content in question and potentially also by their future use of the content. Since functional or communicative proficiency in the target language is the most typical aim for FL-medium programmes, the implementation in practice usually means adopting a learner-centred approach with individualised aims-setting and interactive methodology. This is particularly relevant for multilingual and multicultural contexts. (Räsänen 1999, 16–17.)

Adamson (1993, 105–114) identified some basic abilities that students must possess in order to learn efficiently through a foreign language. These are needed in content-based learning and they are: 1) the ability to reach a basic understanding of content material by using a combination of linguistic, pragmatic, and background knowledge, 2) the ability to use appropriate strategies to enhance knowledge of the content material, and 3) the ability to use appropriate strategies in order to complete academic assignments without full understanding of the content material. Hence, academic competence amounts to possessing a critical mass of understanding and appropriate strategies. Adamson also suggests that the necessary prerequisite knowledge that one must possess when learning through a foreign language can be divided into five categories:

- 1) Universal pragmatic knowledge (includes basic-level concepts, idea schemas, understanding the nature of rational behaviour)
- 2) Language proficiency (needed for e.g. academic reading, note-taking, speaking in class, using appropriate speaking styles in different situations, taking exams)
- 3) Background knowledge (includes knowledge of a specific content area, experience and school scripts. Sometimes background knowledge can compensate for a low proficiency in the target language.)
- 4) Higher-order cognitive skills (includes e.g. the ability to reason, disposition to think critically, ability to solve problems and analyse)
- 5) Effective study skills and strategies (e.g. for assessment and self-directed learning, note-taking, reading, studying for tests)

In a TTFL programme the teachers' language proficiency is a key element. Much should be done to enhance the general level of language skills of the teaching staff in these programmes, and especially the discourse skills of their areas of expertise. Also adequate support systems should be available for the teachers. The teachers themselves should be aware of the threats caused by inadequate language skills. If the teacher feels that s/he does not master the foreign language well enough, s/he might oversimplify the content matter which can be very harmful for the students. The teachers should also realise that the foreign language is not only a tool but an empowering mediator between themselves and the students, as well as between the content and respective cultures. The potential and relevance of the foreign language component should be understood. Language learning aims are not always expressed very explicitly in TTFL programmes. Naturally the students' oral communication skills and self-confidence in speaking is enhanced by the extensive use of English and e.g. practical placement abroad, but the second component of good language proficiency, accuracy, may remain lower than what could be easily achieved in a TTFL programme. More attention to this issue should be paid. (Tella et al. 1999, 66–67.)

### 3.6 Suggestions for improvement

According to the study of the ACA (2002) **Institutions need more ELTDPs** because they are a means to secure the research base of an institution and they help to sharpen the profile of the institution. ELTDPs build and reinforce commitment in other areas

of internationalisation. They can/should be introduced alongside other educational innovations e.g. new degree structures. They have the potential to increase an institution's range and quality of services through the growing demands of discerning customers. They also have the potential to improve the quality of teaching by forcing teachers to improve their language skills and making their teaching styles more versatile. (Maiworm & Wächter 2002, 122.)

**Institutions need a strategic approach to ELTDPs.** Institutions have to develop an institution-wide policy concerning ELTDPs, and a strategy to implement it. This should address the following issues: an analysis of the market/demand for the various offers they provide, an analysis of the strengths and weaknesses on the market. A definition of success indicators and performance should be measured against these indicators. The institutions must also be ready to close down unsuccessful programmes. (Maiworm & Wächter 2002, 122–123.)

**ELTDPs require more targeted marketing** than what is happening today. Institutions must first decide which student target audience they want to attract. Do they want to e.g. attract the largest number of students possible, or go for a more selective approach? Do they want only foreign or also domestic students? From which parts of the world? (Maiworm & Wächter 2002, 123.)

**ELTDPs should target the best students possible.** The researchers advise a quality approach for the institutions. A selective admissions policy will help to raise the profile of European higher education as a top-quality provider, attract highly-skilled human resources to Europe and secure the research base of universities by attracting future Ph.D. candidates and young scientists. (Maiworm & Wächter 2002, 123–124.)

**Students should be selected carefully, supported by standard admission instruments.** Therefore institutions should keep in mind views both to English-language proficiency and content knowledge. They should organise examinations and interviews for promising candidates from the basis of paper credentials. They should also cooperate with the academic institutions of the source countries with which they have regular contacts. The writers also suggest the development of a standardised European aptitude test geared to the particular quality requirements of European higher education institutions. (Maiworm & Wächter 2002, 124.)

**Teachers should have an advanced knowledge in English.** Institutions should test the English skills of the teaching staff and offer teachers upgrading courses designed for the task of teaching in English. For teachers with difficulties these courses should be compulsory. Intercultural communication should be introduced to all teachers. Institutions should hire such candidates who have a good command of English. Visiting lecturers from English-speaking countries should complement the teaching body. (Maiworm & Wächter 2002, 125.) Takala (1994) agrees that more formal assessment of proficiency of teaching in a foreign language would be needed. The teacher needs to have a sufficient command of the language in order to be able to do a good job in teaching in a foreign language. A reliable test of proficiency would be useful for individual teachers who are thinking of starting to teach in a foreign language. The test would also be useful for the institutions; they could demonstrate to students and parents etc. that the involved teaching staff possesses the requisite language proficiency. Furthermore, the test would be useful in the context of e.g. teacher exchange and in other forms of international contacts in the educational field. (Takala 1994, 47.)

**ELTDPs require new and realistic curricula planning.** The curricula cannot be simply the same as in “standard” programmes. The additional workload for the adaptation process and for additional introduction and language courses need to be taken into consideration. The use of a credit system is helpful to measure student workload. (Maiworm & Wächter 2002, 126.)

In a national level in Finland, more attention should be paid to the reasons why TTFL programmes are established. The quantity of the programmes is great but their standard should be upgraded. Also a clearer distinction between programmes taught in Finnish and those taught through a foreign language should be made. In most cases the literal translations from Finnish into the FL neither work well nor produce adequately relevant content. When organising a FL programme more attention should be paid also to the role, significance and relevance of the foreign language. At the moment the language component is underrated and the potential of these programmes is not fully understood. It was also recommended that the Ministry of Education should contribute to defining the acceptable language proficiency level of teachers teaching in TTFL programmes, and providing an adequate support system for teacher development in this area. It should be understood that even if a teacher is an expert of his/her

field s/he might not be willing or capable to teach through a foreign language. The terminology used in programmes taught through a foreign language should be reconsidered by the Ministry of Education together with school representatives, because terms and concepts are now used indiscriminately in some of the TTFL programmes in universities of applied sciences. There should be uniformity within degrees representing the same field about how work placements are credited. (Tella et al. 1999, 65–66.)

## 4 SERVICE AND EDUCATION QUALITY

### 4.1 Definition of service

A service is a complicated phenomenon and many definitions of it exist. Kotler and Armstrong (2004, 276) define service as “Anything that can be offered to a market for attention, acquisition, use or consumption that might satisfy a want or need.” Four special service characteristics can be distinguished: *intangibility*, *inseparability*, *variability* and *perishability*. Intangibility means that services cannot be seen, felt, tasted, heard or smelled before they are bought. Inseparability refers to the fact that services are produced and consumed at the same time and cannot be separated from their providers, whether the providers are people or machines. Variability means that the quality of services may vary greatly, depending on who provides them, when, where and how. Perishability means that services cannot be stored for later use or sale. (Kotler & Armstrong 2004, 299.)

A similar definition of service was made by Zeithaml, Parasuraman & Berry (1990). According to them there are three fundamental ways services are different from goods in terms of how they are produced, consumed and evaluated. Firstly, services are *intangible* in nature. They are performances and experiences rather than objects, and precise manufacturing specifications can rarely be set for services. Secondly, services are *heterogeneous*: their performance varies according to the producer, customer and time. Thirdly, the production and consumption of many services are *inseparable*, meaning that the service is, at least to some extent, produced and consumed simultaneously. (Zeithaml et al. 1990, 15–16.)

Grönroos (2000) points out that although many services include also tangible elements, e.g. food in a restaurant, the essence of a service is the intangibility of the phenomenon itself. Another element of service used in many definitions is the fact that services usually do not result in ownership of anything. This is the case, for example, when using an airline’s or bank’s services. Naturally there are also services that do result in ownership, such as using the service of a grocery store. Grönroos describes services as processes or activities which are intangible in nature. The meaning of service can range from personal service to service as a product. The most important characteristic of services is their process nature. This means that services consist of series of activities where a number of different types of resources are used, often in direct in-

teraction with the customer. The process, especially the part in which the customer participates, becomes part of the solution. (Grönroos 2000, 46–49.) This definition which views services as processes highlighting the importance of interaction between the service provider and customer, and emphasizing the customers' role in the process is also applicable in this thesis. The type of service discussed in this thesis is education in which the school is the service provider and the students are the customers. The interaction between these two and the students' role are significant factors in the whole service process.

Services are traditionally viewed only as something provided by a certain type of organization, 'a service organization'. This is misleading, firstly, because it neglects the *hidden services* of manufacturers and agriculture, and secondly because it views service as a sector of economy rather than as a perspective on how to create competitive advantage. All goods manufacturers offer services to their customers, including e.g. providing information, handling logistics and offering engineering and other professional services. These types of services form a substantial part of the total invoicing of most companies. These services can be labelled as hidden services, and companies have started to see their strategic value as part of the package offered to customers and the potential for the development and maintenance of a sustainable competitive advantage. (Grönroos 2000, 1–2.) Today a growing number of industries, manufacturers and service firms are facing a competitive service competition. A total service offering, which is seen as a solution to customer problems, becomes a service. In fact, when service competition is considered to be the key for success for everybody and the product is defined as a service, every business is a service business. (Grönroos 2000, 28–29.)

#### 4.2 Service quality

One of the major ways service firms can differentiate themselves is by delivering consistently higher quality than the competitors do. Service industries have followed the example of manufacturers and joined the customer-driven quality movement. Service quality is, however, harder to define and judge than product quality. (Kotler & Armstrong 2004, 302.) The quality of goods is traditionally related to the technical specifications of goods. Therefore a lot of goods-related quality know-how is not directly

applicable for services because of their unique nature. Services, as series of processes, where production and consumption cannot be separated and where the customer participates in the production process, are perceived as very complex. This makes the service quality also a complicated issue. It is essential for companies to understand what customers are really looking for in services and which aspects they evaluate. Only when understanding this, it will be possible to identify the ways of managing these evaluations and influencing them in a desired direction. Therefore the relationship between the service concept, the service offered to customers and customer benefits has to be clear. (Grönroos 2000, 61–62.)

For customers, the service quality is more difficult to evaluate than the goods quality. Therefore, it might be more difficult for the marketer to comprehend the criteria customers use to evaluate services. Customers do not evaluate the service quality merely on the outcome of a service but they also consider the process of service delivery. The criteria that count when evaluating service quality are defined by customers; other judgements are essentially irrelevant. Service quality perceptions are based on how well a provider performs compared to customers' expectations about how the provider should perform. (Zeithaml et al. 1990, 16.) In other words the quality of a particular product or service is whatever the customer perceives it to be. There is a risk that when quality is defined too narrowly, e.g. considering mainly the technical specifications of a product or service, quality programs become too narrow in scope. Customers often perceive quality as a much broader concept, and aspects other than technical ones often dominate the quality experience. It is essential that service providers define quality in the same way customers do. (Grönroos 2000, 63.) In the following chapters the issue of service quality is discussed in more detail.

### 4.3 Quality dimensions

During service encounters interactions between the service provider and the customers occur. These include a series of moments of truth, which are situations in which the service provider has the opportunity to demonstrate to the customer the quality of its services. What happens in these buyer-seller interactions will obviously have a critical impact on the perceived service quality. Basically, the quality of service as customers perceive it has two dimensions; **a technical dimension** and **a functional dimension**.

The technical dimension, also called outcome dimension, refers to *what* the customer is left with when the service production process and the buyer-seller interactions are over. This can be for example a room in a hotel, a meal in a restaurant, or a new hair-cut after going to the hairdresser. These outcomes are a part of the quality experience, and frequently this dimension can be measured relatively objectively by customers because of its characteristics as a technical solution to a problem. (Grönroos 2000, 63.)

However, due to the number of interactions between the service provider and the customer, the technical quality dimension does not count for the total perceived service quality. The way in which the technical quality is transferred to the customer also influences the customer. Functional quality is process-related and refers to *how* the customer receives the service and *how* he experiences the simultaneous production and consumption process. Functional quality is closely related to how the moments of truth of the service encounters are taken care of and how the service provider operates. Naturally, the functional quality dimension cannot be evaluated as objectively as the technical dimension; customers often perceive it very subjectively. Another important dimension regarding the service quality is company and/or local image which can affect the perception of quality in different ways. If the service provider has a favourable image, minor mistakes can be forgiven, but if mistakes occur frequently the image will be damaged. If the image is negative to begin with, the impact of any mistakes will often be remarkably greater than it otherwise would be. The image can be seen to act like a filter in the quality perception. The total perceived quality of a service is a combination of the technical and functional quality affected by the image of the company. (Grönroos 2000, 63–64.)

In service contexts the quality can often be seen as the foundation of a competitive advantage. In order to make right decisions and take right actions, companies must first determine which quality dimension is the vital part of great total quality. The technical quality of a service is usually a prerequisite for a good total quality and it has to be on an acceptable level. However, if customers are to be satisfied with the total service quality, also functional quality has to be good. When a number of firms are competing with similar technical quality, it is the functional quality that matters. Hence, firms compete with their service processes and the functional quality impact created by them. (Grönroos 2000, 66.)

#### 4.4 The perceived service quality

The quality perception process is more complicated than just considering the experiences of the quality dimensions that determine whether the quality is perceived good, bad or neutral. Good perceived quality is obtained when the experienced quality meets the expectations of the customer's expected quality. (Grönroos 2000, 67.) According to the exploratory study of Zeithaml and colleagues (1990) good service quality is meeting or exceeding the customer expectations of a particular service. Perceived service quality can therefore be defined as *the extent of discrepancy between customers' expectations or desires and their perceptions* (Zeithaml et al. 1990, 19). The expected quality is a function of several key factors. Word-of-mouth communication is a potential determinant of customer expectations. Expectations also seem to vary depending on customers' individual characteristics and circumstances, therefore personal needs can affect customer expectations. Past experience can also influence customers' expectation levels. Customers with more experience of a certain service can have different expectations than those who have never used a service before. Another element is external communications, including a variety of different direct and indirect messages conveyed by service providers to customers, e.g. advertising, TV commercials, direct mailing etc. They play a key role in shaping customers' expectations. One factor influencing expectations and seen as a part of the influence on external communications is the price. (Zeithaml et al. 1990, 16–19.) Grönroos (2000, 68) sees that also a company/local image plays a central role in the customer perception of the service quality. In this thesis the definition of quality in service is based on Grönroos' ideas presented above, and on Gummesson's (1993) model which is presented next. This model was also used as a basis for defining the quality in education.

#### 4.5 The Gummesson 4Q Model of Offering Quality

Below is presented the 4Q Model of Offering Quality developed by Gummesson (1993) (Grönroos 2000, 71.) This model has been developed based on earlier models. The underlying idea is that services and physical goods are integral parts of services. The model is intended to help in developing and managing quality regardless of whether services or physical goods are the core of the offering. This model includes expectations and experiences as variables and also an image and a brand variable. The

image refers to the company image. The image is related to customers' view of a firm, whereas the brand refers to the view of a product that is created in the minds of customers. According to the model, customers' perception of the total quality influences the image of the firm, and on the other hand it also contributes decisively to the brand that is emerging in the minds of the customers. There are two sources of quality in the model; design quality, and production and delivery quality. The design quality refers to how well the service and goods elements and their combination are developed into a functioning package. If there are errors in the design quality the result will be poor performance and negative experiences for customers. How the package and its elements are then produced and delivered compared to the design refers to the production and delivery quality. A quality problem occurs if there are problems either in the production of goods elements in service processes or if the delivery of goods does not correspond to the expectations.

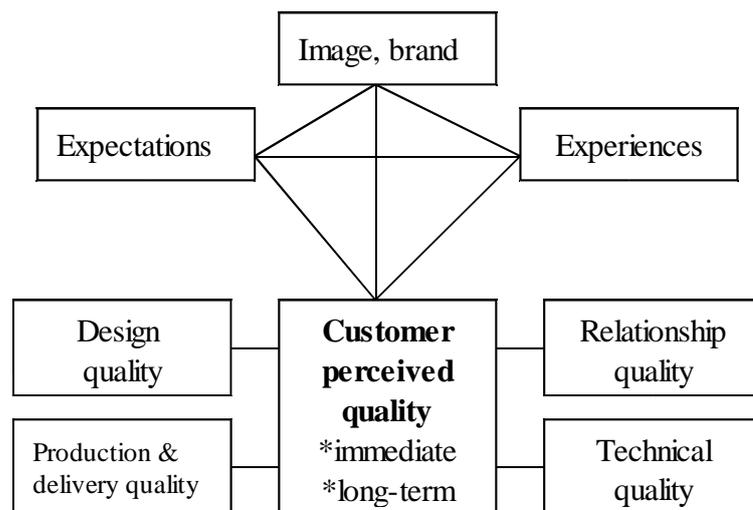


Figure 1. The Gummesson 4Q Model of Offering Quality.

The two other quality concepts, relational quality and technical quality, form the result of the goods production and delivery, and of the service process. The relational quality refers to the way the customer perceives the quality during a service process. Service employees who are customer-oriented, considerate and empathetic contribute to the relational quality in a positive way. The relational quality is closely related to the

functional quality dimension mentioned earlier. The short-term and long-term benefits of a package are referred as the technical quality. The technical quality is good, for example, when a car performs according to the specifications or a person's economic security is well covered by an insurance company. The Gummesson model takes into account the fact that good quality or quality problems can be traced back to the factory or back office (production quality) or even further to the design table (design quality). (Grönroos 2000, 70–72.)

#### 4.5.1 Image and brand

The image represents the values customers, lost customers, potential customers and other groups connect with the organisation. The image exists on several levels; a large company can have an overall company image as well as a local image. Company images on different levels are, however, interrelated because the overall image influences the perception of the local organisation. A favourable and well-known image is an asset to any company because it has an impact on customer perceptions of the communication and operations of the firm. The image has at least the following roles: 1) *Image communicates expectations* together with external marketing campaigns and word of mouth communication. Image has an impact on expectations and it helps people to screen information. A positive image makes it easier for a firm to communicate effectively and makes people more perceptive for a favourable word of mouth. Consequently, a negative image has the opposite effect. 2) *The image acts as a filter* which influences the perception of the performance of the company. Both the technical quality and functional quality are seen through this filter. A good image becomes a shelter and minor problems can be overlooked for a short period of time. A bad image, on the other hand, makes customers feel more dissatisfied and angrier with a bad service than they would otherwise be. 3) *The image is a function of the experiences as well as the expectations of customers*. When customers develop expectations and experience the reality of the service, the resulting perceived service quality changes the image. If the perceived service quality meets or exceeds the image, it is reinforced or even enhanced. If the perceived quality is below the image, the opposite effect will happen. 4) *The image has an internal impact on employees and an external impact on customers*. If the image is not clear and distinct for the employees, it may affect employee attitudes. This, in turn, may have a negative impact on the employees' per-

formance and consequently on the customer relationship and quality. (Grönroos 2000, 293–295.)

Kotler & Armstrong (2004, 285) define brand as: “A name, term, sign, symbol, or design, or a combination of these, intended to identify the goods or services of one seller or a group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competitors.” Consumers see the brand as an important part of a product/service and branding can add value to the product/service. Grönroos (2000) objects to the traditional definition of a brand because the definition misses the key characteristic of services as processes and excludes the customer. Because customers normally participate in service processes, this process undoubtedly creates a distinction between the services of different providers. The service production process has to be at the heart of service brands because it is during that process that the most profound impression on the customer’s view of the service is created. Secondly, brands are often viewed from the marketer’s point of view as things that the company creates. The marketer uses different planned marketing communication means to develop a distinct brand and the customer is expected to form an image of the brand that corresponds to the intended brand. In the context of physical goods this has been a successful way of creating brands, because the good is reproduced and already exists when the branding process begins. However, when considering services the importance and involvement of the customers increase dramatically because a service process is a much less standardized base for branding. Secondly, the customer also participates in that process which forms the basis for brand development. (Grönroos 2000, 286.)

#### 4.5.2 Expectations

As mentioned above, customer expectations have an extremely important impact on customers’ quality perceptions. Over promising raises customer expectations too high and customers will perceive that they receive a low quality. The level of quality measured in an objective way may be good, but as customer expectations were not in line with his experiences, the total perceived service quality is however low. From a marketing point of view it is better to underpromise in order to make sure that the company can fulfil the promise given to the customers. In that way the customers will not be dissatisfied with the quality of the service. At the same time it allows the service

provider to offer its customers unexpected surprises, which create loyalty much more effectively than satisfactorily perceived quality. (Grönroos 2000, 68.)

Measuring and comparing expectations and experiences is certainly not a straightforward task. Grönroos (1993) presents certain validity problems related to the measurement of expectations. These are 1) If experiences are measured after the service experience or at the same time, they become biased by the experience, 2) Measuring expectations prior to the service experience is not necessarily appropriate either, because the expectations which customers have beforehand are possibly not the expectations with which customers will compare their experiences. If the customer's expectations are changed during the service process, the altered expectations are the one with which the experiences should be compared to in order to determine the actual quality perception, and 3) Experiences are perceptions of reality, and inherent in these perceptions are prior expectations. If expectations are measured and then experiences are measured, then expectations are actually measured twice. Although these problems are difficult to solve, a comparison of experiences and expectations still makes sense, at least theoretically, because expectations clearly influence the perception of the quality both on an episode level and a relationship level. (Grönroos 1993, 56.)

In order to understand how the quality is perceived in an ongoing relationship, understanding how expectations develop throughout the relationship is important. It is critical to understand that customers may not expect the same aspects of quality in the beginning as they do at a later stage, and why this change has happened. (Grönroos 2000, 89.) According to Ojasalo (1999) in Grönroos (2000, 89) three different types of expectations can be identified in the long term. These are fuzzy expectations, explicit expectations and implicit expectations.

### **Fuzzy expectations**

Customers with fuzzy expectations expect a service provider to solve a problem but they do not have a clear understanding of what should be done. It is important for a service provider to understand what kind of fuzzy expectations customers have because even though customers cannot formulate them consciously, they still have an effect on satisfaction with the quality. Customers perceive that there is a need for a service or a change of the current state in general, but they do not have a clear picture of what should be done and how. Fuzzy expectations are real to the customers and if the

service provider does not fulfil such expectations, customers will be disappointed. Customers feel that something is missing and they do not understand why they are not satisfied; fuzzy expectations remain fuzzy. In order to deliver satisfactory service, the service provider has to be aware of those fuzzy expectations and try to make them come up as explicit expectations. If this does not happen, the service organisation may have to deal with unhappy or frustrated customers. A customer may have fuzzy expectations for example about what they want from an evening out at a restaurant. They want to have a good time but they cannot specify what would fulfil this need/want. If the service provider can make these unspecified wishes explicit to the customer and for itself, there is an opportunity to satisfy the customer. (Grönroos 2000, 89–90; Ojasalo 1999.)

### **Explicit expectations**

Explicit expectations are clear in customers' minds in advance of the service processes, and they can be either realistic or unrealistic expectations. Customers assume that explicit expectations will be met. It is important that service providers try to help customers to adjust unrealistic expectations into more realistic ones, because then there is a bigger chance that a service that meets the customers' expectations is delivered. The service provider should be very careful when giving promises to customers, especially in the beginning of a relationship. If promises are vague, there is a risk that customers will form unrealistic expectations. It is extremely dangerous to lead customers to believing that the service will include features that in fact are not included. Unclear and vague sales messages can easily lead to such promises, which in turn lead to possibly unrealistic explicit expectations. (Grönroos 2000, 90–91; Ojasalo 1999.)

### **Implicit expectations**

Implicit expectations refer to elements of a service that are so obvious to customers that they take them for granted, and expect the service provider to fulfil even though they are not clearly expressed. Because of this, the service provider faces a danger of ignoring them and not including such elements in the service offering. As long as implicit expectations are fulfilled, the customer might not even consciously think about them. However, if these expectations are not met by the service provider it will lead to dissatisfaction. Companies need to make sure that service offerings are designed in a way that they meet also the implicit expectations, not just the explicit ones. To sum

up, service providers should remember the following. Fuzzy and implicit expectations should be detected and turned into explicit ones. Fuzzy expectations become less fuzzy if the service provider focuses on them. As the relationship between the service organisation and the customer continues, the organisation knows what to do and customer learns what to expect. If implicit expectations are not met, they become explicit. Customers should be made aware of what is realistic to expect in order to avoid unrealistic expectations. There are also things that happen unintentionally over time without the interference of the service provider. When customers learn what they explicitly need and want, and accept what is unrealistic to expect, they turn fuzzy expectations into explicit ones and unrealistic expectations into realistic ones. Naturally, sometimes customers might think that the expectations considered unrealistic by one service provider are really realistic, and change to a service provider who will be able to meet their expectations. It is also possible, that as customers get used to a certain level of quality, some expectations that were originally explicit become implicit. As long as everything continues like before, customers might not think about them anymore, and no problems occur. However, if something is changed in the service offering that makes the customer dissatisfied, the implicit expectation becomes explicit once again.

(Grönroos 2000, 90–92; Ojasalo 1999.)

#### 4.6 Quality in education

Defining the quality in education is perhaps even a harder task than defining the “basic” service quality. At least this seems to be the case when reviewing the literature in the field. According to Helakorpi (1995) many pure humanists easily label the term quality as a technical concept suitable for engineering, and therefore not suitable for educational purposes. However, the preconditions of quality application in public services are great, especially when quality is understood as something more than following the standards. Quality standards have to be seen as theories among other theories. They are to be applied in a way best suitable for the situation in question. Quality in the school world is therefore something else than in the business world but the basic philosophy can and should be applied in education. When doing this the first problem is to define the customer. Sometimes the customer is considered to be the person who

pays for the service, which then would be either the community or the state. The majority, however, considers the student to be the customer. (Helakorpi 1995, 132–133.)

The concept of the quality in education has to be based on considering the needs of the student. The quality cannot be created from orders from the higher levels of the organisation but the starting point has to be the cooperation of all the parties involved.

There are three elements of quality from an educational point of view: the quality of educational planning, the quality of guidance to learning (teaching), and the quality of the learning environment. (Helakorpi 1995, 132–133.) According to Käyhkö (2003) quality in the educational context is difficult to define, but on a general level it is the excellence of the whole operations and results. Often quality refers to customer satisfaction i.e. meeting the needs of the students and the working life. Quality in education cannot be defined in one way; it is bound to the attributes of time and place. Educational quality is based on the expertise and motivation of the personnel of the institute. Quality is involved in all operations and it is important that everyone is willing to commit to maintaining a good quality. Quality in higher education is based on the perception of the management and personnel of the educational institute of what is good quality. The central issue is to reach a general understanding of how quality is interpreted and developed. Quality can be seen to affect higher education in several levels. These include the individual level (students), the school level, national level and international level. (Käyhkö 2003, 1–3.)

Green (1994, 13–18) agrees that definitions of the quality in education vary, and reflect different perspectives of the individual and society, at least to some extent. There are several quality concepts that could be used in order to judge the quality in education. These include the traditional concept of quality, which is associated with the notion of providing a service that is distinctive and special and which confers the status on the owner or user. Quality can also be seen as conformance to specifications or standards, quality as fitness for purpose, quality as effectiveness in achieving institutional goals, and quality as meeting customers' stated or implied needs. Green points out that one of the most essential issues when making judgements about the quality in education, despite the concept used, is to clarify the criteria on which such judgements are made.

Hämäläinen (1998) thinks that in Finland the evaluation of the quality in education is often perceived quite narrowly. When analysing the quality of education in a comprehensive way, he thinks that several different issues should be evaluated. The following table is based on Hämäläinen's idea about what to evaluate when evaluating the quality in education.

TABLE 1. Evaluation of quality in education. (Hämäläinen 1998, 30-36)

<b>Points of evaluation</b>	<b>Explanation</b>
1. Connection to other education	How well a course or a study module belongs to the entirety of the education
2. The goals of the studies	Are goals: consistent with national and institutional goals, clear, reasonable and realistic compared to the resources. Do they correspond with the needs of working life, do the students and staff know what they are?
3. The contents and structure of the study programme	Is the contents according to the goals, relevant to working life, based on the newest information, and are different parts of the programme intertwined?
4. Teaching and learning practices	Which methods are used and why, do the goals and teaching methods correspond with each other, how student guidance is organised, how the evaluation and development of teaching methods are organised?
5. Evaluation methods of learning	It is relevant to acquire information about learning results, and know how this information can be used to develop teaching
6. Students	It is important to know what the starting level of the students is and organise the studies accordingly
7. Teachers and other staff	The professionalism of educators is of essence, both content mastery and teaching skills
8. External framework	Financial resources, educational facilities and equipment, library resources, updated IT-equipment
9. Quality assurance	How information about whether set goals are reached is collected, and how it is secured that this information will be used to develop operations
10. External relationships	Useful and functioning relationships with other institutions and working life
11. Strengths and weaknesses	Other strengths and weaknesses that were not mentioned earlier

Sajasalo's (1997) dissertation handles the quality of a tailored educational service. The object of the study was the MBA education offered by the Jyväskylä University continuing education centre. The purpose of the study was to develop such a model on the quality of education that could be tested. This model was then used as a basis in a quantitative survey in which data was collected through questionnaires. In the study the viewpoint used is that of a customer. The author created content for the concept of total quality in education, which is based mainly on the ideas presented by the Nordic School (such as Grönroos, Gummesson, and Lehtinen). The content of the total quality in educational service is divided into smaller and more easily estimated factors. These are: technical quality, functional quality, quality of interaction, benefit and added value. In the following table the content of these different sources of quality is presented from the parts it is applicable to education in general.

TABLE 2. Sources of quality in education. (Sajasalo 1997, 50–52)

<b>Technical quality</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The fluency of the curriculum preparation process</li> <li>The applicability of the curriculum to the customer's needs</li> <li>The accessibility of the personnel</li> <li>The expertise and professional ability of the educators</li> <li>The quality/standard of the course material distributed</li> <li>The education-technical know-how of the educators</li> </ul>
<b>Functional quality</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The service attitude of the personnel</li> <li>The politeness of the personnel</li> <li>Flexible handling of matters</li> <li>The accuracy of timetables</li> <li>Keeping promises that have been made</li> <li>Keeping contact with the customer</li> <li>The personnel's ability to guide in problem situations</li> <li>The organisation of course happenings</li> <li>Information on future training sessions etc</li> </ul>
<b>Quality of interaction</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The desire to focus on the customer's problems</li> <li>Treating the customer as an individual</li> <li>The ease of interaction</li> <li>Commitment to the customer relationship</li> <li>The 'chemistry' between the contact person and the customer</li> <li>Supporting the learning process</li> <li>Giving constructive feedback on progress</li> <li>The justness of evaluating performance</li> </ul>

Continues on the next page

<b>Benefit</b>	The utilization of the education in practice Setting the priorities of the education in cooperation with the employer and the instructor Possibilities to study abroad Increased ability to be critical about one's own work Improved abilities to analyse a company's strategic operation The ability to apply the newest information into practice Opportunities the education offers for career development Improvement of social and economical situation Creating a network with other students The utilization of project works and the diploma work in the development of business operations Possibility for further studies
<b>Added value</b>	The value of the (MBA)-title to the customer The value of the (MBA)-title to the background organisation Social and economical possibilities achieved with the help of the education The realisation of the image value as the degree is completed A sense that work has been completed in order to change things

#### 4.6.1 Quality in Jyväskylä University of Applied Sciences

The evaluation council of higher education in Finland (Korkeakoulujen arviointineuvosto) has developed an audit system for quality control systems of higher education institutions. The purpose of the audit is to prove internationally that Finland has a qualified and consistent national quality assurance policy within higher education. (Tuomi 2006, 3.) The quality control system of Jyväskylä University of Applied Sciences was audited in the spring of 2006 and the council decided that JAMK qualifies the criteria set for the quality control system. The core of the quality control in the Jyväskylä University of Applied sciences consists of three elements: 1) quality control, 2) follow up data and indicators of the situation and results and 3) quality improvement. Quality control includes description of operational processes, quality control in education, quality control in research and development, control of follow up data, and strategic processes and methods. Follow up data and indicators are collected through the following sources: AMKOTA-database (statistical information about universities of applied sciences), Ministry of Education, Statistics Finland, OPALA (a joint system of Ministry of Education and universities of applied sciences which col-

lects information about students e.g. their employment after graduation) and BSC-measures (internal). Quality control includes the following measures: audit, self evaluation, cross evaluation, benchmarking, and strategic development projects. (Hämäläinen et al. 2006, 19.)

#### 4.6.2 Model of quality in education

In the previous sections the concept of quality in education was discussed on a general level. Because in this thesis the emphasis of the study is based on the students' perceptions about their education, it is relevant to view the issue of quality from the students' perspective. A model of what quality could mean in education from a student's perspective is presented on the next page. It is based on the Gummesson 4 Q model of offering quality (1993). It has similarities with Helakorpi's (1995, 132–133) ideas about what is quality in education. It also has connections with Sajasalo's (1997, 50–52) model, which is, however, too detailed for the purpose of this study, and is more suitable for a quantitative research. The Gummesson model is used as a basis because it is comprehensive, and it considers the expectations and experiences, which are important in this thesis, to have an effect on the process of how a customer perceives the quality. Image and brand variables as well as expectations and experiences are presented in the model in the same way as in the original Gummesson model. Other variables are modified to be more appropriate in an educational context.

The customer who perceives the quality is a student whose own expectations and experiences affect the perceived educational quality. In this case experiences include also previous education which in turn has an effect on the expectations one has of the current education. The sources of quality are the educational organisation and guiding and producing educational service/teaching. If the process of providing education is organised and guided poorly, it is clear that the quality of education cannot be good. Naturally it is also not enough that the educational service i.e. teaching is produced with a good quality and the teachers are competent professionals, if the process is designed badly. Both these aspects have to be well taken care of in order to produce high-quality education. The way the student perceives the quality during the service/education process is affected by the interaction between the personnel and the students. Open, friendly and honest interaction between the students and the teaching

staff and other staff are vital for the whole experience to be positive. Improper ways of communication and interaction can be very harmful to the perceived quality in education, and thus to the whole institution. The short-term and long-term benefits of the service were referred to as the technical quality by Gummesson (Grönroos 2000, 71). It is clear that educational services should benefit the customers i.e. students in a way that they gain knowledge and learn. The author feels that it is not enough just to learn something that might be only short-term, but it is of vital importance to learn how to apply the knowledge one has gained during the educational process.

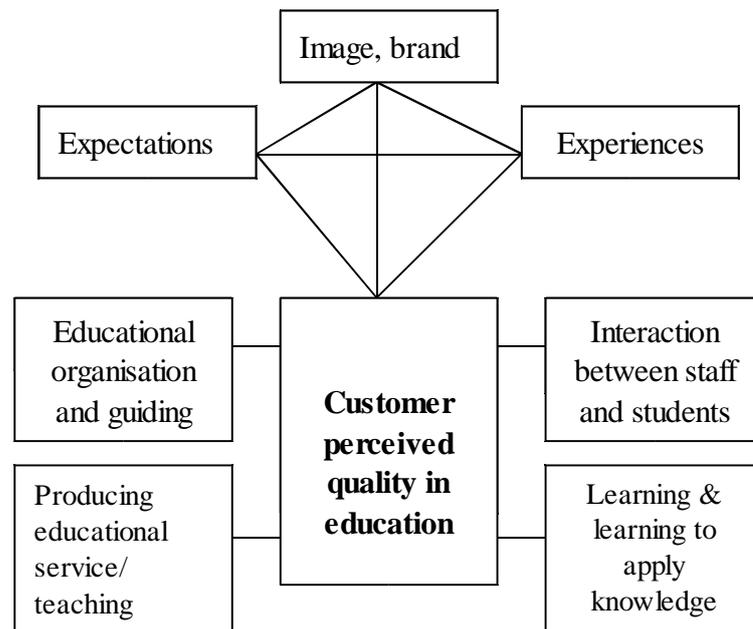


FIGURE 1. Model for quality in education (compare to Gummesson 1993).

## 5 RESEARCH METHODS

### 5.1 The purpose of the study

The purpose of the study is to investigate what it is like to study in an English degree programme. The subject is examined from the students' perspective. The main research questions are:

- What kinds of expectations do the students have concerning studying in an English degree programme and how does the reality correspond with these expectations?
- What kinds of advantages and disadvantages are related to studying in an English degree programme?

Answers to the main research questions are attempted to find by dividing them into several themes. These themes were chosen on the basis of the theoretical part.

### 5.2 Research methods

The study aims at creating an overall picture of studying in an English degree programme. The researcher wanted to give the respondents an opportunity to express their opinions and feelings about the programme without restricting it to certain specific questions. An interview was chosen as a research method because, as Denscombe (2003) points out, if the researcher wishes to investigate emotions, experiences and feelings rather than more straightforward factual matters, then it may be justified to prefer interviews to the use of questionnaires. The nature of emotions, experiences and feelings is such that they need to be explored rather than simply reported in a word or two. (Denscombe 2003, 165.) Interviewing provides a way of generating empirical data about the social world by asking people to talk about their lives. Interviews can be viewed as special forms of conversation which can vary from highly structured, standardized, quantitatively oriented survey interviews, to semi-formal guided conversations, and to free-flowing informational exchanges. Interviewing is often seen as a

one-way pipeline for transporting knowledge, but as a meaning-making conversation it is more like a two-way informational street. (Holstein & Gubrium 2004, 140–143.) In this study, a semi-structured interview was considered to be the best option because it allows the respondents to express themselves more freely. It also makes it possible that such matters will come up that the researcher did not directly ask. This serves well the purpose of this study. In a semi-structured interview the topics or the themes of the interview are decided in advance but the method lacks the exact form and order of questions, which is typical for structured interviews (Eskola & Vastamäki 2001, 26). According to Denscombe (2003) semi-structured and unstructured interviews are on a continuum and it is likely that in practice any interview will slide back and forth along the scale. What separates them from structured interviews is their willingness to allow interviewees to use their own words and develop their own thoughts. Allowing interviewees to ‘speak their minds’ is a better way of discovering things about complex matters, and unstructured interviews have as their aim ‘discovery’ rather than ‘checking’. They lend themselves to in-depth investigations, particularly those which explore personal accounts of experiences and feelings. (Denscombe 2003, 167.)

### 5.3 Collecting the data

The empirical part of the study, the interviews, was conducted between January 23 and February 1<sup>st</sup> 2007. The respondents were asked to participate in the survey by e-mail, which was sent to all the Finnish second and third year students of Facility Management and Consumer Communication, as well as to the fourth year students who were still in the Jyväskylä area, because the resources did not allow travelling to other cities. Two students replied to the e-mail by giving their consent to participate. Other six respondents agreed to participate in the study after a face to face encounter. None of the second year students were available for the study and only one third year student agreed to participate. The difficulty of gathering respondents was partly due to the fact that many second and third year students were not in Finland at the time of the interviews. Finally, seven fourth year students and one third year student were interviewed. All the respondents were Finnish and female. All the students participating in the study received an e-mail which included the purpose of the study and the themes of the interview so that they were able to prepare for it in advance. According to Denscombe (2003, 172) there is likely to be more benefit from an interview if the re-

spondent is well informed about the topic and has done the necessary homework in the issues that are likely to arise during the interview.

All the interviews were done in cafés in Jyväskylä except for one, which was made in the researcher's home. Thus the environment of the interviews was casual and in each interview situation the best and most private place at the location in question was used. However, some background noise did occur during the interviews, but this did not seem to affect the interviewees. Everyone seemed relaxed and able to concentrate in the interview situation. No interruptions took place during the interviews. The interviews were conducted in Finnish. The reason for this was that because all the respondents were Finnish, it was thought that it was easier for them to express their ideas in their native language. The respondents would also be able to say what was on their minds without leaving anything out due to language difficulties.

In the interview situation the confidentiality of the subjects' reports needs to be clarified and the consequences of the interview interaction for the subjects to be taken into account e.g. stress during the interview (Kvale 1996, 111). Each interviewee was assured that everything they said during the interview would be recorded but that this information would be used in a way that their identities would not be revealed. The recordings of each interviewee were listened to and processed only by the researcher. All interviewees took part in the study voluntarily and the researcher tried to make the interview situation as relaxed as possible in order to minimize a possible stress of the interviewees. All interviews were recorded with a MP3-player with the permission of each interviewee. At first some general matters not connected to the study were discussed with each respondent. This was done in order to relax both the interviewer and the interviewee. Secondly, the purpose of the study was explained again briefly, after which the actual interview started. The interviews lasted from 19 minutes to 42 minutes, the average duration being 27 minutes.

The interviews were transcribed to Word-format so that each transcript was given a number according to the order in which the interviews were made. So the names of the respondents were replaced by numbers at this point. The recordings were transcribed as accurately as possible; the interviews were listened from the tape and written exactly as spoken on the tape. After that they were listened through once more and the

conformity with the recording and the transcript was checked. The ready transcripts amounted to 37 pages of written text.

#### 5.4 Reliability and ethicalness of the study

According to Kvale (1996, 235) issues of verification do not belong to some separate stage of investigation, but they should be addressed throughout the entire research process. Reliability pertains to the consistency of the research findings. Kvale (1996, 111) also mentions that the purpose of an interview study should, beyond the scientific value of the knowledge sought, also be considered with regard to improvement of the human situation that is being investigated. This research aims at finding out what it is like to study in an English degree programme. It points out the benefits and problem areas of the programme, as well as recommendations on how to improve the programme. This will hopefully lead to an improved situation for the future students of the programme, given that the school takes action to improve the situation.

The reliability of a research is bound to the researcher him/herself, to the object of the research and to the research conditions. In order to obtain profound knowledge the researcher should take his/her own position into consideration, and take up the role the situation demands. The research conditions affect essentially to the research results, for example the succeeding or failing of an interview. Also the understanding and conformity of concepts used between the researcher and the respondent affects the reliability of the research results. (Syrjälä et al. 1994, 100.) The fact that the researcher is a student of the programme just as the respondents in this study, is on the other hand a benefit but may also cause problems. It is an asset because it is easier to discuss about matters related to the programme when both the interviewer and the interviewee know what they are talking about. Certain concepts and jargon related to the subject are understood by both parties, which minimizes the need to explain everything in great detail. Also the fact that some experiences are shared by both parties involved in the interview situation makes it easier for the respondents to express their opinions fluently and openly. On the other hand, the fact that the researcher is a fellow student of the respondents may also influence the study negatively. The interview situation may not be as formal as it would be in other cases. However, the purpose of the study and the themes of the interview were made clear to the respondents and the interview situation

was controlled by the researcher. Another problem is related to the fact that the researcher's own experiences and feelings about the programme might affect the objectivity of the study. In order to minimize the influence of the researcher's own opinions and possible prejudice, the interview themes were designed on the basis of the theory. And as mentioned above, the interviewees were given the opportunity to speak freely about their opinions and ideas without restricting the interview conversation to certain predetermined questions.

### 5.5 Categorizing and analysing the results

The data was prepared for the qualitative analysis by putting all material into similar format and identifying them for reference purposes. Back up copies of both recordings and transcripts were made. According to Denscombe (2003) the researcher's self plays a significant role in the production and interpretation of qualitative data. The researcher's identity, values and beliefs cannot be entirely eliminated from the process; therefore the researcher's self is inevitably an integral part of the analysis and should be acknowledged as such. (Denscombe 2003, 268.) Coding qualitative data involves breaking the data into units for analysis and categorizing the units. This is called analytic coding. The researcher needs to decide on the units that will be used for the analysis. Qualitative researchers will be on the lookout for the occurrence in the data of particular *ideas* or *events*. The researcher can use existing theories, respondent categories or personal/professional hunches to guide how this is done in the first place. (Denscombe 2003, 271.) In this thesis both theory and the researcher's personal 'hunch' were used in categorizing the units for analysis. The ideas presented in the model for the quality in education were used in categorizing the data. In addition, other relevant themes emerging from the interviews were used to categorize and analyze the data.

## 6 RESULTS

### 6.1 General expectations and experiences about the programme

At first the respondents were asked to recall and talk about the expectations they had before starting their studies. Naturally, because of the respondents different backgrounds, interests and hopes, the answers varied quite a lot. In general, the respondents did not have a lot of expectations at all, and many of the ones they had were not in line with the reality of the programme. Perhaps one of the reasons for this was that the students in general did not know a lot about the programme before starting their studies, and thus their expectations were not based on facts. Four interviewees mentioned that they knew very little about the degree programme when they applied and when they first started their studies. Thus they could not have a lot of detailed expectations about the programme.

Three respondents said that they had expected there to be more teachers who speak English as their native language, and that the fact that there were so few of them was a disappointment for them. This issue was mentioned by several students in other contexts and is discussed more in chapter 6.3.

All the fourth year students interviewed mentioned that they had expected there to be more international students in the programme. It was a disappointment to find out that the majority of the students were Finnish and that the number of foreign students was so low. Four people mentioned that they were disappointed because the programme was promoted as an international one but the reality was not that international at all. The importance of more foreign students was seen e.g. in that they would have brought something new and different to class discussions and group work. One respondent mentioned that if there had been more foreign students around, English would have been the language used also outside the classroom, which would have been a positive thing. Another respondent recalled that in the beginning of the studies there were more foreign students but then they just disappeared somewhere. She said that the programme had failed in being a truly international one. As a positive thing she saw the fact that the Finnish students studying in the programme are internationally oriented, meaning that many have e.g. lived abroad before and have experiences in foreign languages and cultures. However, the students said that it was good that

there were at least some foreign students. The following comment describes well the feelings of the interviewees about the matter:

*The richness of an international programme would be particularly the fact that one gets to know and make friends with people from all over the world, not just Finns.*

Contrary to the fourth year students, the interviewed third year student said that she was satisfied with the number of foreign students and that she had in fact thought that there would be fewer foreign students participating in the degree programme. It is not possible to say that one third year student represents the opinions of the whole class, but it is clear that the number of foreign students can change from one year to another, and therefore the experiences of the students can vary accordingly.

It was mentioned by two of the interviewees that it felt silly to listen to a lecture held in English and discuss in English in a class where there were no foreigners. However, one interviewee mentioned that it was good that English was spoken even though there were no foreigners, because the idea of the degree programme is to study in English.

*It does not feel very international when there are only Finnish students listening to a Finnish teacher giving a lecture in English.*

As mentioned above, there were also many individual expectations mentioned by the respondents. One student was disappointed because of the content of the programme. She also felt that the name of the programme sounds nice, but not enough effort is invested in planning the content and choosing the teachers. Another respondent expected there to be more interaction and connections with working life and not so much lecture-type of teaching. One said that during her studies she did not know what exactly she would be able to do when she graduates and that the programme had been quite confusing. As a positive thing she mentioned that it will be easier for her to find work abroad after graduating from this programme. One interviewee was disappointed because the courses were different from what she had read in the material she had about the programme. She felt that their contents was explained in a fancy way but the reality was different. She was also disappointed about the location of the school building. One respondent said that she had expected the programme to be more practically-oriented and thought that it was maybe a bit too theoretical. A lot of courses which should have been very practical were organised through the Internet, which in her

opinion did not serve the purpose of the courses very well. One respondent mentioned that she did not have a lot of expectations because she did not know much about Facility Management, and that she thought that the studies would be more like the ones in the Finnish programmes. However, after studying in the programme and learning what FM is, she is satisfied with the programme that she chose. Some other comments made by the students were:

*I was disappointed because the programme did not meet my expectations. I'm not saying that the programme is lousy; it is just not as good as I expected.*

*I expected to receive high-quality teaching on several practical issues, support from guidance counsellors and a useful education. The reality did not meet these expectations. I was also disappointed because I did not receive any help in finding a place to do my practical training.*

*I expected there to be more tourism studies involved in the programme and I was surprised to find out the actual structure of the programme.*

The fact that this programme was taught in English was mentioned by all the interviewees as a reason why they applied to the programme. They thought that this fact adds value to the programme and benefits them in the future. For many students this was in fact the most important reason to choose this programme. Several respondents mentioned the fact that their language skills would improve as well as the chances of finding work abroad. An international degree programme and an international atmosphere were mentioned as important reasons by five interviewees. Other reasons why this degree programme was chosen were:

- interest towards tourism studies (mentioned by three students)
- interest towards customer service
- the fact that the degree would look good on paper
- possibility to study something practically-orientated
- interest awoken by an appealing advertisement of the programme

## 6.2 Organisation and guiding of the studies

The overall opinion about how the studies were organised and guided/tutored was very clear and unanimous among the respondents: more should have been done. All respondents felt that they did not get enough help and tutoring from the school during their studies. Two people mentioned that they were disappointed and confused because the planning of the personal study plan, called HOPS in Finnish, did not take place during the studies even though they were told so. HOPS is normally used in the Finnish programmes to help organise students' studies so that one's individual needs, skills and interests can be taken into consideration. One respondent commented:

*We have been left aside. We did not have what the Finnish programmes' students had; a certain study path to follow. We have just taken some courses here and some courses there.*

One person said that during the first year of her studies there were more tutoring and help offered from the school but after that the tutoring was practically non-existent. One respondent mentioned that she was at first disappointed about the programme because she thought that the content and structure of the studies was very much predetermined. When she found out that she could plan her studies according to her own interests she was very pleased. However, she said that she had to really pull out the information from the teachers about whether she could make the choices she wanted. Clearly not all students were aware of this opportunity and it came out from a couple of the interviewees that they would have wanted more freedom and flexibility to organise their studies more individually. It seems that it is possible to organise one's studies according to personal interests and wishes at least to some extent, but this opportunity was not advertised/ emphasized enough by the school, as far as these students were concerned.

*I did not want just someone to tell me which courses to take in order to graduate. I wanted to discuss with someone about what I wanted from life and how this school could help me achieve it.*

*There was no clarity about how to build the degree according to my own interests. And what confuses even more is that the programme is a little bit of everything mixed together, there is no specialization.*

It became clear from the answers that the students would have wanted more guiding and tutoring offered by the school without them having to ask for it. Many said that they would have wanted personal discussions with the staff about their studies and personal situations. Several people mentioned that help was available only when one knew where to ask for it.

*When I ask something I either do not get a clear answer to my question or I'm made to run from one person to another in order to get information. In the end I often feel like I'm a nuisance and that makes me unwilling to ask for help.*

Three respondents mentioned that it is not only the school's responsibility but one has to take responsibility for their own education. One of them said that even though she did want more guidance, the positive thing was that this kind of a system teaches the students independence.

One student said that she had bad experiences about how her studies were organised and guided when she was in Holland doing her exchange period. There was confusion about the courses that she was supposed to take but were then not organised at all. The problem was due to the exchange school but she felt that she did not get enough support from Finland; finally she was just told to do whatever she wanted. There had also been confusion about a double degree that was promised to the Facility Management students when they started their studies in 2003. According to the interviewee, she and her class members was supposed to receive a Bachelor's degree in both Facility Management and Hospitality Management. When they left for Holland they were still under the impression that they would get the double degree. However, due to new rules in Holland, they did not receive the degree. The students also found out that it had not been possible to get the double degree the previous year either. Therefore, the respondent said that they felt that they had been cheated by their own school because it had not informed them that they were not going to get the degree, even though they already knew about it.

The majority of the interviewees did not mention any problems with the organisation of courses. However, two people felt that the students were not considered enough when organising the studies. Timings of the courses changed all the time and sometimes courses were cancelled completely e.g. because of a lack of a suitable teacher. One person said that most courses were offered in a flexible way so that if one could-

n't attend a course in a certain period it could be taken later. She also felt that the teachers were flexible if some special arrangements were needed e.g. compensating some missing assignments or attendance. Two people mentioned that the lack of suitable teachers for certain courses had caused problems.

*It is not nice when there is a course that you really want to take but there is no teacher available. And it can be the case that no teacher is found for the course the following year either...*

One student criticised the fact that she had courses, especially during the first year, in three different locations. It was very inconvenient to travel between Mankola, the School of Tourism and Services Management, and other locations where courses were held. Two people mentioned that it was sometimes very frustrating for them, if they wanted/needed to take a certain course but they had to postpone or even omit the whole course because there was no teacher available for that course.

Work practice arrangements were mentioned by six interviewees. Two of them had found a placement with the help of the school; one was very satisfied with her work place, the other was not. Altogether four students mentioned that they would have wanted more help from the school when arranging their work practice. The students who had done their work practice in Finland did not consider this very important, but it became clear that when trying to find a work place abroad, more help would definitely have been needed. Two respondents told that they had asked for help from the school, for example a list including all the work places of previous students, but had not received any. Generally the students were missing contacts of prospective employers abroad and could not understand why the school does not help the students more, e.g. by using their contacts and cooperation partners around the world. Two students said that there is information available in the study path, but that the information had proved to be quite useless. It was mentioned by a couple of the students that naturally the students are responsible for finding their own work placements, but it became clear from the students' comments that they were not satisfied with the amount of help and guidance offered by the school. Clearly the school has a lot to improve in this sense, and hopefully more help will be offered to future students.

*It would be nice to get more help from the school, for example useful websites through which it would be possible to find work places. But we have found together with my classmates some helpful sites...*

### 6.3 Producing education and learning

The opinions interviewees had on the education/teaching in this degree programme vary from very negative to quite positive views. There was a lot of discussion with the interviewees about this issue which, in the author's opinion, shows the high importance of the matter. Two people made it very clear that the teaching had not corresponded with their expectations and that they were disappointed about it. The other said that she expected to receive a high-quality and useful education, and that the studies would be more demanding. She was disappointed at how easily, and sometimes even by cheating, courses could be passed. She felt that even though flexibility is a good thing, the teachers should be stricter. She was also disappointed that some issues were taught very superficially; she expected the teachers to be able to offer more profound teaching. She mentioned that some courses could have been a lot better if a little more resources would have been used. The other student with a very negative attitude said that the teaching was of an inferior quality. Her exact words: 'It sucks.' The biggest problem in her opinion was the inadequate language skills of the teachers which made the teaching seem unprofessional.

*The teachers are charming personalities but I'm disappointed at how easily courses can be passed. Flexibility is a great thing, but the teachers ought to be stricter. Some issues are handled very superficially. Of course I could have found out more about the matters independently, but you'd think that the teachers would have enough expertise for more in-depth education.*

The issue of the teachers' language skills was mentioned by six of the interviewees when they talked about their expectations and experiences about teaching. However, the two persons who did not mention the teachers' language skills at this point mentioned it somewhere else during the interview. One of the students said that she was not that bothered about it herself but that she felt sorry for the foreign students. Two people mentioned that sometimes teachers used Finnish words when they did not know the English ones, and in those cases the foreign students were clearly ignored. One student said that she felt she had better language skills than some teachers and in those cases it was frustrating to listen to the teaching.

*If a teacher doesn't speak proper English it does tell a lot about the quality of teaching.*

*It would be nice if teachers could develop their language skills. I mean, if we anyway have to study in English you would wish that the teachers would also invest more in it.*

The interviewees had also expected there to be more teachers with English as their native language. This point was mentioned by five interviewees. Also the need for more visiting professors with strong knowledge and experience in their own areas was requested by three students. They thought that the visiting lecturers were interesting and useful, and they would have wanted more of this kind of teaching. One student said that she learned most from visiting lecturers and praised the contents of intensive courses taught by foreign experts. Another student said that she would have wanted the whole programme to be taught by native English speakers, even though she understood that this was not very realistic. One person said that the majority of teachers speak quite good English but that she wishes that the teachers would be motivated to improve their language skills because they are teaching in an English degree programme. One respondent commented on the importance of a teacher's knowledge of the content with respect to knowledge of English:

*If a teacher knows the content he is teaching very well then it is not that big of a problem if he has some problems with the language. Then he knows how to go around an issue and explain it differently. But if he is unaware of the issue even in his own language, there is no chance he will be able to explain it reasonably in English.*

Four students said that the education/teaching is 'ok' or quite good. One student said that the level of education is good but that the teachers do not demand very much from the students. One person was very satisfied with the fact that she was able to study so much communication. She said that the level of teaching is higher in Finland than in Holland. She said that the thing in the degree programme she especially liked was that the quality of teaching was high and one had to actually do something in order to pass courses. In contrast to this, altogether five students favoured the education they received in Holland to that in Finland. Four of them said that the level/quality of teaching was higher in Holland, and two said that they learned more in Holland and that the teaching was more concrete there. In addition two people mentioned that the teachers' language skills were generally better there. Four respondents said that the studies were more demanding in Holland and that the students were expected to do more. One person said that studying was very hectic and a lot was done in groups. Two other interviewees also mentioned the big amount of group work done in Hanzehogeschool. One

of them said that about 85% of the studies consisted of group work and that she felt it was a bit too much. She said that the teaching system was different in Holland. There were not so many contact lessons than in Finland and the students were not given ready answers but had to find the information they needed by themselves. She said this way of studying was very educative for her.

*The implementation of the courses was much better in Holland. It was more project work and not just reading textbooks and writing essays. I learned much better from project works e.g. making marketing plans or doing research in real life situations.*

One person said that teaching in the programme in general seemed to lack something. She said that she would have wanted more inspiring and varying teaching methods. Another student agreed that the teachers should pay more attention to the way they are teaching. One respondent said that the whole degree programme consists of bits and pieces from here and there and that the entirety is not very clear.

*I was very satisfied with some teachers and not that satisfied with the others. I would like to know how much the school supervises their language skills and teaching methods.*

When the interviewees were asked to tell about what they had learned and if the education prepared them for applying the acquired knowledge into practice, a variety of different answers was received. Three people mentioned that they had noticed the usefulness of the education when they had been working. Two people said that this happened during their work practice. The third person said that she had been able to apply the knowledge acquired in school in her work in a restaurant.

*What I like in our degree programme is that there is a compulsory work practice. I learned so much about communication during my work practice. I learned how to apply theory into practice and how to actually make a communication campaign. In my opinion the actual learning took place during the work practice.*

*The work practice made me certain that I had actually learned something. I knew different modes of action and I could apply into practice what I had learned in school. It is when you get your hands 'dirty' that you really realise what you have learned.*

Two respondents mentioned that languages were among the most important things they had learned during their studies. In addition to languages one student mentioned

that she had learned most from courses that she took at the School of Business, and the other had learned from communication studies in Holland. One person could not really say what she had learned, however, she appreciated the fact that she had an education. Three persons mentioned that they believe that the future will show how much they have learned and how well they will be able to apply the knowledge acquired through this education. Here are some comments about learning:

*I don't know what I have learned. Education is always good. I don't know if I would choose this again, probably not. On the other hand I don't know what would be a better option.*

*I have generally learned a lot but I cannot say that I am a professional of some field, nothing like that.*

*The time in Holland and all the projects we did really helped me to learn to apply the things I had learned into practice.*

*I think I have learned a lot and I feel that in this degree programme it is really up to you how much you learn and how to use that knowledge. However, I did not feel that I was able to use the things that I had learned during my practical placement. I don't know why, maybe it was too far from what we had learned in school.*

The conclusion that can be drawn from the answers is that the level or quality of producing education i.e. teaching seems to be neither very good nor that bad. The biggest problem is clearly the inadequate language skills of the teachers. This is a serious problem because it seems to have a big influence on the students' perspective on the quality of education. What the students have actually learned in the programme seems to depend on the person; no significant consistency was found in the answers. It can be seen from the answers that the education does not correspond with the students' expectations, much less exceed them. This should awaken the school and the teachers to think about the reasons behind this phenomenon as well as encourage them to come up with solutions how to improve matters. In the end, it is the students who are the most important customers.

#### 6.4 Interaction between the personnel and the students

The interviewees were asked to talk about the interaction between the students and teachers/other personnel. The overall feeling about the matter was quite neutral. Simil-

ar views to those found out in the previous section about tutoring and organising the studies were aired: interaction works if the student takes the initiative. The interviewees were neither positive nor that negative about the quality of interaction; the general opinion was that it is 'ok'. However, it became clear from everyone's answer that the interaction could work better. This matter did not seem to be of the highest importance for the students; perhaps this is the reason why they were so neutral and did not have that much to say about it.

Seven of the interviewed people were generally satisfied with the level of interaction between the students and the staff. Five people said that if they e.g. contact a teacher they usually get answers/help fairly easily. One of these five said that she does not really interact with the teachers unless it is something very important; she usually tries to find all the necessary information by herself. However, she said that she does not feel that it is difficult to approach the teachers. One said that the interaction usually works 'ok', but during the fourth year she has noticed that it is more difficult to get in touch with the teachers. She thinks this might be because the teachers are concentrating more on the first and second year students. One person said that it is easy to interact with teachers that one knows better and has been dealing with more in the past. These teachers are helpful and it is nice to interact with them. Interaction is more difficult when dealing with strange or more unknown teachers. Another person agreed that it depends on the teacher whether it is easy to get in touch and get help. Two people said that it is sometimes very difficult to e.g. get in touch with teachers and sometimes you don't get a response to e-mails even if you contact them several times. They pointed out that it is a lot easier to get results if one sees the person they are trying to reach face to face and then asks for help or advice.

*The interaction works well in general. Sometimes there are certain problems concerning the information flow. But in my opinion it is not difficult to approach the teachers.*

Only one student had a quite negative opinion about this matter. She said that there is not much interaction between the students and the teachers and that nothing is told you unless you specifically ask for some information. She said that it is partly due to the fact that she had not spent that much time in Mankola and therefore did not have so many personal contacts with the teachers.

Internal communication can be seen as a part of the interaction between students and the personnel. According to Junttila (2007) the internal communication in the Jyväskylä University of Applied Sciences and in the Degree Programme in Facility Management and Consumer Communication has experienced changes during the last few years. Prior to the spring of 2005 the internal communication was handled mainly through e-mail but an intranet was also in use. The intranet was for both the students and the staff which was problematic. The intranet was confusing and students must have felt that there was a lot of irrelevant information for them. Therefore at that time e-mail was the most efficient means of communication also in the Degree Programme in Facility Management and Consumer Communication. As the school noticed that the system did not work, a new intranet was launched in spring 2005. It was called *study path* and it is meant only for the students. Also a new intranet for the staff was introduced after that. The point was to make the intranet clearer and more efficient for the students but the introduction of the study path was not a success. This was due to the fact that it was launched in the middle of the school year and not enough information was received by students and staff members about the new system.

The respondents had faced some problems with the new system but nobody had very negative feelings about it. Most students said that the transfer phase when the system was introduced was the biggest problem. Students felt that they were not informed enough about where to find all the information and how the system operated. So the launching of the new system seemed to be the problem, not the system itself.

In general the interviewees were quite neutral about the new system: three people said that the new system is very good, one person said that it does not work at all. Three people also said that one can always find the necessary information when one searches for it long enough. The students seemed to trust that they will be able to find the necessary information when needed, even though sometimes they are not aware at first where to look for. It could be that today's students are so used to searching for information on the Internet and other sources that it is easy for them to adapt new systems. Students have also learned that information is not handed to them on a plate, but they have to discover it for themselves. Perhaps this also makes it easier for students to use different systems e.g. intranets.

## 6.5 The exchange period

Seven of the respondents had done an exchange period in Hanzehogeschool Groningen, Holland. Two respondents studied there for one academic year. Four students spent there one semester, which equals to about six months. One person first studied there for a year and then did her work training (5 months) spending altogether 1.5 years in Holland. One person did not do an exchange period abroad due to personal reasons. Because all the seven students did their exchange periods in Holland as a part of the studies, everyone's experiences are naturally related to Holland as a country and Groningen as a city. Because everyone also attended the same school it is easier to compare their reflections on the exchange period. On the other hand the fact that all exchange periods were done in the same location does not provide a very extensive view about the matter. However, as this survey is limited to the students of the Degree Programme in Facility Management and Consumer Communication, it is sufficient that the results reflect the experiences of these students without the need to generalize the answers.

All the respondents were given a chance to talk about their feelings and opinions about the exchange period. A common view shared by all the respondents was that the exchange period was a positive experience. Generally the students were satisfied with the quality of education in Hanzehogeschool. As already mentioned earlier, five students said that they preferred the education in Groningen to that in Jyväskylä. Here are some comments respondents had about the exchange period:

*It was absolutely a great experience! Teaching in Holland was a lot more concrete than in Finland and one had to really work in order to pass courses. I learned the most important things while I was there.*

*It was a positive experience. It was the time of personal growth; I had to become more independent in order to cope in a new environment.*

*I did not have problems; the only thing causing a culture shock was the apartment. But the school was great and the quality of education high. In that sense the experience gave me a lot.*

The biggest problem that students seemed to face was the low quality of housing. Four people mentioned that they had been extremely disappointed in the housing arrangements in Holland. One person told about living in a totally shocking conditions; she

lived in a poorly equipped trailer with heating problems, inadequacy of warm water, inexistent sound-proofing, rats and many other problems. She was luckily able to move to another apartment after a few months. Also another person told that she had found a new place to live because of the low quality of the apartment that was first arranged for her. The conclusion can be made that the big amount of housing problems cannot merely be a coincidence but that the problems are related to the situation and student housing system in Groningen, Holland.

Two respondents mentioned that they were a bit surprised about the big amount of studying while in Holland. They had expected the exchange period to be more relaxed but they found out that the school was very demanding. One person saw this mainly as a positive thing but the other said that this left her a negative feeling about the school. Two persons mentioned that they had had problems with the organisation of their studies while abroad. One said that the information flow between Jyväskylä and Groningen had not been working and due to that it took a lot of time for her to try to arrange the things for herself. The other said that the courses she was supposed to take had not been organised by Hanzehogeschool at all and that the teachers and the staff in Jyväskylä were unaware of this. Trying to sort out these problems was very stressful for her because, as she said: ‘nobody knew anything’. She would have hoped to get more support from the school, and at the end she had to decide for herself what to do.

#### 6.6 Studying in a foreign language and understanding

Studying in a foreign language has its own benefits and naturally also challenges. All the students interviewed had naturally good English skills to start with, and all had studied English in comprehensive school and in upper secondary school (lukio in Finnish). Five of them had either studied English after that or lived abroad before entering Jyväskylä University of Applied Sciences. It came out from the interviews that none of the respondents had had problems with their studies because of inadequate English language skills. All respondents also stated that they did not have problems in understanding matters even though they were taught in a foreign language. The majority of the respondents said that they were confident that they would get along well with their English skills when they started their studies. A couple of people said that they were a little bit excited to see what would be the level of English of their class-

mates, but only one person mentioned that she was at first unsure whether her own language skills would be adequate.

Three people had had problems related to understanding how to do certain assignments. This was however due to the unclear instructions – not the fact that they did not understand English. One respondent said that she has had to use more time in doing assignments than she would have if she was studying in Finnish. However, she feels that the use of a foreign language has not slowed down or cumbered her learning process. One person said that she had expected the studying to be more demanding than it had actually been. One respondent said that she had not had problems with her own language abilities but she had been bothered about some of the teachers' language skills. She said that she sometimes had to think when writing an essay or an assignment whether the teacher would understand her if she used some more complicated structures or 'fancy' expressions. Another person said that she had not had any problems with the language when studying in Finland and that she got used to studying in a foreign language very quickly. However, she had faced some problems when studying in Holland; she had felt quite desperate in many occasions there because of the difficulty of the studies. In addition, two people mentioned that at first there were some challenges but their language skills developed quickly:

*In the beginning there were some concepts that I did not know and I had to spend some time with the dictionary. But I learned the necessary things during the studies and did not have any bigger problems.*

*At first my own speaking skills were a bit rusty but they soon improved as I had to use English more. But I did not have problems with understanding things in English or coping with my studies in a foreign language.*

## 6.7 Language skills and their development

The respondents were asked to reflect on their expectations and experiences about the development of their English language skills during the studies. Three interviewees said that they definitely had expectations but they could not point out *how* they expected their language skills to develop. The majority of the respondents expected their speaking skills to improve and become more fluent, and indeed this had happened. Everyone mentioned, also those who had no expectations, that their speaking skills

had either improved during their studies or that they had gained more confidence in speaking. Half of the respondents mentioned that their vocabulary had become more extensive, especially vocabulary concerning tourism, communication, consumer issues, and vocabulary one might need in working life. Three respondents mentioned that their writing skills had improved; one of them said it was thanks to the academic literature she read during her studies.

*Well, at least I think that my English has improved. Yes, I can say that it is much better now than it was during the first year of studies.*

*Well, it [language skills] has to have improved. If you think that you would have chosen a Finnish programme you wouldn't have used English this much. I have been able to maintain the level of English because English has been used in school almost every day.*

*I expected speaking to become more fluent and that academic writing would become easier. This is exactly what has happened, and also my vocabulary has extended enormously.*

*In the beginning of the studies speaking was a bit problematic to me but otherwise my language skills were good. I have gained a lot more self confidence in speaking and dare to speak more in English now.*

*I have become a more confident speaker and on the other hand I have realized that everyone makes mistakes and so do I. That's life.*

*I don't know if my language skills have improved or not, but at least it has become easier to use English.*

Five students mentioned that the amount of feedback received from the teachers about the students' language skills was very small. Four of them had hoped for more feedback e.g. about their written assignments. They said that it would have been easier to develop their language skills if they had received some feedback. It was also mentioned that it is difficult for the students to assess their own language skills and that feedback from the teachers could help to avoid some mistakes that might be unnoticed by the students themselves. One person was of the opinion that it is possible for the students to improve their language proficiency by reviewing their own texts and mistakes. One respondent also said that she understood that some teachers were not willing to give feedback because they did not have so good language skills themselves that they could have done that.

*It would have been great to get some feedback. Because when you do something, e.g. with Word, it checks your mistakes and so, but of course this doesn't mean that your language is like a native person's English.*

*I received feedback quite rarely. In the English classes we got some feedback but not that much. It would have been useful so that you wouldn't get a false impression about your language skills.*

Two people mentioned that they had hoped the degree programme to contain more English language studies. One person said that she had expected English language studies to be emphasized more in the programme, and that one really speaks English fluently after the education. However, she felt that this had not been entirely true; there was not that much concentration on the language aspects in the programme. Therefore she was a bit disappointed. She also expected the studies to contain more business English and to learn more how the language is used both in verbal and written contexts. Another student had expected that English language courses would be offered continuously throughout the studies, but the emphasis had been in the beginning of the studies. Opposite to these opinions, one student said that there was no need for more English studies. She said that she had learned enough in upper secondary school and that the few courses offered by the Jyväskylä University of Applied Sciences are enough.

Proficiency in other languages was also mentioned by one student. She pointed out that her skills in other languages, mainly in German and Swedish, had deteriorated a lot during these studies because she has not had to use them. She said that she would have hoped for more compulsory Swedish courses and also that some other language would be compulsory to the students studying in English. She said that the school should offer language courses also to more advanced students e.g. those who have already studied a foreign language for several years in comprehensive school and upper secondary school.

Three people had not expected their language skills to develop that much. One of them said that she expected her language skills to develop only a little; in her opinion she already had good English skills. She did not feel that she had learned much new during this education but she has been able to maintain her language skills. The studies have made her confident that she can get along in all situations in English. Another respondent said that she already had such good language skills that she did not expect them to develop. She merely thought that this education could be a way to maintain

her English skills. However, she admitted that she had learned new vocabulary and improved her presentation skills in English. The third person said that she had not noticed that her language skills would have developed a lot. She said that her knowledge of grammar was much better in high school because there grammar was emphasized so much. She did not, however, hope for more grammar teaching in this programme because one can always study it on her own if necessary. What she had gained through this education was practical concepts and writing skills. It seems that even though these interviewees did not have much or any expectations, they still learned something new. Therefore it can be said that in their situation their expectations were met or even exceeded.

*Especially writing skills have improved. Now it feels funny if I have to write something in Finnish; it's a lot more natural to write in English.*

*I had lived abroad for ten months before I started my studies, so my basic English skills were fine. It just doesn't develop if you live in Finland. But of course I have learned some new vocabulary.*

In conclusion, the majority of the interviewees had expectations but they could not specify them to a great extent. Improving spoken English was the most common individual expectation that the respondents had. The results in this respect show that all the students feel that their spoken English skills have either improved or that they have become more confident speakers. Many interviewees mentioned that it is easier for them to do presentations in English now. The survey shows that the studies have been able to offer the students possibilities to practice and accordingly improve their spoken skills. The students' expectations were met and even exceeded, therefore it can be said that the degree programme has been successful in this sense. Vocabulary was the second major thing that had developed through the studies. Half of the respondents mentioned that their vocabulary had improved a lot. Three people mentioned that their writing skills had improved. Perhaps the fact that no huge progress was mentioned by any of them students is due to the fact that everyone already had good proficiency in English when they started their studies. Another reason could be that it is difficult to compare one's current language skills with those three to four years back. Naturally the true progress cannot be measured objectively, although that would be a very interesting subject to study.

## 6.8 Benefits of an English degree programme

Several benefits of the programme came up during the discussions and have been reported also in earlier parts of the text. In order to specify them the respondents were asked to mention the biggest benefits related to studying in an English degree programme. Some of the benefits mentioned by the students were related to this degree programme as a whole, without emphasizing the language aspect. However, the benefit that showed to be the most significant one according to the respondents is something that is generally related to the benefits of English degree programmes. This is the development of language skills, which was also one of the main reasons why the interviewees applied to this programme in the first place. Seven respondents mentioned this as the biggest or one of the biggest benefits of studying in this programme. Once again the students emphasized their spoken English skills and their improvement during the programme.

Four people mentioned that the international aspect of the programme is a benefit. Having international students to study with has offered the opportunity to get to know other cultures and also make friends with people from all over the world. Two students also praised the solidarity of the students and the good atmosphere of the programme.

*It was great to have some international students in our group. That way you get in touch with different cultures right from the start.*

*If you haven't had a lot of experiences in international settings before, you can really gain a lot from this programme in that sense.*

*I have made friends with a lot of new people, both Finnish and foreign. The solidarity among the students has affected positively the study atmosphere.*

The exchange period abroad was seen as one of the benefits of the programme. This point was mentioned by three students. One of them praised the school's exchange network and said that it was easy to go abroad and that the exchange was organised efficiently. As already mentioned, the exchange period was considered to be a positive experience by all the students.

Better employment opportunities abroad were mentioned as a benefit by two students. They said it might be easier for the students of international degree programmes to find work abroad than those who have studied in Finnish. It was also mentioned that employees in Finland will probably also appreciate the fact that one has studied in English. According to one interviewee it is also easier for the students of international programmes to go abroad because they have already experience in different international settings.

The freedom to choose and study courses that are of one's own interest was a benefit mentioned by two students. One person said that this degree looks very good on paper which might prove useful in the future. According to another student it might also be a benefit that the Degree Programme in Facility Management and Consumer Communication is not that well-known, because then the employers will not know what it contains. One person said that she has learned to handle stress much better thanks to these studies and does not feel so overwhelmed than before when there is a lot of work to do. She also said that her computer skills have improved significantly.

To conclude with it can be said that according to the interviews, and quite logically, by far the biggest benefit of the programme is the fact that the students' are able to maintain and develop their English language skills. The international aspect and contacts with people from other cultures was mentioned by half of the respondents as an important benefit. The exchange period abroad was brought up by three students at this point. Other individual aspects mentioned were listed above and it can be seen that the students actually have quite different views about the matter. It depends strongly on the person what she feels is beneficial to her.

## 6.9 Problems of an English degree programme

Several problems and disadvantages were also mentioned by the respondents in many points during the earlier themes. In addition to these, the interviewees were asked to think about the biggest problems and disadvantages that are connected to studying in an English-Language-Taught degree programme. The answers varied quite a lot and once again, part of the answers was related to this programme in general without em-

phasizing the fact that it is an international degree programme. Four respondents mentioned that the biggest problem is definitely the fact that teachers have inadequate language skills. This point was discussed in more detail in part 6.3 and it was already mentioned that every interviewee mentioned this problem during the interviews. It seems that one half of the respondents classify this as the biggest problem in the degree programme, and the other half sees it as a problem among the others. However, according to the answers the teachers' inadequate language skills seem to be the biggest individual problem brought up by the respondents. A descriptive example of the problems caused by this is:

*Sometimes it feels that because of the teachers' inadequate English skills it does not matter what you do. You'll pass the course simply by scrabbling something.*

One person looked at the language issue from the student's perspective. She made an interesting comment about a disadvantage that students might face when studying in a foreign language. It runs as follows:

*It is sometimes difficult to express oneself, e.g. in exam situations when you are not using your native language. It is naturally easier to explain things in your mother language and if you simply don't remember a word or an expression, you might get stuck in one point. Then you just give up thinking and that will affect negatively in the end result.*

Two persons mentioned the vagueness of the programme with respect to its contents as a problem. One student said that the problem was that the programme consisted of so many different subjects that it was unclear for her what she was actually studying. She said that the programme has clearly failed in offering the students studies that would train them to be experts of a certain field. She also mentioned that she would have needed and wanted more help and guidance from the school during her studies. Also many changes in the personnel made her confused about who to talk to. The other student mentioned that sometimes it feels that the English programme was invented only because the school wanted an English programme. Other issues, like the content, had been left half-way. A problem related to this that was mentioned by a third student was that the degree name is too vague and unknown by employers. Students can face difficulties when trying to explain that e.g. in job interviews.

One student said that one of the biggest problems was that there were not very much international students in the programme. She said this might be because of Jyväskylä as a location and that the situation might be totally different in other international degree programmes. However, she feels that in order for the programme to be truly international there should be more foreign students. She said that they should be more committed to stay here and study for several years, but this can be problematic. She feels that it was good that there were at least some foreign students around although she had hoped for more. She also mentioned that it is a problem that the students' starting levels are quite different when they come to the programme, especially what comes to their language skills. She had noticed that some foreign students did not understand that much and that this had caused some problems.

An interviewee said that the amount of courses offered was quite limited and that it is probably bigger in the Finnish programmes. She also thought that the students studying in Finnish programmes had more practical projects as part of their studies and that when they graduate they are more ready to enter the working life than the international students. She feels that the content of the English programmes might be worse than in the Finnish programmes.

In conclusion, many different problems were brought up by the respondents, including the unclear content of the programme and the lack of foreign students. Clearly the most significant problem, mentioned by all the respondents, was the fact that the teachers have inadequate language skills. This affects the motivation of the students, the atmosphere in the class and the quality of the whole programme. As mentioned earlier, it is a serious problem that has a big effect on how the students perceive this programme and how satisfied they are with their education.

#### 6.10 Final comments

Finally, the respondents were given a chance to say what was still on their minds about the programme and subjects discussed during the interview. Five people wanted to use this opportunity to speak. Their comments were in line with the previous findings and here are some:

*Somehow it feels that you haven't learned anything, but when you stop to think about it you realize how much further you are compared to the time you started. But time has gone by so fast.*

*For a long time it was unclear for me what this programme was really about, and I even considered dropping out. The programme definitely needs some clarity, especially the consumer communication part. It needs to be more clear what is it that we become of after this school.*

*I wonder why there even is an international programme and why the school boasts about it and then the students are not satisfied with it. I bet that not many students in our class are very satisfied with the programme. I mean, why is the school forced to organise a programme which does not work at all?*

*The programme is good on paper but the realization is not that good. It is a difficult situation when teachers cannot be found and then students have to wait for a first year course for three years.*

*As a whole the programme has been quite good and international. English courses were good, but sometimes the content of some courses was bad. Sometimes the communication with teachers did not work. Otherwise I liked it, even though now I just want to graduate as soon as possible.*

## 7 DISCUSSION

### 7.1 The central research findings

The purpose of this study was to find out what it is like to study in an English-Language-Taught degree programme. The subject was examined from the students' perspective, through their expectations and experiences. The following research questions were used: *What kinds of expectations do the students have concerning studying in an English degree programme and how does the reality correspond with these expectations? What kinds of advantages and disadvantages are related to studying in an English degree programme?* This part aims to answer the research questions by presenting the most central results of the research and relating them to the theoretical part.

In general, the respondents did not have a lot of expectations of the programme. This is probably due to the fact that many of them had only a limited amount of information about the programme, and thus did not have a clear picture about it. The interviewees seemed to have what Ojasalo (1993) calls fuzzy expectations. Customers with fuzzy expectations expect a service provider to solve a problem but they do not have a clear understanding of what should be done (Grönroos 2000, 90.) The results indicated that the students perceived that there was a need for a change of the current stage in general, but they did not have a clear picture of what should be done and how. As the students continued to have these fuzzy expectations throughout their studies and the service provider i.e. the school did not seem to try to make these expectations explicit, and fulfil them, the students remained unsatisfied. The existence of these fuzzy expectations throughout the whole study time is something that the school should take seriously and plan action to improve the situation.

The interviewees had also some explicit expectations about the programme. According to Ojasalo (1993) explicit expectations are clear in customers' minds in advance of the service process, and they can be either realistic or unrealistic. The respondents expected there to be more teachers who speak English as their native language as well as more foreign students. These two matters were mentioned by the majority of the respondents and they indicated to be issues that caused disappointment to the students. As Grönroos (2000, 91) points out the service provider should be very careful when

giving promises to customers, especially in the beginning of the relationship. This should also be noted by the school when marketing the programme.

All the interviewees mentioned that one reason why they chose this programme was because it was taught in English. They thought that this fact adds value to the programme and will benefit them in the future. For many students this was in fact the most important reason to choose this programme. Several respondents mentioned that they expected to improve their language skills as well as chances of finding work abroad through the programme. An international degree programme and an international atmosphere were mentioned as important reasons to apply by five interviewees. As mentioned earlier, the reality of the programme did not meet the students' expectations when it comes to the programme being an international one as the number of foreign students and native English teachers remained relatively low. Similar opinions were aired also by students participating in Nahan-Suomela's (2001) survey; some students would have hoped the programme to be more international and most students also hoped to have more native English teachers. The need for more native English teachers was also mentioned in Vartiainen's (2000) study.

As regards to the students' expectations about the improvement of their language skills, it can be said that their expectations were met and some even exceeded. Improving spoken English was the most common individual expectation that the respondents had. The results show that all the students felt that their spoken English skills had either improved or that they had become more confident speakers. The vocabulary was the second major thing that had developed through the studies; half of the respondents mentioned that their vocabulary had improved a lot. Three people also mentioned that their writing skills had improved. The survey shows that the studies have been able to offer the students possibilities to practice and accordingly improve their spoken English skills. Therefore in this sense it can be said that the programme has been successful in meeting the customers' expectations. However, as Tella and co-workers (1999, 67) point out, the students' oral communication skills and self-confidence in speaking is enhanced by the extensive use of English and e.g. practical placement abroad, but the second component of good language proficiency, accuracy, may remain lower than what could be easily achieved in a TTFL programme. In this study only the students' subjective view on how their language skills have developed is

available. This, however, seems to support the statement made by Tella and co-workers.

The students were unanimous that they would have wanted their studies to be guided better. All respondents felt that they did not get enough help and tutoring from the school during their studies. Issues that were mentioned included the lack of proper and individual planning of the studies, need for more personal discussions with the personnel and more information about how to organise one's studies according to own interests. It seems that it is possible to organise one's studies according to personal interests and wishes at least to some extent, but this opportunity was not emphasized enough by the school, as far as some respondents were concerned. The results clearly showed that the students would have wanted more guiding and tutoring offered by the school without them having to ask for it. Several people mentioned that help was available only when one knew where to ask for it. Similar findings can be found also in earlier research. Räsänen (1999, 23) mentions that the lack or inadequacy of available support systems is a potential problem among programmes taught through a foreign language. According to the results of Vartiainen's study (2000) international students feel somewhat alone with their problems; this is due to the altered role of studying, which has led to an increase in self-studying and need for more independence.

The majority of the interviewees did not mention any problems with the organisation of the studies. However, two people felt that the students were not considered enough when organising the studies. They mentioned problems related to timing of the courses and the lack of suitable teachers. The issue that came out most clearly was that the students would have needed more help from the school when arranging their work practice. This was important especially for the students who were trying to find a work place abroad. Vartiainen's (2000) and Munaita's (2002) studies also revealed that international students have difficulties with work placement arrangements abroad. The content of the programme was criticized by three respondents. They mentioned that it was unclear for them what they were studying and that the content did not meet the expectations they had about it according to the marketing material. There would have probably been a lot more discussion about the programme's content among the respondents, but the subject was considered to be of less importance in this thesis and therefore was not discussed in more detail. Also Vartiainen's (2000) study showed

that students experience difficulties deriving from planning and implementation of the curriculum and the programme.

According to the results the level of teaching seems to be neither very good nor that bad. By far the biggest problem mentioned by the respondents was the inadequate language skills of the teachers. This point was mentioned by all of the respondents. In the model of the quality in education presented previously teaching was one of the sources of the quality in education. If the students are dissatisfied with teaching it is bound to have a negative impact on the perceived educational quality. The author feels that the school should not settle for providing education that is on an adequate level but it should pursue to improve teaching in various ways in order to improve the general quality of the programme. One of the major things that need to be concentrated on is clearly the teachers' language skills. These are, as can be seen from the results, of a significant importance in an international degree programme. The inadequacy of the teachers' language skills is something that is recognized very well in the field. Several research results support the statement that teachers' inadequate language skills are a problem in international degree programmes (See e.g. Räsänen 1999; Vartiainen 2000; Nahan-Suomela 2001). Also more assessment of proficiency of teaching in a foreign language would be needed (See Maiworm & Wächter 2002; Takala 1994).

Another element of the quality in education-model is learning and learning to apply knowledge. Defining what had been learned seemed to be quite difficult for the respondents and no significant consistency was found in the answers. Many respondents said that they had learned a lot but that they could not call themselves experts in any field and that the future would show what they actually had learned. Only three people said that they had been able to apply the acquired knowledge into practice.

The overall feeling among the respondents about the interaction between the students and the personnel was quite neutral. The majority of the students were generally satisfied with the level of interaction. However, the results showed that the interaction could clearly work better. The students felt that they were the ones who had to take the initiative in order to get things done. It was mentioned by several respondents that they had hoped there to be more communication with the school. Difficulties in the information flow of the institution was mentioned also by Räsänen (1999, 23) and Vartiainen (2000, 55). The respondents had no significant problems or negative feelings

about the internal communication system of the school. The only thing that was criticized was the inadequate information received by the students about the launching of the new school intranet.

The exchange period in Holland was seen as a positive experience by all the students who went there. Generally the students were satisfied with the quality of education in Hanzehogeschool, Groningen. Five students mentioned that they preferred the education in Groningen to that in Jyväskylä. There were also some problems related to the exchange period, mainly housing problems and communication problems between JAMK and Hanzehogeschool.

In conclusion it can be said that the quality of education in the programme is on an average level. Different aspects presented in the model for quality in education were discussed and several problem areas were indicated. All these have an effect on the total perceived quality in education. Therefore it is important for the school to focus on each of the variables presented in the model and improve the problem areas. In general the reality did not correspond very well with the students' expectations about the programme. This can be seen e.g. in the students' feelings of disappointment about the number of foreign students and native English speakers, the inadequate amount of guidance offered by the school and in the general opinions that students had about the programme. Räsänen (1999, 23) also mentioned that the mismatch between aims, implementation forms and expectations is something that can be problematic to programmes taught through a foreign language.

## 7.2 The major advantages and disadvantages of the programme

According to the respondents, by far the most significant benefit of studying in an English degree programme is the development of the students' language skills. Seven respondents mentioned this as the biggest or one of the biggest benefits of studying in this programme. The students said that especially their spoken English skills and presentation skills had improved during the programme. Other benefits mentioned were the international aspect of the programme, the exchange period abroad and better employment opportunities abroad. It was also mentioned that the international and language aspect of the degree will be a benefit also in the labour market in Finland.

The benefits that came up in this study are in line with the benefits mentioned in the theoretical part.

The results indicated that there are several problems related to the programme. According to the students the biggest individual problem is the inadequate language skills of the teaching staff. This in turn has a very negative impact on teaching. As mentioned above, the results showed that the teaching is only on an average level. Accordingly, the teaching variable being an important source of quality in education, it affects negatively the whole perceived quality in education. The other source of quality in education, educational organising and guiding, seems not to be on a very high level either. The students did not have that negative opinions about the organising of the studies but the guidance offered by the school was clearly inadequate. This also has a negative impact on the perceived quality of the educational service.

The way the students perceive the quality during the education process is affected by the interaction between the personnel and the students. According to the results the interaction was on an adequate level but there were some problems concerning it that were mentioned earlier. The vagueness of the content of the programme was a problem that was mentioned by a couple of students in this study and it has also been recognized earlier in Munaita's (2000) study. Tella and co-workers (1999, 65) also recommended that more attention should be paid to the reasons why TTFL programmes are established. The quantity of the programmes is admirable but the standard of these programmes should be updated.

### 7.3 Suggestions for future

Several ideas on how the Degree Programme in Facility Management and Consumer Communication could be improved came up in this study. Some of these suggestions can be applied for international degree programmes in general. It is obvious that more attention should be paid to teachers' language skills. Teachers for the programme should be selected more carefully and the number of native English speakers, if possible, should be higher. There should be some training available for the teachers that would concentrate on teaching content through a foreign language. There should also be support systems for teachers. The teaching itself could also be developed and new

methods of teaching introduced. The language aspect of the programme should receive more attention; English should not be regarded merely as a tool and the potential of an English-Language degree programme in developing students' language skills should be exploited better. More concentration also on other aspects of the language than speaking skills would be useful. Increasing the amount of feedback on students' language skills would also be beneficial. Also the amount of international students should be on such a level that the programme really is international. The guidance of the studies is not adequate and this should be noticed by the school. Also more help in the students' work placement arrangements is clearly needed, especially for the students going abroad. The vagueness of the content of the programme is something that has to be acknowledged by the school, and the marketing of the programme also needs more attention.

Due to limited resources this thesis covered the opinions of the students of only one degree programme. However, it would be interesting and useful to study international degree programmes in a larger context in order to develop them. For example Jyväskylä University of Applied Sciences would benefit from an extensive study which would cover all the international degree programmes offered by the school. This would help in discovering the problem areas and improving the quality of these programmes. The subject of the quality in education is also something that is definitely worth more research. Educational institutions offer an important service to their customers i.e. students and their satisfaction should be a priority. Models similar to those that were presented in this thesis could be used and also developed further in order to estimate the quality of different educational institutions and programmes.

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## APPENDICES

## Appendix 1: Interview themes

- Students' expectations prior to studies
- How has the reality corresponded with these expectations (Participants can answer freely but the following points will be discussed)

Educational organisation and guiding

Producing educational service/teaching

Learning and learning to apply knowledge

Interaction between students and personnel

Coping with studies/assignments

Understanding through a foreign language

Interacting with people from different cultures

Exchange period and work placement

The development of language skills

- Problems/disadvantages related to studying in an international degree programme
- Benefits/advantages related to studying in an international degree programme