How do students' perceptions of their education change over time?
- exploring perceptions of learning, responsibility, engagement and satisfaction.

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Preface

I would like to start by expressing my gratitude to my supervisor Tommy Jensen who has patiently guided me in this long process of thesis work through helping me stay on track, critically evaluating my work and contributing to its completion. Moreover, I would like to give a thanks to all the students who filled out my survey and the teachers who let me borrow time from their lectures which was an important reason for the high response rate of the survey which was the foundation for the successful realization of the study.

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Abstract

Business education is one of the most popular subjects for Swedish university students, in Sweden in general as well as in Umeå university. This leads to challenges both for the university in terms of providing study programs, teachers, facilities, etc. however it also presents students with situations where they face a number of educational related aspects that they form perceptions about. These perceptions have not been widely studied, especially on local level. Neither have there been much previous research on how these perceptions change over time as a student progresses through the education. These were the reasons for the realization of this thesis.

The study took foundation in the students’ perspective and was carried out through a deductive approach. The theoretical framework focused on different aspects that can affect student perceptions such as their own performance, learning, content and delivery of the education, teachers and fellow students. From this framework, key aspects were identified that students can form perceptions about. These were learning, responsibility, engagement and satisfaction.

A survey was then developed based on the theoretical framework and the questions were categorized according to the four key aspects. The survey was distributed among students on all levels of the education in the Umeå university School of Business. When the data collection was finished, the data was analyzed in SPSS and Excel. The results were presented, question by question in the empirical results chapter and later compared with the students’ level of study. From this it was evident which aspects that were interesting to further analyze within the four key perceptions.

The result of this study shows how and which student perceptions that change while students go through an educational experience. The conclusions that can be drawn are that perceptions of learning, responsibility and engagement change over time while perceptions of satisfaction remain constant.
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1. Introduction

The introductory chapter of this thesis aims to give a background explanation of the topic. Also it will lead to the formation of purpose and problem statement. The chapter finalizes with brief definitions of a number of key words that are important for the study.

1.1 Background

The number of students in higher education within business and economics in Sweden has increased rapidly in the past years. Over the last 10 years the number of graduates from such an education has doubled leading to that business education has become one of the most popular subjects in higher education (Enequist & Holmvall, 2006:12-13). In 2005, 5 856 students graduated with a business or economics degree in Sweden (Beck, 2009:2) and in the beginning of the 2007/08 academic year, 13 272 students started an educational career within business or economics. (Lindqvist, et al., 2009:36) Also the start of the 2008/09 academic year was characterized by a strong increase within the education, both on undergraduate and graduate levels. (Eriksson & Amnéus, 2010:20)

For employers, there is today a large supply of business and economic professionals and recent graduates. Even though there are many possible employments for individuals with this background, the competition for jobs is tough both in the short and long term. The agency Statistics Sweden predicts that there will be a surplus of business and economic students during the coming 15-20 years and even though the demand is predicted to increase, the surplus is still overwhelming. (Enequist & Holmvall, 2006:31-32) This means that also the students who entered their education in 2009 will face this reality of excessive demand which is expected to remain until at least 2025 (Lindqvist, et al., 2009:36).

Alexander Beck, head researcher at a union for business and economic professionals made a comment about the report by Lindqvist et al. (2009) in an article. There he expressed that the main concern was not the surplus of graduates within this area but rather an aspect that the agency for higher education does not take up in the report – the students’ own responsibility and their ability to themselves influence their opportunities to get a future job. For example, building a network of contacts through engaging in different activities while in the university can be vital for business and economic students in the pursuit for a job after graduation, Beck argued. (www.mynewsdesk.com)

Moreover, organizations of today are in need of individuals with good academic background combined with hard and soft skills such as analytical abilities, communication skills, time management skills, presentation skills, self-motivation and problem solving skills (Owen, 2000:2-3). Employees should also have the capacity to think and learn independently, understand organizational procedures from different perspectives (Bartunek, Gordon & Weathersby, 1983 in Rodriguez, 2009:1), solve problems, analyze material, work in teams and plan (Levenburg, 1996 in Rodriguez, 2009:5). These and many other abilities are in essence what students should be able to develop during their university education since one of the main purposes of higher education is to prepare people for employment (Worth, 2002:14-17).

Looking at what the Swedish law of higher education states about the purpose of undergraduate university education, it is to give the students knowledge and skills, capacity to conduct independent and critical judgments and independent problem solving skills. Moreover there are also informal expectations on the education, such as it should contribute to personal development and learning as
well as prepare students for future employment. (Jacobsson & Gillström, 2007:37-38) This shows that, in theory, the purpose of higher education is to a large extent to fulfill the needs of future employers.

However, the Swedish National Agency for Higher Education found in one of its many investigations of higher education in Sweden that it does not function in the best way possible as students expressed not being completely satisfied with their educational experiences. These results could according to researchers Jacobsson and Gillström be attributed to different reasons such as the amount, depth and quality of lectures or the recent expansion of undergraduate studies with a consequence of less teaching hours and resources per student. However, the study raised a very interesting question namely the students’ engagement or detachment in their education. There were several issues pointing to a need for students to take responsibility for their own learning and it gave evidence to the fact that students of higher education in Sweden do not match up to the required responsibility. Many students are not independent and able to control their education and they are not engaging into their learning as to take the most out of it. (Jacobsson & Gillström, 2007:33-64)

There has been previous research addressing the subject of student engagement in the education although most researchers have focused on what can be done from the university, faculty or teacher side to maintain the quality and motive students to perform and engage in their education (Rodriguez, 2009; Coffman, 2003; Baxter Magolda, 2002). There is also previous research done on the students’ situation in higher education and how they experience it (Civilekonomerna, 2007; Barrling Hermansson, 2005; Brandell, 2001; Enequist & Holmvall, 2006; Jacobsson & Gillström, 2007). However there is less research concerning how students perceive their own performance in the education also, there is little research examining how these perceptions change over time.

Moreover, although the Swedish National Agency for Higher Education continuously investigates the students’ situation in Sweden through different research projects, these are focused on a national generalization. Brandell (2001:80) concluded that local investigations on the subject of student perspectives are important. It is for many reasons essential that teachers, faculties and university management know the students’ views and opinions. Therefore, studies are needed on both central and local level, and not only the obligatory course evaluations but also other forms of evaluations and investigations.

1.2 Purpose

Taking into account the fact that business studies is one of the major educational subjects in Sweden, coupled with the lack of research done on students perception on local level, the relevance for performing such a study is clear. Moreover, since there in general is not much information about how students perceive different aspects of the university education or how these perceptions change over time it is evident that this is an interesting topic for study. Further, through reviewing previous research in the topic of student perceptions four key areas surfaced that will be the foundation for this study.

The purpose of this thesis is to explore how student perceptions are distributed over the course of a university education through comparing four key variables with a time frame, these variables are learning, responsibility, engagement and satisfaction.
1.3 Problem statement
To be able to reach the purpose of this study, the following research question will be investigated:

How do students perceive their education and how do their perceptions change over time?
2. Scientific methodology

This chapter includes information about the scientific method, hence the base from where the thesis work started. Here, the reason for choosing the current topic is presented combined with information about the researcher, such as preconceptions and scientific approach. Moreover, the perspective of the thesis is explained as well as the research approach and the choice of and criticism toward secondary data.

2.1 Choice of topic

I believe that to get a world class education you need to be a world class student. I also believe that had I maintained that kind of approach to my education from the moment I started the university I would have been much more successful. Sure, I have always tried to do my best but inevitably there are courses where I have not focused on really learning the content, rather I was studying to pass the test. Thankfully toward the end of my education, especially due to my involvement in a student organization I realized the importance of being an engaged students in order to make the most of my education.

Throughout the course of my university time I have met and worked with other students of all sorts. Some of them have had a good sense of direction in their way to approach the education while others have shocked me with their bad attitude and behavior. These different perceptions of the education that I have seen different students possess that has made me interested in finding out how the student body perceives their university education with a focus on their view of learning, responsibility, engagement and satisfaction. Do students see that they need to take responsibility for their education and learning and really engage into the education to make sure that they get all they want out of it?

As mentioned in the introductory chapter, the lack of research in this area can be found in the combination of local studies on how student perceptions transform as a student goes through an education. Looking at some of the research done among university students, this is most often based on student opinions in the present and is not comparing the students on different levels of the education. From the results of previous research it seems as the individuals who are actually valuing their education is decreasing whereas it is becoming more popular to rush through the education to get a degree. There is also research indicating that some students believe having an education is a guarantee for a good job in the future. Through finding out how student perceptions change over time, it can be possible to discover whether the results from previous research are present in all levels of the education or if those approaches develop at a certain stage in the education.

Personally I think this development is frightening, how can people show this kind of disrespect toward themselves and their own development? I believe that a change is needed which is what drives me to write this thesis. Through understanding how students perceive their education and their approach to learning I would like to help my fellow students in keeping an advantageous view of their education from as early as possible. I hope that students can start to understand the value of their own contribution and investment into their education and fundamentally value themselves and their experience. Also, I hope that this study can help teachers and other university staff to understand student perceptions and see what perceptions that may need to be changed.
2.2 Preconceptions

Preconceptions can be described as the author's previous theoretical knowledge and practical experience around the topic and how it can and will affect the work with the study. These can be divided into first hand and second hand preconceptions. First hand preconceptions comes from the author's personal life and experience such as values and attitudes. Second hand preconceptions come from theoretical sources such as lectures, literature and articles. (Johansson Lindfors, 1993:76)

The preconceptions can help the author understand the research problem better and contribute to knowledge development around the topic in the process of building the thesis. However, the preconceptions can also bring negative effects on the thesis work especially if the author is unaware of his/her previous knowledge. When the preconceptions are paid attention to, it is easier for the author to consciously avoid them in order to not have them affect the thesis. (Johansson Lindfors, 1993:77-78)

It is therefore important for me to briefly reflect upon my preconceptions since I need to be aware of them to avoid them affecting my work. It may also be that my preconceptions are central in this study since the choice of topic is chosen due to a personal interest and personal involvement which makes it even more important for me to describe my previous knowledge.

First of all, I have located my higher education to three different universities, Mälardalen’s University in Västerås, Sweden, Universitat Pompeu Fabra in Barcelona, Spain and Umeå University in Umeå, Sweden. The reason for this is mainly a search for new experiences and learning. Through this I have studied with many different individuals with different background and I have seen good and not so good approaches to studies. My bachelor studies were concentrated on marketing whereas my master education is within management.

Also, I have worked with many students outside of the classroom through my engagement in the student organization AIESEC for 3,5 years. In this organization I have carried out trainings mainly within leadership, team and personal development, and I have recruited other students to this organization. Through this I have met many students both Swedish and international most of them with business background that coupled with my own focus on business makes it interesting to study this group. However, I have not studied the topic of student engagement formally in my education. The main secondary preconceptions here come from articles I have read and lectures I have attended out of my own interest and in research for this thesis.

Further, for 6 months I was working for the external relations office at Umeå University as a communicator where my job was to talk to students about their possible cooperation with corporate life. Here I have also seen how students behave in relation to taking up the opportunities that are offered to them by the external relations office. Sadly, a large number of students show very little interest in taking own initiative.

With my background I can identify with the objects of my research which are students in the Umeå School of Business. This can facilitate in my work with the survey and analysis. I can relate to the experiences of my respondents and connect to the empirical data that will evolve. Although there is a threat that I might move away from having an objective view as I can be seen as one of them, rather than an independent researcher. I might also misunderstand the points of views of the respondents through my own opinions. However, as I am aware of this threat the risk of it happening
is low, especially since I now have been away from the university for almost a year since I have been working full time at a company in Umeå. This helps me in also taking the view of an outsider when analyzing the data. What moreover might influence my research are my own values and expectations of what may come out of this study. However, even though I have a view of what could and what I would like to see evolve out of the research, I have worked hard on not letting it influence the work neither with the theoretical compilation, the survey formation nor the analysis and conclusions. The potential affect these aspects may have had have further been diminished through discussions about the study content with my thesis supervisor who has helped me in seeing different sides of the information.

2.3 Perspective
To facilitate the understanding of this study it is advantageous to explain the perspective from which the study is based. According to Halvorsen (1992:37-38) it is vital to initially establish the perspective of the study since it may affect the outcome of the study. Since the purpose of this thesis is to explore how student perceptions change, it was clear that the perspective taken in this study should be the one of the students. The reason for this is twofold. First, due to previous research most often taking a university perspective when performing studies in the university environment. Second, if student perceptions are the topic of study, it is logical to approach these from a student perspective.

Most parts of this thesis have the student perspective as viewpoint. The theoretical framework will cover many aspects that students come into contact with, aspects that will be the foundation for the survey as well as the analysis of the results. Finally, the conclusions will focus on the students themselves, how they can influence their education and improve it for themselves. However, the theoretical framework starts off by explaining the purpose of higher education as well as makes clear some factors in the educational context that are important for the understanding of the thesis. These parts will not be presented from a student perspective, rather from the state and university perspectives.

In this study the phrase perception is widely used and to make sure that there are no misunderstandings concerning the meaning of this word, the researcher would like to explain the significance of this. Perceptions refer in this study to a broad view of what a person believes or thinks about different aspects. It does not intend to explain deep psychological or neurological processes, rather, it will be used in this study as a general phrase for individuals’ opinions or point of views.

2.4 Scientific approach
The scientific approach that the researcher chooses should reflect the view of reality that the author possesses and take its start in the purpose of the study. The purpose of this thesis is to explore how student perceptions transform while a student progresses through the education with a focus on learning, responsibility, engagement and satisfaction.

Perceptions of different aspects are, in the mind of the author, subjective and can depend on various reasons. However, it is not the reasons for the perceptions that are to be investigated, it is the perceptions themselves which is why a quantitative methodology has been chosen. At the same time, what is of interest in this study is not mainly to generalize the results over a large population, it is also to compare and interpret how the perceptions change over time.
What is recurring in quantitative research is that the scientific approach at hand is closely related to positivism while another scientific approach is hermeneutic which is commonly used in qualitative research (Johansson-Lindfors, 1993:23). However, as Johansson-Lindfors (1993:23) mentions, it can be difficult for a researcher to specifically define the type of approach that is being used. This is due to the researcher unconsciously making choices that affect the scientific approach and other methodological aspects. Also it can be difficult for the researcher to connect the research to one scientific approach.

As a researcher I do not consider my approach to be either definite positivism or hermeneutic. The quantitative empirical data will be interpreted as to increase understanding of perceptions and while the data collection will be done through surveys with the researcher passive and striving to be objective, the analysis will contain interpretations and conclusions which will be drawn by the researcher and may include subjective features. With this in mind I will not take a stand for a positivistic or hermeneutic scientific approach, rather I can establish that both of them will be used in this thesis.

2.5 Research approach

The clarification of research approach underlines the overall work with the study; hence in what way the research problem was approached by the researcher. In essence this approach illustrates the relationship between the theoretical frame of reference and the empirical results presented in the study. (Bryman & Bell, 2007:11)

This particular study was based on a deductive approach meaning that the theory is the base for the empirical data collection and the analysis of the data. This approach fits very well with the purpose of the study as it is focused on understanding students’ perceptions where a theoretical base is needed to further know what empirical evidence to collect. (Bryman, 2002:20-22; Bryman & Bell, 2007:11)

In general there is a large amount of research done about university students and teachers and the university environment from different angles. However most research focus on a teacher and university management view of how to improve university education for students whereas this study is focused on exploring how student perceptions are distributed on all levels of the education, from a student perspective. Still, it was possible to develop a solid theoretical base as to continue with the survey development and the empirical data collection. Moreover, no specific hypothesizes were drawn from the theory that will be accepted or rejected although the empirical data will be linked to the existing theories in the thesis. (Bryman, 2002:22)

As seen through the eyes of the author of this thesis, there are many advantages with choosing a deductive approach for this study. First, this approach fits well with the purpose of the study and the fulfillment of the same since the empirical results can be connected to the theoretical frame of reference and thereby be confirmed in previous research (Bryman, 2002:22). Second, the deductive approach is a good choice in combination with quantitative research (Bryman & Bell, 2007:14) which is the model for the empirical investigation. Third, based on the author’s little scientific preconceptions about the topic as such it was decided that this approach would provide the best possible foundation for the thesis work. This choice allowed the author to gain knowledge in the subject before collecting empirical data.
2.6 Choice of secondary data

In the search for articles and literature within the field of this study I had two main focuses, first finding previous research about the topic form all over the world with high scientific value and second, finding current reports about the situation in Sweden. Although this study is investigating the perceptions of Swedish students, I evaluated that also foreign research is relevant since similar issues can exist in other countries as well. I had as a goal to find as current information as possible, mixed with a few older sources to get a good combination. I believe that the topic of this study calls for recent research as it is an issue that is changing constantly.

I searched for articles about student perceptions, expectations, attitudes and behavior in the database Business Source Premier. Search words used were, “university students”, “perceptions”, “choice”, “attitude”, “expectations” and “behavior” in different combinations. I was further careful only to use peer-reviewed articles since they are scientifically reviewed. Through this search method I mainly found international articles.

To find current research in Swedish context I searched for reports done by the Swedish National Agency of Higher Education and by other organizations that have an interest in the Swedish university environment such as labor unions. I found several studies focusing on how students in Sweden experience their university education. The Union Civilekonomerna (Graduate Economist) has made surveys among their student members to inquire about different aspects concerning higher education and they have released other studies following up on business and economic graduates. The Swedish National Agency for Higher Education has made studies among students in higher education in Sweden about different quality aspects in the education, about students’ views of academic freedom as well as reports with purpose to raise awareness about the student situation. The main difference between studies done by the Swedish National Agency of Higher Education and the labor union is that the ones from Civilekonomerna only include business and economic students whereas the others represent students from many different study departments. This difference does not affect this study to a great extent, it is mainly important to be aware of this when comparing the previous research to the results of this study. (Civilekonomerna, 2007; Beck, 2009; Jacobsson & Gillström, 2007; Barling Hermansson, 2005; Brandell, 2001)

The books I have used are mainly methodology books coupled with a few books covering the study topic. These were found in the university library and in my personal book shelf.

2.6.1 Criticism of secondary data

For the most part, the secondary data comes from articles related to the field of study. Obviously, some sources may not fit perfectly for this study which is why I want to discuss some criticism toward the secondary data.

My goal was to find sources based on business students, however in the theoretical framework there are articles and books containing research based on many different student backgrounds or a background that is not business. On the positive side, I believe that through using research based on different background provides a wider view of the topic as a whole while, at the same time, opinions may vary among different study directions. To avoid having this affect the outcome of the study, I have mixed research focusing on only business students with research focusing on different study directions and when there have been differences in the material I have explained that in the text.
Moreover, there is research based on foreign contexts. For example the book by Light (2001) is based on students at Harvard University in the USA which may not correspond totally to the Swedish context. However, this book includes many aspects of student life that are transformable to any students no matter where they study such as time division, working with teachers and other students etc. The same can be said about other sources that are based on research done in other countries than Sweden such as Devlin (2002) which is made in Australia and Kember et al. (2008) from Hong Kong. Further, if I have found contradictory information in Swedish and foreign research I have not used the foreign source.

There are also a few second hand sources in the theory. This is due to the fact that I could not find the original articles of that author or that the initial research was developed by the first hand author where then both research concepts were referred to from the same article, one as second and one as first hand source.
3. Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework is the basis for the empirical study. The information found in previous research will create the foundation for the survey which is to be used to collect empirical data. This chapter starts with a section explaining background information, such as the purpose of higher education in Sweden and the university environment. This section is mainly meant for setting the context in which the respondents operate. The chapter then continues with the actual theoretical framework presented from the students’ perspectives including previous research on aspects that affect students’ perceptions.

3.1 The purpose of higher education

In Sweden, the state is responsible for the higher education. The Swedish National Agency for Higher Education is the department in charge of the running and development of higher education together with the universities. (Jacobsson & Gillström, 2007:11-12) Stated by this agency is that higher education has a purpose and role in the Swedish society regulated by the law of higher education and the higher education ordinance. (www.hsv.se)

According to the law of higher education and the higher education ordinance, the education should rest on scientific or artistic ground and proven experience. It should give the students knowledge and skills within the field of which the education relates to. Examples of knowledge and skills that higher education should provide students are ability to make independent and critical judgments, ability to independently distinguish, formulate and solve problems, and prepare individuals to face changes in their future work life. (www.hsv.se)

Further, according to Barrling Hermansson (2005:13-22) the law of higher education states that students should have the opportunity to freely choose their education and field of study and the education should give them the possibility to freely and independently seek for knowledge. Moreover, all accepted students should have adequate previous knowledge to make sure that the education can be delivered at the intended level and not lowered to fit students with lacking previous knowledge. Also, to make sure that the students’ degrees give a correct indication of their knowledge level, the examinations should have appropriate difficulty level, be fair and take into consideration the critical thinking done by the student.

The universities also have a role to cooperate with the surrounding community in research and education. Among other things, this cooperation should involve the shaping of educational programs to meet the demand on the labor market and that students are given an opportunity to have connection with the community and corporate life during their education. (www.hsv.se)

The purposes and roles as declared by the state are quite clear however it is important to reflect upon if these are the ideal ones and if they include all necessary aspects. Wolk (2007:5-11) suggests that the purpose and role of higher education mainly focus on the knowledge and skills students should posses after the education. There is no purpose concerning developing responsible and independent individuals for the future. According to Wolk, institutes of higher education should more clearly indicate that the purpose and role of higher education is to promote students to take personal responsibility and engage in their education, development and learning. Furthermore, the law does not declare that curiosity, creativity and the importance of learning for life are essential in higher education. The questions are what the purpose of higher education should be, if the students’
views of the purpose are the same as the one of the state and what the students’ perceive their role
to be in fulfilling this purpose. Although before going in to these questions it is interesting to
understand the educational context in the universities and some of the challenges institutes of
higher education are facing today.

Overview 3.1

The purpose of higher education

- Knowledge and skills
- Problem solving
- Preparation for future professional life
- Freely choose education
- Adequate previous knowledge
- Critical thinking
- Cooperate with community

3.2 University environment

According to the Swedish National Agency for Higher Education, university education should
maintain a high quality based on the quality standards that are formulated by the state. These quality
standards that define high quality education are: a good pedagogical standard, facilitation of the
students’ critical thinking and ability to formulate and solve problems as well as diversity, equality
and good leadership. (www.hsv.se) However, it seems as though the universities at the moment are
facing challenges to maintain a high quality education. This was stated by Hejzlar (2002) in a report
containing an evaluation of business studies in 26 different educational facilities in Sweden. The
challenges are further explained below.

Since the business subject has grown rapidly with a doubling of students in the past 10 years more
resources are required to manage the education (Enequist & Holmvall, 2006:12-13). Obviously, an
expansion like this increases the demand for teachers. One of the challenges that Hejzlar (2002:35)
found was that the post-graduate education within business has not attracted as many students as
necessary to cover the teaching need of the undergraduate education which in turn has lead to the
universities not having enough authorized teachers. Hejzlar’s finding can be supported by facts from
a report from the Swedish National Agency for Higher Education where it is stated that there was an
increase of 22% in the number of accepted university students in august 2009 compared to the year
before. In contrast, the number of full time employees in the universities increased with 5% (Eriksson
& Amnéus, 2010:70).

Hejzlar (2002:8-10, 20-23) continues to say that due to this lack of teachers it often is the case that
students take courses not only with students from their own program but different programs are
scheduled together. This is positive in the way that students are able to interact with new people,
which can enrich the learning experience however, it also increases the study group sizes. Another
challenge is that different study groups have different levels of previous knowledge. Moreover, it
happens that problems in scheduling cause the order of the courses not to be ideal in relation to
previous knowledge of the students meaning that the students may have to take a course that would
have fit better at another stage in the study program. This problem is diminished as the students
move to higher levels in the education since there the class sizes are usually smaller and the students
are choosing a field to specialize in, hence all students in the class has specifically chosen the subject
in which they want to gain deeper knowledge.
Obviously, the aim when forming a program is to ensure to the largest extent possible that the courses will build upon the knowledge that the students are gaining. The A and B level courses consist most of the times of four parts that can be defined as the core of business education, accounting, finance, marketing and management. Each of these subjects requires a teacher that has specific knowledge in that area as well as the content of each subject is most efficiently delivered in different ways. Accounting and finance is often delivered through lectures and counting exercises while marketing and management are examined through seminars, case studies and reports. (Hejzlar, 2002:20-23)

On C and D levels the universities usually have a course supply that also is consistent with the four core subjects although there are also other subjects such as business development and entrepreneurship. On these levels the content stretch deeper into each of the areas and most students choose one subject to focus on. The graduation theses that these students write to finalize their degree are often reflecting the local corporate life and can many times be connected to the research of the respective supervisor. (Hejzlar, 2002:20-23)

3.2.2 Diverse student body

As presented earlier, to study business is popular in Sweden. It attracts both students that major in the subject and students that study it as a complement to other educational subjects. It is also common that the education, especially on the higher levels is delivered in English which result in international students also taking part. (Hejzlar, 2002:20-23) This has brought about maybe the biggest change in the universities over a number of years which is the diverse background of students in terms of their origin, opinions and previous knowledge (Light, 2001:129). Also, in a report by Ahlm et al. (2009:35-38) university teachers in Sweden emphasized that the main change in the university environment in the latest years is that the diversity has escalated and that teachers find the main change to be in the previous knowledge of the students.

On behalf of the Swedish National Agency for Higher Education Ahlm et al. (2009:35-38) interviewed teachers in different Swedish universities about the knowledge students possess before entering the university. These teachers stated that many students have good knowledge and are both motivated and show high performance. However, at the same time the group with inadequate knowledge and abilities has increased and the difference in knowledge and abilities between the highest and lowest performing students has grown larger.

According to the teachers, the previous knowledge has changed to the worse especially in writing, math and English combined with a lack of motivation and ambition. They also say that many students demand too much help and service and do not take responsibility for their studies. At the same time a positive change that teachers have seen within the student body is that the presentation, cooperation and computer skills have improved. (Ahlm et al., 2009:35-38)

Barrling Hermansson (2005:62-72) continues the reasoning about diversity within the student body and accentuate that a challenge for the educational departments in this environment is how to maintain the quality standards. The fact that some students lack previous knowledge increases the complexity for them to take the necessary step from pure fact learning into analyzing and interpretation which according to the purpose of higher education is required. Therefore it has become more difficult for teachers to manage an education that uphold the level of difficulty where current research can be mirrored and conveyed in a correct way.
### 3.2.3 Consequences

The fact that some students arrive to the university poorly prepared poses a problem for the numerous students that do fulfill the required previous knowledge. They are coming to the university with interest and dedication and do not get the quality in the teaching that they have a right to demand since the teachers have to spend time on lifting the students’ knowledge to the required level before they can start the real education. This can lead to that students losing their illusions about higher education and do not perform to their potential. If this happens students will not learn as much as they have a potential to do, the university can lose prospective researchers or students may even discontinue the education before completing it. (Barrling Hermansson, 2005:37-44)

Trout (1997:1-7) found that for the universities, the problem with diverse previous knowledge in many cases start with low admittance requirements. This leads to universities accepting students that many times have poor study habits and bad attitudes from their high school years which may continue as they enter the university. When universities are accepting disengaged individuals and rather than obliging them to adapt to the university requirements, the content of the education is adjusted to their needs, it is obviously not consistent with maintaining a high quality education.

According to Barrling Hermansson (2005:62-72) this adjustment of the education leads to an absence of really difficult phases, especially on the lower levels. Further, Chonko et al. (2002:3-9) found that large student groups in combination with fewer teachers increase the number of participants in each class leading to teachers feeling forced to utilize examination methods that are easily corrected and graded, due to time constraints, which on the down side do little to examine the students’ knowledge about the subject. Moreover, Barrling Hermansson (2005:73-76) stated that teachers as well as students express that the education is too much based on mechanical learning and at the same time teachers state that the examinations in many cases do not demand enough from students in terms of independent learning and deepened knowledge. Thus, it may happen that the critical perspectives that should be part of all higher education are in short supply on the lower levels. Instead, the difficult parts are held upon until the higher levels of the education when the class size facilitates such teaching.

The purpose of higher education as well as the university environment can have an influence on potential and current students in higher education. Therefore the next sections focus on the possible reasons for choosing a university education and the perceptions of the education that students can possess.

### Overview 3.2

**University environment**
- **Quality standards**
- **Educational challenges**
- **Diversity – previous knowledge**
3.3 Perceptions of the education

It has now been learned what the purpose of higher education is and what the educational context in the university looks like. This chapter focuses on the student perspectives on different aspects concerning the education and will examine what aspects affect student perceptions.

3.3.1 Choice of educational direction and university

In a study examining students’ reasons for entering higher education, Pasternak (2005:6-11) found four factors that influence the choice students make when choosing a specific university or study program, all of which will be discussed below.

The first factor for why students may choose a specific university or study program is convenience. This factor is related to aspects such as that the class hours enable a balance of studies, personal life and other activities. It can also be a convenience choice if the university is located close to the person’s home town or that there are good transportation possibilities between the university and the accommodation of the student. Moreover, this is connected to the existence of a comfortable study program with an attractive duration for the student either in number of classes weekly or in length so that obtainment of a degree is in a near future. (Pasternak, 2005:6-11)

The second factor is admittance requirements, meaning the level of difficulty of acceptance to the university. This can affect the students’ choice from two sides. Either the university is attractive due to high admittance requirements which limits the number of accepted students to the most talented ones and gives the university an exclusive image. These universities are usually seen as high-quality educational facilities due to high requirements in terms of grades and/or other merits in the selection process of accepted students (Pasternak, 2005:6-11). On the other hand low admittance requirements, meaning universities that maintain lower requirements when accepting students, attract students with lower performance from their high school years who need a university that will accept them in any case (Trout, 1997:1-7).

The third factor, reputation has to do with the general view of the university or the study department, especially important is the reputation for quality and seriousness. This reason for choosing a university is also comprised of the fact that if well-known and competent lecturers are present at the university this attracts students. Conversely if the university has a general poor reputation for some reason, this would not attract students to choose the particular educational facility. The reputation of different universities is most commonly passed from peers or family members to the students. (Pasternak, 2005:6-11)

Lastly, the fourth factor and most common one is professional interest. This is the reason of choice for students that have found the university to have courses or a study program that suits their specialization or is close to their field of interest. (Pasternak, 2005:6-11) If the student finds the subject of study interesting it motivates the person to complete the education. Also, students find that courses where the relevance of the subject is established and theories are connected to their future profession to be very interesting. Professional interest can further be connected to the students’ future career and that the education they choose will help them gain qualifications related to practice that they can use in their future career. (Kember et al., 2008:6-12) Also, undergraduate students are usually attracted to fields perceived as professional which they believe to be lucrative (Barbarik, 1980 in Alexitch and Page, 2001:2).
The fourth factor, interest and future career is further reinforced by a survey among Swedish university students which indicated that the main reason for why they study is their own interest for a given subject combined with thoughts of future career possibilities. Also, students choose to enter the university to facilitate their own intellectual development and contribute to their social and personal development. (Barrling Hermansson, 2005:8-9) Brandell (2001:39-40) found that Swedish students generally look at the university education as a mean to influence their existence and future and Mac Sighigh (2006:1-4) discovered that the main purpose with studies is for many students to enhance their chances for a good life.

Jacobsson & Gillström (2007:59-64) mentioned in their report that students in higher education are in general motivated by both interest and an ambition to enhance the opportunities for themselves in the labor market. As many as 95% of Swedish students stated that they were studying the education of their choice because it was of interests to them. Four out of five agreed to a high or very high degree in the statement that they started to study because they see it as a way of enhancing their opportunities on the labor market.

However, Jacobsson & Gillström (2007:59-64) also found students who expressed that they started to study as it is an alternative to being unemployed and Brandell (2001:40-42) stated that there are students that describe the start of their education without saying that it was a choice. This means that students explain that their journey to the university was not about making a choice. It can be that the student feels that starting the university was by coincidence, that it was a natural step in life or that he or she for some reason was forced to study. Clearly, previous research shows many different reasons for why students choose a specific university of study program. In Overview 3.3 these reasons are compiled.

**Overview 3.3**

**Reasons for choosing educational direction or university**
- Convenience
- Admittance requirements
- Reputation
- Interest
- Future career
- Alternative to unemployment
- Non-choice

### 3.3.2 Student approach to learning

According to Alexitch and Page (2001:4-8) there are normally two types of approaches to learning that exist among students; learning orientation and grade orientation. The learning oriented type is mainly focused on values such as the process of learning, intellectual ability and personal development whereas the grade oriented type focuses more on grades, status and competition. Thus, learning oriented types can more naturally possess a natural motivation, self belief and will for learning than a grade oriented type that for the most part is concerned with the education being a preparation for a future career. Usually, the learning oriented individuals have higher grades and show greater satisfaction in their overall university experience compared to their grade oriented counterparts. This illustrates the importance of students developing a quality of learning where they understand that higher education has a greater goal than just getting a degree. The perspective and
approach to learning need to be elevated as to move students toward the learning-oriented approach which then also will be manifested in their study behavior.

Similarly, Marton and Säljö (1976:6-11) identified through a study on Swedish university students that there are different approaches to learning within the student body. The outcome of the research suggests that learning has to be described in terms of its content – basically what is learned rather than how much is learned. There are significant differences in how students describe their learning which lead to the notion that some learners engage in surface level processing (how much is learned) whereas others engage in deep level processing (what is learned). It is assumable that the surface level learning can be connected to individuals who are grade oriented and the deep level to learning oriented students.

Previous research has further shown that deep and surface approaches to learning are affected by factors in the learning environment. Generally, if students’ have a positive understanding of educational goals, assignments and workload, this is related to a deep learning strategy. Moreover, students’ perceptions of high quality teaching and complete engagement into independent learning are also associated with a deep learning approach. (Nijhuis et al., 2007:14-18) This engagement into independent learning can both facilitate a deep learning for the individual student as well as it can help students to understand how to learn from each other. To uncover the level of engagement of a student, examining if the student uses quantitative or qualitative concepts of learning can be of interest, aspects that will be discussed below.

3.3.3 Concepts of learning

Learning can be distinguished between quantitative and qualitative learning which Eklund-Myrskog (1998:7-16) found when investigating Swedish students’ concepts of learning through asking them what learning means to them. Briefly, the quantitative concept can be described as a focus on gaining many facts or applying knowledge rather than the qualitative concept which is more focused on seeing learning as a tool for personal development. Linking to the above mentioned approaches to learning, it is assumable that the concept of quantitative learning can be connected to grade-orientation and surface level approach while qualitative learning can be associated to learning-orientation and deep level approach.

Through their research Eklund-Myrskog (1998:7-16) could formulate five concepts of learning three of which they connected to quantitative learning and two to qualitative. The first quantitative concept is learning in terms of remembering which means that students concentrate on memorizing facts, often connected to the subject of study but sometimes also in general. The focus here for the student is to be able to reproduce rather than gain a deeper understanding of the subject or relating the knowledge to practice.

The second quantitative concept is when students see learning in terms of understanding. In this concept, students differ through considering that learning either means understanding in general terms or that is means understanding the educational content. The latter group focuses on learning and understanding what they believe will be examined. (Eklund-Myrskog, 1998:7-16)
The third and last of the quantitative concepts is *learning in terms of applying knowledge*. This concept indicates that students focus on getting a deep understanding and thereby they are able to apply their knowledge in practice. This concept is more directed to practice than the previous one although they both deal with understanding. (Eklund-Myrskog, 1998:7-16)

The first qualitative concept is learning in terms of *getting a new perspective*. The individuals that identify with this concept perceive learning as a way of seeing things from many different ways and thus finding new perspectives. Lastly, the second qualitative concept, *learning in terms of forming a concept of one’s own*, is applied by students that use what they learn to form their own opinions and concepts. (Eklund-Myrskog, 1998:7-16)

Students may identify with many of these concepts at the same time and it is common that the concept of choice for a student varies as the individual pass through the levels of his or her education. This will further be examined in 3.4 Changes Over Time.

**Overview 3.4**

*Student approach to learning*

- Qualitative learning:
  - Learning orientation
  - Deep level processing

- Quantitative learning:
  - Grade orientation
  - Surface level processing

**3.3.4 Learning environment**

The delivery of higher education is usually accomplished through different types of learning environments such as lectures, group works and independent study. A survey by Devlin (2002:8-11), performed on university students’ about their preferred learning environments showed that the choice of preferred learning environment by a student is often related to the person’s perception of who is responsible for their learning. In this survey, a majority of the respondents chose lectures as their preferred learning environment, however they also engaged in independent studies, tutoring and practical session on or off campus. Student study groups were used by a small number of students and one-to-one tutoring sessions in between students were very rarely used.

These results show that students see that a variety of learning environments can help them in their education. Further, although the most preferred learning environments are those that include a teacher, students also engage in more independent ways of studying. This fact suggest that students to some extent participate and enjoy situations in which they themselves can be in control of their studies (Devlin, 2002:8-11) while at the same time the concept of independent study seem to offer both opportunities and threats. Some students see it as an opportunity to explore new horizons whereas others find it scary and are not able to handle it adequately. (Bryson & Hand, 2007:7-9) But the fact remains that almost one quarter of the responses in relation to preferred learning environment had to do with the individual student’s own behavior and how they can influence control over their studies in the chosen learning environment. These results can be interpreted as students seeing themselves as, at least somewhat responsible for their own learning. (Devlin, 2002:8-11)
Participants were also asked how their learning can be improved in relation to the different learning environments. Here, the suggestions for what to improve were mainly related to lectures and independent study followed by a wish for more practical connection to theory. This means that the students seem to perceive that their learning can be improved both in a learning environment that is managed by teachers and that is controlled by the students themselves. This in turn also suggests that students do acknowledge that they have a degree of personal responsibility for their learning and education. (Devlin, 2002:8-11)

Taking into consideration that students indicate that independent study can be improved to enhance their learning, they are referring to improvements that can be made in their own approach and behavior in relation to the education. This result is positive in providing some evidence that students have a perception of personal responsibility although two thirds of the students state that the best way to improve the education is to change university staff and fellow students’ approach and behavior. Hence, students do not perceive that they hold the entire responsibility on their own shoulders. (Devlin, 2002:8-11) Also, Light (2001:198) found that many students are quick to suggest that improvements in learning can mainly be done among fellow students, faculty members, deans and teachers but they do not clearly see what they themselves can improve which indicates that students perceive the university system as being responsible and should take care of the students.

Finally, the participants in the survey made by Devlin (2002:8-11) were asked to attribute responsibility for learning to the sources they perceived as holding the responsibility for their learning. It is noticeable that even though the students seemed to take on responsibility themselves, they indicated that they themselves hold 56% of the responsibility for their learning. This was followed by the perception that teachers possess 27% of the responsibility. Further, fellow students hold 9% while other people and factors take on 3.5% of the responsibility each.

Obviously, students have different perceptions of the holding of responsibility for student learning and academic success. It happens that students expect teachers to provide all the necessary information and through that ensure that they pass the course. (Alexitch & Page, 2001:4-8) This, coupled with the manner of adjusting the education to students’ needs that was discussed earlier in this chapter, is often spoken about in terms of treating students as consumers and that the students expect to have the education delivered to them (Chonko et al., 2002:3-9). In any market, when facing a consumer he or she should be satisfied instantly, a sales person do not want their customer to have to work hard to get satisfaction from the product or service (Trout, 1997:1-7). Whereas, it is clear that comparing students with consumers does not add up. It can only lead to students believing that they are entitled academic success which undermines the importance of hard work (Chonko et al., 2002:3-9).

These feelings of entitlement that many students have are in the long term very dangerous. Students expect that good grades and a diploma will guarantee a job and a successful career. For many students, good grades are synonymous to something being learned since they managed to answer the questions on the exam but this shows nothing about what knowledge actually was gained by the person. Just having good grades without any real knowledge behind will not lead to success in the long term even though students expect that it will help them in finding a good job in the future. (Chonko et al., 2002:3-9)

However that students many times believe that the teachers are responsible for them succeeding in their education can only be seen as a misunderstanding that lead students to believe that they themselves are not accountable. This misunderstanding can be traced to the low levels of the
university education. From there it happens that students are used to not having to take responsibility or spending a lot of time studying, since they are given all the necessary information from teachers, (Chonko et al., 2002:3-9) which makes it problematic for students to know what to expect of the whole university experience (Light, 2001:177). Students that are used to an uncomplicated education on low levels and have the feeling of being in a secure world where everything will be spoon-fed to them, enter the higher levels with poor understanding of what is actually waiting and what is expected from them. (Chonko et al., 2002:3-9)

This highlights the importance of not disregarding the students’ expectations but of setting the right ones. Teachers need to understand that helping students is not the same as pampering them. When lowering the expectations of students in regards to content of courses, teachers and required amount of effort there is no way to turn back. When arriving to the university the teaching should be based on the needs of the students however it will inevitably set the tone for the whole education and this is a great opportunity to shape the expectations. Often students come to the university with unclear expectations and the way they are treated from the beginning will help clear out the expectations (Chonko et al., 2002:3-9).

Overview 3.5

**Learning environments**
- Lectures
- Independent studies
- Tutoring by teacher
- Tutoring by other student
- Student study groups
- Practical exercises

### 3.3.5 I as a student

As established previously in this chapter, student engagement into learning is needed to facilitate qualitative learning. Student engagement can mean many things although assignments, subjects, courses and education are linked together indicating that if engagement can be created at any of these levels, it will spread over to others. (Bryson & Hand, 2007:11-12) Student engagement is connected to the extent to which students engage themselves in the kind of educational activities that evidently lead to high quality learning. Examples of such activities involve active learning, participation in developmental experiences and working with others, teachers or students. The ideal behavior of students is that they challenge themselves within these activities and within the education itself to reach the highest level of learning and to get the most out of the university experience. They need to look into new ideas and concepts, practice important skills such as presentation, communication, analysis etc. which will ensure that they are completely ready for work life when graduating from the university. (Coates, 2005:7-11) Fundamentally, a student should be able to attain knowledge, analyze it, know how to make independent judgments, develop an own identity as well as use critical thinking and problem solving (Baxter Magolda, 2001: preface xvi).

This ideal behavior that include having a thirst for challenges and being persistent is usually connected with individuals that were well prepared when they started the university which facilitated their adaption to the university environment. However, there are individuals that are unable to adapt to the university environment who can start avoiding challenges and display a low level of perseverance (Rodriguez, 2009:12-14).
Trout’s (1997:1-7) study “Disengaged students and the decline of academic standards” explains the problem with students that feel and are detached from their education. Often these students also have a detached approach to their education. They may not read the course literature, they may try to keep away from class discussions, they think that they can get good grades for mediocre work and ask for easier and fewer assignments. These students may also dislike hard times, complain about the workload, demanding teachers or that course requirements take up their time outside of class. It happens that these students do not prepare adequately for classes and exams, they may skip chances for improving their performance and they look down on intellectual achievements. Basically they are indifferent toward challenges and toward anything intellectual. Also, when students dislike a subject they tend to disengage as well as when they are having trouble with low previous knowledge. Jacobsson & Gillström (2007:28) discovered that 8% of Swedish students often had trouble with the studies due to a lack of previous knowledge and 1% had experienced this very often. According to Barrling Hermansson (2005:37-44), disengagement induces students to study just to pass the exam and that disengaged students demonstrate a lack of independence and critical thinking. These students can also believe that university studies are only about taking the fast track to graduation and then further to an employment.

While being familiar with the disadvantages that come with disengagement it is important to highlight the opportunities students have that can help them feel more engaged in their learning. Bryson and Hand (2007:11-12) found that strong social connections and having a sense of belonging gives confidence to participate and learn actively. Further, if there is a trusting environment among all parties involved in the education, where the students feel valued, the learning experience is more enjoyable and also more engaging. What really facilitates student engagement is when students are able to engage into their learning in the beginning of their education, maintain this and grow even more engaged as their studies evolve. (Bryson & Hand, 2007:11-12)

Early student engagement is often closely related to how well new students are able to adapt to the university environment. Previous research indicates that this adaption can depend on the ability the students have to plan and manage their time. Students that have strong time management skills, that know where their time is spent and understand how to allocate and plan time, can have a much easier adaption than those who do not. Instead, individuals with poor time management skills may find it very difficult to adjust to the university life. In light of this it may be important to educate and encourage students to use planning and time management skills. (Light, 2001:24,91)

Finally, student engagement into learning can be improved through a frequent use of feedback since that helps students to reflect on their performance. Previous research suggest that university students appreciate to receive acknowledgement for their efforts, feedback on their work, both praise as well as constructive criticism, and suggestions to points where they can improve (Bryson & Hand, 2007:9-11). Further, Poulos and Mahony (2008:3, 10-11) found in their study of students’ perceptions of feedback that feedback is complex and interpreted differently by each individual. Basically each student has different perceptions of what feedback is and has varied opinions of the value of feedback. An implication that can be drawn from these diverse views of what feedback is and how to use it is that students need to learn how to better recognize feedback, how to use it better and more often, how to ask for feedback and to understand how to take feedback seriously. Often feedback is connected to the expectations of the students. If a student sees feedback as important in their learning experience the person will expect it and vice versa.
Overview 3.6

I as a student
- Engage into learning
- Assignments and Exams
- Persistence and effort
- Initiatives and challenges
- Study performance
- Adaption
- Feedback

3.3.6 Content and delivery of the education

Civilekonomerna (2007:6-8) found in a study that about 57% of Swedish university students were very satisfied with the education. Satisfaction is an aspect that can lead to student engagement and the level of satisfaction is often depending on the content and delivery of the education. Barrling Hermansson (2005:108-119) found that recurring reasons for why a university student is satisfied are that the education has good status, the supply of courses is large and varied, the knowledge gained is wide and deep, the preparation for future working life is good and the internationalization of the education is good.

Additionally, Jacobsson and Gillström (2007:61) found when surveying Swedish university students that they were very satisfied with their university and their education. 84% of the students expressed that they would choose the same university if they could re do their choice. About 90% of the participants in the study give the grade good, or very good to their education. Brandell (2001:67-71) discovered a similar finding, also through surveying Swedish students. In the study by Brandell (2001:67-71), almost two thirds of the students were satisfied with the content of their education, while about one in 15 was dissatisfied. Further, half of the students were satisfied and one in seven dissatisfied with the delivery of the education. In both cases the majority of the participants were satisfied but it is possible to assume that more students are satisfied with the content of the education than the delivery of it. Also, students stated that they were happier with their own study results than the examination procedures. Moreover, 60% of the students in Jacobsson and Gillström’s (2007:33) study indicated that the education in a high degree contributed to reflection over personal values.

The participants in this study were also asked to what degree the studies were developing their ability to perform independent and critical judgments and their ability to independently identify, formulate and solve problems. The results showed that a majority of the students (about 70%), experienced that the studies in high or very high degree demanded analysis. To organize ideas, information or experiences in new and more complex interpretations were seen as less common, 53% of the students expressed that the studies included this in a high or very high degree. 60% believed that the education to a high degree contained applying value to information or arguments and 67% said the same about applying theories to practical problems. (Jacobsson & Gillström, 2007:37-38)

Moreover, looking at the common delivery and examination methods of a university education, reading, writing and reporting are important features. In the theoretical part of the education these activities are expected to be the main tools for learning and therefore exist to a great extent. (Jacobsson & Gillström, 2007:45-48) It does also happen that a large number of students, especially
the newer ones are frequently bored in class. However, as Trout (1997:1-7) stated, these individuals can often be connected to having spent very little time studying or doing homework in high school, having interacted little with teachers outside of class and being disengaged from student clubs or groups during their previous education. Being bored can also be related to the demands that the education puts on students. Jacobsson and Gillström (2007:23-32) discovered that about one fourth of the students in their study often or very often during the semester experienced that the pace of the education was too high. However, three fourths expressed that they seldom or very seldom experienced this. Also, 21% of the social science students declared that during the semester they often or very often experienced that the education put too low demands on them. Closely half of the students agreed in a high or very high degree that it was easy to pass the courses, especially when the examination was done through exams. Moreover, a correlation could be found between those that had reported a lack of previous knowledge and the experience of the study pace as being too high. Further, the students that reported having a lack of previous knowledge were also in agreement that it was difficult to pass the courses and that the education put too high demands on them.

Similarly, Bryson and Hand (2007:9-11) stated that university students sometimes have the perception that their teachers overlook the student learning experiences through giving them too much work which put their focus on the next crucial task or deadline instead of their engagement into learning. At the same time, Kember et al. (2008:6-12) found that students usually are very compliant to the demands and tasks of their education. Compliance means that students unquestioningly do all tasks and assignments that are given to them since they believe that is it necessary and a must to reach their goal of getting a degree. This means that even though students perceive that they are given too much work, they do not oppose to it or give suggestions to teachers on how to improve this.

What can be assumed from the above part is that a large share of the students feels that the education puts too low demands on them and that the courses are easy to pass while others have the opposite perception. It is evident that the differences in previous knowledge that exist in the university today present a challenge when it comes to delivering the education. Barrling Hermansson (2005:48-52) mentioned a possible solution for this challenge, the opportunity for educators to require students to take on more responsibility in the education and to themselves find ways of adapting the content to their level. Barrling Hermansson (2005:48-52) stated that the university staff needs to have faith in the students’ capacity to, with guidance from teachers, manage a lot of the studying by themselves.

Further, research suggests that it is rewarding for both students and teachers if the students are given and expected to influence the education. Having a too directed course schedule can only limit the students and it does not trigger their curiosity. It is much better to require student involvement in the classes but also to give interesting homework assignments that call for creativity and a thirst for more knowledge. (Light, 2001:18, 51) Students do expect the course material to be of interest for them and to assist them in developing their personal characteristics. They anticipate that attractive and enriching subjects should facilitate an increase of their knowledge and fields of interest. (Pasternak, 2005:6-11) Moreover, through encouraging innovative behavior in all activities on campus, be it classes, events or the way student organizations work, can have a large impact on the general mindset among the student body. Basically it is about creating strategies for increased student engagement in their learning through developing creative and beneficial relations between activities in the students’ lives and the academic program. (Blake et al., 1997:1-2)
Overview 3.7

Content and delivery of the education
- Satisfaction
- Personal values
- Critical and analytical thinking
- Problem solving
- Demands and work burden
- Influence the education

3.3.7 Teachers

Many times, the degree of engagement from students in a specific subject depends on the behavior and approach taken by the teacher with emphasis on communication skills and the use of teaching tools. Student engagement is incurred through professional and enthusiastic communication as well as efficient use of pedagogical tools. On the other hand, lack of enthusiasm from the teacher can have an alienating effect on students. (Bryson & Hand, 2007:9-11)

Another influence on student engagement is how teachers work together in teams and how their teaching matches up in relation to others, hence how equal the teachers are in their teaching and grading. Students sometimes experience that the teacher support vary a great deal, especially when in the process of writing a thesis. In general, students value consistent communication and advice since inconsistent treatment creates uncertainty for the students and diminishes their trust in the teachers. (Bryson & Hand, 2007:9-11)

It sometimes happens that the teacher and student approach to the education differ widely which decreases the efficiency of the education and learning (Alexitch & Page, 2001:4-8). To come to terms with this it is important that teachers and students interact and try to understand each other. A recurrent aspect that seems to have high importance in the mind of the students in relation to engagement or disengagement is the relationship they develop with teachers. A good relationship promotes high engagement and vice versa. (Bryson & Hand, 2007:9-11)

However, to have a good student-teacher relationship can be difficult. Students expect teachers to be just and objective when assessing their work and this expectation can have contradictory influences since objectivity require some distancing from the students in order to not favor anyone. (Crossman, 2007:8-10) At the same time, students anticipate that lecturers will be open for personal mentoring and feedback (Pasternak, 2005:6-11). Hence, distancing is encouraged in some situations while personal contact is important in others. (Crossman, 2007:8-10) Students perceive interacting with teachers and asking for feedback as a good way to talk to someone with a lot of experience in the subject. (Light, 2001:62-63) However, Jacobsson and Gillström (2007:41) discovered in their study of Swedish universities that the relationship between students and teachers is not ideal. 90% of the surveyed students experienced that they rarely or very rarely discussed with teachers or supervisors outside of scheduled time.

Further, Barrling Hermansson (2005:77-80) found when interviewing students that many of them consider the education to be excessively driven by the teachers. There is a belief among students that teachers rather would spend time on their own research than teaching. Students also state that the university and the teachers do not live up to the perspectives they are teaching such as being creative, using critical thinking, being prepared to reconsider a decision etc (Brandell, 2001:67-71).
Some teachers are even viewed as being unapproachable, non-responsive or even arrogant (Bryson & Hand, 2007:9-11)

Moreover, students feel that universities, their teachers as well as the whole university system do not take enough notice of them and their situation (Brandell, 2001:67-71). Many teachers however are engaged in both academic and non-academic student activities that relate to the subject of study and many of them express that even though they are aware of the problem issues, they feel powerless in changing the way the University environment impact negatively on the students, both in terms of learning and whether or not the students feel valued by the university. (Lea & Callaghan, 2006:11)

This perceptions that students hold of their teachers and the university is unfortunate since previous research indicate that interaction with teachers leaves a lasting impression on students, especially if the interaction is concerning an important assignment in the subject of study where opinions can be exchanged. Even larger impression is left if the teacher encourages discussion and accepts or even supports students to disagree. This gives students an opportunity to take responsibility for their own ideas and opinions and it promotes critical thinking (Light, 2001:119-120). This also means that university staff needs to plan the necessity of working with students both inside and outside the classroom with the consideration that it will promote student engagement (Blake et al., 1997:1-2).

Here the role of communication and feedback becomes obvious. In general, teachers are positive toward receiving feedback from students on classes or assignments and if students can give suggestions for improvement it is even better. (Light, 2001:19, 64-65) However it rarely happens that students put their point of views forward other than on the course evaluations. (Barrling Hermansson, 2005:77-80) On the other hand, students express feeling powerless to give feedback since they fear being unfairly treated – if they criticize they are afraid they will be punished through biased marking. (Bryson & Hand, 2007:9-11)

Overview 3.8

Teachers
- Teacher characteristics and performance
- Student-teacher relationship
- Valuable for university
- Feedback

3.3.8 Fellow students

As discussed earlier, a large change in the university environment over the past years has been an increased diversity in the student body (Light, 2001:129). This can influence the student learning experiences and outcomes due to social and organizational factors that are affected by diversity (Brennan & Osborne, 2008:2-11). Further, since students attribute the responsibility for their learning also to other students it is interesting to understand how students perceive the cooperation with fellow students. (Devlin, 2002:8-11)

According to Jacobsson and Gillström (2007:39-40), students gain valuable training that can be a support for the learning and a preparation for a future cooperation within the working life when they cooperate with others to solve problems and explore new areas. When asking Swedish university students about the frequency of student cooperation Jacobsson and Gillström (2007:39-40) found
that about 60% of the students often or very often are involved in group works that are part of the course work. However, meaningful conversations with students from other educational programs did, according to 83% of the students, never happen. Further, Crossman (2007:8-11) reported that students do see advantages of peer assessment however only teachers are perceived as being objective and competent enough to make fair judgments and Light (2001:62-63) encouraged the use of peer feedback to enhance learning.

Light (2001:196) further stated that academic learning does not only happen in class and personal learning does not only take place in out-of-class settings which makes it important to make use of all learning experiences. Light (2001:173) suggested that the crossover between learning in class and outside class is substantial especially when students have the opportunity to study and be friends with others who are different than themselves. When working with others, students get a variety of learning outcomes for example, collaboration, responsibility for their own learning and deepened understanding of the course content (Boud et al., 1999:1). The fact that student diversity is high gives an even more interesting angle on student cooperation since it is important to learn how to work with different people, both in knowledge level but also with different background. (Light, 2001:145-152)

It is also great preparation for the future work life if students can learn how to challenge and question each other and among themselves take responsibility for each other’s learning as well as their own. According to Light (2001:19, 64-65), students find it rewarding to write essays that are to be read by their fellow students. However, a perception common among students is that other students on many occasions, get away with inadequate work or preparation while them themselves never expect or experience this. According to the students, the conditions between different teachers, courses and subjects are different which makes the work imbalanced. (Bryson & Hand, 2007:11-12)

Regardless of the perception of the fellow students, Light (2001:19, 64-65, 201-2031) further stated that it is important for students not to take the university for granted and really make the most out of these years. Although, the low number of student initiated study groups suggests that there is a lack of responsibility in finding ways to be of assistance to each other or that the students are uncomfortable asking a fellow student for help or feedback. This situation of not cooperating with fellow students as much as possible is unfortunate since it is the social relationships that often help students to adapt well to the university life in general.

Overview 3.9

Fellow students
- Student diversity
- Responsibility
- Cooperation

3.3.9 University life

When new students starts at a university it is important for them to find a match between their ambitions and the demands of the university they attend. Some students find this match, but some do not. For this latter group, the study experience may result negatively and they may drop out whereas others can adapt and change which in turn can lead to a profound personal development. The students that find the university demands suitable or are able to adapt to it report many benefits.
from their university experience often in relation to the people they meet there. (Brennan & Osborne, 2008:2-11)

Some students are able to make the transition to the university from high school much smoother than others through being adaptive and taking responsibility for their studies (Light, 2001:24, 91). However, it does happen that students come to the university unprepared for the challenges that will face them, for example the workload, managing their time and understanding the university procedures (Alexitch & Page, 2001:4-8). When students enter the university they are very familiar with the high school system which can lead to a culture shock occurring when they arrive to the university. The new environment is not what the person expected and it can happen that the student becomes self-conscious and uncertain about his/her beliefs. (Baxter Magolda, 2001: preface xvi)

What can help students to adapt is to engage in other activities next to the education, such as student organizations or sport clubs. Students state that there is a considerable social profit of going to the university since it is a place where many people meet and where interaction and discussions about common interests are possible. These types of gatherings can increase a person’s social connections which can provide a great support for the individual student. Moreover, the university lifestyle is generally connected with costs and obligations however these are not seen as too high obstacles by students since the university and student life is very attractive. The student lifestyle can also affect the student motivation positively or negatively depending on how satisfied a student is with the life he or she is leading. (Kember et al., 2008:6-12)

Overview 3.10

- University life
- Ambition and demands
- Preparation
- Adaption
- Extracurricular activities
- Satisfaction

3.3.10 Missing in the education

Earlier it was presented that students generally have quite high satisfaction rate of their university studies however there are some factors that the students are missing. Civilekonomerna (2007:6-8) made a survey among Swedish university students about their satisfaction or dissatisfaction with their education. The results indicate that the students are the least satisfied with the lack of contact with the corporate life and potential future employers. On the question to what the students would like to change in the education the replies were; more real world practice, better reality adaption of the courses, more lectures and more pedagogical teachers. Some also expressed a wish for increased admittance demands. Beck (2009:38) reported similar results in terms of what students are missing. The students in Beck’s survey asked for better connection of the theoretical education to practice, either in the courses, though examining real cases and stronger connection to the corporate life and public sector.

Bryson and Hand (2007:2-11) also found that there are some missing aspects when students expressed that there are too many students in each course, lack of personal contact with teachers and a sense of being anonymous. These aspects showed to be mainly common in large study programs.
Specific skills that students have demands for are, according to Beck (2009:38), better computer skills and experience within IT such as knowledge in Excel, Power point and practical computer programming. Further inquiries are connected to the content of the courses such as more sales and purchasing courses, law, mathematics, statistics and financial economy. Finally, students want more knowledge in entrepreneurship, negotiations, business strategies and a better understanding of organizational and corporate cultures. Previous research has indicated that some of these missing aspects students can find through engagement in extracurricular activities.

Overview 3.11

Missing in the education
- Practice
- Lectures
- Pedagogical teachers
- Personal contact with teachers
- Specific skills and knowledge
- Extracurricular activities

3.3.11 Extracurricular activities

There are many student activities to engage in outside of the classroom. Options vary between student organizations, sport clubs, part time work etc. Even though there are numerous varieties, not all students choose to make a commitment to anything else than their studies. Obviously it depends on what the person is willing to put in and what gains there can be from joining such an activity. (Light, 2001: 13-22) Not all individuals are aware of that being a student at the university can offer more than just studying. They are not interested in creating networks, deepening skills and knowledge, engaging in student activities, etc. (Mac Sighigh, 2006:1-4) However some students also express that they are unhappy with their life outside the studies and do not feel that it is valuable time for them (Brandell, 2001:45-48).

It is confirmed through research that students that do engage in extracurricular activities and free time activities tend to have a more satisfying university experience and believe they have a more rewarding time in the university. Students that can combine an outside perspective, for example from an extracurricular interest, with the in-class content have many benefits when relating theory to practice (Light, 2001: 13-22). Further, research indicates that a high level of engagement in the studies and in other activities related to the education is an important condition for academic success. (Blake et al., 1997:1-2)

In addition to that, engagement in out-of-class activities can make students overall more satisfied with their university experience than those who do not. It has been shown in research that the best way for a student to go through the university successfully is to have a group of people for support. Joining an organization outside of the classroom can provide such support hence the importance of joining a group as early as possible in the education. (Light, 2001:21-30, 98-99) According to Brandell (2001:45-48) the main free time activity for students in Sweden is sports activities with more than half of all students practicing some kind of sport. About one third of the students have a part time job. Other activities such as extracurricular activities (i.e. student organizations and student unions) and volunteer work engage around 10% of the student body (Brandell, 2001:45-48).
Moreover, working outside of the studies, be it paid, extracurricular activity or volunteering, can be a way of learning something new or putting theory into practice. It has also been suggested in previous research that there is no significant relationship between any of these activities and grades. This means that people who engage themselves outside of studies and those who do not show the same level of academic performance, hence extracurricular activities do not affect the grade level positively nor negatively. Furthermore, there is no difference between these students in their opinions of the quality of the studies and the difficulty level of the courses. However most of the students who do engage themselves in out-of-class activities believe that it has a good influence on their overall university experience. (Light, 2001:21-30)

Not only can extracurricular activities have a positive impact on the university experience. Involvement in extracurricular activities and acquiring skills from these are viewed as carrying high value in the labor market and as being a mean of personal positioning. In a study by Tomlinson (2008:7-10) on how university students’ perceive their future employability, the respondents had concerns about taking out all the potential market value of their university experiences, both in class and outside of class. According to Tomlinson (2008:7-10) students see their CV as an essential tool for positioning themselves and informing others about their individual potential. The skills and competences of each individual are perceived as adding to their marketability as graduates and complement their degree.

Overview 3.12

**Extracurricular activities**
- Student organizations
- Sports
- Paid work
- Volunteer work
- Satisfaction
- Differentiation

### 3.3.12 Time division

As students seem to be involved in extracurricular activities while they are studying it is interesting to find out what the time division between studies and these activities look like. According to Brandell (2001:53-58), the time students in Sweden on average spend on studying is widely spread among individuals even within the same study program. Students within humanity studies spend on average 26 hours per week studying, social science and law, about 32 hours and health care students spend approximately 46 hour per week. Also the scheduled time varies between different programs from 9 to 29 hour per week where humanity and social sciences studies have the least number of scheduled hours. Also, in general, full time students spend about 10 hours per week on part time work and extracurricular activities.

Among the business and economics students, a large share spend a relatively a small amount of time on their studies. In a study by Civilekonomerna (2007:6-8) 36% of the students reported that they study less than 20 hours per week and 32% spent 20-29 hours on studies. 32% reported spending 30 hours. Further, 58% of the students worked in parallel to their studies. Jacobsson and Gillström (2007:24-31) reported that about half of the students work, 46% works 10 hours or more and 7%, 20 hours or more. They also found that it is slightly more common among the social sciences and law students to have an extra job.
The reason for working is mainly due to financial matters. It also happens that students have jobs to which they feel so connected that they fundamentally consider their studies as a part time activity regardless of what the formal status of the study program is (Brennan & Osborne, 2008:2-11). However it is important to put forward that it is proved through research that relatively few hours spent on studies does not entirely depend on work commitments, it is also due to other activities that the students are involved in (Jacobsson & Gillström, 2007:24-31).

Overview 3.13

**Time division**
- Time spent on studying
- Time spent on other activities

3.3.13 Expected and actual merits and ambition

It has been discussed in this chapter that if new university students are able to adapt to the university in a good way they have an easier time to engage into their learning. Chonko et al. (2002:3-9) suggest that adaption or not in many ways is connected to the expectations and goals the students possess when arriving to the university and that these usually are very varying among the student body.

The most obvious expectation students have is earning a degree. Students enter the university with the goal of obtaining a degree in the end. There are also students who expect to earn their degree in a timely manner meaning that they choose a short study program or they may want to study more than 100% at a time to be able to go through their education quickly. In general it can be said that students anticipate that the university time will be well spent so that no time is wasted (Pasternak, 2005:6-11).

Students also set goals for themselves which often are connected to certain grades they want to have or specific things they want to learn which motivates them to complete all the courses, even the less interesting ones. These goals are normally quite realistic and attainable since students, through having many examination experiences in the university, more or less know their own capacity. The goals are also tools for finding a balance between the education and the free time. (Kember et al., 2008:6-12)

Through achieving their goals most students are able to obtain their expected educational merits. It is then interesting to understand how undergraduate students perceive the role of educational merits in relation to their own future employability. The ideal would be if students perceive learning as an investment which will give them benefits in the labor market. Tomlinson (2008) studied undergraduate students in the end of their education to find out how they understand their future work and employability.

Among the results it can be noticed that students find their educational merits as influencing positively on their future opportunities in the labor market. Their responses indicate that they see the gains from a university education to be an improvement of their value of human capital which is a key element of their future employability. It is also believed that higher education will introduce a variety of economic, occupational and social opportunities that otherwise may not have been open for them. However, the students’ perceptions of higher education merits in relation to future
benefits in the labor market is not obvious, rather students see a university education as a basis for their employability and not as a guarantee for a good future job. (Tomlinson, 2008:4-10)

Because of this, the participants in the study expressed a need to explore and develop qualifications that lies outside of the formal learning, namely other hard and soft skills that would be beneficial for them. Big emphasis is put on the need of getting experiences and achievements outside the education to complement the degree. (Tomlinson, 2008:4-10)

Overview 3.14

Expected and actual merits and ambition
- Expectations and goals
- Degree
- Grades
- Balance between education and free time
- Employability
- Educational and other merits

3.4 Changes over time
In this chapter different aspects of a university education have been presented and discussed although for many of these, the students’ perceptions can change over time. In previous research this change is not mentioned although some records of this have been found such as the students’ approach to learning.

Learning in terms of remembering is most often found among new students in the beginning of their education. Also, when it comes to learning in terms of understanding, a difference can be found in the level the student is on. In the beginning of the education, students mainly want to understand theoretical matters whereas in the end of studies, students want to understand theory in relation to practice. Further, in the beginning of a study program, students often relate learning in terms of applying knowledge to everyday life whereas in the end of the program they relate learning to their future profession. The latter group focuses on how to gain advantage from the knowledge in practice and how it can help them in reaching specific goals. Learning for this group means getting and maintaining knowledge long term and not only for a specific period. (Eklund-Myrskog, 1998:7-16)

The two qualitative concepts, learning in terms of getting a new perspective and learning in terms of forming a concept of one’s own, are mainly found among students in the end of the education. This concept is connected to understanding the subject in order to be able to shape one’s own viewpoint of it. (Eklund-Myrskog, 1998:7-16)

To summarize, students in the end of the education are more likely to use a qualitative and deep learning whereas students in the beginning of the education more often use apply a quantitative and surface approach to learning. As students progress in their education, they see the need and importance of understanding and connecting learning to themselves and learning for life rather for a short period of time. (Eklund-Myrskog, 1998:7-16)

According to Kember et al. (2008:6-12) students moreover express that the effectiveness of teaching and learning environments vary depending on which stage in the education they are. Aspects of the learning environments that they did not find interesting early on in the education may be much more
interesting later. For example, first year students to a larger extent find theoretical assignments to be boring whereas in the final year these types of assignments are perceived as more interesting. This is opposite to what Eklund-Myrskog (1998:7-16) stated earlier regarding theoretical and practical coursework.

In any case, the approach to learning evidently changes in different ways over time which also influences the students’ degree of engagement in the education in general (Bryson & Hand, 2007:4-6). As argued earlier in this chapter, a common goal for business students in attending the university is getting a good degree and consequently a good job. In order to get high grades and hence a good degree students value high-quality assessments of their work. Bryson and Hand (2007:4-6) found that students value high-quality assessments and good grades more in the end of their studies than in the beginning and therefore they treat the first year of university as unimportant. Instead, since the first year is full of issues such as transition from high school to university and socialization with new people, students have a tendency to view the education and learning as secondary. Many first year students consider that the commitment necessary is attending lectures and seminars and obviously the level of engagement at the first educational stage is low.

The second year students show a small increase in engagement. According to them, the second year counts as 25% of their final degree and stated that the acceptable total hours of studying is 25 hours per week. This is defined as doing the minimum to obtain an acceptable grade. When asked about these minimalist levels of work, the second year students believe that they will be able to catch up in the last year. (Bryson & Hand, 2007:4-6)

Students in the final year do express that they work harder than in the beginning of their education, some even study 60 hours per week. However they also mention that they are not particularly more engaged into the subject than earlier in the education, rather they engage in the tasks related to the assessment of their work. This leads students to defining their last year as a joyless struggle. (Bryson & Hand, 2007:4-6)

Although, when studying the general satisfaction rate of students, the higher level a student is on, the more satisfied he or she is with the contribution of the university to the individual’s intellectual development. An assumption that can be made from this is that it is only in the higher levels the education and the examinations provide the expected difficulty. (Barrling Hermansson, 2005:8-9) Further, this can be connected to the fact that high level students use more qualitative approaches to learning and low level student use quantitative approaches. This means that the high level students, even though they feel the need to focus on getting good grades, are learning the course material on a deeper level than the low level students. (Eklund-Myrskog, 1998:7-16)

Overview 3.15

Changes over time
- Approach to learning
- Engagement into the education
- Satisfaction
4. Practical methodology

In this chapter, the manner of collecting and analyzing data is described and the decisions made for the data collection and analysis are presented and argued for. The chapter starts with an explanation of the quantitative method. Then the survey development as well as the process for sampling, data collection and data processing are described. The chapter ends with a discussion about the reliability and validity of the study combined with criticism toward the choice of methodology.

4.1 Quantitative method

The method for collecting empirical data to investigate a research problem is closely connected to the purpose of the study and how it can be fulfilled in the best way (Christensen et al., 2001:67). The aim of this study is to explore how student perceptions change focusing the students’ views of learning, responsibility, engagement and satisfaction. To reach this aim, opinions of a large group of people need to be collected which is why a quantitative method has been chosen for the empirical investigation. (Wilson, 2003:120-121)

The quantitative method focuses on numbers, volume and frequency that can be used in statistical measurements. The analysis of data mainly concentrates on discovering and measuring different variables (Christensen et al., 2001:67) and by that the researcher is able to quantify the occurrence of behaviors and attitudes to see how widespread it is (Wilson, 2003:120-121).

The quantitative research method is characterized by structure and by having a predetermined set of starting points from which the research takes form. The result of a quantitative research approach can be used to improve and develop the starting points (Christensen et al., 2001:67) and to generalize the result over a large population (Wilson, 2003:120-121), which are in line with the purpose of this thesis. As a quantitative method was chosen to fulfill the purpose of this study, the tool for data collection was a survey and the respondents were university students.

4.2 Survey development

The survey was based on the theoretical framework. From each section, questions were built to reflect the information of that part to make sure everything was covered in the survey. The survey (which can be found in appendix 1) consisted of 24 questions where the answers were to be given by the respondents in both an opened and closed manner. To answer the open questions, the students could write their responses with their own words while for the closed ones, they had to select one option that most closely matched their perception. Below is a more detailed description of the different sections of the survey.

Background information

The survey started with simple background questions which had as purpose to collect information from the respondents that could separate them in terms of gender, age and time at the university. The form for the closed questions were multiple choice questions where the respondent only can belong to one category, so called mutually exclusive categories (Wilson, 2003:152) such as the following ones.
The open questions in this section, concerning the choice of becoming a university student as well as why they chose their particular study program aimed to understand the aspects that the students see as the most important for why they chose to study at the university. This section was based on ‘3.2.4 Choice of educational direction and university’ in the theoretical framework. The questions were open which made it possible for the students to give as many reasons as they wanted.

Finally, the last question in this section was a dichotomous question which is a type of question that usually consist of two alternative responses, for example yes or no as in this case (Wilson, 2003:151):

**1.6 Was your current study program (subject) your first choice when you applied to the university?**

**YES**

**NO**

**Learning**

The section containing questions about learning had as purpose to find out how the students perceive the concept of learning and to find out what their preferred learning environment is which is corresponding to the sections ‘3.4.1 Student approach to learning’, ‘3.4.2 Concepts of learning’ and ‘3.4.3 Learning environment’ in the theoretical framework.

This part of the survey started with an open question and as a complement to this one, another question also asked about what the students perceive learning to be. However, the second question was closed as to get grading of specific alternatives. The alternatives were based on Eklund-Myrskog’s (1998:7-16) concepts of learning. The reason for having these two similar questions was due to it being interesting to find out what students by themselves, without having options to choose from, would associate learning to.

The closed questions in this section were constructed of statements to which the respondents were asked to estimate their level of agreement using a Likert scale (Wilson, 2003:159). The number of response options was set to four, completely disagree, somewhat disagree, somewhat agree and completely agree. This means that the scale forced the respondents to choose a side, they needed to lean either toward agreeing or not agreeing (Wilson, 2003:156-157). The reason for having a forced scale was due to it being evaluated as a better choice to be able to fulfill the purpose of the study. Since the aim was to investigate student perceptions it was assumed that the respondents should be able to have an opinion regarding each of the questions, hence they would not need a middle-option. In addition to agreeing to the statements, these questions had an ‘other’ option where the respondents could indicate if they had opinions that were not covered in the given options. For the remaining of the survey this type of scale was used for a majority of the questions:
For the question about preferred learning environment, it was important to distinguish between group works that would be examined and independent studies in groups which are why there are two statements asking about group work.

**Educational environment**

The purpose of the last section of the survey was to investigate the students’ perceptions of aspects within the education. To gather the students’ perceptions about these aspects it was necessary to have questions with Likert scale, open questions, multiple choice questions and dichotomous questions. The questions were divided into different parts corresponding to sections in the theoretical framework with the same name. The sections ‘I as a student’, ‘Content and delivery of the education’, ‘Teachers’, ‘Fellow students’ and ‘University life’ all consisted of statements to which the respondents needed to agree or not agree to. ‘Missing in the education’ was represented by an open question about what the students were missing. ‘Extracurricular activities’ contained a dichotomous question with an open complementary follow up question whereas ‘Time division’ was examined through two open questions asking the students about how much time they spend on studies and extracurricular activities. Within the ‘Expected and actual merits and ambition’ there were multiple choice questions about level of ambition and actual study results as well as questions with Likert scale asking about the expected and actual merits the students wanted to gain from their education. The sections ‘3.1 The purpose of higher education’ and ‘3.2 University environment’ from the theoretical framework did not have questions reflected in a specific part of the survey, rather these sections gave inspiration for statements in many different parts, such as ‘Content and delivery of the education and ‘Fellow students’.

The question asking about the respondents’ rate of satisfaction was originated in an interest to find out how satisfied the students were with their own performance which is based on the theoretical framework as a whole since satisfaction can depend on many different factors. Additionally there was one question in the end where respondents could give comments about their education in case there was something that they wanted to put forward that was not included in the survey.

After the survey was developed, it was tested on 10 respondents who answered the survey and then were able to give their opinions on it. From their feedback, one aspect was changed. In the original survey the order of the Likert scale was changed in some of the questions, meaning that it sometimes was presented as 1, 2, 3, 4 and sometimes as 4, 3, 2, 1. The thought behind this was to make sure that the respondents were concentrating on how they answered the questions. However, the test group stated that the order of numbers in the response options should be the same since
they found it to be confusing when the order was reversed. Further, a few wordings were also adjusted as to make the questions more understandable.

4.2.1 Categorization of survey questions

Through examining the previous research in the theoretical framework four key areas surfaced within which it would be possible to categorize the survey and the following analysis. These areas were students’ perceptions of learning, responsibility, engagement and satisfaction. Additionally, the reasons for why students chose to study will be surveyed. In table 4.1 the categorization of the survey questions into each perception is presented. The empirical results were structured to correspond to these categories and the analysis will focus on the perceptions that show differing results when comparing students over time.

| Reasons for studying | 1.4 What reasons are there that made you decide to start studying at the university? |
| 1.5 Why did you choose to study your current study program (subject)? |
| Learning | 2.1 What is learning for you? Describe with your own words how you perceive learning, what does it mean? |
| 2.3 To learn something means: |
| to remember |
| to understand |
| to get good grades |
| to be able to apply knowledge in reality |
| to get a new perspective |
| to form your own opinion |
| to develop as a person |
| Responsibility | 2.2 The kind of education/study technique I prefer to learn the content of a course is: |
| lectures |
| independent studies |
| group work (group work that is part of the examination of a course) |
| independent studies in groups (study with other students – not group work that is part of a course) |
| practical exercises |
| individual tutoring by teacher |
| individual tutoring by fellow student |
| 3.1 I as a student |
| I, personally am responsible to make sure that I go through my education (graduate) |
| If there are possibilities in the education to take own initiatives, I take that possibility |
| I will influence my education to make sure it contains all merits/aspects that I want to get out of a university education |
| I would like to have more feedback on my personal performance in the education |
| 3.2 Content and delivery of the education |
| I as a student can influence the content and delivery of my university studies |
| I often give suggestions to teachers about how the content and delivery of the education can be improved |
3.3 Teachers
I often ask for feedback on performance from teachers.
I am afraid that if I give negative feedback to a teacher, it will reflect negatively on my grades.
My teachers are responsible to make sure that I go through my education (graduate).

3.4 Fellow students
My fellow students are responsible for me getting through my education (graduate).
In group situations in the education I usually let others take the lead and I take a passive role.
In group situations in the education I usually let others take the lead and I take a supporting role.
In group situations in the education I usually take a leading role.
I often ask for feedback on my study performance from other students.

3.5 University life
I take own initiatives to explore all possibilities that are available for me as a student to make my time at the university as good as possible both inside and outside of the studies.

3.8 How many hours per week do you spend studying studies? (Including lectures, group works, independent studies, etc.)

3.10 How many hours per week do you spend in extracurricular activities?

3.11 The most important merits that I would like to get out of my time at the university are:
- a degree
- good grades
- work life experience within the right industry
- general work life experience
- internship (unpaid job within my area of study)
- engagement in student organizations and voluntary activities
- contacts within the industry/company where I want to work in the future.

3.12 The most important merits that I actually will get out of my time at the university are:
- a degree
- good grades
- work life experience within the right industry
- general work life experience
- internship (unpaid job within my area of study)
- engagement in student organizations and voluntary activities
- contacts within the industry/company where I want to work in the future.

3.1 I as a student
I believe that I was prepared and had sufficient previous knowledge when I started to study.
I am good at planning my time (know where my time is spent).
I fully engage into my learning and study to really learn new knowledge.
I study as little as possible, only to pass the courses.
I make more effort in the courses that I find interesting and less effort in courses I find less interesting.
I always do my best on all assignments and exams.
I like and look for challenges that develops me personally or professionally. I am persistent and hard working also in the toughest situations in my studies. I feel that I as a student is valuable for the university and that everyone who works at the university (management, student service, teachers, etc.) highly value my learning.

### 3.2 Content and delivery of the education
I believe that the work burden in my education is too high (too much work). I believe that the education demands too little of me as a student. I am often bored on the lectures.

### 3.3 Teachers
I would like to have more personal contact and support from teachers. I believe that the teachers are unavailable for me as a student outside scheduled time.

### 3.4 Fellow students
I believe that I can learn a lot from my fellow students. I believe that my fellow students were prepared and had adequate previous knowledge when they started to study.

### 3.5 University life
The transition from what I did before I stated to study (high school, work, unemployment) to university studies and university life was easy for me. I believe that my spare time outside of the studies is rewarding since I engage in activities that develop me as a person.

### 3.7 What is your level of ambition in your studies?
- VG in all subjects
- 2 VG’s per 1 G (two thirds VG’s)
- Approximately an equal amount of VG’s as G’s (50:50 VG:G)
- 2 G’s per 1 VG (two thirds G’s)
- G in all subjects
- Whatever happens, happens

### 3.9 Are you engaged in any spare time activity besides studying (i.e. student organization, student union, sports club, voluntary work, extra job)?
**Why/why not?**

### 3.13 What are your actual study results?
- VG in all subjects
- 2 VG’s per 1 G (two thirds VG’s)
- Approximately an equal amount of VG’s as G’s (50:50 VG:G)
- 2 G’s per 1 VG (two thirds G’s)
- G in all subjects

## Satisfaction

### 3.2 Content and delivery of the education
I am satisfied with the content of my education (subjects, course material, etc.). I am satisfied with the delivery of my education (how the content is presented). I am satisfied with the manner of examination of the courses (exam, thesis, presentation, etc.). I believe that the education provides me with many opportunities to use analytical thinking. I believe that the education provides me with many opportunities to use critical thinking. I believe that the education provides me with many opportunities where I get to solve...
3.1 Problems
I believe that the education has helped me to understand and reflect on my personal values.

3.3 Teachers
I believe that my teachers are enthusiastic, pedagogic and professional in when teaching
I believe that the teachers control my education too much
I believe that teachers rather would do research than teach classes.

3.4 Fellow students
I believe that other students influence my own study performance negatively

3.5 University life
All in all, I am satisfied with my time at the university (both inside and outside the studies)

3.6 What do you lack in your education? (What can be improved to make your time at the university better?)

3.14 What grade would you give yourself if you grade how satisfied you are with your performance during your study time?
100% satisfied
Between 75%-99% satisfied
Between 50-74% satisfied
Between 25-49% satisfied
Less than 25% satisfied

3.15 Why did you choose the above option?

Categorization of survey questions, table 4.1

4.3 Sample
The population to be investigated in this study is Swedish university students in the Umeå School of Business. To select a representative sample out of this population a non-probability sampling method was used since it was of importance for the study that the sample consisted of Swedish respondents from different years of their university education and the most efficient way of finding these respondents was through a convenience sampling. (Christensen, 2001:129-133) The sampling was made through looking at the class schedules of the students in the Business school and from that the most convenient classes were chosen. The teacher of each class was contacted via email with a request for permission to come to one of their lectures to have students fill out surveys. Eight teachers were contacted who all gave permission to use some time of their lectures for the survey leading to nine study groups answering the survey (one teacher had lectures for two of the chosen study groups). In total, 366 surveys were distributed which is more than enough according to Wilson (2003:120-121) for this type of quantitative research.

The reason for choosing this type of sampling method is because it was evaluated as the best one to suit the purpose of this study. It was important to find students on different levels of the education as well as students with differing opinions regarding their perceptions of the education. Through catching students on lectures it was assumed that approximately the whole class would answer the survey meaning individuals with different levels of ambition, study habits, satisfaction rates etc. The main downside with this sampling method is the possibility that there were students not present at
the time of the data collection that could have had interesting opinions to share however it was evaluated that the positive sides of this method weigh up for the shortcomings.

Initially, the aim was to collect responses from a similar number of students on each level in the education; A, B, C and D. However due to many B and C level students being in elective courses or on field work/internships outside of the university at the time of data collection, this was not possible. Due to this, one study group on B level and one on C level were surveyed. Moreover, in the D level courses, the number of students in one class were between 20-40 students, however since only Swedish students were eligible for this study, the number of respondents ended up being between 9 and 19 (as indicated in table 4.2).

4.4 Data collection

The collection of data was done between December 7th to December 17th 2009 in nine study groups at the USBE. 366 surveys were distributed and out of them 334 were filled by 150 female and 184 male students studying programs or courses at the Umeå University Business School. The schedule for the data collection looked as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Study Program</th>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Number of students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monday December 7</td>
<td>Management</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>10.00</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday December 8</td>
<td>Business Administration and Economics</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>10.00</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday December 8</td>
<td>Service Management and Retail and Supply Chain Management</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>14.00</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday December 9</td>
<td>Accounting</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>10.00</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday December 9</td>
<td>Business Administration</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>11.00</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friday December 10</td>
<td>Business Administration and Economics</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>11.00</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monday December 14</td>
<td>Retail and Supply Chain Management</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>9.00</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monday December 14</td>
<td>Marketing</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>11.00</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday December 17</td>
<td>Finance</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>14.00</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The data collection was, as previously mentioned, done through visits to lectures of the different study groups. First they were given a short introduction to the purpose of the thesis and the importance of them assisting in fulfilling it. The surveys were then distributed to respondents who filled them out right away. During all times the researcher was present in the room as to be able to answer questions or clear out doubts from the respondents. The most common question was if the respondents should include their current semester in question 1.3 to which the answer was yes.
The choice of finding the respondents in connection to a lecture was made due to the belief that in such a time they would be willing and relaxed to fill out the survey. Also, the teachers were usually a large help in getting the students to fill out the survey since they thought that the topic of the study was interesting and important. The students on C and D level seemed to be more sincere and thorough when filling out the survey whereas the A and B level students were a bit more rushed and gave less thought to the questions, especially the open ones. This is based on the time students on the different levels spent on filling in the survey.

The respondents always were given the choice to leave the room if they did not want to participate in the survey however very few took this opportunity leading to few non-responses. The amount of non-responses were managed by knowing the number of distributed surveys to each class which was then compared with the number of filled surveys that were handed in. The losses of responses were highest in the A-level classes: 23, in the B-level: 4, C-level: 0 and D-level: 5. All in all it adds up to 32 non-responses which give a response rate of about 91%. Other losses of respondents may have occurred if there were students who at the day of the survey were not present at the lecture meaning that they did not get a chance to answer it.

Moreover, there were filled surveys that had one or a few questions that were left unanswered or was answered incorrectly which means that even if 334 filled surveys were handed in, not all questions had 334 answers. For example, if the respondent had checked two response options or if an answer was unreadable these questions were left out of the analysis however the rest of the survey was included. In appendix 2 an overview of the lost responses for each question can be found.

4.5 Processing of data

After the empirical data was collected, the survey was coded as to make it possible to enter the data into computer software. To code a survey means to assign a specific number for each response option, for example in the two questions below, the response Woman was assigned the number 1 and the option Man was assigned the number 2. In the same manner, the six response options in the age question were assigned the numbers 1 to 6. This way the computer software will be able to recognize the data in a good way, it is more straightforward to store the data in this format and this facilitates the analysis of the data. (Wilson, 2003:201)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1.1 Gender:</th>
<th>Woman</th>
<th>Man</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.2 Age:</td>
<td>-20</td>
<td>21-25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The open questions were post coded which means that the answers were listed and then put into different categories. To be able to find these categories, it was necessary to interpret what the respondents meant in their answers since two different words may have the same meaning and end up in the same category (Wilson, 2003:202). To determine the categories, the responses of the open ended questions were entered word by word into Excel. The different sentences were divided by key words through which patterns in the data soon became clear. For example, from question 2.1 “What is learning to you?” the categories ‘Knowledge’, ‘Development’, ‘Future’, ‘Understanding’ etc. were created based on the key words found in the survey responses. Many times these key words were the same as the name of the category however in some cases it was necessary for the researcher to judge where the answer fit based on the answer given by the student. When the categories were determined, they were coded in the same manner as the closed questions. The coded data was then
inserted into the program SPSS which was used for most of the analysis of the data, however also Excel was used for getting a good overview of the results and making comprehensive graphs.

Since the aim of the study is to explore students’ perceptions and how these change over time, it was decided that it would be interesting to find out the frequency distribution of each question, hence the share of respondents who selected a specific option in the survey. The presentation of the open, multiple choice and the dichotomous questions are presented in the share of students that indicated a specific option which is based on the frequency distribution. From these numbers it is also possible to get a good overview of the data and choices can be made for the continued analysis. For example, it can here become evident what parts of the survey that has generated the most interesting results which can be the focus for the analysis. (Wilson, 2003:205)

Based on the frequency distribution and with the research problem in mind, it was determined that the large set of data generated by the questions with Likert scale needed to be presented in a simple manner. Therefore the mean of the response options for these questions were generated and entered into graphs which are presented in the empirical results chapter. Then, cross-tabulations were used to examine the relation between the responses of different questions. With this method it is possible to discover connections between two questions which are what the comparisons in the analysis chapter are based on. (Wilson, 2003:206)

4.6 Choices in the analysis

All the data was analyzed in SPSS where the researcher tested the data to examine the empirical result and find the parts that would prove to be the most interesting for the study. Since the aim of this study is to explore how student perceptions change over time, the main focus was on finding differences in how students on different levels of the education had answered. Through comparing means and running cross-tabulations, it was evident that the students on lower levels, semesters 1-4, and higher levels 5-11, had similar answers within those two groups and differences could be found in between these two levels. Due to this it was decided to make these two groupings and use them as a base in the analysis of changes over time. Moreover, through comparing the answers in between levels of the education, there were empirical results where students on both low and high level indicated similar answers. For a number of these questions it was decided that these results were irrelevant for the further analysis since they would not contribute to the purpose or fulfillment of the problem statement. Table 4.3 gives an overview of the survey questions that were left out of the analysis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reasons for studying</th>
<th>1.4 What reasons are there that made you decide to start studying at the university?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.5 Why did you choose to study your current study program (subject)?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsibility</td>
<td>3.4 Fellow students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>In group situations in the education I usually let others take the lead and I take a passive role</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>In group situations in the education I usually let others take the lead and I take a supporting role</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>In group situations in the education I usually take a leading role</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.5 University life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I take own initiatives to explore all possibilities that are available for me as a student to</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
make my time at the university as good as possible both inside and outside of the studies

### Engagement

3.1 I as a student
- I am good at planning my time (know where my time is spent)
- I fully engage into my learning and study to really learn new knowledge
- I study as little as possible, only to pass the courses
- I feel that I as a student is valuable for the university and that everyone who works at the university (management, student service, teachers, etc.) highly value my learning

3.5 University life
- The transition from what I did before I started to study (high school, work, unemployment) to university studies and university life was easy for me.
- I believe that my spare time outside of the studies is rewarding since I engage in activities that develop me as a person

### Satisfaction

3.2 Content and delivery of the education
- I believe that the education has helped me to understand and reflect on my personal values

3.15 Why did you choose the above option?

Excluded questions, table 4.3

The reason for excluding these questions was due to the answers being similar no matter the respondent’s level of study. It was determined that presenting the results of these questions in the empirical results chapter would be enough since an analysis of these comparing them in between levels of the education would not show any relevant information. Additionally, the survey asked the students for their gender as well as their age which also was left out of the analysis. The initial purpose of these questions was to gather background information about the students and was not meant to be analyzed further. Nevertheless, all empirical results will be presented in the next chapter since it may be of interest for the readers.

In table 4.4, the aspects that remained through the data analysis which will be further discussed in the analysis chapter can be found.

### Learning

2.1 What is learning for you? Describe with your own words how you perceive learning, what does it mean?

2.3 To learn something means:
- to remember
- to understand
- to get good grades
- to be able to apply knowledge in reality
- to get a new perspective
- to form your own opinion
- to develop as a person

### Responsibility

2.2 The kind of education/study technique I prefer to learn the content of a course is:
- lectures
- independent studies
- group work (group work that is part of the examination of a course)
- independent studies in groups (study with other students – not group work that is part of
3.1 I as a student
I, personally am responsible to make sure that I go through my education (graduate)
If there are possibilities in the education to take own initiatives, I take that possibility
I will influence my education to make sure it contains all merits/aspects that I want to get
out of a university education
I would like to have more feedback on my personal performance in the education

3.2 Content and delivery of the education
I as a student can influence the content and delivery of my university studies
I often give suggestions to teachers about how the content and delivery of the education
can be improved

3.3 Teachers
I often ask for feedback on performance from teachers
I am afraid that if I give negative feedback to a teacher, it will reflect negatively on my
grades
My teachers are responsible to make sure that I go through my education (graduate)

3.4 Fellow students
My fellow students are responsible for me getting through my education (graduate)
I often ask for feedback on my study performance from other students

3.8 How many hours per week do you spend studying studies? (Including lectures, group
works, independent studies, etc.)

3.10 How many hours per week do you spend in extracurricular activities?

3.11 The most important merits that I would like to get out of my time at the university
are:
- a degree
- good grades
- work life experience within the right industry
- general work life experience
- internship (unpaid job within my area of study)
- engagement in student organizations and voluntary activities
- contacts within the industry/company where I want to work in the future

3.12 The most important merits that I actually will get out of my time at the university
are:
- a degree
- good grades
- work life experience within the right industry
- general work life experience
- internship (unpaid job within my area of study)
- engagement in student organizations and voluntary activities
- contacts within the industry/company where I want to work in the future

Engagement 3.1 I as a student
I believe that I was prepared and had sufficient previous knowledge when I started to study. I make more effort in the courses that I find interesting and less effort in courses I find less interesting. I always do my best on all assignments and exams. I like and look for challenges that develops me personally or professionally. I am persistent and hard working also in the toughest situations in my studies.

### 3.2 Content and delivery of the education
I believe that the work burden in my education is too high (too much work). I believe that the education demands too little of me as a student. I am often bored on the lectures.

### 3.3 Teachers
I would like to have more personal contact and support from teachers. I believe that the teachers are unavailable for me as a student outside scheduled time.

### 3.4 Fellow students
I believe that I can learn a lot from my fellow students. I believe that my fellow students were prepared and had adequate previous knowledge when they started to study.

### 3.7 What is your level of ambition in your studies?
**VG in all subjects**
2 VG’s per 1 G (two thirds VG’s)
Approximately an equal amount of VG’s as G’s (50:50 VG:G)
2 G’s per 1 VG (two thirds G’s)
G in all subjects
Whatever happens, happens.

### 3.9 Are you engaged in any spare time activity besides studying (i.e. student organization, student union, sports club, voluntary work, extra job)?
**Why/why not?**

### 3.13 What are your actual study results?
**VG in all subjects**
2 VG’s per 1 G (two thirds VG’s)
Approximately an equal amount of VG’s as G’s (50:50 VG:G)
2 G’s per 1 VG (two thirds G’s)
G in all subjects

### 3.2 Content and delivery of the education
I am satisfied with the **content** of my education (subjects, course material, etc.)
I am satisfied with the **delivery** of my education (how the content is presented)
I am satisfied with the manner of **examination** of the courses (exam, thesis, presentation, etc.)
I believe that the education provides me with many opportunities to use **analytical** thinking
I believe that the education provides me with many opportunities to use **critical** thinking
I believe that the education provides me with many opportunities where I get to **solve** problems.

### 3.3 Teachers
I believe that my teachers are enthusiastic, pedagogic and professional in when teaching. I believe that the teachers control my education too much. I believe that teachers rather would do research than teach classes.

3.4 Fellow students
I believe that other students influence my own study performance negatively.

3.5 University life
All in all, I am satisfied with my time at the university (both inside and outside the studies).

3.6 What do you lack in your education? (What can be improved to make your time at the university better?)

3.14 What grade would you give yourself if you grade how satisfied you are with your performance during your study time?
100% satisfied
Between 75%–99% satisfied
Between 50–74% satisfied
Between 25–49% satisfied
Less than 25% satisfied

4.7 Reliability
The reliability of a study is related to the credibility and consistency of the measurements which can be explained through three concepts. First, stability is concerning the stability of the results and if these can be regenerated at a later point in time with little variation. Second, internal reliability has to do with the consistency of the scales. Third, inter-observer consistency is connected to how subjective decisions are made when for example categorizing open-ended questions. (Bryman, 2002:86-88)

In the case of stability, this study which is about measuring perceptions that can change over time, it is not necessarily essential to be able to re-measure the same results at a later point in time. Rather it is important that the study is easily replicated as to make it possible to compare the changes that may have arisen. (Bryman, 2002:86-88) To facilitate this, a good description of the methodology was strived for in this study as well as through keeping a passive approach throughout the data collection as to make sure that the researcher did not in any way influence the respondents. Further, the stability was on top of mind in all methodology related decisions throughout the work with the thesis, such as sampling, method for collecting data, manner of possessing data etc.

To secure the internal reliability, a large focus was put on the development of the survey questions and for each question it was evaluated how best to measure it. This is the reason for the usage of four different scales; Likert scale, multiple choice, dichotomous or open question. To avoid mistakes in the survey, it was tested before the data collection started and as mentioned, a few changes were made after the test. Further, due to the existence of open ended question in the survey, there was a risk of errors in the inter-observer consistency. (Bryman, 2002:86-88) This risk was avoided through paying attention to avoid misunderstanding of the comments made by the respondents by reflecting on all possible meanings of the answer they had given. If there were opinions that did not seem to fit into any category these were presented independently in the results since the mindset of the
4.8 Validity

Validity is concerning if the study is actually measuring what it aims to measure. To secure a high validity of the study it is important to make sure that the questions in the survey are connected to the purpose of the study and that they reflect the theoretical framework in a correct way (Bryman, 2002:43-45, 88-90). Through starting off with building a theoretical framework as to correspond to the purpose and problem statement of the study and then using it as base for the survey development and the categorization of survey questions, the researcher secured the internal validity. Hence it can be affirmed that the secondary and primary data are connected to the purpose of the study and measures what it aims to measure.

At the same time it is also essential to be aware of validity aspects when analyzing and drawing conclusions from the results of the survey since that is when the actual result of the study is developed. (Bryman, 2002:43-45, 88-90) When analyzing and developing the conclusions of the study the researcher reflected on validity aspects. Through being critical and attentive to how the findings in the analysis and the drawing of conclusions arose, untrue assumptions have been avoided. This was especially important when looking at the causality between two variables, if the result was reasonable and if the conclusions were based on accurate measurements. Further when generalizing the results over the population it was vital to have used a trustworthy sampling method that suited the purpose of this study with a sufficient number of respondents, which as described previously, was the aim for this study. (Bryman, 2002:43-45, 88-90)

4.9 Criticism of the methodology

During the process of working with this study, the researcher has been reflecting on possible shortcomings and tried to minimize these. However, it is understandable that there are aspects of the study that are not perfect and that could have been done better or in another way.

First, the results of this study were not analyzed using very advanced statistical analysis tools. The reason for this is that it was determined that the best way for fulfilling the purpose of this study did not exist within statistical tools, rather the strength could be found in interpreting the data in a more straightforward manner.

Second, another sampling method could have been used other than the non-probability method. Before deciding on the sampling method, different methods were evaluated, for example sending emails to all business students or distributing the survey to students in the hallways of the university. However, it was determined that other sampling methods involved more downsides, such as low response rate or risk of only finding students with similar opinions, than the method that was chosen meaning that the chosen method had the best chance in fulfilling the purpose of the study. As it turned out, this method did have one unforeseen consequence since it was difficult to find business students in the B and C levels. It is possible that the result of the study would have shown a better view of when changes in perceptions happen if more B and C level students had participated. Also the distribution between the different groups was not completely equal. The first to the fourth semester were represented by 67,4% of the students and the fifth to eleventh by 32,6%. This may have affected the analysis and generalizations in between the groups since the lesser number of
respondent, the less secure it is to draw definite conclusions. Nevertheless, it was still possible to follow through on this study and come to conclusions which means that this lack of mid and high level students did not prevent the fulfillment of purpose or problem statement.

Third, the survey contained many questions that required the students to reflect and take a stand for a large number of aspects during a short period of time. Because of this it is important to reflect on the respondents’ patience and motivation when answering the survey and how this can have affected the result of the study. A risk is that students misunderstood some of the questions and answered it from their point of understanding or if there were students who answered the questions based on their best or worst experiences. It is a fact that the students gave contradictory answers to some questions, such as when indicating their perceptions of their own study habits and fellow students. Here, there is a possibility that the students do have differing perceptions and have stated their opinion correctly however there is a risk of some respondents losing their patience leading them to not contemplate each question to the desired extent. Through analyzing the overview of lost responses (appendix 2) it is evident that toward the end of the survey, there number of lost responses are increasing. For the closed questions the amount of non-responses are still few enough that they will not affect the total result of the question.

A few of the open questions on the other hand were skipped by a larger number of respondents, especially question 3.6, 3.10 and 3.15. Question ‘3.6 What do you miss in your education?’ had the largest number of non-responses, 173. Still, the 161 respondents who answered this question were in concurrence about the missing aspects. Sure, there may have surfaced more missing factors had more individuals answered the question although this would not have changed the final result of the study in any way. Question ‘3.10 How many hours per week do you spend in spare time activities?’ had 130 non-responses however, it was only possible for students who actually were involved in extracurricular activities to answer this question. When subtracting the students who indicated that they were not involved in extracurricular activities, there were 28 non-responses by the students who did engage in these type of activities which is an acceptable amount that does not affect the final result. Lastly, question ‘3.15 Why did you choose the above option?’ that was asking students to explain their choice of satisfaction rate had 110 non-responses. This amount of lost responses did not affect the final result since this question was mainly about finding the reasons for why a respondent answered the previous questions the way they did nor was their answer to question 3.14 of importance for the study. All in all, with the number of filled out surveys, the number of questions measuring each perception and few lost responses to a majority of the questions, it is evident that the threats of a drop in patience and motivation when filling the survey as well as misunderstandings of the questions have not affected the result of the study.

Fourth, the research question of this study is to examine how student perceptions change over time. A good way to research that would have been to follow the same students for a number of years as they passed all levels of the education. However, since this is a 15hp master thesis, there were not time nor resources available for this type of study. Instead the choice was made to compare low level and high level students.
5. Empirical results

In this chapter, the result from the empirical data collection is presented. The structure of this chapter follows the structure of the survey, hence it starts with the background information of the respondents, followed by the students’ perceptions of learning and the other aspects of the university environment affecting the students’ perceptions of responsibility, engagement and satisfaction.

5.1 Background information

The first part of the survey collected the respondents’ background information, namely their gender, age, level of studies, reasons for choosing to become a university student and for choosing a specific study program or subject as well as if their current study program/subject was their first choice when applying to the university.

In total 334 surveys were filled. All the respondents were currently studying programs or courses on different levels in the Umeå School of Business. The survey was filled by two groups of students, the early level consisting of students in their 1st-4th semester and the late level, consisting of students on semester 5-11. The distribution between these groups is 67.4% in the first group of students and 32.6% in the second. Below is the rest of the background information presented.

5.1.1 Age distribution

This graph displays the age distribution in percent between the three age groups that the respondents represent.

![Age distribution graph](image)

The age distribution of the respondents, graph 5.1

What can be derived from graph 5.1 is that the Umeå School of Business has a quite young group of students, only 11.68% of the students are over 26 years of age. This means that many students enter the university soon after finishing their high school education.
5.2 Perceptions of the education

The following questions measured the students’ perceptions of different aspects in the education and corresponds to the chapter ‘Perceptions of the education’ in the theoretical framework.

5.2.1 Why study?

The students were asked about why they chose to become a university student to which the respondents pointed out several reasons both for why they chose to study in general and for why they chose Umeå University specifically. In graph 5.2 the division of reasons given by all respondents is illustrated:

The different pieces of the chart represent the percentage of students that stated each reason. Below are further explanations of these and a short summary of the comments made by the students under each category.

The main point from this section are that most of the students in this study are looking to their education as a way of creating a good **future** and life for themselves. This is the most common reason for why the respondents chose to become university students, 44% of the students indicated this as a reason. Mainly, this is related to the possibility of getting a good future job and to have many opportunities in life. Frequent comments were: “a good education gives opportunities for a good job in the future”, “a degree will make it easier to get a good job”, “I will have better conditions on the labor market”, “get a qualitative job and a good career”, “it is an investment for the future”.

Some respondents indicated that they chose to study because their desired job demands it: “I know what I want to work with in the future and that demands a university education”, “I want to be self-employed and an education will help me get there”. Further there were many reasons connected to being competitive and having an advantage on the labor market: “an education looks good on the CV”, “having a degree will help me stand out in the labor market”, and others saw education as a way
to make money in the future: “to get high salary”, “so that you get a good job and make a lot of money”.

Interestingly there were also some that perceived studying as a necessity: “It feels like that is a must in today's world”, “there are no other options to a good job”.

**Personal development** is the second most common reason for becoming a university student. Personal development was closely connected to knowledge development and self-fulfillment: “want to develop as a person”, “get increased knowledge about the society”, “to accomplish something”, “be able to develop as a person and come to the next stage in life”, “increase knowledge and get deeper insight into the subjects”, “I have a will to learn”.

**Make a change, have an activity** is related to students wanting to make a change from their previous activity, or that they simply wanted to have something to do. Some of these students also seem to have chosen a university education instead of being unemployed: “I had nothing else to do”, “I wanted to change my occupation”, “it was a labor market measure”, “it was time to take care of my education”, “I started to study so that I wouldn't have to work”, “I was unemployed and restless”, “lack of motivation at my last job”, “wanted to do something new”, “change my working life and living environment”.

There were 7% of the students that saw an education as something interesting and fun: “I wanted to have an education within business”, “I chose Umeå when I saw that they have a business school”, “I think it is interesting and fun to study”, “I like to read, analyze and criticize”. Another 7% wanted to have a good foundation to build upon for the future: “I wanted a good foundation to build upon”, “I wanted a good quality education”, “I wanted a wide education”, “it is a good foundation for the future”.

Moreover, there were students that felt that a university education was a natural step in their life, that they really wanted to study or that they felt forced to get an education: “I wanted an education”, “it felt like a natural step after high school”, “had a theoretical high school education so I had to go to university and I wanted that”, “it was planned”, “it was a given for me to study at the university”, “felt that I was forced to study to be able to have bigger opportunities later in life”.

Finally, the 14% that indicated a university specific reason stated good reputation: “heard good things about Umeå University”, “the university had good reputation among friends”, “my brother has studied here and said good things about it” and student life: “fun to live the student life”, “being a student is an experience I don't want to miss out on”, “I heard that Umeå had a good student life”, “I wanted to meet new people”. Further, the geographic location was important: “I wanted to go far from my home town”, “I live in Umeå”, “didn't want to study in Stockholm”, “close to my home town and my family”.

Coincidence was also indicated as a reason for why some students ended up in Umeå: “It was a coincidence that I ended up in the university”, “didn't get into any other university”, “Umeå was the best university that I got in to”, as well as low admittance requirements “I came to Umeå because my grades were bad”, “low admission requirements”, “got in here”.

That is was a convenience choice to choose Umeå University is related to those that stated accommodation as a reason: “Had long cue time within Bostaden”, “easy to find accommodation” whereas there were also voices that liked the fact that Umeå university had an international
direction: “it gives me an opportunity to study abroad”, “international environment”, “universities cooperate with others abroad”, “different cultures”. Lastly, only one student stated that family pressures were a significant reason for why the person started to study.

5.2.2 Choice of educational program/subject

The different pieces of graph 5.3 below represent the percentage of students that indicated the respective reason for why they chose a particular study program or subject.

These reasons can have been affected by if the student had chosen the particular study program as their first choice or not. Out of the respondents, 85,3% stated that they had chosen their study program as their first choice and 14,7% had not. Below are further explanations of the indicated reasons and a short summary of the comments made by the students under each category.

The undoubtedly most common reason for why students chose a particular study program or subject is interest. Here students made both general comments as well as comments more related to a particular study program: “wanted deepened knowledge within business”, “seemed like something I could be interested in for longer than 6 months”, “I find this subject easy”, “pure business and not so much fluffy stuff”, “it will give me the competence I need”, “I like to count and I am interested in money”, “the right content and the only one in northern Europe”, “here were many topics that interested me and that I think I can be good at”.

Also here, the future of the students seem very important to them, mainly they have thoughts of being able to use their education to have a successful career and earning money. Some general comments were: “it will give me a good future”, “high quality education gives me a good platform”, “good direction toward my future plans”, “it will prepare me and help me reach my goals”. Also students made comments more related to their future career: “it helps my future career to get
experience”, “there are interesting job opportunities within this area”, “it is a very actual topic”, “high status”, “the most advantages after graduation”.

Students also chose their study programs in relation to their desired field of work: “directed toward what I want to work with”, “I want to become self employed and this program is connected to that and gives me the right competences”, “it mirrors the type of job I want to have in the future”, “I think it’s the best way to a management position”. In contrast, others indicated that the wide education was attractive: “wide education that can give many opportunities in terms of choice of work”, “varied and fun, “good mixture of courses”.

There were also students that expressed that they did not really make a choice, rather they used the exclusion method or found themselves ending up in the study program/subject by coincidence. This reason was particularly common among the students that did not choose their current study topic as their first choice: “applied, got in and tried how it felt”, “applied by coincidence”, “gut feeling”, “there was no other choice”, “the least bad one”, “didn't get in to my first choice”, “don't want to attend this program will switch when I get in to something better”, “there was nothing else that I wanted to do”.

Also, here the international aspect was attractive: “there are courses in English”, “opportunities to study/work abroad”, “interested in international perspectives”, “international direction”. At the same time the fact that the study program was different or directed in some way was appealing: “it is a different business program - I can stand out when graduating”, “wanted a directed study program and not only general business”, “it is a mixture of pure business and other subjects”, “innovative program”, “the study program was very attractive and it only exist in Umeå”.

Some students also saw the program/subject as being a challenge or good opportunity for them: “many opportunities”, “development”, “create a challenge for myself and get something out of life”, “a chance – a challenge”, “chance to analyze and take risks” while some students were recommended to the specific program/subject: “was recommended by older students”, “a friend suggested it to me”, “my cousin was studying the program and was happy”.

Again, only one student indicated that the family had something to do with the choice: “my family thought that it would suit me”. This category has 0% in the chart since only one person stated this reason and that adds up to being less than 1% in total.

5.2.3 What is learning?

First, the students were asked to describe in their own words what learning is. This resulted in a number of descriptions outlined in graph 5.4. As it illustrates, there are many ways that learning can be described, although knowledge was the most common explanation. This aspect is in the students’ minds mainly related to acquiring and deepening of knowledge: “learning is getting knowledge in the form of reading, listening and talking”, “Intake, analysis and appliance of knowledge”, “take in new knowledge in an effective way”, “acquiring of knowledge and practice in gathering knowledge”, “learn something new or develop my current knowledge”, “get knowledge to be able to fulfill and follow through on my goals”, “that I should be able to get out something out of the learning”.

The second most common description was development which mainly is connected to personal development: “learning means that I get knowledge in the form of practical concrete abilities and a developing analytic knowledge in the subject that all contribute to a foundation for improved
opportunities to develop yourself”, “it gives me tools for being able to continue developing”, “learning is extremely important since it can develop me as a person”, “develop intellectually and personally”.

Almost just as common as development are descriptions relating learning the future or the importance of keeping the learning points for a long time: “ability to make better choices in the future”, “possibility to have a richer life”, “get experience that you can use later in your work or personal life”, “learning is to acquire knowledge, skills and attitudes that will make it possible to create value and benefit for me and others in the future”, “learning is something you should keep with you through life, something to lean against which will give you a positive future”, “something that you use not only in the university”.

That understanding is equal to learning was stated by 10% of the students: “increase the understanding for the things around us”, “that you understand contexts, not knowing by heart”, “understanding of new things through diverse senses”, “extension of ability to understand”, “understand links between different subjects and be able to draw conclusions from your knowledge”.

To be able to apply knowledge in practice was important to 8% of the students: “I like learning by doing”, “learning is only important if I can see the use of it”, “get abilities and skills”, “it is when you feel that you take in what you read or hear and start to apply it in practice”. Moreover, that learning is getting to know theory was indicated by 5% of the respondents: “be able to take in and sort among a large number of information and select the important parts”, “develop a theoretical base”, “to understand connections between different theories and functions”, “gain access to theories around a topic and then use these to understand the surrounding world, from you own thinking”.

The guidance category is related to that learning is happening when someone is teaching or that proper guidance helps when trying to learn: “someone describes things for me and I can describe it
for someone else later”, “a development between teacher and student where the student pulls and the teacher lets go”, “transfer knowledge from one consciousness to another”, “to with enthusiasm and good pedagogy transfer knowledge to students”, “teach in a good way with using real situations and the work life”, “learning is facilitated by having a good teacher”, “that I do my best with help from a positive educational environment”, “getting an objective picture from someone else”.

**Experience** and **thinking** were indicated by 3% of the students respectively. Experience is connected to getting more experiences: “intake of new experiences”, “exchange of experiences”, “development of experiences”. Thinking is connected to the students’ comments around their own thinking or reflection. Here students see learning as taking place within their own mind: “become wiser through reflection”, “creating new ways of thinking”, “take in information and make it your own”, “get tools to independent and critical thinking” “how I interpret, process, handle and use new information”.

The category **perspective** means that students see learning as a way to create their own perspectives or opinions: “see things from new perspectives”, “development of a person’s points of view”, “learning is to open new doors and get new perspectives”. **Interest** on the other hand is mainly related to getting interested in something: “raise interest”, “create interest for something”, “learning is a will and ability to interest yourself in something”.

That learning is closely related to remembering also surfaced in the students’ comments: “to memorize things”, “you remember surprisingly a lot with a bit of stubbornness and a good memory”, “that I see, hear and feel things that stay in my memory”, “to remember what you learn and be able to use it in different situations”. However students also described learning as a longer process where the knowledge stays with you in the end: “a process where you continuously go through material that hopefully stays with you as an intangible asset”, “understand the thinking process”, “development through processes where you get to solve problems”, “a process where you develop knowledge”.

1% of the students stated that learning means **personal engagement**: “you have to take responsibility for your learning yourself”, “learning gives maturity and responsibility”, “when a person engage into something”, “when a person engage into something and want to teach it to others” whereas 2% said that they **do not know** what learning means.

The **other** comments were: “The base for a society”, “necessary”, “routine”, “structure and adequate teaching material with suitable work burden”, “get motivated and inspired”, “cooperate with others”

### 5.2.4 Concepts of learning

Graph 5.6 represents average grading that the students made for each of the concepts of learning. As can be derived from it, mainly students believe that learning is synonym to when understanding occurs and when the knowledge they have gained can be applied in reality.

The next concept that many students connect to learning is personal development which is related to lifelong learning. Further, getting a new perspective and shaping an opinion of your own have both a slightly lower mean, although still many students see these as being related to learning. Remembering something has an average below 3, meaning that students to a lesser extent perceive hard fact learning as real learning. Rather they prefer to understand something in a wider perspective. Moreover, students do not perceive that learning is synonym to getting good grades.
This question also included an “other” option from which these comments came: “To get new information”, “cooperate with the society”, “understand the whole and then put it into a context”.

These results also show that there are both students who are using a more quantitative approach to learning as well as there are student who lean toward qualitative learning. In the qualitative approach, students are oriented to learning and want to process what they learn on a deep level whereas in the quantitative approach students are more grade oriented and focus on surface level processing.

When summarizing question 5.2.1 and 5.2.2 it is noticeable that the students gave several indicators for qualitative learning; personal development, intellectual ability such as thinking and reflection as well as getting new perspectives and forming own opinions. Further indications of this type are those who show a will and interest for learning and see the learning as a process while only a few students indicate personal engagement as being learning. There are also some students that see the importance of learning for the future which suggests deep processing and hence a qualitative learning approach.

Quantitative learning approaches on the other hand were also found among the students replies. The fact that students relate learning to future career or that it will make them competitive in the future, learning in terms of remembering, understanding and applying knowledge in practice are connected to quantitative learning. The students who indicated that learning is related to experience, knowledge or theory and grades can also be positioned within this learning concept.
5.2.5 Preferred learning environment

Graph 5.5 shows the mean for students’ preferred learning environment when studying the course material. It indicates that practical exercises have some popularity whereas tutoring by students and group works seem to have the least preference level in the students’ perception. Further, practical exercises are more important for students in the higher levels of the education.

The students seem to like both teacher and student driven learning environments. The second most preferred environment is lectures followed by independent studies, either by the alone student or through forming their own study groups with their fellow students. It is here interesting to point out that the respondents like studying with others but they do not seem to benefit from receiving tutoring help from fellow students.

Personal tutoring by teacher and group works that are part of the course examination are less preferred although the means for these environments are higher than 2,5 meaning that the students still have some positive opinions for these.

It was also possible for students to enter another type of learning environment if their preferred one was not in the given list or if they had other comments. Environments and comments that came from the students were: “To teach others”, “home exams”, “a lot depend on the teacher”, “seminars”, “a combination is always the best thing, that way you can always learn something new and it doesn’t have to be about the course material”.

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5.2.6 I as a student

What can be derived from graph 5.7 is that most students feel that they were prepared for university studies and life when they entered into it. 35% of the students completely agreed and 45% somewhat agreed to this statement whereas 16,5% somewhat disagreed and 3,6% completely disagreed to being fully prepared. Further, most of the students believe that they themselves have the greatest responsibility for their education and learning. As many as 84,1% completely agreed and 14,4% somewhat agreed to this statement. Only 1,2% and 0,3% of the students selected options somewhat disagree and completely disagree.

Students further agree to liking and looking for challenges as well as doing their best on all assignments and not only studying as little as possible. Also the respondents do state that they engage themselves more into courses they find interesting than those that are less interesting. At the same time, the students agree less to being engaged into their studies. Moreover, even though the students like and look for challenges, they do not agree to a great extent that they take own initiatives within the education nor do they state that they will influence their education as to make better.

The students also indicate that they are not the best at planning. Neither do they grade themselves to be persistent nor hard working at all times. On the other hand the students would like to receive more feedback on their performance and this is especially common among the older students. Finally, the results indicate that the students do not perceive to a great extent that they are valuable for the university.
5.2.7 Content and delivery of the education

Graph 5.8 illustrates how the students perceive different aspects within the content and delivery of the education. Overall, the students seem adequately satisfied with the education, although they do not give it the best grade; the different aspects of the education that were graded were the content, delivery and examinations. To the statement “I am satisfied with the content of my education”, 14.1% of the students agreed completely and 64.4% somewhat agreed. 20.1% somewhat disagreed and 1.5% completely disagreed. The statement “I am satisfied with the delivery of my education” 6.6% of the students completely agreed to and 62.6% somewhat agreed. 29% of the respondents somewhat disagreed and 1.8% completely disagreed to the same statement. 15.6% completely and 61.7% somewhat agreed to being satisfied with the examination procedures. 20.7% somewhat disagreed while 2.1% completely disagreed.

The students agree to using problem solving, analytical and critical thinking and reflection on personal values. 76.2% of the respondents state that they agree completely or somewhat to using problem solving, 67.4% agree to using analytical thinking and 59.6% agree to using critical thinking. Having opportunities to understand and reflect on personal values does according to 53.9% exist. Further, the respondents do not seem to think that they can influence their education and hence they do not often give suggestions to teachers about how to improve the education. There are also some students who indicate that they often are bored during lectures.

On the other hand, the students state that not enough demands are put on them and they state that the work burden is too low. 41.7% of the respondents express that they completely disagree and 35.7% somewhat disagree to the statement that the education puts too low demands on them.
Further 19% and 53.3% completely and somewhat disagree to the statement that the work burden is too high.

5.2.8 Teachers

The next part of questions was concerning the students’ perceptions of the teachers and their relationship with them. The first point of interest that can be drawn from graph 5.9 is that the students do not attribute much responsibility to the teachers for their education and learning, 41.7% and 39.9% of the respondents completely or somewhat disagreed to the teachers having the responsibility for their education whereas 16.5% and 1.8% somewhat or completely agreed to this statement. The students do not believe that the teachers are controlling the education too much and students feel able to give feedback to their teachers and do not believe that negative feedback will result in unjust grading. However, it seems as the students do not often ask teachers for feedback on their performance. Students also express that their teachers are not as enthusiastic, professional and pedagogical as they would wish.

Further, most students state that the teachers are available for them outside of scheduled time and they do not believe that all teachers want to research rather than teach, although there are some students that do agree with these statements. There are also students who indicate that they would like to have more personal contact with their teachers.
5.2.9 Fellow students

The respondents were next asked about their perceptions of their fellow students and how they see the cooperation with them. The replies for these questions can be found in graph 5.10.

A majority of the students believe that they can learn a lot from their fellow students and they indicate that the other students were prepared and had adequate previous knowledge when they started the university. 13.2% and 62.3% agreed completely or somewhat respectively to their fellow students being prepared and 20.7% and 3.9% somewhat or completely disagreed to this. Moreover, the respondents do not consider their fellow students to affecting them negatively nor do they attribute much responsibility of the education and learning to them. 76.3% and 14.7% completely or somewhat disagreed to the statement that their fellow students are responsible for their education whereas 8.4% and 0.6% somewhat or completely agreed. Also, students do not seem to have a habit of asking each other for feedback.

The roles that the students take in group situations vary for different individuals. To the statement “In group situations I take a passive role” 4.5% and 13.5% of the respondents agreed completely or somewhat whereas 13.9% and 45% somewhat or completely disagreed. 7.9% of the students completely agreed and 43.6% somewhat agreed to taking a supportive role in group situations. 39.6% somewhat and 8.8% completely disagreed to this. Lastly, to take on the leading role 16.1% completely and 40.6% somewhat agreed while 29.7% and 13.6% somewhat or completely disagreed respectively.
5.2.10 University life

In graph 5.11 the students’ perceptions of the university life can be found. The students believe that it was fairly easy for them to adapt to the university life and they state that they have a quite rewarding free time. However, they do not take as much initiative as they could to improve their life inside and outside of class. Moreover, the students indicate that they are satisfied with their time in the university, 42.3% agreed completely and 47.7% agreed somewhat to that statement while 9.1% and 0.9% disagreed somewhat or completely.

5.2.11 Missing in the education

The responses from the students in regards to what they are missing in their university life, both in and outside of class can be found in graph 5.12. As in much of the previous research, practice is the main category in this study that the students are missing. Included here are both actual practice through working in a company as well as a wish for more connection to reality and companies: “more contact with the corporate life and companies”, “more stimulating activities - trips, study visits at companies etc”, “too much theory”, “more real and current scenarios”, “possibility to have practice”.

Teachers and other university staff are given quite a lot of feedback related to examinations, communication and personal contact: “better pedagogy and engagement from teachers is needed”, “change the delivery of some courses, both the assignments we do and the teachers performance should be improved so that it feels like we learn something and not only produce lots of writing”, “sometimes it seems like the teachers themselves are bored with what they are talking about”, “more developing lectures and more classes where you easier can get personal contact and help from the teachers”, “more personal and concrete feedback”, “more student influence in the development of courses”, “clear information and communication”, “better information from the teachers before a course starts about schedule and plans so that we as students can prepare better”.
9% of the students are concerned about the **quality** of their education and are missing certain aspects: “control and evaluate teachers and their lectures”, “give us students more developing and challenging demands”, “dare to set high demands – if Math C is a requirement, teachers should assume that everyone knows it”, “higher demands on students, it’s possible to get away with your studies without putting a lot of time”, “put higher demands on exchange students, everyone I have worked with have been free riders and haven’t done anything”, “many exchange students plagiarize and cheat on exams which lowers the quality on my education, they should also be required to have better English”.

The students further request different types of **assignments**: “more problem solving and case work early in the education”, “more analytical assignments”, “more discussions in small groups”, “more critical and reflective thinking”, “more assignments that are actual and related to what is happening right now”, “more critical thinking, sometimes it feels like we are pushed into the right way of thinking and not given the opportunity to form our own opinion”, “the assignments we do should be improved so that it feels like we learn something and not only produce lots of writing”.

Also, there is a demand for a higher supply of **courses**: “better supply of courses”, “more courses connected to the direction I study”, “better planning of the order of the courses – you should be able to finish the economics courses before you have to choose the direction business or economics”, “possibility to study abroad as a part of the program”.

4% of the respondents are missing **free time** activities: “there should be more free time activities for students”, “more information about different opportunities during and after the study time”, “more and better student life”, “more time for free time activities”.

A small number of students indicate that their personal **responsibility** is missing: “it is my own condition that makes the studies and the university life suffering, I have a lot on my mind”, “my own approach is missing as well as my will and interest for the subject”, “I find the studying boring but it is a necessity to become a better person after the studies”, “I need to put a clear final goal for myself”.

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**What is missing in the education, graph 5.12**

- Practice: 39%
- Teachers: 25%
- Assignments: 8%
- Courses: 8%
- Quality: 9%
- Free time: 4%
- Other: 5%
Other comments were: “cheaper coffee”, “free books”, “free time over Christmas”, “more microwave ovens”.

5.2.12 Extracurricular activities

Concerning the students’ engagement in extracurricular activities the results show that 69.2% of the respondents are engaged in extracurricular activities, while 30.8% are not. The respondents that are engaged in extracurricular activities are involved in the types of activities that are displayed in graph 5.13. As seen, the most popular free time activity is sports of some sort. This includes both students that are engaged in a sport activity as a professional and those who like to exercise on their free time. The sports activities that students are involved in are: IKSU, football, floor ball, volleyball, squash, golf, taekwondo, swimming, skiing, jumping ropes, aerobics, Thai boxing, handball and hockey. Some students are also coaching other teams or act as referees in their respective sports.

33% of the students indicate that they work outside of the studies. Most often this means part time job, only one student indicate full time job. Jobs that students have are: masseur, self employed, customer service, insurance sales, riding instructor, restaurant staff, petrol filling station, retail, bank, website maintenance, invoicing and accounting.

Student organizations and activities engage 24% of the respondents. The organizations indicated by the students are: AIESEC, SIFE, HHUS, Umespexarna, the E-pub, student radio, student newspaper, the buddy program for international students, the student union, Origo and Headhunt.

Other voluntary organizations that students are engaged in are: YPC, a network for young logisticians, Brf, Ung företagsamhet, CISV Umeå – international peace association that works with leadership, alive role play, medieval organization, CREDO and politics.

Other free time activities are: all opportunities that the education gives, family, music and language courses.
5.2.12.1 Why extracurricular activities?

In graph 5.14 the reasons for engagement in extracurricular activities are presented. The most common reason for engaging in extracurricular activities is to have some other activity than the university. This is related to students wanting to get away from the studies for a while or just because it is a fun activity they are engaged in: “important to have exercise and social meetings”, “I like to be active”, “to think about something else than the university for a while”, “to get out of the university world”, “I compete on national level so I have to practice a lot”, “because it is both nice and fun to get away from the studying”, “it's fun and I have a need of being part of things also outside of class”, “because I think that you need time to relax brain and be able to do things that you enjoy and that are less demanding”, “talk about something else and have a social life outside of studies”.

The obvious reason for why many students work is because they need the money: “to be able to keep the same standard of living as I had before I started to study”, “money so that I don't need to take student loan”, “have to earn extra money”, “earn money so that I can keep my apartment”.

18% of the respondents state that they find their free time activity rewarding and developing: “personal and professional development”, “create network”, “to develop and learn because it is important”, “challenges”, “motivational”, “it's a part of my life”, “rewarding for my university experience and it will give me both personal and professional experience”, “meet people from other classes”, “inspiring”, “exciting”, “learn new things”, “engaging”, “you get to take responsibility and be creative”, “physical and psychological wellbeing”, “stimulating and valuable”.

Many were also looking for a way to get practical experience: “get work experience”, “possibility to apply theory in practice”, “I think that working is as important as studying”, “learn how the labor market behaves” or want to strengthen their CV: “to get better merits and experiences for my CV”, “increased competitive advantage on the labor market”, “to strengthen my CV”, “get references”, “it is good for the CV and is an advantage when you are going abroad for studying”.

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5% find their activity as being *interesting*: “interesting to work with others”, “I want to”, “something I want to do and that I like” and the other comments were: “to improve Umeå as a student city”, “arrange fun events for the students”.

### 5.2.12.2 Why not?

Graph 5.15 shows the reasons for why student choose not to engage in extracurricular activities.

![Reasons for not engaging in extracurricular activities, graph 5.15](image)

47% of the non-engaged students had **no time** for free time activities: “did that in the beginning of my studies but now there is no time”, “am going to get an extra job if I have time”, “It takes time from the studies”, “used to work but it took too much time”, “I wanted to focus on my studies during the first year and not overload myself”, “have not found anything that fits with my time, “haven’t had time to get involved yet”, “I may join something later”, “haven’t had time but I want to”.

**No interest** was indicated as a reason from 27% of the respondents: “haven’t found anything within my area of interest”, “those things were only interesting during the first year”, “I prioritize other things”, “have not found anything that is rewarding for me”, “why should I?”, “no plans to start”, “have no interest for it”, “I don’t like to attach myself to things”, “no will right now”, whereas 11% had **no energy**: “can’t be bothered to get engaged”, “never felt motivation for it”, “the studies take up so much energy that I don’t have the energy”.

**Other** comments were: “I mostly just hang out with friends and party”, “haven’t found a job yet”, “have tried to find some organization to join but I miss something like the nations”, “I prefer to do other things in my free time”, “don’t know any extracurricular activities” and 4% **did not know** why.

### 5.2.13 Hour spent studying

Graph 5.16 below shows the percentage of students that spend a certain amount of hours per week on studies. Form the graph it is obvious that a majority, over 30%, of the students spend 26-30 hours per week on their studies whereas around 17% spend 21-25, 31-35 or 36-40 hours per week. Noticeable is that about half of the students can be found spending within 50-75% of the 40 hours.
that corresponds to a full time activity. There are further about 12% that study 16-20 hours per week while only a few spend under 16 or over 40 hours.

5.2.14 Hour spent on extracurricular activities

Graph 5.17 below illustrates the time spent per week on extracurricular activities by the students that indicated that they are engaged in these activities.
What can be derived from the graph is that almost 40% of the students spend on average between 6-10 hours on their extracurricular activities. Further, 17%, 18% and 19% of the students spend 0-5, 11-15 or 16-20 hours respectively. The students that spend more than 20 hour per week on extracurricular activities are quite few.

5.2.15 Expected and actual merits

Below is a comparison (graph 5.18) between the merits that the students want from their university time and those they believe they will actually get. The average values of the merits students stated that they want to get and will get during their university time are presented in the graph. The expected merits are those that the students want to get while the actual represent the merits that the students know or think that they for sure will get.

Getting a degree (expected and actual degree), good grades (expected and actual grades) and engagement in student or voluntary organizations have quite similar grading for both actual and expected merits while specific and general work experience, internship and contacts have a gap in the expected and actual value.

It was also possible for the students to enter other merits that they want or will get. The students expressed that they want to get “knowledge and skills that gives me competitive advantage, it is good to have some assets other than the degree”, “personal development so that I feel ready for the real life”, “good friends”.
5.2.16 Ambition and actual study results

Here the students’ level of ambition and actual study results in terms of grades are presented. Graph 5.19 illustrates the share of students who selected each option. As can be seen from the graph, a majority of the students have the ambition to pass all their courses with the grade G. There are about 10% that aim for 2 Gs in relation to 1 VG, 15% aspires for an equal amount of Gs and VGs and 16% would like 2 VGs per 1 G. About 13% of the respondents have the ambition for all VGs. Moreover, there are 8% of the students that chose the option “whatever”.

The 4% that selected the other option gave these comments: “pass the courses, get a degree and get a job”, “that I will get knowledge that I can use”, “I learn what I believe is important for the future and then it doesn’t matter if it gives me G or VG”, “to get decent grade comparing to my classmates”, “to pass all courses with at least a G but aim for as high grade as possible in all phases of the education”, “to always do my best”, “learn as much as possible and get as good grades as possible”.

When comparing the ambition to actual study results it is visible that not all students are able to realize their level of ambition into actual grades. 35% of the students have the actual result all Gs and 25% have 2 Gs per 1 VG. The same amount of VGs and Gs is the actual result for 17% while 15% have 2 VGs per 1 G and 6% have all VGs. The 3% that selected the “other” category indicated an actual result as being: “3 VG per 1 G”, “4 VG per 1 G”, “3-4 G per VG”, “5 G per 1 VG”, “some not passed”, “half G, half not passed”, “haven’t finished my first course yet”, “G in the most courses however I have 5 not passed courses”.
Overview 5.1 shows a compilation of the students’ ambition and actual grades. It shows that there is a gap in the students’ ambition and actual study results, especially for the students that have all VGs as a goal.

Overview 5.1

Expected and actual study results
- VG: Expected 13%, Actual 6%
- 2VG/1G: Expected 16%, Actual 15%
- 1VG/1G: Expected 15%, Actual 17%
- 2G/1VG: Expected 10%, Actual 25%
- G: Expected 31%, Actual 35%
- Other: Expected 4%, Actual 3%
- Whatever: Expected 8%

5.2.17 Satisfaction of own performance

The final question in the survey concerned the students’ satisfaction of their own performance in the university. Graph 5.20 illustrates the percentage of students that selected each category.

Almost 50% of the students are 75-99% satisfied with their own performance during their university education. Just over 30% of the students chose the category, 50-74% whereas 10% of the students are completely 100% satisfied. Another 6% are 25-49% and 4% are less than 25% satisfied. Below are the students’ comments for why they chose a particular satisfaction rate.

The students that are 100% satisfied typically state the reasons for this as having worked hard, gotten good results, reached their goals and that they have done their best. Some comments were: “I am always satisfied with everything I do”, “I have done what I wanted and should during the university time both in and outside of class”, “if you are not satisfied, you should do something about
it”, “I have performed much better than I thought I would before my studies”, “I have passed everything so far”, “I feel that I have learned a lot”, “I am an ambitious student with good grades”.

Students who are **75-99% satisfied** indicate that they can improve things to become more satisfied, for example they want to structure and plan their work better as well as be more engaged in the studies. Also they feel that they have not accomplished results that mirror their capacity or that they have been de-motivated at times which has affected the results. The students said: “very satisfied but there is always room for improvement”, “I have done my best and performed according to my ability and sometimes I could have done better but then I realized that it wouldn't make a difference”, “the motivation has been volatile sometimes during the year which has led to my performance not always has been 100%”, “not very interested in the education”, “don't give my all in all situations”, “I have to deal with the university but I'm here for the knowledge from outside”, “I work a lot which decreases the study hours, but I do fine anyway”, “I am not always so active and engaged as I could wish I was”, “the day you are 100% satisfied you will stop performing – while if you are less than 50% satisfied you are doing the wrong things”, “I have done my best and haven't put unnecessary amount of time on my studies”, “I didn't think that it would be so easy as it was”.

Those who state that they are between **50-74% satisfied** left comments concerning their attitude towards the education such as that they are lazy to study, they prioritize other things or their engagement and ambition is low. Some also stated that it is enough to be this satisfied and others put blame on teachers and fellow students: “I can do better but I usually prioritize my social life”, “I have put down too little time on my studies”, “work, free time and ambition is volatile”, “I had periods where most of my time went to student organizations”, “I can do better but I have to learn how to prioritize better”, “too little free time activities”, “I’m not satisfied with my grades”, “I can do better but a lot of group works and unclear teacher values makes getting good grades like winning the lottery and you don't want to venture to go for VG”, “because I think that I am lazy and really do have the capacity for getting VG in all courses”, “I know that I have much more to give if I only have the strength and will”, “outer influence your own performance negatively there is no way to exclude it especially in group works with difficult people”, “don’t have the best concentration or planning skills”.

The comments from students who indicated **25-49% satisfied** were mainly related to their own performance. They wished they would have worked harder, been more engaged and done better. The comments also included aspects that they were missing in the education: “too little connection with corporate life”, “I am fed-up with the narrow mindedness of the university and the belief that it is such a good way to go”, “I would have wanted to perform better”, “when I take a boring course I don’t put any effort on it hence relatively bad grades”, “I haven’t done my best”, “I am lazy as hell”.

The 4% of the students who are **less than 25% satisfied** indicated the reasons for this as being low motivation, too little time put on studying as well as a lack of interest: “because I have tried to study for a while now but I haven't managed it, I manage my studies but the exams are not going as well and neither are the group works”, “the only thing that drives me today is my bad conscious”, “the times I can have fun I choose that instead of studying – it becomes a vicious circle”.

### 5.2.18 Other comments

In the end of the survey there was a chance for the students to give other comments regarding their experience in the university or perceptions of the education and learning. There were different
aspects of the education that the students directed their feedback and comments namely the teachers, courses/content, practice, fellow students, student life and general comments.

Students had comments concerning the use of pedagogical tools, creativity and engagement of the teachers and the delivery of the education. “the level of the teachers is very varied”, “I have never had individual tutoring by a teacher”, “more pedagogy among the teachers, there is nothing worse than sitting on a lecture that you thought would be interesting but instead there is a grey haired old man without involvement ramble on without any planning or structure”, “there should be better quality among the teachers in terms of pedagogy and engagement for what they teach”, “better interaction between teachers and students”, “better teaching skills especially on the lower levels”, “teachers should think outside the box. They demand that from students but rarely do that themselves”, “more lectures from people from corporate life and teachers from corporate life - teachers that have worked with what they teach about”.

The comments about courses/content were mainly regarding wishes for a higher supply of courses or a change in the content of courses: “more education about computer use and tools, more focus on results and analysis”, “more freedom to choose direction and be able to choose your own road through the education that gives you the most stimulus to develop”, “I usually influence the education for future students, not for my own education”, “maybe the university studies can become more modern”, “more personal challenges, more discussions in the classroom”, “short lectures followed by examples and then opportunities to count or similar”, “the bad thing in the university is that you sometimes don’t have time to deepen into the things you find interesting”.

Earlier it was presented that students are missing the practical part of their education. Also in the other comments, this was seen: “More practice – this is the best way to find out if what you’re studying is right for you”, “university and corporate life should cooperate more”, “I am quite satisfied with the connection to the corporate life, but it is because I have taken own initiative to find practice and connections”, “more reality focus in case work”.

The students also had comments about their fellow students. “When I was in the service management program, my fellow students affected me in a positive way however during my master studies they affect me negatively”, “put higher demands on exchange students”, “more contact between the different grades (years), would like to have team building not only in the beginning of the program”, “drop everything that is connected to group thinking, I am here for my own sake and not to hang out with others”, “other students influence my education negatively through group works”.

The students seem quite satisfied with the student life in general although there are some students that don’t like where they are: “studying has been a positive experience, life quality is better even if I have less money”, “Umeå is a good student city”, “many think that it is more demanding to study than it actually is”, “more activities and organizations at the university - they should show themselves more, not all students are interested in partying”, “I am not really representative for student life, I feel trapped and it feels like I am wasting the best years of my life”, “the balance between studies and outside of them should be solved by engagements”.

Finally, the general comments were also on the positive side: “I am not happy with my last year in the university but otherwise it has been a nice time”, “I am happy that I started studying here in Umeå”, “nice atmosphere at the university – thanks”, “I think learning gets better and more interesting the longer you study”.

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6. Analysis

In the analysis chapter, the relevant empirical results will be analyzed with emphasis on the student perceptions that change over time. Also, the theoretical framework and empirical results will be compared and analyzed. This chapter is built up as to correspond to the four specific perceptions that are to be examined; learning, responsibility, engagement and satisfaction.

6.1 Learning

The first aspect that will be analyzed is the students’ perceptions of learning. From the survey, a number of factors surfaced within what learning is, where the respondents in this study had differing perceptions depending on what level of the education they were on. Graph 6.1 illustrates the difference between low and high level students in terms of what they perceive learning to be based on the survey question “2.1 What is learning to you? Describe in your own words how you perceive learning, what does it mean?”.

The values are shown in percentage of students who indicated that learning to them is each of the categories. As seen, the low level students more often perceive learning as knowledge, understanding, interest, remember or they do not know what it is. High level students on the other hand more often perceive learning to be development, future, theory, guidance, reflection, perspective, process or other aspects. The categories that are in common for the students regardless...
of the study level are development, practice, experience and personal engagement. The fact that high level students to a greater extent indicate both theory and practice is contradicting the findings by Kember et al. (2008:6-12) and Eklund-Myrskog (1998:7-16) concerning what types of assignments students prefer.

Furthermore, similar differences between low and high level students can be found in the answers of question 2.3 in the survey which was asking the students about what learning means however also giving them options to choose from. Graph 6.2 illustrates the share of students who selected options 3 and 4 for each of the statements in the survey, meaning that they somewhat or completely agree to the specific statement. The option, to remember something, was to a greater extent indicated as learning by the newer students. Moreover, that getting good grades meant that learning has occurred had the largest difference between the two groups with 41% of low level compared to 20% of high level students agreeing to this statement. Instead, getting new perspectives, forming own opinions and personal development were more frequently pointed out as learning by the more experienced students.

The meaning of the above mentioned findings can be reflected in previous research about qualitative and quantitative approaches to learning. (Alexitch & Page, 2001; Marton & Säljö, 1976; Eklund-Myrskog, 1998) In general, students on all levels of the education show signs of both qualitative and quantitative learning. However, it is possible to derive from these result that as a student progresses through the education he or she goes from a quantitative intense to a qualitative intense approach to learning.

As mentioned, the students in the lower levels more often have the perception that learning is the same as knowledge, being interested, remembering and that good grades are a sign of something being learned which are all more related to quantitative learning. It then appears as if the students realize when progressing to higher levels that learning is more closely related to reflection, forming an opinion of your own and getting new perspectives, thus qualitative aspects. This is in accordance
with what Eklund-Myrskog (1998:7-16) reported. It is further visible that the high level students’ perceptions of learning is more varied among many aspects while in the low level students have a more narrow view of the concept.

Additionally, that learning is connected to practice and experience is almost equally important for students on all levels which is contractive to what Eklund-Myrskog (1998:7-16) stated. At the same time it is possible that the concept Future which, as indicated in graph 6.1, is more popular among high level students also is related to practice and experience. The more experienced students most probably have a greater need of understanding knowledge in relation to practice and they want to apply knowledge in practice as to learn a profession whereas the low level students want to apply knowledge to everyday life. This suggests that a word that explains what learning is, for example knowledge or future, may mean different things for low and high level students. Because of this, it would be interesting to have further research on what the students actually mean when they explain what learning is and how the words signify different features depending on the educational level of the student.

To summarize, the empirical results show that the students in this study change from using a more quantitative approach in the beginning of their education to a more qualitative approach later which is coinciding with the study by Eklund-Myrskog (1998:7-16). It is also possible to see that low level students have a more narrow perception of what learning is and that the same word for describing learning may have different meaning depending on it being expressed by a low or high level student. Further, it seems as if students, as their education progresses, realize that what they are learning is important and that they actually want it to stay with them for life and not only to pass the next test. This is similar to the learning versus grade orientation by Alexitch and Page (2001:4-8) and what Marton and Säljö (1976:6-11) proposed, that learning needs to be evaluated by content and not by amount.

This change in the perceptions of learning over time is also corresponding to the manner in which the university develops the pedagogy of study programs to move from a quantitative to a qualitative approach as Hejzlar (2002:8-10, 20-23) stated. The courses in the program should build upon the knowledge gained previously by the students where the low levels are focused on broad subject learning while the high levels move more deeply into a specific topic selected by the student. The results from this study hence give evidence to that the development in learning approach the study programs aims for is actually working since the students perceptions change alongside the change in pedagogy.

6.2 Responsibility

Many of the questions in the survey measured the students’ perception of responsibility. Here, the difference between the low and high level students in their perceptions of learning environments, hours spent studying or in extracurricular activities, expected and actual merits as well as other aspects related to taking responsibility in the education will be presented.

Graph 6.3 presents the students from all levels of the education who completely or somewhat agreed to preferring different learning environments. The graph shows that more experienced students to a higher degree prefer independent studies and practical exercises while the less experienced students are more positive toward all other environments. This means that the high
level students have a less positive outlook concerning the learning environments in general since they, in the survey, indicated agreement to a lesser extent to all options.

Overall the students mainly prefer practical exercises, lectures and independent studies either alone or in a group which are all consistent to what Devlin (2002:8-11) found, although not in the same order. What the students rate as less preferred learning environments in this study is tutoring, although low level students would rather receive tutoring by a teacher than a fellow student while high level students have the same view toward tutoring in general. Also group works are less preferred, somewhat more by high level students who also to a lesser extent prefer independent studies in groups. At the same time this environment is the third most preferred by low level students. This can indicate that students prefer individual or teacher driven studies rather than cooperating with their fellow students, moreover it can be a sign of who the students perceive as being responsible for their education as Devlin (2002:8-11) stated.

The fact that students prefer practical exercises can indicate that they would like to have more connection of the theory in practice which is what Devlin (2002:8-11) proposed. Assuming that the students expect these exercises to be teacher driven, coupled with the popularity of lectures it would further suggest that the students attribute some of the responsibility for their education to the teachers. However, the students also prefer independent studies, which is the main learning environment where the students can control their own learning which means that the students also see themselves as responsible which is in accordance with Devlin (2002:8-11). This complements the responsibility attributed to the teachers, leaving the students with a perception of shared responsibility between themselves and the teachers based on their preferred learning environment.

To summarize, through looking at the results from the students’ preferred learning environments it seems as the students on both low and high level perceive the responsibility of their education to be
shared, mainly between themselves and their teachers, while their fellow students have less responsibility. Through moving on to other measures of responsibility it will be examined if there are other results that can support or contradict this finding.

Graph 6.4 illustrates the actual attribution of responsibility made by the students in the survey. The bars represent the percentage of students on each level who somewhat or completely agreed to each of the statements. What mostly stands out from this section is that the students overall perceive themselves to have the responsibility for their education. This means that even though the law of higher education does not specify that it is important for students to take personal responsibility as Wolk (2007:5-11) stated, the students still seem to be aware of this. However, students on low level attribute more responsibility to the teachers while high level students give more responsibility to fellow students. The latter observation is especially interesting since the more experienced respondents in the previous question stated to a lower degree that they prefer to work with their fellow students, both in group works and through independent studies in groups. This means that the preference of learning environments do not with complete accuracy show to whom the students attribute responsibility.

When analyzing this question it is important to reflect upon if the students really believe that they are responsible for the education to this substantial amount that the empirical results show or if they chose to agree with this statement because it was the “right answer”. Especially, when looking at the responses to other statements within the responsibility perception, this reflection becomes even more relevant.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statements</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Semester 1-4</th>
<th>Semester 5-11</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I am responsible</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers are responsible</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fellow students are responsible</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I want more feedback from teachers</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feedback from teachers</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feedback from fellow students</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Differences between low and high level students’ perceptions of responsibility, graph 6.4
In graph 6.4 and 6.5 answers to statements regarding feedback and initiative can be found. Here, students on all levels testify to not taking very much initiative in, or influencing their education which are signs of a lack in taking responsibility. A large share of the students want more feedback which is consistent with what Jacobsson and Gillström (2007:33-64) found, however they do not often ask for it. It is also interesting that more high, than low level students indicate that fellow students are responsible for their education but at the same time they less frequently ask their fellow students for feedback. Also even less often, students ask teachers for feedback. This is unfortunate since Bryson and Hand (2007:9-11) stated that feedback can help students take responsibility for their learning and Light (2001:62-63) mentioned that students need to understand that asking for feedback is an excellent way of enhancing the learning experience and they need to discover how to use it better. Again, it is noticeable that high level students attribute more responsibility to fellow students but do not want to work with them nor do they ask them for feedback.

Differences between low and high level students’ perceptions of responsibility, graph 6.5

Statements: “If there are possibilities in the education to take own initiatives, I take that possibility”
“I will influence my education to make sure it contains all merits/aspects I want to get out of a uni. education”
“I as a student can influence the content and delivery of my university studies”
“I often give suggestions to teachers about how the content and delivery of the education can be improved”
“I am afraid that if I give negative feedback to a teacher, it will reflect negatively on my grades”

From this it can be assumed that what is missing in the students’ relationship with each other is feedback since they do not often ask for it from fellow students. This can mean that students are not very positive toward student assessments as also Light (2001:19, 64-65) suggested while a good use of feedback and team work can according to Light (2001:201-203) be great preparation for the future work life where the students will need to challenge others and take responsibility in teams. This can also be a sign of what Poulos and Mahony (2008:3, 10-11) stated about students not knowing how to use feedback properly.

In general, students indicate that they take own initiatives while low level students state to a greater extent to be willing to influence their education. Also, low level students to a higher degree believe that they can influence their education but they also think that negative feedback will affect their
grades. More experienced students on the other hand testify to more often giving suggestions to teachers about the content and delivery of the education while at the same time they believe to a lesser extent that they can influence the education. It is noticeable that so many low level students state that they will influence the education but they do not give suggestions to teachers – these answers are quite contradictory and the same can be said about the students’ willingness to receive more feedback but their reluctance to ask for it. This can be connected to what Chonko et al. (2002:3-9) and Trout (1997:1-7) reported about students feeling like customers in the education. It may be that the students who want more feedback and will influence the education expect to be given opportunities for this and do not take the responsibility to ask for it.

It is further possible that low level students believe that they will and can influence the education; however they have not tried to do it. This may be because they are afraid or do not know how to put forward their suggestions, possibly due to some of the challenges mentioned by Hejzlar (2002:8-10, 20-23) such as large class sizes in the lower levels. High level students on the other hand more often give suggestions but it may be that they do not see their suggestions having any affect leading them to the perception that they cannot influence the education.

What can be summarized from graphs 6.4 and 6.5 is that the students’ perceptions of responsibility overall is that they know that they are responsible for their education and believe that they take initiatives. However, they do not seem to act according to this perception which is consistent with the findings of Barrling Hermansson (2005:37-44, 48-52, 77-80). This could indicate that the students want to influence their education but they do not know how, they feel that it is not worth it or they are afraid to do it. This is related to Kember et al. (2008:6-12) who pointed out that students in general are very compliant. Blake et al. (1997:1-2) put forward another reason for the low student influence which is that innovation and creativity is not promoted widely in universities, which makes it difficult for students to know that suggestions and initiatives are welcomed. At the same time Light (2001:18, 51) mentioned that student influence is rewarding for both the students themselves as well as the teachers which also may be a factor that the students do not reflect upon. Through combining this with the preferred learning environments it is also evident that there are students who have the perceptions that Devlin (2002:8-11) reported, that students would like to improve the way others act in the education, fellow students, teachers etc. This is the case for the students who prefer teacher driven learning environments, who do not take initiatives or will influence their education meaning that they see the university system as being responsible for their education and expect it to guide them through it. Based on the empirical results there seem to be students holding this perception on all levels of the education.

Furthermore, what can illustrate students’ perceptions of responsibility is how many hours they spend studying versus how many hours they spend in extracurricular activities combined with their expected and actual merits in the education. If students seem to have a good balance between studies and other activities while they still are able to fulfill their expected merits it can be assumed that they have a realistic view of responsibility. In graph 6.6 and 6.7 the time division of the students is presented. The values are shown in percentage of students who selected each of the response options.

A majority of the respondents indicate that they spend between 26-30 hours studying which is in accordance with what Brandell (2001:53-58) found. Although, the respondents seem to study more than those surveyed by Civilekonomerna (2007:6-8). It is noticeable that the low level students are more centered in the middle categories while the high level students are more dispersed and more represented in the categories with lower number of study hours. As Brennan and Osborne (2008:2-
11) expressed, there are students who consider the education as being a part time activity, mainly due to the financial situation of many students. This could be true for a number of students in this study since two thirds seem to spend 75% or less of the 40 hours that are corresponding to a full time activity. Moreover, Bryson and Hand (2007:4-6) stated that low level students spend less time studying than the high level ones which does not seem to be the case in this study.

In graph 6.7 it is obvious that high level students spend more time in extracurricular activities than their low level counterparts which may be the reason for why they spend less time studying. In general the time spent in extracurricular activities is for a majority of the students between 6-10 hours per week which is corresponding to what Brandell (2001:53-58) found. Further, when adding the students that spend 11-15 and 16-20 hours per week, the percentage of students are equivalent to what Jacobsson and Gillström (2007:24-31) reported.
When comparing the time division of the low and high level students, the less experienced students are a more homogenous group. A majority of them spend between 26 to 35 hours studying and 6-10 hours in extracurricular activities. The more experienced students on the other hand are more diverse in their time division between studies and other activities. It is possible that the high level students are more skilled when it comes to knowing their capacity and study technique, or it may be that they focus on what they find important and interesting. For example, an individual who is about to graduate and who has an extra job within the field of the education may prioritize to work more hours and subsequently study less since that is what the person finds most valuable for the future which can be compared to Tomlinson (2008:4-10). This is also an indication of high level students having a more diverse perception of responsibility of their education since the time division varies among the respondents.

The next measure of responsibility is if the students are able to take responsibility for their own education through making sure that they get all their expected merits. Graph 6.8 presents the differences between levels in what merits the students expect to get out of their education and if they actually will get these merits. The bars indicate the share of students who somewhat or completely agreed to each of the statements. Expected merits correspond to question 3.11 “The most important merits that I would like to get out of my time at the university are” in the survey whereas the actual merits are taken from question 3.12 “The most important merits that I actually will get out of my time at the university are”.

Differences between low and high level students’ expected and actual merits, graph 6.8

Statements:
- a degree
- good grades
- work life experience within the right industry
- general work life experience
- internship (unpaid job within my area of study)
- engagement in student organizations and voluntary activities
- contacts within the industry/company where I want to work in the future
The only variable that high and low level students to a similar extent both expect and will get is a degree. For most of the other merits, the less experienced students testify to wanting and getting these to a greater extent than the high level students. Further, even though the gap between expected and actual values sometimes is large for the students on all levels, it is evident that high level students are less able to actually get the merits they expect. Possibly this is due to that the further a person has progressed in the education, the better the person knows what merits he or she will get. It is essential to reflect upon the fact that high level students have a better chance of actually knowing if they will get each of the merits while low levels students may be guessing when answering this question. However, this also shows that low level students have a more positive outlook on their education and the merits that they will get. Moreover, since the low level students state that they will influence their education and will get the merits they want may depend on them being fairly new in the university and are not exactly sure about what to expect. Nevertheless, it can be assumed that low level students have a perception of responsibility where they will make sure to influence their education and get their desired merits and over time the students lose the grip of this perception.

The students who expect to get a degree, good grades as well as engagement in student or other voluntary activities also seem to actually get these. Almost all the students completely agreed to wanting and actually getting a degree which is in line with Pasternak (2005:6-11) who stated that the most obvious expectation that students have is earning a degree and although the students seem to want more than just a degree, to have one is in the students’ perception inarguably a positive influence for their future which is in accordance with Tomlinson (2008:4-10).

The respondents further indicate that they want specific and general work experience, an internship and contact within the corporate life, however the gap between the expected and actual levels of these merits is quite large. Here is a sign that the students do not seem to actively take responsibility for their education meaning that they do not make an effort to get the all merits that they want.

There are students who do get the merits that they want which can be related to Tomlinson (2008:4-10) who reported that there is an emphasis among students to get other experiences outside the university as to increase their value and strengthen their CV both with academic merits but also outside class commitments. Basically they see the need of complementing the degree with other merits that can represent their personal characteristics and help them stand out in the labor market.

When summarizing the students’ perceptions of responsibility it can be derived that the students change their way of approaching the education in terms of responsibility. In the beginning of the education the students have a more collective view of responsibility where they are more prone to working with other students and act the way others are acting. For them it is also encouraging to share responsibility with others through helping each other, for example in study groups. Over time it seems as the students become more individualistic and start seeing their responsibility as making the education the best possible for themselves through focusing on their own merits and future. This development is in line with the purpose of higher education since it is to develop independent individuals who can take responsibility for their own lives (www.hsv.se). These results also show that the perception of responsibility is more homogenous in the beginning of the education while in the higher levels students have a more differing view of how their level of responsibility should be. Possibly this is due to not all students being able to keep a high level of taking responsibility throughout the education.
6.3 Engagement

The students’ perception of engagement is next to be analyzed. Here, the statements that illustrate a difference between the levels of the education will be presented as well as the students’ engagement in extracurricular activities and finally the level of ambition and actual study results. These are all indications of how the students perceive their engagement into their educational experience.

Bryson and Hand (2007:11-12) explained that student engagement and the different assignments, subjects, courses and the education as a whole are mutually dependent. This means that if students have positive perceptions of aspects in their education, their level of engagement will be higher than if they have negative perceptions. Because of this it is interesting to examine graph 6.9 and 6.10, where the difference between study levels concerning a number of aspects in relation to their engagement is demonstrated. The values are shown in percentage of students who selected response option 3 or 4 in the survey.

![Bar chart showing differences between low and high level students' perceptions of engagement, graph 6.9](image)

**Statements:**
- “I believe that I was prepared and had sufficient previous knowledge when I started to study”
- “I believe that my fellow students were prepared and had adequate previous knowledge when they started to study”
- “I make more effort in the courses that I find interesting and less effort in courses I find less interesting”
- “I always do my best on all assignments and exams”
- “I like and look for challenges that develops me personally or professionally”
- “I am persistent and hard working also in the toughest situations in my studies”

Rodriguez (2009:12-14) and Alexitch and Page (2001:4-8) stated that being prepared and having adequate previous knowledge when entering the university can help students to better adapt and feel more engaged in their education. Here it is possible to see that the high level students believe that they, to a greater extent, were prepared when entering the education and they also perceive their fellow students to have been less prepared while the low level students grade their fellow students to have been equally prepared as themselves. This can be an indication of low level
students having a perception of being on the same level of engagement as their class mates, however as the students move further in the education, more differences appear between themselves and their fellow students.

This can be combined with graph 6.10 which shows that more experienced students believe to be able to learn less from their fellow student than the low level students. This means that the perceptions of the high level students is in accordance with Light (2001:198) who found that the point of improvement that university students often wish for within the education is other students’ behavior. Also this can be connected to Bryson and Hand’s (2007:4-6) suggestion that students see their fellow students as not putting as much effort on their studies as they themselves do. Still, the share of students who agree to the statement about being able to learn from their fellow students is large which can be associated with Hejzlár (2002:20-23) who mentioned that when students take courses together with other study groups it seems to be positive for the students’ learning and engagement. This perception of fellow students that more experienced students have can also indicate that the differences in knowledge were higher a few years ago when they entered the university than it is now or that the new students do not know the capacity of their fellow students as well as the older ones do.

Additionally, the more experienced students seem to have a more selective view of the education and they give some contradictory answers since they testify to engaging more in interesting courses and not doing their best on all assignments while they still indicate being persistent and hard working. Also, the high level students to a greater extent like and look for challenges, want higher
work burden and higher demands but they are still more often bored on lectures than their low level counterparts. This is another sign of that the engagement level of the high level students is varied which is why also the empirical result is varied. Another explanation for this is that the high level students want to be challenged in more ways than the education does at the moment. They may be bored on lectures and engage more in interesting courses because they know what they want to focus on and what interests them and when the education gives them opportunities to work in aspects that they feel strongly about, they are more persistent, work harder and engage more. This finding is contradictory to what Barrling Hermansson (2005:62-72) reported, that the early phases of the education may be low in difficulty level, it rather seems as the students perceive the higher levels to be too low in difficulty level.

Overall, a majority of the respondents in this study agree to liking and looking for challenges and doing their best on all assignments as well as indicate that they do not study as little as possible. This would, according to Barrling Hermansson (2005:37-44), mean that the students show signs of being engaged. However, the students also state that they tend to engage more in courses that they find interesting which according to Bryson and Hand (2007:11-12) can be an indication of disengagement.

Furthermore, according to Trout (1997:1-7), being bored in class can be another sign of disengagement which some of the respondents indicate that they often are. Most of the respondents in this study also indicate that the education is putting too low demands on them and that the work burden is too low. It is possible that students become disengaged and bored if they are not challenged enough which the perception of low demands and work burden can be symptoms of. Comparing the results from this study with the findings of Jacobsson and Gillström (2007:23-32), the current students believe to a higher extent that the demands are too low and work burden is not enough, meaning that they want higher demands and more work.

Slightly more than half of all the respondents, with high level students a bit more represented than low level ones, put forward that they want to have more personal contact with their teachers which according to Light (2001:62-63) is a good way to exchange experiences with someone knowledgeable in a specific field. Also, this is corresponding to Pasternak’s (2005:6-11) statement that students expect teachers to be open for personal contact. However, about 38% of the less experienced students perceive the teachers to be unavailable outside of class. It is natural for the students to feel that they do not get enough personal attention on account of what Hejzlar (2002:8-10, 20-23) reported about the lack of teachers in business education, especially for the lower levels where the class sizes often are larger than in the higher levels. Moreover, it seems as a number of low level students have the same perception as the students that Bryson and Hand (2007:9-11) surveyed. They believe that they are given too much work and since they also perceive the teachers to be unavailable to a greater extent, they may not inform the teachers about the high work load. Although, through knowing that the students want more contact with their teachers it is assumable that they also have a positive perception of them which means that more interaction with teachers would increase students’ perceptions of engagement. This is especially true for the students who believe the teachers to be unavailable.

A majority of the students in this study do indicate that they can learn a lot from their fellow students and that they like and look for challenges. As Coates (2005:7-11) mentioned, student engagement can be identified through the students getting involved in educational activities where they will develop, cooperate and challenge themselves. This means that it is favorable to find opportunities where students can work together, learn from each other and find new challenges both inside and outside of class. Possibly, these opportunities can be found through engaging in
extracurricular activities. Graph 6.11 shows the differences in engagement in extracurricular activities among high and low level students.

As Light (2001: 13-22) stated, there are many different activities for the students to engage in which is consistent with the responses from the students in this study. The students seem to be involved in sport activities, they work and are members of student and other voluntary organizations, there are also those who are engaged in more than one activity. The difference between high and low level students is mainly that more experienced students more often work than less experienced students and the latter group is to a greater extent involved in student organizations. An obvious reason for working is to get extra money but the students also indicated that the extracurricular activities are rewarding, give good experience and strengthen the CV. The students further find extracurricular activities interesting and see it as a way to interact with other students and to be involved in activities within the university environment that not necessarily are connected to the education. The students have probably realized what Kember et al. (2008:6-12) stated about the advantages of being engaged in extracurricular activities. This engagement may also have helped many students in adapting to the university environment which according to Blake et al. (1997:1-2) can be important for academic success.

With this in mind it is possible to regard work and involvement in student or other organizations as complements to the education. Also sports could provide an individual with valuable additional experience such as team work or leadership skills. It is clear that the manner of engagement in extracurricular activities change over time. In the beginning the students are looking for ways to meet other students and to get experience from student organizations whereas more experienced students value work experience to a higher degree. Involvement in sports activities also diminishes over time which possibly has to do with more time being spent working or studying to reach the desired level of ambition.

The next graph 6.12, illustrate the students’ level of ambition and actual study results divided between the two levels. The bars show the percentage of students who selected each of the
response options. The graph points toward the level of ambition between low and high level students not differing much. This contradicts what Bryson and Hand (2007:4-6) reported that students value good assessments in the end of their studies and see their first year in the university as fairly unimportant. Rather is seems as the low level students in this study want to focus on their studies from the beginning to really get into it.

Because of this it is difficult for the university to accommodate all expectations which, as Chonko et al. (2002:3-9) reported, can have an effect on the students’ ability to adapt to the university environment and engage in the education. It is obviously difficult to create a course for a group of people with different ambitions and expectations, which in turn means that on all levels of the education, it can be complicated to set the suitable difficulty level of the courses since the ambitions of the students differ as much as it does.

When comparing the level of ambition to the actual study results the differences between the study levels become evident. About a fourth of the high level, compared to half of the low level students who indicated “all VGs” as their ambition actually had those grades. Instead, the more experienced students with high aspirations can be found in categories “1VG/1G” and “2G/1VG”. At the same time, the high level students seem to be able to get better results than their aim. There are high level students with the ambition “all Gs” who have actual study results in the categories “1VG/1G” and “2G/1VG”. It is also possible to state that low level students are better at keeping their actual study results in line with their ambition while high level students fluctuate more between the categories. When comparing this finding to Kember et al. (2008:6-12), it seems as the students are able to set realistic and attainable goals for themselves.
It is moreover important to reflect upon the fact that low level students have not taken as many courses as their high level counterparts and that the low level courses may be somewhat easier than what is studied on higher levels. Nevertheless, keeping up your level of ambition should not depend on this as it is assumable that high level students have more knowledge, are more experienced and know the study technique that works for them. Rather, this is another sign of a more diverse level of engagement in the higher levels of the education. This diversity is also shown in the previous findings about high level students more often being bored on lectures while at the same they want more challenges and higher work load.

To summarize, the reason for high level students testifying to engage more in interesting courses and not always doing their best may be of the simple reason that they are used to studying, know what they find interesting and have developed a good process for performing and engaging in the education. However, on these levels the education should, according to Hejzlar (2002:8-10, 20-23), be deeper and hence more challenging, but still the students believe that work burden and general demands are too low which can affect their engagement in the education. Brennan and Osborne (2008:2-11) stated that engagement can be facilitated if there is a match between the demands of the university and the students’ own ambition. However, since high level respondents in this study reported that the demands and work burden are too low, that they engage more in interesting courses and do not always do their best, this can point to that the students’ perception of engagement decreases over time. It is possible to assume that the students in this study have a high level of engagement when entering the education and over time this engagement remain for some students while others become disengaged. This finding does not correspond to Bryson and Hand (2007:4-6) who stated that the level of engagement in the beginning of the education is low whereas it increases over time. It is also opposed to Rodriguez (2009:12-14) and Alexitch and Page (2001:4-8) who stated that the students’ entry values are key for determining the engagement level of the students. Rather it appears as if the perceptions of engagement are transformed during the course of the education.

6.4 Satisfaction
The last perception that will be analyzed is satisfaction. There were statements in the survey that measured satisfaction as well as a question asking what the students were missing in the education. Finally their own level of satisfaction when evaluating their performance in the education will be discussed.

Graph 6.13 and 6.14 shows the differences between high and low level students’ perceptions of satisfaction. The values are presented in percentage of students who somewhat or completely agree to each of the statements. Overall, the students state that they are satisfied with the education (content, delivery, examinations) and their university time as a whole. However, a greater share of the low level students are more satisfied compared to their high level counterparts. Low level students also indicate using more problem solving than high level students while analytical and critical thinking is a bit more common in the higher levels.
Differences between low and high level students’ perceptions of satisfaction, graph 6.13

Statements:

“I am satisfied with the content of my education (subjects, course material, etc.)”

“I am satisfied with the delivery of my education (how the content is presented)”

“I am satisfied with the manner of examination of the courses (exam, thesis, presentation, etc.)”

“I believe that the education provides me with many opportunities to use analytical thinking”

“I believe that the education provides me with many opportunities to use critical thinking”

“I believe that the education provides me with many opportunities where I get to solve problems”

The high satisfaction regarding content, delivery and examination procedures as well as the more frequent use of problem solving may among the low level students be signs of many of these experiences being new to them. Hence, it can be derived that they do not have much to compare with which makes it easier to be satisfied. Also it can be that for the newer students everything is fresh and exciting which is why they find the aspects of the education more satisfying. Reversed, this could be the reason for why the more experienced students are more critical toward the content, delivery and examinations. They have been in the education for a while and know what to expect. They have also most probably encountered course content, delivery and examination methods that they found satisfying and vice versa meaning that they are more experienced and know what satisfies them.

When it comes to the teachers, a majority of the students find them to be enthusiastic, pedagogical and professional although almost half of the students also believe that they rather want to research than teach, a view that also Barrling Hermansson’s (2005:77-80) found. This perception is slightly more common among the high level students. There are also students who consider the teachers to be too controlling which is a more usual perception among the less experienced students. However since this perception is held by quite few students it cannot be compared with the results of Barrling Hermansson (2005:73-76). Moreover, only about 18% of the high level students and 13% of the low level students perceive their fellow students to be affecting them in a negative way which is a sign of the students being satisfied with the cooperation with fellow students as well.
As seen, the students in this study are satisfied with their time at the university. However, as the respondents indicated in the survey, there are also aspects missing. Graph 6.15 illustrates the differences between study levels in what they perceive to be missing in their education. Each bar represents the share of students in percent who indicated a particular missing aspect.
As both Beck (2009:38) and Civilekonomerna (2007:6-8) stated, Swedish students lack connection to practice in their education and the same can be said about the students in this study. Especially high level students are in need of more practical application of their education. The main aspect missed by less experienced students is related to the teachers, such as more personal contact, better pedagogical use, as well as additional feedback and information. Approximately 10% of high level and 5% of low level students miss quality and assignments while the students in general lack course supply, free time, personal responsibility and other aspects.

The reason why more experienced students miss practical connection in their education is most likely that they are about to go out into the real world and get a job. It is natural for them to have a wish to be prepared for future work life. This can also be a sign of the high level students not knowing what the employers expect from them and through getting practical experience in the university education, this would become more obvious. The less experienced students’ dissatisfaction of the aspects regarding teachers is likely due to the low levels being more teacher driven with large class sizes as reported by Hejzlar (2002:8-10, 20-23). In general, the students would like a better supply of courses and more courses within the direction that they are studying. Devlin (2002:8-11), Beck (2009:38) and Civilekonomerna (2007:6-8) stated in their reports that the students were missing similar features. This is also in agreement with Bryson and Hand (2007:2-11) who found that the missing aspects in the education were related to the lack of personal contact between students and teachers.

The respondents are as well inquiring better quality in the education which is mainly related to an increase of demands. Many students are critical of the current manner through which they can pass the educational requirements without being challenged which is in accordance with the findings of Barrling Hermansson (2005:37-44). In addition, in the study by Civilekonomerna (2007:6-8) the students wished for higher admittance requirements to which this can be connected. There are further requests from the students for different types of assignments that include more problem solving, analytical, critical and reflective thinking. A small share of the respondents indicated that what is missing in their education is their own personal responsibility or motivation. In addition, some students asked for more free time activities and others gave suggestions for practical things such as more microwave ovens.

![Differences between low and high level students' satisfaction of own performance in the education, graph 6.16](image)
As mentioned above, most of the students are satisfied with their time at the university but it is also interesting to see how the students perceive the satisfaction of their own performance in the education. Graph 6.16 indicates the percentage of respondents who selected each of the options and the main result is that the students on all levels have quite similar views of the satisfaction level of their own performance. The overall satisfaction rate of the students when assessing their own performance indicates that most students are between 75-99% satisfied.

There are 10% of both high and low level students who state being completely 100% satisfied while approximately 30% of all levels are 50-74% satisfied. Another 10% of each level is less than 50% satisfied which is consistent with Barrling Hermansson (2005:77-80) who found that students are critical of their own way of performing in the education. In the comments where students explain the reason for their satisfaction they are often dissatisfied with themselves, their work ethics, discipline, grade level or they testify to simply being lazy and not giving their best in all situations. Again, the students indicate contradictive answers. In the question asking for what is missing in the education, only 2% of the students state that their own personal responsibility or motivation is missing while when commenting the reason for their chosen satisfaction rate, there are many explanations concerning the students’ dissatisfaction with themselves. This means that the students do not perceive that their personal responsibility or motivation is an aspect that can be missing in the education that could make them more satisfied. Rather they believe that missing aspects are concrete educational content. Moreover, what is interesting in the students’ explanations of their satisfaction rate is that there are students who are 100% satisfied because they have passed all courses while there are students who are less satisfied because they are not satisfied with their grades. This shows that the students’ inner motivation and ambition are affecting their satisfaction. This is related to Chonko et al. (2002:3-9) who stated the importance of helping students to set expectations. Additionally, this study cannot find evidence to support Barrling Hermansson’s (2005:8-9) statement that high level students are more satisfied with the intellectual development contributed by the education.

To summarize the students’ perceptions of satisfaction, it is evident that these do not differ much between the levels of the education meaning that they do not change to a large extent over time. The main dissimilarity found is that students on low and high levels perceive different aspects to be missing from the education. It is also possible to see that new students are satisfied due to everything being new and exciting, however as the initial excitement declines, the students stay on a quite constant satisfaction level throughout the education leaving students on all levels of the education with diverse perceptions of the education.
7. Conclusions

The conclusions chapter starts with a review of the problem statement and purpose of the thesis. Then the fulfillment of the problem statement is given, followed by a closing discussion. Finally, suggestions for further research are presented.

Problem statement:
How do students perceive their education and how do their perceptions change over time?

Purpose:
The purpose of this thesis is to explore how student perceptions are distributed over the course of a university education through comparing four key variables with a time frame, these variables are learning, responsibility, engagement and satisfaction.

7.1 Fulfillment of problem statement

Perceptions of learning
From this study it is possible to conclude that the students’ perceptions of learning change from quantitative intense to qualitative intense. There appear to be two main reasons for this. First, this transformation is similar to the structure of the study programs developed by the university where the pedagogy, course content and class sizes to a greater extent are based on quantitative learning in the beginning and moves toward qualitative learning in the end of the education. Second, high level students have a more mature and wide perception of what learning is compared to their low level counterparts. It is possible that when progressing through the education, the students develop their way of perceiving learning into realizing that it is a more complex concept than they initially believed. These findings are similar to what previous research has reported concerning how students’ perceptions of learning change from quantitative to qualitative over time.

Although, it also seems as when students explain their perceptions of learning, they are using words that may have different significance depending on what level the individual is studying on. What these differences are cannot be derived from this study, rather it is an interesting topic for further research. This is indicating that low level student may have similar views of what learning is as high level students but are not able to express it properly meaning that they are not conscious about what learning actually is to them. Apart from being an interesting topic for further research, this could suggest that students need help from educators to become more aware of what learning really is.

Perceptions of responsibility
It is also possible to conclude that the students’ perceptions of responsibility change over time. The most obvious change is that low level students have a more collective view of responsibility where they value working and interacting with others as well as are positive toward making an effort to help their fellow students in the education. The high level students on the other hand are more diverse in their perceptions of responsibility and are to a greater extent more individualistic, meaning that they focus on what is important for them and value their own performance in their education rather than cooperating with others. One reason for this can be the structure of study programs where the lower levels are more driven by teachers and higher levels focus more on independent and group work. This is evident in the results since the low level students attribute more
responsibility to teachers while high level students perceive their fellow students to be responsible to a higher extent. Although, in general students on all levels see themselves as the main person responsible for their education. Also it appears as the change in the perceptions of responsibility depends on the students having an inner realization about their personal and professional goals and future. As time passes it becomes clear for some individuals what they want to do in the future, making them more motivated to take responsibility for their education. Others may not have this realization leading to them lose their motivation as well as view of responsibility.

Much of the overall results within the perceptions of responsibility correspond to previous research. However, not much research about how the view of responsibility transform has been done meaning that these findings regarding changes in the perceptions over time is contributing to complement pervious research in this area.

**Perceptions of engagement**

As with learning and responsibility, the students' perceptions of engagement change over time. In the beginning of the education, the students appear to maintain a high level of engagement, they engage in all courses and do their best at all times. Then, as the students progress through the education they may either become more engaged or turn towards disengagement. This leads to the level of engagement being diverse within the high level where there are students who demand more challenges as well as those who have a more indolent approach to their education. The main differences between low and high level students are the perceptions of demands and work burden combined with different habits in involvement in extracurricular activities where less experienced students more often are engaged in student organizations and more experienced students work in parallel to their studies.

Again, one reason for this transformation in perceptions appears to be connected to the structure of study programs in general, and the students experience in specific. As the students move through the education, they become more secure about what interests them and what study technique works best leading to them wanting more demands. They also value work experience since they are moving closer to a graduation and want to learn how their knowledge function in practice. This does not seem to happen for everyone though since there also are students who move towards disengagement, possibly due to them not being able to develop their interest and study technique. Low level students on the other hand are engaged in the education from the start and want to explore the different opportunities such as engaging in all courses and getting involved in student organizations.

These results concur with several previous researchers’ findings, however there are also many aspects that do not match up. Previous research within student engagement found that students transform from being less engaged in the beginning of the education to becoming more engaged towards the end. It has also been reported that what is important for student engagement are the initial expectations and reasons for entering the university. This study concludes that among low level students, there is a high level of engagement whereas over time the students move either to becoming more engaged or disengaged. This means that the engagement level develops while in the education and do not depend on the initial opinions of the student. Moreover, there is research indicating that the early levels in the education are too low in difficulty level as well as that students mainly value good grades in the later levels of the education while they see their first years as fairly insignificant, findings that cannot be supported by the results from this study. What can be suggested from this is that more research is needed to know when and how the perceptions of
student engagement change as to help students keep a high level of engagement throughout the education.

**Perceptions of satisfaction**

Unlike the three previous perceptions, satisfaction does not appear to change over time. It can be concluded that in the beginning of the education the students have a positive and exciting outlook toward the studies, leaving them quite satisfied with all aspects. At the same time, the high level students state being somewhat less satisfied with the content, delivery and examinations however they still indicate similar satisfaction rates concerning their university time and their own performance as the low level students. This means that in all levels of the education there are students who have perceptions of being very satisfied as well as students who see themselves as being less satisfied. The reason for this is assumed to be connected to each individual’s own expectations. A student with the aim of getting the highest grade in all courses, but has not achieved this may be less than 50% satisfied while a student with the expectation and successful achievement of passing all courses may be 100% satisfied. The one aspect where the students indicate different values depending on their level in the education are the missing aspects, where low level students to a greater extent lack features connected to teachers while high level students miss practical connection of their education. This is most probably due to the early phases of the education being more teacher driven and in the later phases the students are close to graduation meaning that they value practical experience.

Overall, the results show that the students have perceptions of being satisfied with their education which is in accordance with previous research. The same can be said about the missing aspects indicated by the students. However, there is previous research pointing to that students are more satisfied in the end of their education which is a finding that this study cannot support. The contribution from this is that it appears to be the students’ expectations that set the basis for each person’s satisfaction rate. This means that, to make all students satisfied, their own expectations is where the work has to initiate.

In table 7.1 the conclusions of this study are summarized.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perception</th>
<th>Low level</th>
<th>High level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Learning</td>
<td>Quantitative intense</td>
<td>Qualitative intense</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsibility</td>
<td>Collective responsibility</td>
<td>Individualistic responsibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engagement</td>
<td>High engagement level</td>
<td>Diverse engagement level (high and low)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction</td>
<td>Diverse satisfaction level (high and low)</td>
<td>Diverse satisfaction level (high and low)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Overview of the change in perceptions over time, table 7.1

### 7.2 Discussion

Within all four key perceptions there were two aspects that the students indicated opinions about that are valuable to discuss. These were the low level students’ perceptions of teachers and high level students’ perceptions of fellow students.

Throughout this study it is evident that low level students have a more positive view of their fellow students than the high level ones. Possibly this is due to the diverse perceptions of learning, responsibility and engagement that exist on high levels. Here the students want to learn what is important for them, they mainly take responsibility for their own result and they want to engage in
what they find interesting and do not want to compromise with others. Since the perceptions within these areas are diverse it is more difficult to work with fellow students on the high levels than on low levels where the students’ perceptions are similar. Conversely, high level students have a better perception of teachers than low level students do. This latter group are especially keen on expressing that they miss aspects relating to the teachers as well as they to a greater extent believe that teachers are responsible for their education and that teachers are unavailable for them. The reason for this is assumed to be the structure of study programs where the low levels are characterized by large class sized and courses driven by the teacher.

It is further interesting to reflect upon how and if the different perceptions are dependent on each other. A common reason for the existence of a change in perceptions of learning, responsibility and engagement is that these seem to be affected by outer circumstances. It is possible to see that aspects in the university environment such as fellow students, teachers, courses, extracurricular activities, structure of study program, pedagogical approach, difficulty levels etc. play a role in the perceptual transformation of the students. Moreover, it seems as the life situation of the students have an impact as well. New students seem more focused on the present and they spend their time studying and enjoying student activities. They are more about having fun, meeting new people and do not worry too much about the future. On the other hand, the more experienced students are at a different stage in life. They are on the verge of graduating and focus on what they find interesting, important and valuable. They are most probably reflecting on what their next step in life is going to be and how to get there. Since there are outer circumstances affecting the change of these perceptions, it is possible to assume that the circumstances can be altered in a way to help students move in a desired way. As seen, the perceptions of learning, responsibility and engagement change in different ways within the student body and it can be presumed that the most favorable would be if all the students could transform in the same way toward qualitative learning as well as high level of responsibility and engagement however, more research is needed in this area to make any further conclusions.

Conversely, the reason for the non-transformation in the students’ perceptions of satisfaction seem to depend on this area mainly being affected by internal circumstances such as motivation that only each individual can influence. The view of satisfaction is also often a result of successful or unsuccessful fulfillment of a person’s expectations which explains the diverse perceptions of satisfaction existing among the surveyed students. Individuals on the same level can possess widely differing expectations gained from different sources which affect the way they approach the education and their performance. Since this perception is affected mainly by internal circumstances it is probably difficult to directly influence the satisfaction by someone else than the student, rather measures can be taken to affect, for example the students’ expectations.

It seems as there are synergies in between the perceptions and it is possible to assume that students who have perceptions of qualitative learning, high responsibility and high engagement are the same individuals and vice versa. It could also be the case that the students who indicate a high rate of satisfaction also are included in the group of qualitative learning and high responsibility and engagement. However since this perception mainly seem to depend on each individual’s expectations it is not as straightforward to make this assumption. In conclusion, all four key areas of study in this thesis have given insight into student perceptions and how these change over time. Now, further research is needed to increase understanding of this topic as well as how to find ways to affect these perceptual changes.
7.3 Suggestions for further research

While working with this study, a number of interesting topics for further research emerged. These are presented below.

- Since the methodology of this study was of quantitative nature it could not gather any deeper thoughts and perceptions that university students possess. Because of this it would be interesting to perform qualitative interviews with students focusing on understanding their perceptions profoundly.

- The respondents in this study were business students. What would the results be like if it was performed on other educational groups? Would they have similar perceptions, if not what are the differences? Also it would be interesting to increase the scope of this type of study to cover the same students over their time in the university.

- The respondents in this study explained what learning means to them in their own words, however, it is difficult to know what they really mean from an open question in a survey. Due to this it would be interesting to further research what the students actually mean when they explain what learning is and how the words signify different factors depending on what level of the education the student is on.

- As satisfaction seem to be affected by students’ expectations, it could be interesting to study what expectations students have when entering the education. Where do they come from and is it possible to make sure that students have the “right” expectations when entering the university?

- This study cannot determine if the students are aware of the changes that occur in their perceptions. Therefore this would be interesting to study, combined with investigating the actual reasons behind the changes.

- Further research is needed to know when and how the changes in perceptions of learning, responsibility and engagement occur as to help students transform in a desired way that would be favorable for them and their educational experiences.
References
The references used to write this thesis are articles, books, reports and electronic sources.

Articles


**Books**


Reports


Electronic sources


Appendix 1

Study about student's perception on their education

This survey is a basis for a master thesis with a purpose to investigate how students perceive their education. The survey mainly consists of multiple choice questions where you choose an option through circling the answer of your choice. To fill the survey takes about 10 minutes and all answers will be handled anonymously.

1. Background information

The purpose of this section is to get a good background picture of the respondents, it consists of 6 questions.

1.1 Gender:  Woman  Man

1.2 Age:  -20  21-25  26-30  31-35  36-40  40-

1.3 Number of Semesters (No. of sem. as full time student=registered for min 30hp/sem.): ________

1.4 What reasons are there that made you decide to start studying at the university? ________________
____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________

1.5 Why did you choose to study your current study program (subject)? _____________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________

1.6 Was your current study program (subject) your first choice when you applied to the university?

   YES  NO

2. Learning

In this section the questions takes up your perception around learning and how you believe that learning occurs in your education. The section contains 3 questions.

2.1 What is learning to you? Describe in your own words how you perceive learning, what does it mean?
____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________

Indicate to what extent that you agree with the below statements: 1=Don not agree, 4=Totally agree

2.2 The kind of education/study technique I prefer to learn the content of a course is:

lectures
1  2  3  4

independent studies
1  2  3  4

group work (group work that is part of the examination of a course)
1  2  3  4

independent studies in groups (study with other students – not group work that is part of a course)
1  2  3  4

practical exercises
1  2  3  4
individual tutoring by teacher
1 2 3 4
individual tutoring by fellow student
1 2 3 4
Other, what: ____________________________________________________________

2.3 To learn something means:
to remember
1 2 3 4
to understand
1 2 3 4
to get good grades
1 2 3 4
to be able to apply knowledge in reality
1 2 3 4
to get a new perspective
1 2 3 4
to form your own opinion
1 2 3 4
to develop as a person
1 2 3 4
Other, what: ____________________________________________________________

3. Educational environment
This section takes up your opinions of different aspects within your education. It contains 15 questions.

Indicate to what extent that you agree with the below statements: 1=Don not agree, 4=Totally agree

3.1 I as a student
I believe that I was prepared and had sufficient previous knowledge when I started to study
1 2 3 4
I am good at planning my time (know where my time is spent)
1 2 3 4
I fully engage into my learning and study to really learn new knowledge
1 2 3 4
I study as little as possible, only to pass the courses
1 2 3 4
I, personally am responsible to make sure that I go through my education (graduate)
1 2 3 4
If there are possibilities in the education to take own initiatives, I take that possibility
1 2 3 4
I make more effort in courses that I find interesting and less effort in courses I find less interesting
1 2 3 4
I always do my best on all assignments and exams
1 2 3 4
I like and look for challenges that develops me personally or professionally
1 2 3 4
I am persistent and hard working also in the toughest situations in my studies
1 2 3 4
I feel that I as a student is valuable for the university and that everyone who works at the university (management, student service, teachers, etc.) highly value my learning

1 2 3 4
I will influence my education to make sure it contains all merits/aspects that I want to get out of a university education

1 2 3 4
I would like to have more feedback on my personal performance in the education

1 2 3 4

3.2 Content and delivery of the education
I am satisfied with the content of my education (subjects, course material, etc.)

1 2 3 4
I am satisfied with the delivery of my education (how the content is presented)

1 2 3 4
I am satisfied with the manner of examination of the courses (exam, thesis, presentation, etc.)

1 2 3 4
I believe that the work burden in my education is too high (too much work)

1 2 3 4
I as a student can influence the content and delivery of my university studies

1 2 3 4
I believe that the education provides me with many opportunities to use analytical thinking

1 2 3 4
I believe that the education provides me with many opportunities to use critical thinking

1 2 3 4
I believe that the education provides me with many opportunities where I get to solve problems

1 2 3 4
I believe that the education has helped me to understand and reflect on my personal values

1 2 3 4
I often give suggestions to teachers on how content and delivery of the education can be improved

1 2 3 4
I believe that the education demands too little of me as a student

1 2 3 4
I am often bored on the lectures

1 2 3 4

3.3 Teachers
I believe that my teachers are enthusiastic, pedagogical and professional in when teaching

1 2 3 4
I would like to have more personal contact and support from teachers

1 2 3 4
I believe that the teachers control my education too much

1 2 3 4
I believe that teachers rather would do research than teach classes

1 2 3 4
I often ask for feedback on my performance from teachers

1 2 3 4
I believe that the teachers are unavailable for me as a student outside scheduled time

1 2 3 4
I am afraid that if I give negative feedback to a teacher, it will reflect negatively on my grades

1 2 3 4
My teachers are responsible to make sure that I go through my education (graduate)
1  2  3  4

3.4 Fellow students
I believe that I can learn a lot from my fellow students
1  2  3  4
I believe that my fellow students were prepared and had adequate previous knowledge when they
started to study
1  2  3  4
I believe that other students influence my own study performance negatively
1  2  3  4
My fellow students are responsible for me getting through my education (graduate)
1  2  3  4
In group situations in the education I usually let others take the lead and I take a passive role
1  2  3  4
In group situations in the education I usually let others take the lead and I take a supporting role
1  2  3  4
In group situations in the education I usually take a leading role
1  2  3  4
I often ask for feedback on my study performance from other students
1  2  3  4

3.5 University life
The transition from what I did before I started to study (high school, work, unemployment) to
university studies and university life was easy for me.
1  2  3  4
I believe that my spare time outside of the studies is rewarding since I engage in activities that
develop me as a person
1  2  3  4
I take own initiatives to explore all possibilities that are available for me as a student to make my
time at the university as good as possible both inside and outside of the studies
1  2  3  4
All in all, I am satisfied with my time at the university (both inside and outside the studies)
1  2  3  4

3.6 What do you miss in your education? (What can be improved to make your time at the
university better?)
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________

3.7 What is your level of ambition in your studies?
Choose ONE option – the option that fits the best for you:
O  VG in all subjects
O  2 VG’s per 1 G (two thirds VG’s)
O  Approximately an equal amount of VG’s as G’s (50:50 VG:G)
O  2 G’s per 1 VG (two thirds G’s)
O  G in all subjects
O  Whatever happens, happens
O  Other, what: ____________________________________________
3.8 How many hours per week do you spend studying? (Including lectures, group works, independent studies, etc.)

__________________________ hours

3.9 Are you engaged in any spare time activity besides studying (i.e. student organization, student union, sports club, voluntary work, extra job)?

YES NO

If YES, what and why?

___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________

If NO, why not?

___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________

3.10 How many hours per week do you spend in spare time activities?

__________________________ hours

Indicate to what extent that you agree with the below statements 1=Don not agree, 4= Totally agree

3.11 The most important merits that I would like to get out of my time at the university are:

a degree

1 2 3 4

good grades

1 2 3 4

work life experience within the right industry

1 2 3 4

general work life experience

1 2 3 4

internship (unpaid job within my area of study)

1 2 3 4

engagement in student organizations and voluntary activities

1 2 3 4

contacts within the industry/company where I want to work in the future

1 2 3 4

Other, what: ______________________________________________________________

3.12 The most important merits that I actually will get out of my time at the university are:

a degree

1 2 3 4

good grades

1 2 3 4

work life experience within the right industry

1 2 3 4
general work life experience
1  2  3  4
internship (unpaid job within my area of study)
1  2  3  4
engagement in student organizations and voluntary activities
1  2  3  4
contacts within the industry/company where I want to work in the future
1  2  3  4
Other, what: ________________________________

3.13 What are your actual study results?
Choose ONE option – the option that fits the best for you:
O  VG in all subjects
O  2 VG’s per 1 G (two thirds VG’s)
O  Approximately an equal amount of VG’s as G’s (50:50 VG:G)
O  2 G’s per 1 VG (two thirds G’s)
O  G in all subjects
O  Other, what: ________________________________

3.14 What grade would you give yourself if you grade how satisfied you are with your performance during your study time?
Choose ONE option – the option that fits the best for you:
O  100% satisfied
O  Between 75%-99% satisfied
O  Between 50-74% satisfied
O  Between 25-49% satisfied
O  Less than 25% satisfied

3.15 Why did you choose the above option?
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________

4. Finally

4.1 Do you have any other comments concerning your university education or student life that you would like to present?
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
## Appendix 2

### Overview of lost responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Number of lost responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.4 What reasons are there that made you decide to start studying at the university?</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.5 Why did you choose to study your current study program (subject)?</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1 What is learning to you? Describe in your own words how you perceive learning, what does it mean?</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 The kind of education/study technique I prefer to learn the content of a course is:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>independent studies in groups (study with other students – not group work that is part of a course)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>practical exercises</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>individual tutoring by teacher</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>individual tutoring by fellow student</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3 To learn something means:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to remember</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to understand</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to get good grades</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to be able to apply knowledge in reality</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to get a new perspective</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to form your own opinion</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to develop as a person</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1 I as a student</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe that I was prepared and had sufficient previous knowledge when I started to study</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am good at planning my time (know where my time is spent)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I fully engage into my learning and study to really learn new knowledge</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I study as little as possible, only to pass the courses</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I, personally am responsible to make sure that I go through my education (graduate)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If there are possibilities in the education to take own initiatives, I take that possibility</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I make more effort in courses that I find interesting and less effort in courses I find less interesting</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I always do my best on all assignments and exams</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I like and look for challenges that develops me personally or professionally</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel that I as a student is valuable for the university and that everyone who works at the university (management, student service, teachers, etc.) highly value my learning</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would like to have more feedback on my personal performance in the education</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.2 Content and delivery of the education
I believe that the work burden in my education is too high (too much work) 2
I believe that the education provides me with many opportunities where I get to solve problems 2
I often give suggestions to teachers on how content and delivery of the education can be improved 1
I believe that the education demands too little of me as a student 1

3.3 Teachers
I believe that my teachers are enthusiastic, pedagogical and professional in when teaching 2
I would like to have more personal contact and support from teachers 1
I believe that the teachers control my education too much 2
I believe that teachers rather would do research than teach classes 3
I believe that the teachers are unavailable for me as a student outside scheduled time 1
My teachers are responsible to make sure that I go through my education (graduate) 1

3.4 Fellow students
I believe that I can learn a lot from my fellow students 1
My fellow students are responsible for me getting through my education (graduate) 1
In group situations in the education I usually let others take the lead and I take a passive role 1
In group situations in the education I usually let others take the lead and I take a supporting role 6
In group situations in the education I usually take a leading role 4
I often ask for feedback on my study performance from other students 4

3.5 University life
The transition from what I did before I started to study (high school, work, unemployment) to university studies and university life was easy for me. 1
I believe that my spare time outside of the studies is rewarding since I engage in activities that develop me as a person 2
I take own initiatives to explore all possibilities that are available for me as a student to make my time at the university as good as possible both inside and outside of the studies 3
All in all, I am satisfied with my time at the university (both inside and outside the studies) 3

3.6 What do you miss in your education? (What can be improved to make your time at the university better?) 173

3.7 What is your level of ambition in your studies? 4

3.8 How many hours per week do you spend studying? (Including lectures, group works, independent studies, etc.) 11
3.9 Are you engaged in any spare time activity besides studying (i.e. student organization, student union, sports club, voluntary work, extra job)?
   If YES, what and why? If NO, why not?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.10 How many hours per week do you spend in spare time activities?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hours per week</th>
<th>Total (with average)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>75</td>
<td>130 (28)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.11 The most important merits that I would like to get out of my time at the university are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Merit</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A degree</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good grades</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work life experience within the right industry</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General work life experience</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internship (unpaid job within my area of study)</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engagement in student organizations and voluntary activities</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contacts within the industry/company where I want to work in the future</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.12 The most important merits that I actually will get out of my time at the university are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Merit</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A degree</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good grades</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work life experience within the right industry</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General work life experience</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internship (unpaid job within my area of study)</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engagement in student organizations and voluntary activities</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contacts within the industry/company where I want to work in the future</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.13 What are your actual study results?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study results</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.14 What grade would you give yourself if you grade how satisfied you are with your performance during your study time?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.15 Why did you choose the above option?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>110</td>
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