



LUND UNIVERSITY
School of Economics and Management

Synthesis of Knowledge

The Perception of Graduates with Non-Business Bachelor Degrees and a Master in Management (MiM)

by

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30 May 2016

Master's Programme in Management

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Abstract

Purpose: The purpose of this study was to generate insights and shed light on the value of interdisciplinary knowledge and skills derived from a novel educational concept (Master in Management, MiM) as assessed by the corporate world. Therefore, companies' perception of the synthesis of knowledge from management graduates with non-business bachelor degrees was explored. Ultimately, this research aimed to assist in developing an understanding of companies' perspectives on the value of applicants with combined educational knowledge for managerial positions.

Research Questions: How are graduates that synthesise non-business bachelor knowledge with a managerial master degree perceived in the workplace?

- What are the reasons for companies to hire these graduates for managerial positions?
- What are the qualities that are of interest for companies in these graduates?

Methodology: Adopting an exploratory, inductive-driven approach, the perception of recruitment and MiM experts was analysed using a mixed-method research design. Empirical findings arose from qualitative data gathered through purposefully selected interviewees. To map the qualitatively collected perceptions with the real-world implementations, an additional small sampled-sized quantitative study was conducted with former graduates of such an interdisciplinary degree programme.

Findings: While interdisciplinary knowledge arising from a combination of management degree and non-business degree was highly valued, the appreciation varies depending on the business context and the previously studied subject area. Concerns regarding the level of business knowledge and lack of professional experience arose. However, described as T-shaped individuals, their ability to flexibly adapt and bridge different disciplines was perceived as very powerful.

Limitations: Based on the novelty of the research topic, some interviewees lacked awareness and hence, their answers might have resulted in cursory insights. In addition, it is difficult to generalise the findings as this thesis studies a subjective matter. Therefore, the interpretative nature of this study paves the way for further research on non-business MiM education.

Practical implication: The revealed perception of business experts about these programmes can facilitate the decision-making process of affected stakeholders. Universities can design their programmes accordingly, awareness amongst companies can be raised and prospective students can gain a deeper understanding of their potential career opportunities when graduating from such a degree.

Keywords: Master in Management (MiM), interdisciplinary knowledge, synthesis of knowledge, T-Shaped, management education

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, we would like to express our profound gratitude and appreciation to our interview partners, who made this research project possible. Their expertise and insights inspired us not only academically, but also personally. We would specifically like to thank Matthew Wood from EFMD for his support, input and contacts, which added substantial value to our study.

Secondly, we are grateful for the continuous guidance and help we received from Lund University School of Economics and Management. The assistance we got encouraged us to grow with the project.

Thirdly, we would like to thank our Master in Management class of 2015/16 for a memorable year together in Lund.

Finally, we would like to thank our friends and family for being there - like always.

Thank you. Danke. Tack.

Key Words and Definitions

Interdisciplinary: In the scope of this study, ‘interdisciplinary’ refers to the synthesis of two or more dissimilar subject areas. Master in Management (MiM) graduates combine knowledge and skills from at least two areas: their non-business undergraduate degree and the MiM programme. Therefore, these individuals are also referred to as non-business MiMs throughout the study.

Qualities: In the scope of this research, ‘qualities’ are seen as distinctive characteristics and/or attributes, which make up an individual’s personality, traits and behaviour.

Managerial positions: In the scope of this thesis, ‘managerial positions’ are defined as job roles on a managerial track. Individuals can start in graduate schemes or junior entry positions, but with the focus on a further career development to become a manager.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

This study is concerned with the Master in Management Programme (MiM), a novel educational concept, which combines interdisciplinary knowledge and skills to prepare students for the challenges of the 21st century. Living in a dynamic and complex environment has radically transformed the way today's world works. As the "pace of change is only set to accelerate" (World Economic Forum, 2016), the fourth industrial revolution caused by technology seems imminent (Trudeau, 2016). Besides fundamental differences originating from demographic and socioeconomic factors, technological disruptions change so rapidly that shelf life of knowledge is reduced and knowledge sometimes "outdated by the time students graduate" (Heinemann, 2009; World Economic Forum, 2016). As a result, expectations about management skills have also constantly evolved over the past decades, creating an uncertain business landscape, where a simple and fast answer is not readily available. Educating future managers "too narrowly and analytically" (Waddock & Lozano, 2013, p.265) and turning them into pure subject specialists has been criticised for years (Cheit, 1985; Pfeffer & Fong, 2002). Many observers of the global financial crisis in 2007-2008 view these individuals as narrow-minded as well as silo-thinking and refer to them as the cause of the crash (Giacalone & Wargo, 2009; Thomas, Thomas & Wilson, 2013; Waddock & Lozano, 2013).

Facing the "most turbulent, rapidly evolving labour market seen by any generation" (Infosys, 2016, p.5), it appears necessary to move away from the traditional emphasis on techniques, analysis and tools (Waddock & Lozano, 2013). This development gives way to more openness and flexibility of companies' recruitment practices, increasing diversity at the workplace, which does not merely stem from internationalisation. Specifically in business areas such as consultancy and finance, graduates from non-business backgrounds, including law, maths or philosophy, are a welcomed asset (Leonhardt, 2000; McKinsey, 2016). Besides bringing positive aspects, such an educational variety can also pose challenges. Different approaches and ways of thinking between disciplines can lead to comprehension problems as Andrea Radojicic, HR Business Partner Assistant at Google, points out: "I speak English, Spanish and French but I don't speak engineer" (Thomas, 2015). Therefore, it can be a great advantage for a company to have individuals who can bridge this gap and bring additional business knowledge, as this is often seen as an unavoidable prerequisite for everybody who wants to work in the economy (Der Tagesspiegel, 2008).

As a consequence, the call for "multidisciplinary integration" (Navarro, 2008, p.108) has become louder. Thus, well-rounded individuals, equipped with "disciplinary and interdisciplinary knowledge and soft-skills" (Bajada & Trayler, 2014, p.613), are expected to close the gap between expert knowledge and management skills. Business education reacts to this changing employment landscape and offers degrees, where graduates combine deep specialist knowledge

in one subject area with overarching management skills to shape cutting edge students. In particular, the novel postgraduate MiM represents a viable strategy for this by teaching young talents managerial skills and cross-functional perspectives. Targeted at pre-experienced students, who strive to pursue a future career in management, this degree equips recent graduates with the fundamentals of business acumen, while it also aims to develop their personal and leadership skills (Masters Portal, 2015). Although some of these postgraduate programmes accept students with a business bachelor degree, the majority of MiM programmes actually attract students from a wide range of undergraduate degrees with little or no business background. In this study, the latter type is regarded as the extreme case of interdisciplinary educational knowledge synthesis. Therefore, these MiM programmes are chosen as an example to investigate how companies perceive interdisciplinary knowledge and skills derived from higher education.

1.2 Problem Discussion

The desire for these graduates in academia, the offering of such programmes by universities and the high demand of students to study these programmes does not per se translate into an ultimate end-customer demand from companies. Existing academic literature surrounding MiM programmes is thin and no peer-reviewed literature on this topic exists. Based on this significant research gap, this study is among the first to embark the investigation of companies' perception of students with an interdisciplinary background gained from a MiM programme and a non-business bachelor degree. This is particularly relevant as today's working environment is shifting towards more flexibility and adaptability and thus, this study introduces a novel educational concept that can potentially meet these new requirements.

1.3 Context

In order to familiarise the reader with this novel educational concept, the following section aims to provide background information about interdisciplinary management programmes. This helps the reader to situate MiM programmes within the context of management education. It has to be stated clearly that the following information includes all different kinds of MiM programmes, not solely the type this study focuses on.

Master in Business Administration versus Master in Management

When talking about management education, the Master in Business Administration (MBA) instantly crosses one's mind. "Arguably the most widely recognised academic brand in the world" (Bradshaw, 2011), this degree is often viewed as the pinnacle of management education. At first glance, the relatively new MiM programmes might appear similar to the traditional MBAs, based on the fact that both equip individuals from diverse academic backgrounds with business knowledge to prepare them for careers in management. They both represent general management postgraduate degrees opposed to specialised Master studies such as a Master in Finance or Marketing. However, the MBA and MiM programmes' characteristics (programme and student age, previous work experience, tuition fees), teaching approach and salary after

graduation differ widely (Graf, 2014). Despite their initial similarities, the MiM's American counterpart targets a different clientele, which is why some experts claimed that "there is no competition between a MiM and an MBA" (Clarke, 2015).

Master in Management Profile

The MiM itself is a postgraduate degree designed for students, who want to pursue a future career in management. The programme is either available for students with a business undergraduate degree (17%) or other academic backgrounds (83%), including ones without any prior business knowledge (Graf, 2014). The one or two yearlong programmes equip recent graduates with the fundamentals of business knowledge in diverse areas, including besides others marketing, finance or human resources, but do not exclusively focus on theoretical input. They also aim to develop management skills and interpersonal competencies, including communication and presentation, as well as professional capabilities, such as analytical and critical thinking (Masters Portal, 2015).

A MiM study revealed that worldwide approximately 660 postgraduate degrees exist, which qualify as MiM programmes (Graf, 2014). The majority of these (86%) are implemented in Europe, but have constantly gained in global popularity as their international acceptance has grown (Graf, 2014; Masters Portal, 2015). As they attract candidates from around the globe and are internationally oriented, students get the opportunity to benefit from high diversity and multiculturalism in the classroom. Given that 88% of MiM courses have only been established in the last 15 years, the degree can be categorised as rather young but attractive (Graf, 2014). Mainly driven by the European Bologna Reform, students can now specialise and differentiate themselves from the masses or even change their educational path by choosing a non-consecutive postgraduate degree (EHEA, 2014; Symonds, 2014). Recently finishing their undergraduate degrees with little or no prior work experience, MiM programmes attract relatively young students with an average age of 24 years (Graf, 2014). After degree completion, these graduates start their career within a wide range of industries and a variety of job roles, particularly in consulting and financial services (Graf, 2014). In 2014, 83% of MiM alumni were employed within three months after graduation with an average starting salary of 40.000 Euro. However, the range spans from 25.000 Euro to 70.000 Euro, seemingly depending on the MiM programme's characteristics (for example, GMAT requirements and internationality of the programme) (Graf, 2014).

It has to be emphasised that there is no *one* clear-cut definition of the typical MiM graduate. Firstly, MiM is not a fixed term, which is why these programmes can be either a Master of Arts or a Master of Science in Management. Secondly, MiM is an umbrella term for students with business undergraduate as well as non-business undergraduate degrees. Thirdly, MiM programmes are between 9-24 months long, thus varying in programme structure (Graf, 2014).

Development

Today, it is apparent that the MiM increases in popularity and runs a chance to replace the MBA as the flagship programme in the European education system (Clarke, 2015). The MiM degree “has already become one of the fastest-growing segments of the business education degree market” (Bradshaw, 2011) and “once the best-kept secret of European business schools, [it] is becoming the star of 21st-century business education” (Bradshaw, 2015a).

A growing number of students as well as universities recognise the potential of MiM programmes. Universities have identified a market-niche to educate pre-experienced graduates in management skills. Moreover, the decision to implement such a programme was also driven by financial incentives (Bradshaw, 2015b). According to the Graduate Management Admission Council’s (GMAC) Application Trends Survey (GMAC, 2015a), at least 50% of worldwide universities offering any type of MiM declare that the application volume has gone up between 2011 and 2015. “Asia has started to develop a taste for the MiM” states Roland Siegers (2013), Executive Director of CEMS, a Global Alliance in Management Education. This is also reflected in an increase in application volume for all different MiM programmes of 75% in 2014 in Asia and the Middle East. Figures in other parts of the world seem equally optimistic, which indicates that MiM programmes become a worldwide trend (Graf, 2014). With this excessive supply, it is important that the course content does not suffer in quality (Bradshaw, 2012). Therefore, the Financial Times Business Education edition on the MiM can be used as a benchmark to identify the leading programmes. Since 2005 it has listed an ever-growing number of MiM programmes in its ranking, mounting up to 80 programmes in the 2015 ranking compared to 70 in 2014 (Financial Times, 2015). Nevertheless, doubts in the industry have indeed been raised, as “salary levels and promotions should not be the only measure of the success of the business schools and schools should take a more thoughtful and proactive role” (Thomas, 2015).

This development is also reflected in a growing worldwide demand of the business world. Even though in 2012, Santiago Iñiguez, Dean of IE Business School in Spain, stated that “the brand awareness of MiM is really low” (Bradshaw, 2012), nowadays ever more companies seem to discover the potential of these graduates. While in 2009, 19% of employers questioned in the Corporate Recruitment Survey (GMAC, 2015b) stated that they plan to hire MiM alumni, this number reached 51% in 2015. According to universities offering MiM programmes, their students come with sought-after capabilities. The pre-experience of these graduates is not necessarily seen as a downside, but instead, as an opportunity as these students are not “hard-wired into a specific way of doing things” (Celine Foss, personal communication, 23 March 2016). Coming “with less institutional memory” (Topuniversities, 2013), gives companies the chance to ‘form’ and educate the students according to their requirements, which is something companies value in these young, sharp and flexible individuals. They easily adapt to different cultural circumstances and are “entirely open to innovation and change” (Celine Foss, personal communication, 23 March 2016). The fact that the salaries for these pre-experienced graduates

are lower than their MBA counterparts is an additional incentive for companies to hire MiMs (Clarke, 2015; Kristina Eneroth, personal communication 31 March 2016).

The focus of the present study exclusively lies on European universities offering MiM courses in full-time study mode. It solely includes programmes, which only accept recent graduates with a non-business undergraduate degree to convey a business understanding and prepare them for positions on a managerial track. These MiM students have no prior business knowledge of areas such as finance, marketing, economics, supply chain management and organisation. Instead, they hold a first degree within fields as diverse as humanities, technology, social and natural sciences or arts and design.

1.4 Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to generate insights and shed light on the value of interdisciplinary knowledge and skills derived from a novel educational concept as assessed by the corporate world. Therefore, companies'¹ perceptions of the synthesis of knowledge from management graduates with non-business bachelor degrees is explored, using a mixed-method approach. Special attention is paid to the qualities that are appreciated from these graduates when hired for managerial positions and the reasons that motivate their recruitment.

Ultimately, this research aims to assist in developing an understanding of companies' perspectives on the value of applicants with combined educational knowledge for managerial positions. By developing almost unprecedented knowledge, the findings will serve as an attempt to narrow the existing research gap and offer information for all stakeholders involved. The results of this study will not only serve as a beneficial contribution to raise awareness amongst companies, but can also be used by universities to adapt their managerial programmes.

In line with this, the following main research question is explored:

- 1. How are graduates that synthesise non-business bachelor knowledge with a managerial master degree perceived in the workplace?*

To be able to answer the main research question, the following two sub-questions serve to grasp the gist of the research area:

- 1.1 What are the reasons for companies to hire these graduates for managerial positions?*
- 1.2 What are the qualities that are of interest for companies in these graduates?*

¹ In this study, company includes businesses as well as organisations.

2. Theoretical Review

This chapter aims to give the reader an overview of literature surrounding the topic. To the best of the authors' knowledge, no existing research has previously explored this field. Therefore, this study cannot draw on literature directly linked to MiM but rather identified concepts based on interview outcomes. Consequently, this theoretical review covers the fields Skill Set & Employability, T-shaped Individuals, Management Education and Informational Diversity.

2.1 Skill Set & Employability

Over the course of the past decades, managerial skill sets have been studied extensively in the literature. The fluid business environment is changing the skills that are required of managers. The following excerpt serves as an attempt to give a short overview of the ongoing discussion about necessary skills in the business workplace.

Katz (1974) was one of the first academic researchers to analyse the kind of skills effective executives exhibit. From his findings, he generated three apparent categories, including technical (knowledge), human (collaboration) and conceptual (organisational overview) skills. In the succeeding years, researchers' focus shifted. Meta competencies, including creativity, mental agility, balanced learning and self-knowledge became superior (Pedler, Burgoyne & Boydell, 1994). Paglis (2013) found a significant overlap of delegation, leadership, communication and managing teams, when she compared studies about managerial skills. Essentially, the mind-set of managers plays another significant role as exemplified by Gosling and Mintzberg (2003), who claim that managers need various mind-sets in order to successfully navigate through the complex business world. In addition, Crilly, Schneider & Zollo (2008) agree with Drucker (1999) when they emphasised that, to be a successful manager, awareness about oneself and others is crucial.

Even though Mintzberg argues that management "does not change, it remains basically what it was" (de Holan & Mintzberg, 2004, p.207), it appears that the labour market's focus of top skills changes. Historically, great emphasis was put on hard skills within the workplace as these were the driving motor of the industrial economy (Zehr, 1998). Hard skills, often also referred to as technical skills, highlight a person's acquired knowledge, excellence and practical experience necessary to fulfil specific job requirements and formal job roles (Davis & Muir, 2004; Robles, 2012).

With the transformation to a knowledge and service economy in the 21st century (Spohrer & Kwan, 2009), the interaction with strangers has grown (Seabright, 2005) and consequently, interpersonal skills have become more important (Imel, 1999; Zehr, 1998). Researchers agree that for a growing number of jobs, solely having the required technical knowledge is not sufficient anymore (Davis & Muir, 2004; James & James, 2004; Mitchell, Skinner & White, 2010; Robles, 2012), as knowledge becomes obsolete much quicker (Heinemann, 2009). Robles (2012) defines

soft skills as broadly applicable interpersonal qualities, which “are the intangible, nontechnical, personality-specific skills that determine one’s strengths as a leader, facilitator, mediator, and negotiator” (p.457). She explicitly researched the importance of the ten most-stated soft skills identified by business executives and ranks them as follows: “integrity, communication, courtesy, responsibility, social skills, positive attitude, professionalism, flexibility, teamwork, and work ethic” (Robles, 2012, p.456). Providing soft skills has become inevitable nowadays, even in positions within former hard skill domains such as accounting (Cole, 1999) and IT (Solomon, 2002). In addition, Wilhelm (2004) states that from an employer’s point of view, the highest importance is placed on interpersonal skills, specifically for the success in entry-level positions.

The apparent change in the skill set is also reflected in the employability of graduates. Employability itself has been described as a complex and ambiguous concept, which is hard to define (Andrews & Higson, 2008). Nevertheless, Pool & Sewell (2007) term it as “[...] having a set of skills, knowledge, understanding and personal attributes that make a person more likely to choose and secure occupations in which they can be satisfied and successful” (p.280). Generally, it considers the link between the needs of the business world and the graduates’ competences and skills (Trunk et al., 2006). In recent years and due to the lively environment, fundamental shifts in the recruitment market can be observed. Recruiters seemingly do not only look for employees who fit the hard fact hiring criteria. Instead, they widen their focus to find candidates that have a personal attitude, relevant professional experience, and the ability to adapt, to solve problems as well as work in teams. Govindarajan and Gupta (2001) argue that globally operating companies only have a competitive advantage when their “teams strive to build trust and overcome barriers of geography, language and culture” (p.63). In addition, employers desire a set of qualities such as trustworthiness, reliability, motivation, communication skills and willingness to learn (Bowers-Brown & Harvey, 2004; McMurray et al., 2016).

As employability is a complex and dynamic theory, research provides several models from a range of authors that serve as a framework. Probably one of the most famous concepts, the USEM model, was developed by Knight and Yorke (2004). USEM stands for Understanding (knowledge of a subject), Skills (Subject specific and generic), Efficacy beliefs (Awareness and understanding of one’s self and one’s abilities) and Metacognition (self-awareness and ability to reflect), four interrelated components of employability. The CareerEDGE model, another attempt to interlink fundamental elements that aid graduates’ employability, heads into a similar direction (Pool & Sewell, 2007). Two of its integral parts include ‘Career Development Learning’ as well as ‘Degree subject knowledge, Understanding & Skills’. Besides, life and work ‘Experience’, ‘Generic skills’ are additional attributes valued by employers. Also referred to as transferable skills, they can include a variety of characteristics employers expect to see in alumni. Deriving from previous research and listed by The Higher Education Academy (2006), these qualities comprise “adaptability/flexibility, imagination/creativity, willingness to learn, independent working/autonomy, working in a team, ability to manage others, ability to work under pressure, good oral communication, communication in writing for varied purposes/audiences, assumption

of responsibility and for making decisions, planning, coordinating and organising ability” (p.4). Finally, ‘Emotional Intelligence’, “the capacity for recognising our own feelings and those of others, for motivating ourselves, and for managing emotions well in ourselves and in our relationships” (Goleman, 1998, p.317) appears to play a role when it comes to employability.

2.2 T-Shaped Individuals

In a fast-changing world that gets more interconnected, instrumented and intelligent, a broader repertoire of skills and dynamic capabilities are inevitable (Barile et al., 2012). Here, the economy requires individuals that combine subject knowledge with the ability to move across different disciplines (Barile et al., 2015). Therefore, it seems that the traditional I-shaped employee, who has deep specialised knowledge in one particular area, has to make way for the multidisciplinary T-shaped employee (Donofrio, Spohrer & Zadeh, 2010). On the one hand, these T-shaped individuals are equipped with in-depth disciplinary expertise of one (or more) specific subjects, the vertical stem of the T (Leonard-Barton, 1995). On the other hand, they also have “business and people skills” (Tomé, 2011, p.531), the horizontal bar of the T. Based on their deep disciplinary and broad functional knowledge (Barile et al., 2012; Ornstein, 2015), T-shaped professionals can increase efficiency within companies “through the transfer of best practices” (Hansen & von Oetinger, 2001). These hybrid individuals do not only have deep problem-solving skills in one area like the I-shaped individual (Donofrio, Spohrer & Zadeh, 2010), but also the ability to communicate with and understand the vocabulary of people from other disciplines (Spohrer et al., 2010). They “speak the languages of business” (Peters, 2012, p.64) as well as their own, which could be “a competitive advantage in their pursuit of promising careers” (Harris, 2009). These individuals “are capable of convergent, synergistic thinking” (Leonard-Barton, 1995, p.75) and have the ability to connect several areas as they do not only understand business but also people and organisational culture (Hansen & von Oetinger, 2001).

Since communication and teamwork skills are getting more important (Bitner & Brown, 2008), their flexible mind-sets and cross-functionality increase efficiency in transdisciplinary teams (Donofrio, Spohrer & Zadeh, 2010; Hansen, 2009). As being T-shaped will arguably allow these individuals to “learn and adapt more rapidly to the changing needs of business” (Spohrer & Kwan, 2009, p.8), their profiles could become more sought after in today’s knowledge-intensive service-oriented economy (Donofrio, Spohrer & Zadeh, 2010). On top of all that it will become crucial for young employees to have a flexible skill set, which is updated in an ongoing manner. Individuals are expected to change their careers several times during their life (Gratton & Scott, 2016), which is why upskilling and reskilling will become inevitable (van Dam, 2012). Being multi-disciplined and trained in soft skills as well as having deep expertise knowledge will therefore be invaluable in the future job market as “the interaction of different knowledge sets can result in creativity and new ideas” (Karjalainen, Koria & Salimäki, 2009, p.556).

2.3 Management Education

While the 20th century is often defined as the management era (Mintzberg, 1989), Kaufman, Beaumont & Helfgott (2003) propose that the origin of management as a respected field of study and practice dates back to the 1880s. That is when the first business schools were founded (Thomas, Thomas & Wilson, 2013) and when Henry Towne declared that “the management of works has become a matter of such great and far-reaching importance as perhaps to justify its classification also as one of the modern arts” (Kaufman, Beaumont & Helfgott, 2003, p.131). Back then, he viewed management “as a set of practices that could be studied and improved” (Kiechel, 2012, p.64). Contrarily, Mintzberg (1989) argues that management consists of “roles or organised sets of behaviour identified with a position” (p.15). Due to this discord, ongoing debates exist as to whether management should be treated as a science or a profession that can be learned, or rather an art or a craft that can be acquired with relevant experience (Kransdorff, 2006; Mintzberg, 2005).

In a quest for legitimacy, business schools have introduced several higher education programmes with the aim to professionalise management. However, they have been scrutinised and came under fire for not achieving this (Khurana, 2007). While the much-heralded MBA has long dominated the management education field, it also faced harsh criticism in the past (Kransdorff, 2006; Pfeffer & Fong, 2002). Some critics reason that these programmes do not create managers but rather “too many off-the-shelf-solutions” (Kransdorff, 2006, p.60). One opponent of too narrow business education and their curricula, Henry Mintzberg, claims that MBA graduates are over-analytical and “not prepared to manage” (de Holan & Mintzberg, 2004, p.209). In his eyes, MBA curricula do not develop actual management skills or soft skills (Thomas, Thomas & Wilson, 2013). Instead, Mintzberg favours a business school approach, which “concentrates on the complexity of real managerial and organisational problems rather than specialised knowledge in subjects such as marketing or finance” (Kransdorff, 2006, p.61).

Mintzberg and Drucker, two of the most influential individuals on management education, view management as a practice, which “requires a holistic and integrated set of skills” (Thomas, Thomas & Wilson, 2013, p.469). Therefore, the teaching of silo-centred, discipline-oriented management skills has to be re-evaluated and courses redesigned as deans, too, “would like to see more multi-disciplinary, integrated programmes” (Thomas, Thomas & Wilson, 2013, p.471). The integration of different disciplines has to be implemented to open up a systemic view (Cezarino et al., 2016). When two unrelated fields are combined, this powerful synthesis can arguably create informational diversity within one individual. This understanding has also been translated into management education and lead to combining management with other disciplines. Traditionally, the coupling of management and engineering is already implemented in some countries. However, novel educational concepts, such as the MiM, which accept students from many different disciplines, have only emerged recently. In the light of current changes, “interdisciplinarity is in great demand” (Heinemann, 2009), as it opens up opportunities for complex thinking (Cezarino et al., 2016). These students benefit from the “differences in

knowledge bases and perspectives that members bring to the group” (Jehn, Northcraft & Neale, 1999, p.743), caused by the divergent educational backgrounds, expertise and professional experience from peers in the programme.

2.4 Informational Diversity

As today’s world has become more interconnected, companies benefit from diversity as it has the “potential to create unique value for the organizations” (Krishnan, Miller & Judge, 1997, p.361). While diversity can occur in multiple ways, studies found that specifically informational diversity based on knowledge and professional background “positively influence[s] group performance” (Jehn, Northcraft & Neale, 1999, p.741; Mannix & Neale, 2005). Particularly, in a nonroutine working environment, informational diversity can lead to enhanced outcomes (Jehn, Northcraft & Neale, 1999) and provide companies with benefits when reacting or adapting to changes (Mannix & Neale, 2005). It adds creativity and improves the ability to solve problems as it allows seeing tasks from different viewpoints, which in turn fosters innovation (Jehn, Northcraft & Neale, 1999; Mannix & Neale, 2005; Nemeth, 1986; Stanford GSB Staff, 1999). Organisations can capitalise on a diverse workforce due to their understanding of existing markets and their insight into new ones (Grogan & Eshelman, 1998; Mannix & Neale, 2005). However, the pitfalls of informational diversity, including the hampered effectiveness to commonly engage in tasks and the potential for conflicts caused by different mind-sets, are apparent (Jehn, Northcraft & Neale, 1999). Only when teams from informationally diverse backgrounds are coordinated efficiently, their greater performance can erase the challenges and teams can thrive based on their different educational expertise (Mannix & Neale, 2005).

Chapter Summary

The theoretical perspectives presented above shed light on the aspects this study identified as tangent to the concept of MiM. Placed within the context of this research, contributions of four theoretical dimensions have been explored in order to gain a better understanding of the research topic and serve as a guideline throughout the entire research and analysis. These included Skill Set and Employability, T-Shaped Individuals, Management Education and Informational Diversity (Figure 1).

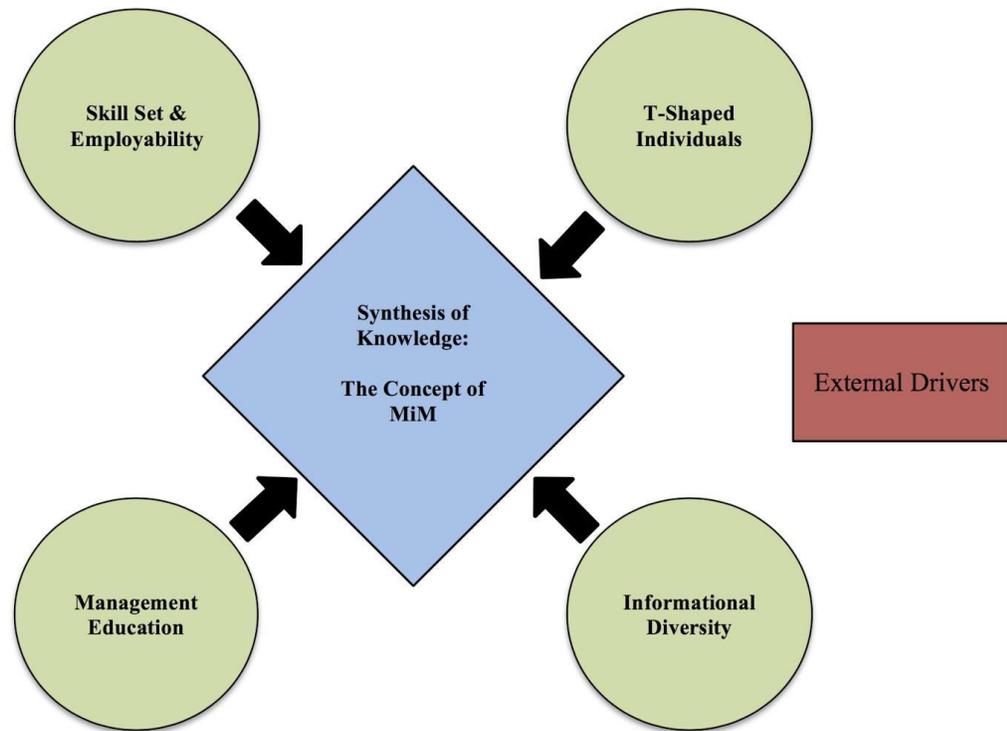


Figure 1: Theoretical Model

In addition, this model (Figure 1) illustrates the presence of external factors, which have a continuous impact on the four dimensions. These external drivers include radical changes in the environment that have been triggered by globalisation, technological development and growing complexity. As these influences are versatile, no overarching theoretical concept has been identified. However, this issue will be revisited and put into context within the discussion in Chapter 5.

3. Methodology

This chapter gives an overview of the methodological reasoning, research design, data collection process and data analysis used to answer the research question in a sound manner. Saunders, Thornhill & Lewis' (2007) 'research onion model' provides a framework for the most suitable strategies and methods dealing with the research topic (Figure 2).

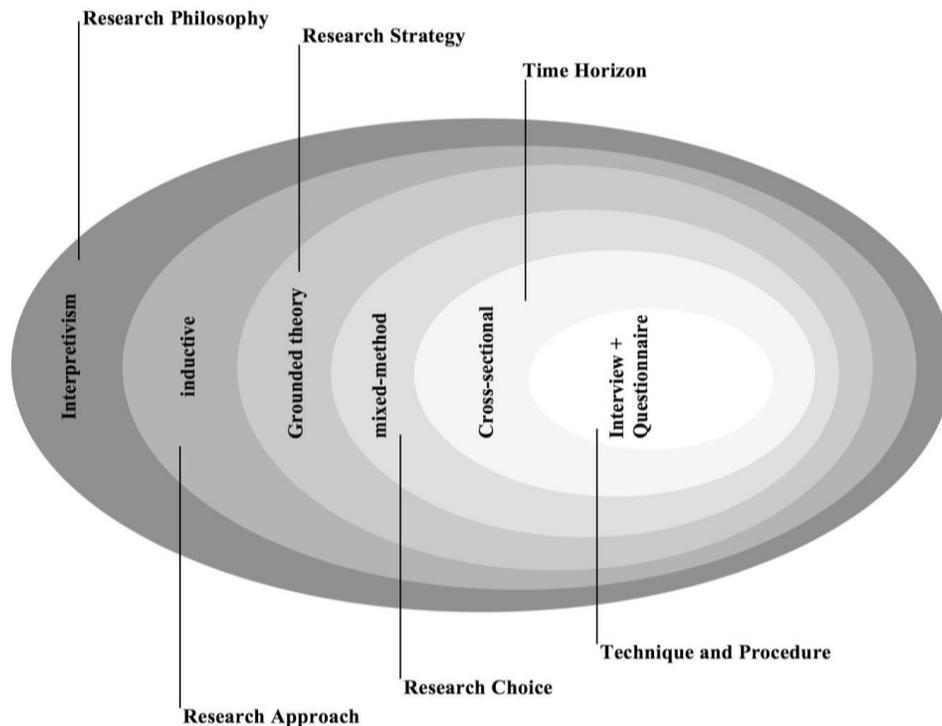


Figure 2: Research Onion based on Saunders, Thornhill & Lewis (2007)

3.1 Research Philosophy

In general, research philosophy deals with the development and nature of knowledge in a particular field (Saunders, Thornhill & Lewis, 2007). Its creation is strongly influenced by the connection between reality, researcher and the nature of knowledge itself (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2012). Hence, our assumptions and understanding about the world determined the choice of research philosophy and thus, the overall research design.

This study is grounded on a relativist ontological viewpoint as it is believed that multiple realities exist. Truths are constructed and interpreted intersubjectively by each individual observer, including the researchers, which is why they can be perceived differently (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2012). These circumstances allow for a plethora of understandings, independent of social and situational context (Saunders, Thornhill & Lewis, 2007). As knowledge

is arguably subject to change over time, the ascribed meanings and truths might differ depending on the context as well as the observer (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

Based on the fact that many truths exist and “reality is not objective and exterior” (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2012, p.23), this study takes a constructionist epistemological stance. Knowledge is socially constructed by experiences and expectations of multiple perspectives and given individual meaning by interviewees as well as the researchers themselves. Therefore, it is based on an interpretivist position, as it is dependent on the surroundings and the differences in reality that exist therein (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2012; Saunders, Thornhill & Lewis, 2007).

3.2 Research Approach

The study was conducted in an inductive manner and aimed to explore a phenomenon of which only little directly relating literature exists (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Hence, no predetermined theory could be applied but instead, theory followed data (Saunders, Thornhill & Lewis, 2007). Therefore, information had to be collected first in order to move towards a more general scope (Bryman & Bell, 2011). As learning about individuals’ perception of the researched context is crucial, qualitative data in the form of interviews was gathered. This is an approach commonly used in inductive theory, which allows analysing the collected data and uncovering evolving patterns between respondents throughout the process of research and data analysis. Thereby, knowledge is continually expanding and new theories can be generated (Saunders, Thornhill & Lewis, 2007).

3.3 Research Design

As MiM programmes are relatively new and not yet researched, the study adopted an exploratory research design. Hence, it aimed to develop a first understanding and deeper insight into the precise nature of the given situation (Saunders, Thornhill & Lewis, 2007).

3.3.1 Research Strategy

The research strategy is grounded-theory inspired. Theoretical knowledge was mapped and conceptualised with the empirical insights gained throughout the conduction of the study and the process of constant comparison (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). As this study is based on an inductive approach, deriving patterns from data was used to build theory (May, 2011; Saunders, Thornhill & Lewis, 2007). However, due to time constraints, this study was merely concerned with the exploration of emerging concepts rather than the generation of an elaborate theory.

3.3.2 Research Choice

Taking the research philosophy and approach into consideration, a mixed-method technique was chosen as most suitable to answer the research questions. This study was therefore based on

qualitative as well as quantitative data collection methods and their respective analysis procedures (Saunders, Thornhill & Lewis, 2007). Ghauri & Grønhaug (2005) claim that qualitative data in form of interviews is best suited for inductive exploratory research projects. Hence, this was the predominantly used method. Quantitative data, stemming from questionnaires, was subsequently compiled. This combination of two independent techniques helped to corroborate and complement the research findings (Saunders, Thornhill & Lewis, 2007). Additionally, using more than one source of data collection assisted in overcoming limitations of each individual method (Chapter 3.7).

3.3.3 Time Horizon

Due to the limited time frame and bearing in mind that this project did not intend to observe changes but rather aimed to compare different individuals, who share similar characteristics (field of profession, expertise), a cross-sectional approach was selected. This time perspective explores a specific phenomenon in short-term at a particular point in time (Bryman & Bell, 2011; Saunders, Thornhill & Lewis, 2007). By taking a ‘snapshot’, this method allowed to simultaneously collect data and to capture insights from the interviewees (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

3.4. Data Collection Method

3.4.1 Background Information

To obtain additional insights and extend knowledge, the 80 leading MiM programmes were identified based on the Financial Times MiM Ranking 2015 (Financial Times, 2015). Out of these, European universities with ‘non-relevant degrees’ (excluding those requiring an undergraduate in business, economics or management prior to the MiM) were contacted via email or phone. Background information was requested in the form of open questions and eight replies containing both, qualitative and quantitative data, were received. These insights described the universities’ motivation and assessed need to start MiM programmes. In addition, the responses also shed light on the potential popularity of MiM courses by presenting the development of student applications as well as enrolments over the last three years.

3.4.2 Qualitative Data Collection Method

This study used a qualitative research method to step “beyond the known and enter into the world of participants to see the world from their perspective” (Corbin & Strauss, 2015, p.14). The purpose of this method was to guarantee that multiple opinions and personal insights were captured. Therefore, each interviewee was of high information value for the study.

Sampling

For the qualitative part of this study two forms of non-probability sampling were used: purposive and snowball sampling.

Purposive sampling allowed for a strategic and purposeful information-oriented choice of participants. In the selection process, it was of primary importance that the interview partners were particularly informative and represent relevant assets in answering the research questions. However, since purposive sampling is subjective, this choice was influenced by the authors' judgement about several sample selection criteria and could have been different for other researchers (Bryman & Bell, 2011; Saunders, Thornhill & Lewis, 2007). Consequently, the selection process was based on the following aspects: Firstly, with the research goal in mind, individuals with human resource and recruitment knowledge were targeted as appropriate candidates. Being involved in hiring practices, this group of people was considered to have a relevant understanding and opinion of the phenomena as well as emerging trends within this field (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Furthermore, recruitment firms and online job boards were addressed, as these were seen as the interface between employer and employee. As they were expected to provide a broad overview of recruitment processes within different sectors, they functioned as representatives of multiple needs. Secondly, to minimise the pool of potential interview candidates further, the geographic location was restricted to Europe. This continent was chosen as a primary research ground to ensure accessibility and to reflect the population of MiM programmes, as the majority is based here. Thirdly, throughout the literature search, the industries of consulting, finance and technology were singled out as most receptive for all MiM graduate types. Therefore, specifically companies in these sectors were targeted in order to learn more about their reasoning. In addition, experts from the field of management education were included because they were perceived as suitable candidates based on their understanding of MiM programmes as well as their connection to the business world. Due to this non-random sampling technique, insightful individuals who fulfilled the above mentioned requirements (sector, location, industry, job role and work experience) were selected, while the remaining ones were ignored (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2012). Despite the established selection criteria being based on judgemental considerations, even a small sample size was expected to give "a good deal of variety in the resulting sample" (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p.442). Even though candidates stemmed from different backgrounds and implicated a diverse set of key characteristics, at least two individuals of the same category were interviewed. It can be argued that this allowed the analysis of key dimensions from different viewpoints (Saunders, Thornhill & Lewis, 2007).

In addition, this study used snowball sampling to identify more interview participants, something often applied where "individuals are very rare and [...] hard to find" (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2012). Interview partners were asked to assist in the recruitment of further eligible candidates (Bryman & Bell, 2011; Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2012). Although not matching all selection criteria, one participant from outside of Europe was interviewed, as his insights were expected to be valuable for the outcome of the study.

By means of these two sampling techniques, a total of 16 interviews with 17 individuals were conducted. A detailed table of all interview candidates can be found below (Table 1).

Table 1: Overview of Research Participants

Company	Position	Category	Name	Country	Date and Time	Length	Language
American multinational financial services corporation	Graduate Recruiter	Company (Investment Bank)	Bennett, Ella & Calmer, Antonia*	United Kingdom	21/04/2016; 18.30 CET	16 min	English
(Former) Financial Times	(Former) Business Education Editor	Expert	Bradshaw, Della	United Kingdom	29/04/2016; 10.30 CET	34 min	English
Stepstone	Chief Development Officer	Recruitment (Job Board)	Bruhn, Wolfgang	Germany	21/04/2016; 17.00 CET	50 min	German
Graduate Management Admission Council (GMAC)	Senior Director Research Services	Expert	Chisholm, Alexander	United States	29/04/2016; 18.00 CET	17 min	English
Carrington Crisp	Founder and Owner, Education Marketing Specialist	Consultancy (Education)	Crisp, Andrew	United Kingdom	03/05/2016; 10.00 CET	22 min	English
MiM Compass www.mim-compass.com	Founder MiM-Compass	Expert	Graf, Thomas	Germany	07/04/2016; 15.00 CET	28 min	German
Cisco	Learning and Development Manager	Company (Technology)	Joseph, Sven	Belgium	08/04/2016; 15.00 CET	24 min	English
European Foundation for Management Development (EFMD)	Associate Director, Corporate Services	Expert	Dr. Möhrle, Martin	Belgium	28/04/2016; 09.00 CET	44 min	German
Former UBS/ Deutsche Bank	Global Head of Talent/ Chief Learning Officer & Global Head of HR Development						

*Participants names were changed to protect their anonymity

Multinational management consulting services company	Teamlead Graduate Recruitment	Consultancy (Management)	Rottmann, Anna*	Germany	13/04/2016; 09.30 CET	20 min	German
Randstad	Human Resource Manager	Recruitment	Schmitz, Sven	Germany	14/04/2016; 09.00 CET	23 min	German
Global Alliance of Management Education (CEMS)	Executive Director	Expert	Siegers, Roland	France	29/04/2016; 08.30 CET	26 min	German
Grenoble Ecole de Management	Associate Dean and Director of International Affairs	Expert	Thomas, Mark	France	26/04/2016; 14.00 CET	29 min	English
Centre for Continuing Education - University of Applied Sciences Vienna and Economic Chamber Vienna	Director	Expert	Völk, Natalie	Austria	10/05/2016; 09.00 CET	24 min	German
Chefspoolen	Chief Executive Officer	Recruitment	von Homeyer, Sofie	Sweden	03/05/2016; 14.00 CET	17 min	English
American multinational technology and consulting corporation	Director of Human Resources	Company (Technology)	Vries, Mariella*	Belgium	26/04/2016; 12.00 CET	16 min	English
European Foundation for Management Development (EFMD)	Director of Operations	Expert	Wood, Matthew	United Kingdom	22/04/2016; 11.00 CET	42 min	English

*Participants names were changed to protect their anonymity

Semi-structured interviews

As the focus of this study lay on capturing experts' perceptions, discursive interviews were chosen as the main method of qualitative data collection. This is also in line with the constructionist approach of this study, which aimed to uncover individual participant's opinions. These individual interviews were conducted in a semi-structured form to be flexible (Corbin & Strauss, 2015), as asking open-ended questions allowed both, the participants and the researchers, latitude (Bryman & Bell, 2011; Saunders, Thornhill & Lewis, 2007). On the one hand, it left room for the interviewees' contribution and allowed them to express their perspectives in their own words. On the other hand it offered interviewers the possibility to adapt and react to "relevant issues raised spontaneously" (Legard, Keegan & Ward, 2014, p.141) by asking follow-up questions to gain a deeper understanding when necessary. Following topical trajectories might open new beneficial insights. In addition, this type of interview provided overall consistency across all conversations (Corbin & Strauss, 2015) and served the exploratory nature of this study by helping to carve out relations between variables.

Interview Conduction

To help the interviewees prepare, an interview guide was created (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2012), which included five topics with an overall of seven questions (Appendix A). This guide was distributed prior to the interviews via e-mail, as this was expected to provide more in-depth answers and help yield profound insights into the field (Bryman & Bell, 2011). The interviews were held over the phone, via skype or in person in either English or German. The German interviews were translated as accurate as possible in order to ensure that the meaning was kept. This interactive, discovery-oriented approach allowed us to gather data rapidly and provided the benefit of personal contact despite a potential geographical distance (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Overall, all conversations took between 16 and 50 minutes and except for one, they were tape-recorded with the consent of the interviewees and transcribed afterwards as suggested by Bryman and Bell (2011). Finally, they were sent to the participants for confirmation and minor changes were made.

3.4.3 Quantitative Data Collection Method

Alongside the qualitative data, an exploratory survey targeting a small-sized population of MiM graduates was conducted. The purpose of this questionnaire was to test if the receiving end, the graduates themselves, experienced what interview participants were claiming. It has to be pointed out that this questionnaire was only an add-on and does not influence the fact that the focus of this study lay on a qualitative, inductive-driven approach.

Sampling

The questionnaire participants were recent graduates from Lund University's 2014/15 MiM programme. Hence, their selection was based on purposive sampling (Bryman & Bell, 2011). These graduates were selected as target sample based on their non-business backgrounds,

mirroring the population of this research project. In addition, their accessibility as well as their direct involvement in the topic played a significant role in the selection process. Overall, a number of 21 replies were received. This number already indicates that the findings cannot be generalised and only served as an extra, simply reflecting the insights of one particular involved group.

Self-completion Questionnaire

The questionnaire represented an additional source of primary data. It was composed of four main parts consisting of closed and open-ended questions (Appendix B). Starting off with an introductory text to inform the participants about the purpose of the study reduced potential misunderstandings. The first part of the survey contained questions about personal information and previous work experience. The second part inquired the students' job search and the third part their current job. The last part was concerned with the participants MiM perception and asked them to rate statements surrounding their job application, the interview process and their current work insights. Based on a five-point Likert Scale, the strength of their opinions was assessed (totally disagree-totally agree). Moreover, three open questions invited participants to express their personal opinion and left room for additional remarks (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012). Consequently, this research instrument aimed to convert the qualitative responses, given by the MiM alumni about attitudes and opinions into quantitative data.

Questionnaire conduction

Before distributing the questionnaire, a pilot study was executed to refine the research instrument (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Four current MiM students, who were expected to identify with the target group, were asked to fill in the survey and give critical feedback about the comprehensibility of the questions. Afterwards, changes were made accordingly and one question was removed completely. The questionnaire was designed using Google Forms, a self-completion anonymous survey, which allowed participants to note down their own answers. The web-based questionnaire was published on the Lund MiM alumni Facebook group and their respective LinkedIn Page to reach respondents who were located all over the globe (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2012). The sample group had one week to complete the survey and a reminder message was sent after five days.

3.5 Data Analysis

Using a mixed-method approach indicates that each set of data had to be analysed separately. The results of the analysis were combined in the discussion section to compare and contrast different viewpoints as well as to increase credibility.

3.5.1 Qualitative Data Analysis

According to Bryman and Bell (2011), qualitative data is “not straightforward to analyse” (p.571) and its analysis is “not governed by codified rules” (p.591). An overall of 140 pages were

transcribed from the interviews, which allowed more awareness for upcoming themes (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Due to the abundance of information and to “guard against being captivated by the richness of the data collected” (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p.571), the interviews were individually analysed by coding, “whereby data are broken down into component parts, which are given names” (p.577). This initial and open coding method was guided by the aforementioned research questions and resulted in identifying the suitable “‘container’ for ideas and concepts” (Sinkovics, Penz & Ghauri, 2005, p.27). However, coding qualitative data “tends to be in a constant state of potential revision and fluidity” (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p.578), which is why these categories were continuously adjusted. Hence, this study was inspired to follow the idea of Thomas’ (2013) constant comparative method by reviewing and comparing the data throughout.

After collaboratively sorting and grouping the data into seven salient themes in an Excel spreadsheet, these were further split into 29 sub-themes to make the retrieved data more manageable. Three main themes were considered to be relevant to answer the research questions and were therefore used for further analysis. Two additional themes were classified as surprising outcomes, which, though not directly related to the purpose of the research, were considered to be significant findings and therefore included. One topic, which provides recommendations for MiM programmes, was included in Appendix C. The final topic was, despite being interesting, not used for further analysis, as it did not directly assist the purpose of the study. A complete list with an overview of all themes and sub-themes that arose during the interview can be found in Appendix D.

3.5.2 Quantitative Data Analysis

Bryman and Bell (2011) mention various techniques, which can be used when evaluating quantitative data. Since it was decided to use the questionnaire solely as an add-on, the number of potential methods was reduced (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Therefore, this empirical data was not analysed by means of statistical programmes, but presented and visualised using charts and diagrams produced in Excel. This was considered to be more appropriate regarding the small sample size. Close-ended questions provided ‘numerical data’, which were summarised by their frequencies and presented as descriptive statistics. Answers retrieved from open-ended questions “can lead to a greater level of discovery” (Gillham, 2000, p.5) and were categorised, ranked and then interpreted and compared. During the analysis it became apparent that only 18 questions provided information that was considered to be relevant to answer the research questions. Therefore, only the outcome of these questions was presented and used for further comparison with qualitative data. Even though the remaining findings revealed interesting insights, they were excluded from the study but can be found in Appendix E.

3.6 Data Quality

3.6.1 Qualitative Data Quality

Following Guba and Lincoln (1994) in Bryman and Bell (2011), trustworthiness and authenticity can be used as primary criteria to assess qualitative data. Accordingly, this study took the four trustworthiness criteria credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability into consideration followed by the assessment of authenticity (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

Credibility refers to the acceptability of the research findings to others, acknowledging that multiple social realities exist. This study attempted to maximise credibility by using a mixed-method approach and a variety of informants to collect data on the research topic. This strategy builds on the qualitative and quantitative data collection techniques to capture different dimensions of the same phenomenon (Bryman & Bell, 2011; Easterby-Smith et al., 2012). In addition, two researchers examined the retrieved data and the use of substantial descriptions as well as appropriate documentation, which facilitated cross-checking the interpretations for validity (Lewis & Ritchie, 2003).

Transferability indicates that findings in qualitative research “tend to be orientated to the contextual uniqueness and significance of the aspect of the social world being studied” (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p.398). As the research findings in this study occurred within a specific context and only a small group of individuals was studied, the transferability might be limited. Therefore, it was crucial to provide an adequate description of the phenomenon and circumstances including the boundaries of the project, which allows observers to attain an understanding and to compare variations of their own situation.

Dependability entails that transparent records of all phases are kept during the research project. Due to the detailed interview transcriptions and the thoroughness throughout the research process, future researchers are enabled to repeat the work (Shenton, 2004). Furthermore, two observers, who constantly consulted each other throughout the process, conducted the research. In addition, an independent supervisor and a study peer-group reviewed all steps taken, which avoided the risk of drifting off (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

Confirmability describes the study’s approach to objectivity (Bryman & Bell, 2011) and potential biases, which were aimed to be reduced by using a mixed-method approach (Shenton, 2004). We acknowledged our subjectivity but tried to “ensure as far as possible that the work’s findings are the result of the experiences and ideas of the informants, rather than the characteristics and preferences of the researcher” (Shenton, 2004, p.72). Furthermore, recognising drawbacks and potential consequences of research processes positively influenced confirmability (Shenton, 2004).

Lastly, authenticity describes the degree to which the conduction as well as the evaluation of the data is genuine regarding the participants' experiences. This study included individuals from various topic-related expertise to ensure that "the research fairly represent[s] different viewpoints among members of the social setting" (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p.398). To respect differing viewpoints and to provide a faithful processing of the received information, each interview was transcribed and sent to participants for confirmation.

3.6.2 Quantitative Data Quality

To ensure the quality of the quantitative data, a pilot study was run before the questionnaire distribution. The feedback was used to adjust minor details in order to avoid misunderstandings. In addition, further explanations as well as examples given below questions, helped to avert misinterpretation. Participants, stemming from a homogenous sample, had to answer all questions except the last two. This, on the one hand, ensured a complete set of data and on the other hand, did not make respondents drop out before completion, since questions at the end demanded more thoughtful statements. As the survey template is included in Appendix B, the possibility to replicate the questionnaire is ensured. Moreover, making use of the Likert scale, which is considered a less biased measurement, helped to capture the graduates' perception (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

3.7 Limitations

Since the setting of the project was complex and dynamic, it might be difficult to exactly replicate the research process. Even though transparent records of all phases were kept, it is "impossible to 'freeze' a social setting" (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p.395). The purposive sampling technique left room to strategically select the best-suited interview candidates, which might have resulted in bias probability as the selection was solely at our discretion. Therefore, pre-defined thoughtfully selected criteria were used to support the decisions made. In addition, at least two interviewees from the same field were selected to capture different insights (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

During the process of data collection, a study design limitation appeared. After critical evaluation of interview candidates, the focus shifted to more field-related experts away from the initially chosen recruitment companies. The notion to mainly interview recruitment companies was based on the idea that they have a good overview of the topic as they are the interface between employer and employee. However, it became apparent that for certain candidates the awareness of the MiM degree itself did not exist or was fairly limited. Answers were based on assumptions rather than on experience, which resulted in cursory information. Instead, the experts revealed deeper insights as they did not only have an understanding of the topic, but in addition were also connected with the business world.

One potential downside of semi-structured interviews is that interviewees might be led into a specific direction by the questions and the interaction with the interviewer. To counteract this pitfall, the interview processes as well as the further analysis were conducted by two researchers to maintain a two-sided view and “inter-observer consistency” (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p.410). Moreover, an interview guideline provided a direction for all participants and ensured comparable data.

As for the data analysis, interviews conducted in German had to be translated to English. Translating quotes especially implicates the risk of losing the original meaning. However, the level of academic English was considered to be sufficient for the purpose of this research and did not negatively influence the outcome.

Overall, it is acknowledged that all gathered information is of interpretative nature and is not perceived or claimed to be true and objective facts (Alvesson, 2003). The results were used carefully in a critically reflective approach that will however not lead to a ‘final answer’.

Chapter Summary

This chapter provided an overview of the applied methodological concept. By adopting an exploratory, inductive-driven research approach, the perception of recruitment and MiM experts was analysed using a mixed-method research design. Empirical findings arose from qualitative data gathered through purposefully selected interviews. To map the qualitatively collected perceptions with the real-world implementations, an additional small sampled-sized quantitative study was conducted with former graduates of such an interdisciplinary degree programme.

4. Findings and Analysis

4.1 Qualitative Findings

As mentioned in Chapter 3.5.1, three main themes and two surprising outcomes were identified during the data analysis. This chapter presents the findings of these five themes.

4.1.1 Reasons to Hire Master in Management Graduates

External Drivers

Interviewees strongly consented that external drivers, such as globalisation, technological progress and the overall complexity of today's world have a growing influence on companies. They have to rethink their business practices in a global environment where *"things are a lot more complicated than they have ever been"* (Wood). This results in a changing recruitment attitude because *"if organisations operate more internationally, they also become more open towards lateral entrants"* (Bruhn).

"20-30 years ago the idea of having really deep finance skills or accounting skills was more meaningful than it is today, where you have to be able to account for a variety of stakeholders and all sorts of perspectives, both culturally [and] academically." (Chisholm)

Respondents added that in a dynamic and rapid changing landscape, where more complex problems require new ways of thinking, companies need to be more agile in order to flexibly adapt (Möhrle). The world is *"constantly changing, constantly renewing, constantly looking for different business factors"* (Thomas). Interviewees pointed out that these external drivers are easier to handle, if companies can hire graduates whose bachelor discipline is relevant for the company's core business but who at the same time understand management.

"They are familiar with the matter, with the products, with the industry not only in a commercial way but also in a technical way. It makes a huge difference if they know, what they are advertising and selling." (Siegers)

Having insights from MiM students as well as from over 60 world-leading corporate partners, it can be expected that Roland Siegers has good understanding of companies' current needs. His statement emphasises the benefits that occur when graduates, particularly within industrial, technical and scientific sectors, understand the industry they work in. These additional qualifications *"lead to more proximity and realignment of the applicant's profile and a 'fit' with the general competencies needed in this company"* (Möhrle).

Diversity

General consensus existed that nowadays not only gender, cultural, ethnic and racial diversity add value to organisations, but also informational diversity is desired. Matthew Wood, Director of Operations at the European Foundation for Management Development, pointed out that “*companies now are so much more interested in a diverse background*”. Even though Natalie Völk stated that “[...] *by having a different undergraduate degree, I will indeed broaden my horizon - but in my interpretation, I would not say that this necessarily increases diversity*”, opinions between interviewees varied. Several experts believed that diversity can be found within MiM graduates with a combined educational background, which is something companies want.

“The well-known top consultancies, [...] they all set value on a high diversity, which means they do not only want to hire people with business backgrounds.” (Graf)

According to Graduate Recruiters from an international financial service corporation, this is also a big agenda in the investment banking sector and global capital markets (Calmer & Bennett). They assumed that adding diversity to a workforce helps an organisation to move forward, as it enhances the culture and sets them apart from their competitors. Della Bradshaw as well as Dr. Martin Möhrle both mentioned that companies, which constantly hire like-minded students from the same schools lack diversity, which can create ‘blind spots’ and hamper development.

“If you only select from a very small group of people, you are limiting the extent to which you can be creative about the way you think and you develop. You need people to challenge.” (Bradshaw)

Dr. Martin Möhrle knew from many years of recruitment experience at Deutsche Bank and UBS that the need for diversity might have various reasons. Firstly, recruiters should not limit themselves to one specific hiring sector but rather cover the complete talent market. By doing this, they ensure to get the best graduates of all and not just the best individuals within one single area. Even though this means that “*the effort to find the right candidate might potentially be greater [...] there is no other way*” (Möhrle). Secondly, a company with more diverse staff allows for a better representation of its customers and markets. This enables a business to anticipate consumer trends as they are better understood. Thirdly, more informed decisions can be made if employees from different backgrounds and viewpoints are involved in the decision process. The Graduate Recruiters Antonia Calmer and Ella Bennett agreed and claimed that informational diversity can only “*add to how a team works*”. In their opinion, particularly the different ways of thinking and problem-solving as well as ideas and perspectives are beneficial. According to Anna Rottmann, who is involved in hiring practices herself, companies want to hire “*all sorts of academic backgrounds in order to integrate diverse and many different perspectives, intellectual approaches and methods to then thereof adopt ‘best practices’*”. Hence, as in “*the Western World, you tend to find [that] one of every four graduate degrees is already in business, the need*

for everybody to have a standardised business degree might not be there”, stated Alexander Chisholm, who has insights into statistical data based on his work for GMAC.

Requirement Profile

Interviewees agreed that in today’s business world the amount of project work has increased and companies “*want people who can work in teams*” (Bradshaw). Therefore, soft skills, understanding co-workers and customers as well as building trust and empathy with others is crucial. Andrew Crisp, Education Marketing Specialist at Carrington Crisp, believed that graduates need “*an ability to get on with the customer, the ability to relate to that individual, to understand their circumstances, to operate on a human level rather than a technical level*”. Following the quote ‘Hire for attitude, train skills later’, interpersonal skills are a prerequisite for success on the job and “*personal relationships – to be good at that – that is really important*” said Sofie von Homeyer, CEO of a Swedish recruitment company.

“When I talk to companies, what they tell me they want the whole time is people who can work in teams, [...], who can get the best out of their colleagues. I think that is what people are looking for. It is effectively what is often termed the softer skills.” (Bradshaw)

Despite the importance of soft skills, these only represent one side of the coin. Even though recruiters and experts said these are necessary in the workplace, hard skills were often termed as equally relevant and needed. They often represent the ground on which candidates are actually selected as they are easier to measure (Thomas).

“[...] in more complex industries, companies need to have people with specialised knowledge, which is inevitable, on the one hand [...] and on the other hand, they also require additional skills, which I generally describe as management competencies.” (Bruhn)

Some interview partners emphasised that particularly technological skills are inevitable in a digital world. Over the past decades, a lot of changes have occurred “*and part is obviously driven by technology, driven by a need to respond to things*” (Wood). The external driver technology will infuse all business areas and “*the whole economy [will become] very digital*” (Vries). However, as these skills are often so new that universities cannot teach them fast enough, companies need curious graduates “*who will question the status quo*” (Bradshaw) and are able to constantly adapt to a fast-paced environment.

“What companies are looking for today - and I think there are several studies where they have looked at the main qualities of what companies want - and one of the greatest ones is adaptability.” (Thomas)

“The agility [...] the adaptability and flexibility that companies need to adopt, requires employees who are able to work on different things, to pitch in and potentially put a lot of effort into acquiring a new range of subjects.” (Möhrle)

Interviewees highly emphasised the need to hire individuals who are “*capable to think outside the box*” (Schmitz) and have analytical as well as problem-solving skills (Wood). Anna Rottmann believed that “*it is incredibly important and essential to bring in different perspectives to teams in order to look at an approach in its entirety.*” Particularly in a globally operating business world, where “*companies have an international perspective*” (Wood), tasks are challenged in teams. In these surroundings, the sensitivity to understand people that come from other cultures is crucial. Hence, having a cultural element is a valuable asset that companies have come to appreciate and “*depending on where you want to work, studying abroad and having intercultural competencies are qualities that companies take into account*” (Möhrle). In general, consensus between the interview partners existed that companies need employees with personal skills and a well-rounded character. They need to be committed, “*hard-working*” (Thomas), willing to learn and on top of that be a “*good fit with the culture*” (Möhrle).

“You have to work hard, you have to have stickability, you can work in a team, take on different views, can work with different nationalities, understand cultural elements, have the emotional intelligence.” (Wood)

An additional reason for companies to hire non-business MiM graduates is that they “*are suitable for entry level positions, they fit into the income bracket for all employees*” (Möhrle) and in comparison to an MBA graduate with an older profile, companies “*are not having to pay ludicrous salaries*” (Wood).

4.1.2 Qualities of Master in Management Graduates

Skill Set

The fact that non-business MiM graduates have combined knowledge from two different fields was regarded as a quality by experts. Companies perceive it as valuable if employees understand the product and the core operations, but also know how to handle tasks in a business-related way (Möhrle). Antonia Calmer and Ella Bennett, who were familiar with the MiM programme, stated that this quality adds a whole different dynamic to how people work, which can only help a company grow. As Sofie von Homeyer did not come across the MiM degree before, she could only assume that the combined degree allows them “*to see things from more than one perspective*”.

“The most important is really the different way of thinking [...]. When you talk to ten engineers you are noticing a specific trend, a way of thinking. [...] you start noticing how they are shaped and formed and educated. When you can bring someone from a different

background into a management position, [...] it is really the different angle that people come from and I think it only enriches really the team when you can do that.” (Joseph)

Coming from an engineering background himself, Sven Joseph could relate his own experience and appreciated interdisciplinary knowledge as well as the ability to think outside the box. Even though Anna Rottmann highlighted the same qualities and believed that this *“educational combination has certainly charm”*, it has to be kept in mind that she did not come across this programme before. Therefore, it was hard to judge to what extent she felt this degree is substantial, valuable or just ‘charming’. Mark Thomas, who teaches strategic management at Grenoble Business School, saw the power of an interdisciplinary education and stated that these graduates *“[...] are used to listen to people [and] have a wider spectrum of ideas and approaches [...]”*

“This person has the ability to think outside the box. Due to the business-related part of their degree, they have acquired a way of thinking - not only related to their specific field of activities - that may broaden a company’s horizon [...]. This is something every company incredibly benefits from.” (Völk)

“So the attractiveness of somebody, who comes in with a set of mind-sets to begin with and continues with that throughout their career, it is going to be good for both, the employer and the employee. [...] Again, it comes back to the benefits of the MiM: it is big picture thinking - if you put in strategic thinking and it is being able to observe trends.” (Crisp)

Working for many years in a recruitment company, Sven Schmitz has experienced that *“everything which broadens the horizon - thus also enabling a different perspective on things - is absolutely enriching”*. Combining two ways of thinking might prevent these graduates from becoming ‘blinkered specialists’ but rather exemplifies their openness towards other disciplines. Interviewees claimed that this might allow them to separate themselves from graduates who studied only one discipline.

“Depending on the combination and depending on the industry I am in, I can clearly distinguish myself from others, because I have combined different subjects, which are both important in this industry sector.” (Möhrle)

Furthermore, non-business MiM graduates were expected to have a general theoretical knowledge, which provides them with a broad overview of management related subjects. Even though they do not have deep expertise in a certain business area, they have the ability to see the big picture (Graf) and to understand the concept behind it.

“Even if you are not a marketing specialist at the end, you know what marketing people are talking about. Or you know what the finance people are talking about. [...] You are at a position where you know what that means. You know the questions to ask and that is important.” (Bradshaw)

“ [...] even if this is not going into detail - you learn the most important topics such as finance, marketing, HR and other things, which could for example help humanistic students to become more effective in organisation, opposed to someone who has just done a humanistic degree.” (Bruhn)

In addition to these hard skills, the interview candidates set importance on the interpersonal qualities trained in these MiM courses. Wolfgang Bruhn gains recruitment insights from his position as Chief Development Officer of Stepstone, an internationally operating online job board. He expected that when companies hire MiM graduates, they *“get completely different people [...] it is not only about business competences, but the content also targets the personality - and this is the appeal of the MiM programme”*.

Bridging Skills

Della Bradshaw, who worked for 27 years at the Financial Times, started their Business Education section and established the Financial Times MiM ranking. She pointed out that students with deep disciplinary knowledge of a certain subject and an additional set of broader skills could be classified as T-shaped professionals.

“Going on to the real world by rounding off specific knowledge gained in other disciplines, with a more broad management degree [...]. By having a degree that is coming from first degree studies not in business and then rounding it up with a general understanding of management - it becomes a more powerful employee.” (Chisholm)

This twofold knowledge is a quality that can help companies to connect disciplines and departments. Differences in academic backgrounds can lead to problems and misunderstandings, as each profession has a specific way of communicating, which might not be easily accessible for outsiders.

“Business people and engineers, or business people and IT people cannot communicate with each other because they do not speak the same language and do not have the same way of thinking.” (Siegers)

Therefore, companies desire individuals who can bridge this gap (Thomas). Due to their interdisciplinary background, non-business MiM students have the ability and qualities needed to address this issue. Natalie Völk assumed that they are *“able to communicate with other*

departments in a more professional and well-grounded way due to their broader understanding of what others are doing. [...] I see these graduates as bridge-builder - as interpreter.”

“People who can then translate are invaluable as they understand what is meant, what is said and what is thought. So there is a communication function [...] - a translation function between the different ways of thinking [...] they have access to two worlds.”
(Siegers)

Flexibility and Open-mindedness

Having studied two different subjects was perceived positively by several interviewees. Thomas Graf, who has published MiM surveys, but does not have a direct insight into companies' perspectives, thought that one competence of non-business MiM graduates is their ability *“to manoeuvre between operating departments [...] I believe this is a core quality”*. Interview participants felt that MiM graduates qualified themselves as flexible assets who can adapt and show their open-mindedness as well as their interest in business. This ability is proven as *“having to work in a psychology class compared to a marketing course or a psychology class compared to a finance course, [these graduates] will have had to adapt. Much more than somebody that just had Business courses”* (Thomas).

“Simply because I successfully tackle two subjects, two different degrees, I have shown that I am able to become acquainted with and immerse in new topics. So this learning ability, this personal agility, the competence to confront new contexts is proven twice, not just once. [...] I bring flexibility and I have self-control, something the employment market will require more in the future than it did in the past.[...] For me this [adaptability] is a future core competence.” (Möhrle)

“They have shown that they possess a certain kind of flexibility, because they have opened themselves up to two totally different fields. [...] Irrespective of the expertise, they simply have shown that they are open-minded.” (Siegers)

Internationality and Intercultural Competence

A common theme within MiM programmes seems to be its international orientation. Thomas Graf found in his survey that *“some programmes promote the development of soft skills or intercultural competences through international MiM classrooms and stays abroad.”* Due to the fact that a lot of MiM programmes are taught in English, they attract students from across the world. Hence, the number of different nationalities within one classroom tends to be high. Even though this does not necessarily set MiM students apart from other graduates with an equally international exposure, interviewees still valued this as an important quality of non-business MiM graduates. They highly appreciated this international twist and intercultural competence. Della Bradshaw, who has a good insight into the business world, thought what *“recruiters are really*

really looking for, is that international mix that [MiMs] clearly have. [...] [MiMs] work with people from different backgrounds, with different nationalities - just that cultural awareness”.

“Then there is this whole add-on of being in a different culture, being in a different environment, mixing with different people, experiencing different things that to me is of value [...] and I think that is where going and doing a programme like [the MiM] brings great value.” (Wood)

4.1.3 Perception of Master in Management Graduates

Throughout the interviews it became apparent that perceptions of MiM graduates differ and highly depend on several variables listed below.

Powerful Combination

In general, interviewees perceived MiM graduates as an asset for companies due to their interdisciplinary knowledge and skills. Thomas Graf, who is not involved in hiring processes, could only assume how companies perceive MiM graduates. He expected that *“the combination of all-rounder on the one hand and the specialised knowledge on the other hand is, in my opinion, what makes MiM graduates extremely attractive for the labour market”*. Anna Rottmann could see *“this combination of non-business and business has extremely high potential”* and Matthew Wood was convinced that MiMs are *“an attractive proposition to an employer”*.

“The combination of the non-business degree with the Management degree - I think it is kind of a powerful combination. And so, I personally see that as something companies would absolutely be interested in.” (Joseph)

“That is exactly why I believe this combination of a high specific knowledge and management skills and competences is a great combination.” (Bruhn)

However, interview partners appeared to give significant importance to the role the undergraduate degree plays in this synthesis of knowledge (Bradshaw). Then, depending on the sector and type of job, this combination *“will be more or less appreciated”* (Thomas).

“Having a MiM alone does not make the complete product. It depends on the overall package of personality, undergraduate degree and postgraduate degree. [...] Not every MiM graduate will be equally successful on the job market, because it always depends on what someone did before. It will always be the combination and not just the last degree that matters.” (Möhrle)

Experts agreed that if the undergraduate degree complements the job profile and is relevant for the industry, it is a huge advantage and increases employability.

“If one has a degree, for example originating in a technical or scientific field, which comes close to the core business of the company - for an engineering company that could be a technical background in combination with business; or a company in the chemistry sector, where someone has done something scientific before; or if somebody is in the IT sector and has done informatics or maths or physics before - then these are additional skills which will be appreciated of course.” (Möhrle)

Interviewees consented that MiM graduates, particularly with “*exotic subjects*” (Möhrle), have to “*make a compelling case for themselves*” (Wood). They “[...] *need a good story to sell it*” (Rottmann) and invest more “*in the reasoning of [their] own employability compared to [someone] studying one subject in full length*” (Möhrle).

Sceptical towards Level of Business Knowledge

As the postgraduate non-business MiM degree is between one or two years long, several respondents were sceptical towards the level of business knowledge students are able to acquire. Some believed that holding a MiM degree does not qualify graduates to work in positions where experts with deeper and more specific business knowledge are required as “*in many areas you need ‘hard-core’-business economists, who know every tiny detail of the economy*” (Völk). In these cases, Mark Thomas was “*not sure there is a great benefit of having a hugely different background*”. For specialised job roles, which rely on “*very precise analysis*” (Thomas), a diverse background with less business knowledge could actually be a disadvantage. Thomas Graf guessed that “*there are certain jobs where the Master cannot turn things around, where you cannot compare someone with a five year long business education to someone who has done two years*”. Mariella Vries, who is hiring for a multinational technology company, perceived the non-business MiM degree as good but “*really quite generic*”. She believed that these graduates “*still need to get some specifics into [their] toolbox in order to become real valuable for the company*”.

“All important subjects have to be included [in the programme], otherwise the relevance is missing. What you want to achieve at the end of the day, is not just to touch upon some areas [...], if you do not delve into it to a critical level, then nothing will stick. Then there are the humanists, who have heard a little bit about it, but if you ask them they say ‘Honestly, we have only briefly talked about it, I do not remember’. So that is important.” (Bruhn)

“There are of course certain subjects within the field of business administration, which you need to be exposed to for many years in order to fully comprehend them - if you work in a year-end balance-controlling function, this is not trivial. If it is about understanding the fundamental contexts such as ‘How does a business work?’ then such a two-year long programme is completely sufficient and in my opinion an excellent idea.” (Möhrle)

“Somebody who has studied [business] for 5-6 years, has presumably a deeper expertise in certain fields. These are other jobs we talk about; these are rather analysts or consultants that have specific requirements. [...] There these individuals who have studied for five years will have an advantage. [...] If you then have somebody, without prior business knowledge and just a one-year MiM, [...] I do not think it is as simple as that. [...] Therefore, we insist on 60 ECTS [in business] on bachelor level, so that you have a minimum of two years - we think this is important.” (Siegers)

While interviewees did not see very promising job chances for non-business MiM graduates in deep analytical business field, Natalie Völk, Director of the Centre for Continuing Education at the University of Applied Sciences Vienna, saw their strength in another job role. She believed that *“these graduates are predestined for interface functions within companies [...] in which these interdisciplinary graduates are going to be one step ahead as they are equipped with competences that set them apart from specialists.”*

Personality

Even though interview partners identified a number of positive qualities MiM graduates are equipped with, they also emphasised the potential need to give more proof of their skills compared to ‘pure’ business students. They *“come into an arena where a lot of people tend to have that background before”* (Calmer & Bennett), where *“[...] the real challenge would be that [they] would have to prove [themselves] a bit harder than someone else”* (Joseph). Therefore, knowing oneself and being aware of strengths and weaknesses has been pointed out by interview partners as absolutely crucial for non-business MiM graduates. Furthermore, *“it is important to know yourself well – what am I good at and what am I not so good at. And either take help or be very aware of things that you are not good at, so that you know what you need to concentrate on”* (von Homeyer). In addition, the *“personality plays a very important role”* (Bruhn) in the hiring process according to some interviewees, as the MiM can only be seen as *“one third of the whole assessment of a candidate”* (Möhrle).

“At the end of the day it somehow does not matter what background one comes from and what exactly one has studied but today it all goes deeper. You really look very closely at the personality.” (Bruhn)

Insufficient Professional Experience to Start as a Manager

Personality is a decisive factor for managerial careers, as simply having the theoretical know-how is not sufficient to be successful according to interviewees. They agreed that as *“the knowledge alone does not translate itself into experience. [...] Solely the management degree does not enable somebody to become a manager”* (Schmitz). Generally, individuals have to grow into managerial roles with time as they *“are not going to be the CEO after week one”* (Wood). Instead, interviewees wanted graduates to gain experience first and not hire managers directly.

Mariella Vries was convinced that *“becoming a manager directly is nearly excluded in these type of domains, you don’t start as a manager”*.

“We are slowly making a shift in realising that being a manager is just another role.[...] Over time yes, but I think it would be very hard to nearly impossible to convince somebody to say ‘hire me as a manager’ if you do not have any experience or background. Typically you can build the experience over time of course, like gradually growing into your role or you can of course come with some kind of education like [MiMs] are doing. And I think you need either of those.” (Joseph)

“The job of a manager is generally not something you learn in business education. [...] How to deal with conflicts, how to lead employees - many things of a manager's daily routine, which belong to leadership, only come with experience and are not easy to learn.” (Möhrle)

Therefore, various interviewees consented that the lack of work experience may be a drawback to hire non-business graduates for managerial positions immediately after graduation. Instead, *“companies perceive previous work experience as a tremendous additional value”* (Völk).

“The employers that we are working with [say] the one thing that is sometimes missing is actual work experience. A lot of MiM students, who are all pre-experienced, [...] are doing their undergraduate degree and go straight to their graduate degree. So I think it is very helpful [...] to do a work placement so you actually get some real experience [...] but that is really the one thing that comes up sometimes. Other than that I think they are regarded very positively.” (Crisp)

Employment Market

Overall, interviewees foresaw good opportunities for non-business MiM graduates to successfully compete in the business environment. However, an awareness of the above mentioned downsides as well as the dependent variables has to exist. In turn, this will enable graduates to balance these and leverage their talents and multiple strengths.

“These graduates differ widely in their employability. A greater heterogeneity in their careers compared to other degrees will be expected. [...] and the MiM as a postgraduate programme in business [...] has its market.” (Möhrle)

“When we get to the recruiters - the companies - the demand for these profiles is high. I absolutely see a trend, a very strong one actually.” (Siegers)

“The perception of the MiM degree is very good and I think it is rising [...] I have heard a lot of recruiters say, they really like the MiM programme.” (Wood)

However, even though these individuals were in close contact with the corporate world, their statements and predictions could not be expected to fully entail the perception of companies. Despite hearing positive insights, information from these experts has to be evaluated critically as it is hard to judge if their perception correlates with the actual behaviour of companies.

4.1.4 Surprising Findings

During the interviews, surprising findings came to light, which are not directly related to the research questions. Nevertheless, they were identified as interesting aspects and are briefly mentioned below.

Master in Management Employment Profile

The following part deals with the receptiveness of non-business MiM graduates regarding countries, industries and company size.

Some recruiters mentioned that cultural differences between countries in terms of their receptiveness towards recruiting MiM graduates exist and *“even within a relatively homogenous area, like Western Europe, you see differences”* (Crisp). Overall, it appeared that the United Kingdom was named by several interviewees as rather receptive and having *“a tradition of being more open”* (Crisp). In contrast, *“Austria is relatively traditional and it always takes some time until new developments in the education sector are actively requested by the labour market”* (Völk). Similarly, Germany is a *“rather traditional and conservative market and it is going to take some time until this changes”* (Rottmann).

These *“all-rounders”* (Graf) were expected to go *“into a whole range of industries”* (Bradshaw) as *“there wouldn't be one [industry] that isn't [receptive]”* (Wood). Consulting as well as financial services were referred to as particularly open towards MiM graduates with non-business undergraduate degrees. It appears that *“consultancy firms make use of exactly this diversity already for a long time. So they consciously do not only focus on employing economists”* (Rottmann). A financial services provider in the United Kingdom emphasised their wish to hire these alumni (Calmer & Bennett). Other banks have already *“[...] started to recruit more non-business students. Especially in sales, in wealth-management and in customer care of wealthy clients, these mixed educational backgrounds were very welcome”* (Möhrle). In addition, the service sector was seen as *“more open-minded for [a MiM] background”* (von Homeyer).

With regard to receptive company size, the opinions differed and reasons for small and large companies to hire non-business MiM graduates were identified. Smaller companies *“usually do not have a management system where you train somebody in management. There, I think, one is very grateful if somebody comes equipped with this knowledge from their degree”* (Schmitz). Hence, the smaller a company is, *“the more you need individual leadership personalities who can think broader because they cannot afford as many”* (Siegers). Andrew Crisp, saw receptiveness

in both, *“the bigger companies because they have a wider variety of opportunities. But the smaller companies because they need people who can be more flexible”*. Wolfgang Bruhn and Dr. Martin Möhrle believed that more global companies, rather than mid-sized companies anticipate hiring trends better, due to the fact that they often recruit on campuses. Hence, their awareness of the MiM degree might be higher and they might keep a wary eye on new programmes due to their strategic hiring processes.

Master in Management Awareness

Throughout the interviews, it became apparent that only little awareness of interviewees from companies as well as recruiters about non-business MiM programmes existed. Only two out of seven individuals had come across this degree before. The interviewed experts were not surprised about the lack of awareness, but they also expected to see an increase in the future.

“That doesn’t entirely surprise me I have to admit. [...] I think the awareness will increase. The employers who know about it at the moment will tend to be the larger employers, who perhaps are already recruiting on university campuses and have the knowledge and awareness of what is happening in the universities and the business schools. Whereas the smaller employers, who recruit occasionally on the campuses, it will take them a little bit more time to see things with a consciousness.” (Crisp)

“That does not surprise me. As I said there is a lot of work the business schools have to do in building up the marketing for these programmes.” (Bradshaw)

“I think within Europe, you definitely have the highest awareness for Master in Management programmes but globally - as more schools in Asia and US and Canada specifically are adding these programmes - I think the awareness has started to increase. [...] I think over time - as companies recognise this need for diverse opinion of thoughts and perspectives [...] there is a potential to even get more awareness and acceptance in terms of MiM hiring.” (Chisholm)

“I would think that I would see an increase [in hiring MiMs]. I really think once people realise the strength and power of that they even start doing more of that. I think it is relatively new right? I think we always have more done it the more traditional way, but I think it is definitely something that I see increase.” (Joseph)

“If this is a new degree [companies] might say: ‘We do not know these [graduates] and how they work’ but when they realise ‘they function well’ [...] - then one is less concerned simply because of the experience [with them]. That is always the problem with innovation, no empirical data exists.” (Möhrle)

4.2 Quantitative Findings

This section presents the quantitative findings extracted from the questionnaire. The final data set consisted of 21 respondents, who graduated from the MiM programme at Lund University in 2015 and came from a non-business undergraduate degree. Due to the small sample size, data is presented descriptively without any further statistical evaluation. The findings are an excerpt and only serve as an indication to contrast and support the qualitative results, on which the main focus of this study lies. The questionnaire can be found in Appendix B and additional quantitative findings excluded from the analysis can be found in Appendix E.

4.2.1 Profile

The sample group was built up of an international mix of 21 individuals stemming from 15 different countries. The majority of graduates originated from Sweden (19%), Germany (14,3%) and China (9,5%). All remaining nationalities had one representative (Austria, China, France, Greece, Iceland, Indonesia, Italy, Pakistan, Switzerland, the Netherlands and the United States).

The vast majority of respondents indicated that they gained professional experience prior to the MiM. Over a third, hence the largest percentile of these students (38%), stated that they had 12-24 months of work experience. While 14% of all students had worked 2-5 years before, the same percentage of students had no professional experience at all.

4.2.2 Application Process

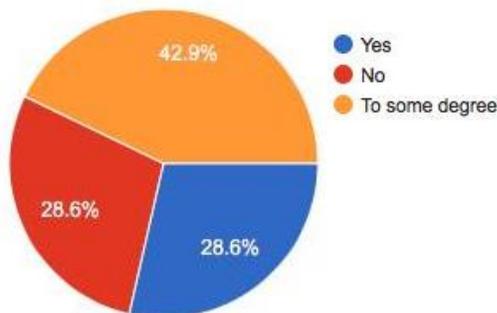


Figure 3: Positions Complementing the Bachelor Degree

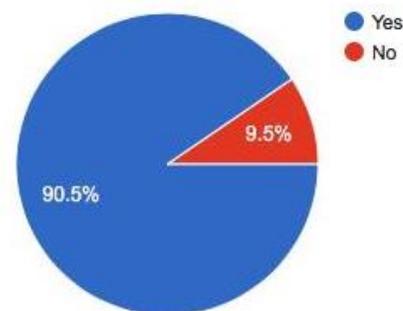


Figure 4: Positions Requiring a Business Background

Figure 3 shows that the majority of graduates (42,9%) applied for positions in various industries, not necessarily complementing their bachelor studies. In addition, 28,6% of respondents either looked for jobs related or unrelated to their undergraduate degree.

When applying, nine out of ten respondents did so for positions that required a business background in the job description (Figure 4). Out of these 90,5%, the largest proportion (80%) successfully moved further in the application process, indicating that they got invited to interviews or assessment centres.

4.2.3 Employment Profile

The majority of graduates (23,9%) were employed in Sweden, followed by Germany (19%). Denmark ranked third (14,3%), while 9,5% of respondents found a job in the United Kingdom. The rest was equally distributed between countries such as China, Italy, Malaysia, Poland, the United States and Vietnam.

Moreover, the data showed that graduates ended up working in a wide range of different industries, including amongst others (Digital) Media, Consumer Goods or Technology. Yet, the most prominent ones were Consulting as well as the Pharmaceutical Sector with 19% each. Finance and Banking were mentioned by 14,3% of respondents.

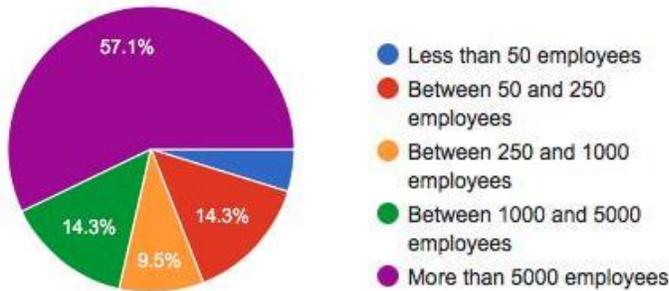


Figure 5: Company Size

The biggest share of respondents (57,1%) worked in large companies with over 5000 employees. The smallest share of 4,8% was taken by small sized companies with less than 50 employees (Figure 5).

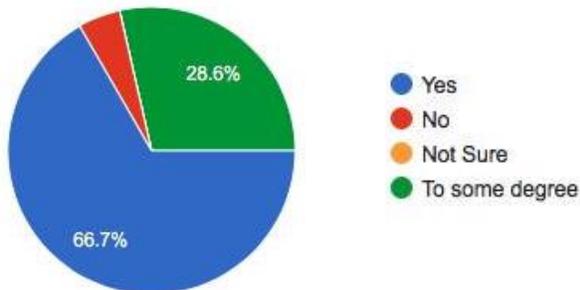


Figure 6: Business Background

Figure 6 shows that the vast majority of over 65% felt that the MiM degree gave them a business background. Almost a third of all respondents were indecisive, whereas the remaining 4,8% disagreed completely.

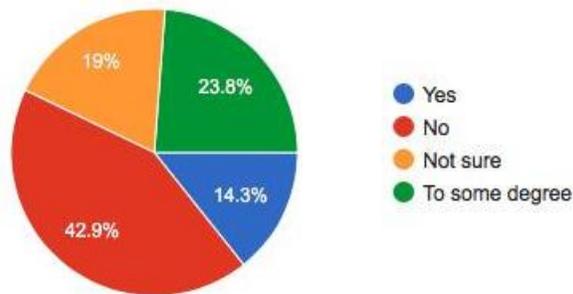


Figure 7: MiM Degree Awareness

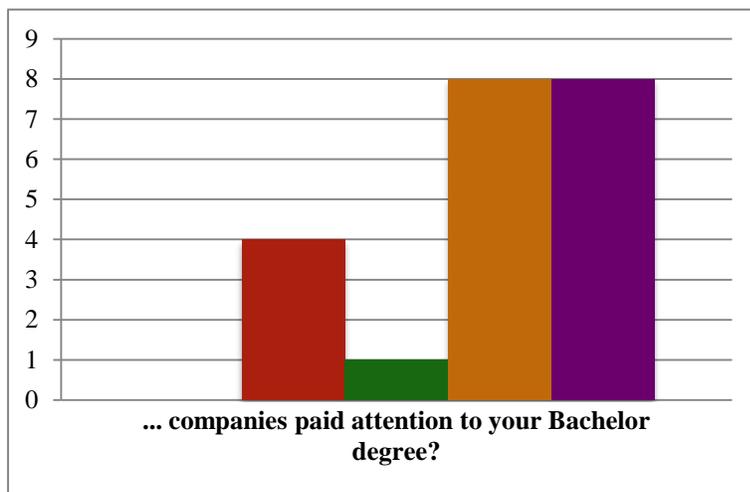
Figure 7 illustrates that just over 40% of all respondents got the impression that the MiM degree was not known by companies in general. Only 14,3% thought that employers were aware of this programme.

4.2.4 Non-business MiM Perception

Respondents were asked to rate questions on a 5-point Likert scale according to their compliance reaching from 'totally disagree' to 'totally agree'. For simplification purposes and to aid a stronger perception, the categories 'totally disagree' and 'disagree' as well as 'totally agree' and 'agree' were combined. The following questions dealt with the graduates' personal impression of certain situations during their application process or job interviews. It has to be noted that these questions were related to personal perceptions. Some of them might have been easier to answer for the participants as they asked about their personal experience (for example Figure 13). Others might have been harder to judge or interpret as they were based on assumptions (for example Figure 17).

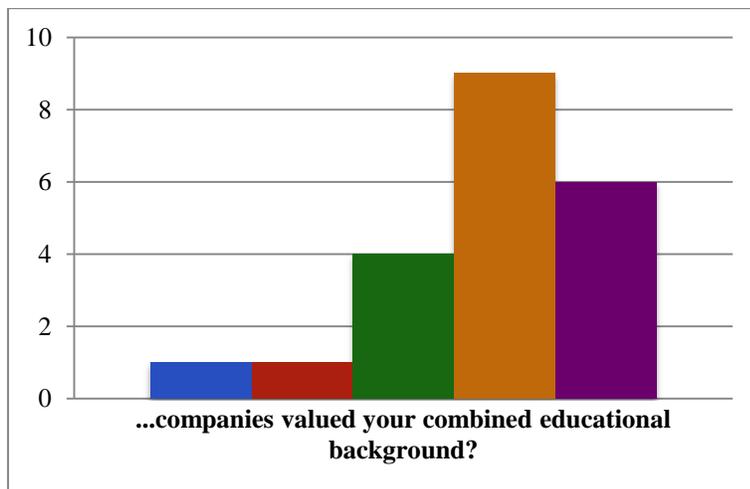
During your application process and job interviews, did you get the impression that...

▶ Totally Disagree
 ▶ Disagree
 ▶ Undecided
 ▶ Agree
 ▶ Totally Agree



It can be observed that the vast majority (over 75%) of graduates agreed that companies took their undergraduate degree into consideration when applying for jobs (Figure 8).

Figure 8: Attention Paid to Bachelor Degree



In addition, as can be seen in Figure 9, roughly 70% of the graduates considered that employers valued their twofold academic degree.

Figure 9: Perceived Value of Interdisciplinary Degree

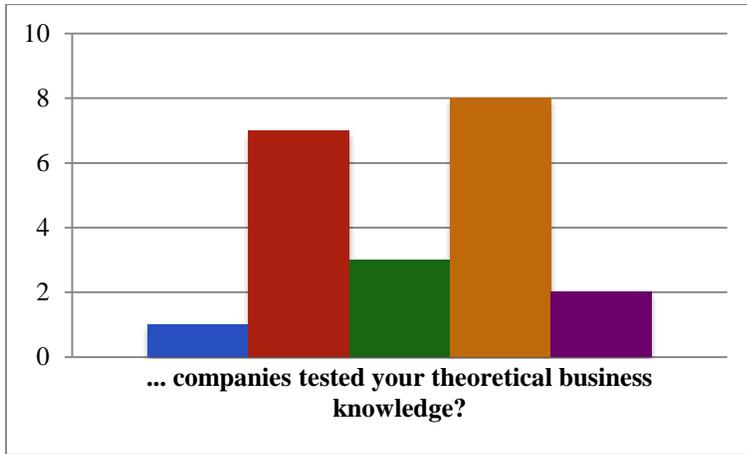


Figure 10: Testing Theoretical Business Knowledge

Respondents had differing experiences with regards to demonstrating their theoretical knowledge during their assessment. While more than 45% of the respondents stated that the company tested their business understanding, this was not the case for 38,1% (Figure 10).

Now working within a company, do you feel that...

▶ Totally Disagree
 ▶ Disagree
 ▶ Undecided
 ▶ Agree
 ▶ Totally Agree

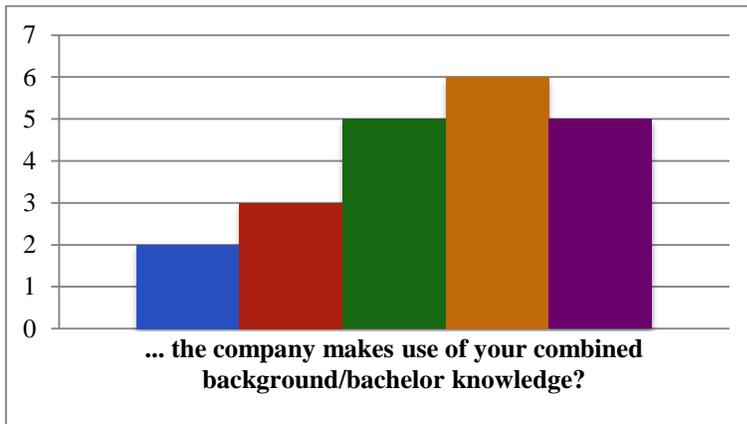


Figure 11: Making Use of Combined Background

Even though opinions varied greatly, slightly more than half of all graduates agreed that their employer made use of their combined educational background. However, almost a fourth of the respondents was indecisive or disagreed (Figure 11).

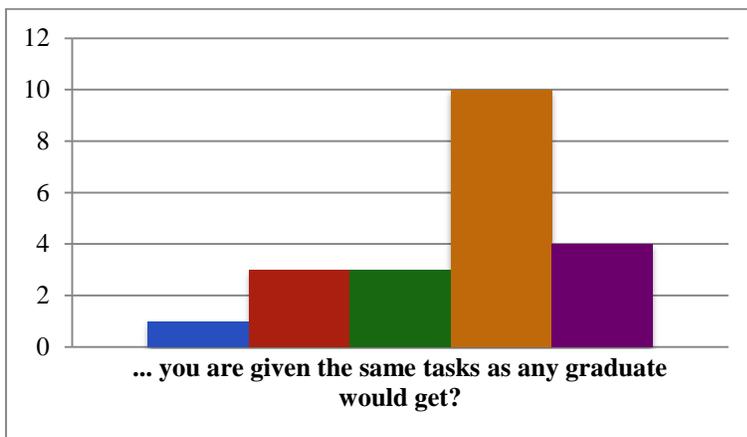
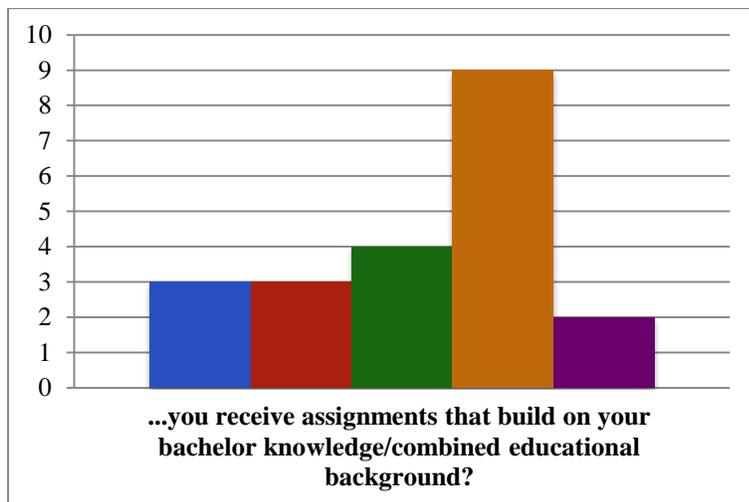


Figure 12: Given Tasks in Comparison to other Graduates

When taking a look at the tasks these graduates received at work, Figure 12 shows that more than 65% believed that they are given the same tasks every other graduate would get.



Besides, Figure 13 highlights that every second graduate felt that he/she received assignments that made use of his/her bachelor knowledge.

Figure 13: Assignments Based on Bachelor Knowledge

Qualities

Respondents were asked to name qualities that employers look for in non-business MiM graduates. The 56 answers given were grouped, categorised and labelled according to their content (Table 2). This resulted in six categories, which are listed by their frequency:

Table 2: Qualities of MiM Graduates

Categories	Examples of answers given
Interpersonal Competencies	Communication skills, conflict management, determination, presentation skills, eagerness, professionalism, ambitiousness, efficiency, willingness to learn
Managerial Understanding	Managerial potential, leadership potential, leadership skills, business and commercial awareness, business acumen, business knowledge
Analytical Skills	Problem solving, case solving, solution orientation, decision-making, independent thinking
Flexibility	Quick reaction, versatility, ability to work in fast-paced environment, flexibility
Broad Perspective	Uniqueness, combined technical and business knowledge, inventive insights, creativity, big-picture oriented, ability to combine different mind-sets, combine soft & hard skills, international exposure
Teamwork	(Intercultural) teamwork, team player, teamwork, team working skills

Reasons

Respondents were asked to name reasons for companies to hire non-business MiM graduates with diverse backgrounds for managerial positions. External reasons such as globalisation, a changing working environment as well as the emerging necessity to have business skills, even in less business oriented areas, were mentioned. However, overall the main emphasis was put on internal reasons. Combining knowledge of more than one discipline as well as their multiple and broader perspectives were stated most frequently. Moreover, MiM graduates management knowledge, adaptability, flexibility and the diversity they bring into a company were listed.

5. Discussion

For the purpose of the discussion, the research sub-questions have been turned around.

5.1 Research Question 1.2: What are the qualities that are of interest for companies in these graduates?

Non-business MiM Graduates are T-shaped

In the context of the present study, the concept of T-shaped professionals was coined in relation to MiM graduates (Figure 14). This was based on interviewee's statements about the composition of these individuals, characterising them with "*specific knowledge gained in other disciplines [and] a more broad management degree*" (Chisholm) as well as soft skills developed during the programme (Graf). These crucial MiM components reflect attributes that are used in the literature to define T-shaped skills (Leonard-Barton, 1995; Ornstein, 2015; Tomé, 2011). The vertical bar represents the deep subject knowledge, which in the case of MiMs has been taught in various respective undergraduate disciplines. The horizontal bar of the T is developed during the MiM degree: these graduates gain general management knowledge along with the training of soft skills such as communication, teamwork and flexibility (Robles, 2012). The synthesis of their undergraduate non-business knowledge with their overarching managerial skills does however not make them experts within a specific business area as pointed out by the interviewees. Instead, the interview partners believed the MiM degree rather gives these individuals a broad overview and helps them to understand the fundamental business contexts (Bradshaw; Bruhn).

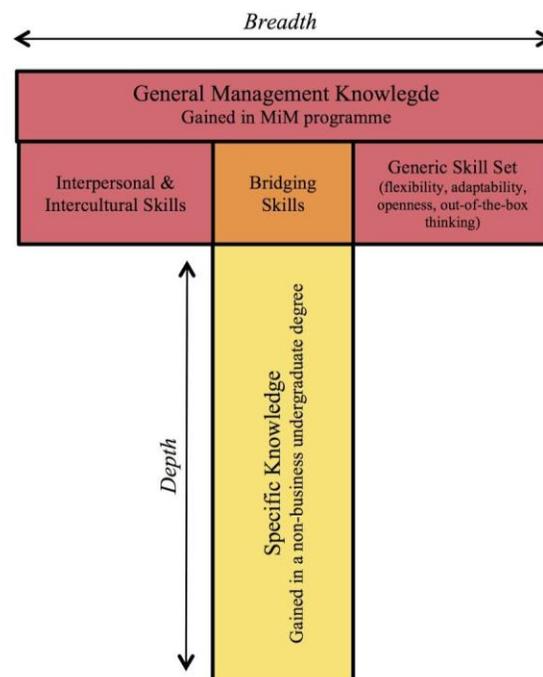


Figure 14: T-Shaped MiM Graduate

Non-business MiM Graduates Offer a Wide Range of Skills

Based on the fact that MiM graduates decided to take this specific path and synthesise their knowledge - matching a non-business undergraduate degree with a managerial master - they arguably developed skills that are underrepresented in other ‘traditional’ graduates with a consecutive degree. Keeping the T-shaped model in mind, it is not surprising that the literature and interview participants’ responses about the qualities of these individuals highly corresponded (Figure 14). They agreed that due to their interdisciplinary knowledge and skills, these individuals offer a “*wider spectrum of ideas and approaches*” (Thomas) by having a different way of thinking (Leonard-Barton, 1995). They can look at old problems in a new way and potentially dissolve rigid business structures with their fresh and broad perspective, a quality that is seemingly valued by employees as pointed out by the survey findings (Table 2). Their ability to “*translate [...] between the different ways of thinking*” (Sieggers) allows them to bridge areas that otherwise might have difficulty communicating (Hansen & Oetinger, 2001; Spohrer et al., 2010). By deciding to study a new subject area after the completion of the undergraduate degree, interview partners pointed out that these T-shaped MiMs have proven their flexibility and open-mindedness, qualities appreciated in the business environment (Robles, 2012). Both literature and empirical data (Möhrle; Thomas; Table 2) stated that those graduates can adapt to new circumstances based on their ability to manoeuvre between departments. This is also a ‘generic skill’ included in the CareerEGDE model and is expected by recruiters in today’s dynamic and complex business world (Pool & Sewell, 2007). Looking at the findings, it could be observed that by adding a MiM degree, individuals are able to transform from highly versed I-shaped specialists to more well-rounded T-shaped professionals, who can distinguish themselves from the masses.

Non-business MiM Graduates have Intercultural Competences

Interviewees gave MiM graduates credit for their internationality fostered by their exposure to other nationalities in these diverse programmes. Findings from the quantitative research reflected this international mix, as 15 out of 21 respondents from the sample had different nationalities (Chapter 4.2.1). Studying in this context and being constantly surrounded by people from diverse backgrounds allows them to develop intercultural competences, which are becoming increasingly important in an interconnected and globally operating world (Govindarajan & Gupta, 2001).

5.2 Research Question 1.1: What are the reasons for companies to hire these graduates for managerial positions?

Companies need Employees with Soft Skills in a Service-oriented World

Our society has developed from an industrial to a knowledge-based service economy over time (Zehr, 1998). Being equipped with hard skills, the deep knowledge in a specific field, has in the past been seen as crucial in the working environment to fulfil one’s job requirements (Katz, 1974). The interviews showed that this understanding is still prevalent today, however, additional skills have become inevitable. Based on qualitative (Chapter 4.1.1) and quantitative (Chapter

4.2.4) data, two factors were identified as external drivers and overarching reasons for the change in companies' employability profiles, namely complexity and technological advancements (Figure 1). As stated in the literature and also indicated by participants (Bruhn; Vries; Wood), these driving forces changed the emphasis from the formerly dominating hard skills, to the importance of soft skills (Davis & Muir, 2004; Robles, 2012). Companies face complex problems, which require collaborative efforts and teamwork to lead to success, not only across departments but also on a global scale. Therefore, interpersonal skills such as communication and intercultural competences are a must and strongly sought after by employers as indicated during the interviews (Bradshaw; Crisp; Wood). Taking literature and interview outcomes into account, we believe that the MiM graduates' profile, including interpersonal skills and intercultural awareness, is a good attempt to cover the increasing skill demands, and thus, one reason for companies to hire them for managerial positions.

Companies want Employees with Informational Diversity in an Intercultural World

The globalisation and interconnection of markets also leads to an increase in diversity within the workplace, not only culturally but also academically. Literature (Jehn, Northcraft & Neale, 1999; Nemeth, 1986) and interviewees (Bradshaw; Graf) both discovered the advantages of having an informationally diverse workforce. While most of the literature highlights the positive impact such teams can have on creativity and efficiency, it also points out that it can have downsides if not managed correctly (Jehn, Northcraft & Neale, 1999; Nemeth, 1986). However, it seems that interview candidates only emphasised advantages of diverse professional backgrounds. In particular, they valued the possibility to bring in new perspectives and to overcome blind spots by recruiting outside of a like-minded pool of traditional hires (Bradshaw; Joseph; Möhrle). The majority of interviewees agreed that MiM graduates would increase diversity within teams because they themselves already are equipped with two educational insights and potentially enter an arena with only specialised I-shaped individuals. Therefore, the interviewees valued the possibility to increase diversity by hiring MiM graduates and making use of the benefits that come with it (Calmer & Bennett) and identified it as another reason for companies to hire these individuals.

Companies need Employees who can adapt in a Dynamic World

Given today's fast-paced and dynamic development, it is fact that companies require employees to constantly rethink and restructure processes and practices in order to stay competitive. From the interviews, it became apparent that firms seek individuals who are adaptable, able to flexibly react, quickly become acquainted with new topics and circumstances but also have "*emotional intelligence*" (Wood). Amongst others, similar desired key attributes are also mentioned as important elements of employability (Pool & Sewell, 2007). As these expectations mostly overlap with non-business MiM graduates' qualities mentioned above, it can be argued that they have a high employability when it comes to updated requirement profiles. Within this challenging environment, it seems appealing for companies to hire non-business MiM graduates as they have actually already proven 'in print' that they are adaptable. As opposed to individuals who just

claim to have these skills, non-business MiM graduates demonstrated their flexibility as they studied a second degree, which is unrelated to their undergraduate degree (Chapter 4.2.4; Möhrle; Siegers; Thomas). By taking on new challenges, they exhibited their openness, something that becomes increasingly important as knowledge is outdated quicker (Heinemann, 2009). This is another reason for companies to hire MiMs, since this digital and fast-changing environment requires exactly these traits that MiMs can provide.

Companies want Employees who understand the Product and Business in a Complex World

Moreover, interview partners believed that companies appreciate hiring graduates that have an understanding of the company's core product (Möhrle). This is of particular interest in industrial, technical and scientific sectors where a deeper knowledge of the matter is needed but where additional business essentials are highly valued (Siegers). In other words, in companies today, one often either finds thinkers, whose job it is to develop the product, or business-educated individuals, who sell it. Seldom, individuals are found who are familiar with the product and also have a business understanding, at least not at such an earlier stage in someone's career. Therefore, literature, interview partners as well survey respondents can see a tremendous need for individuals that entail both these aspects (Heinemann, 2009; Chapter 4.1.1; Chapter 4.2.4). It was a recurring theme in the interviews and something employers actively look for. Hiring such individuals creates *“more proximity [...] and a ‘fit’ with the general competencies needed in [a] company”* (Möhrle), which in turn only helps a business. Thus, interviewees saw it as another reason to hire such ‘valorised’ MiM graduates, especially in fields where they have an undergraduate degree related to the company's core business and broader management knowledge on top of that.

5.3 Summary: Supply matches Demand

Looking at the above mentioned qualities and reasons, it can be seen that non-business MiM graduates' profiles match today's job specifications relatively well. However, even though these graduates have already demonstrated their abilities, it could be argued that graduates with a consecutive degree can provide the same and keep up. They have potentially also acquired a broad skill set as well as interpersonal and intercultural competences throughout their lifetime, prerequisites in a complex environment. Even though, MiM alumni seem to be a good fit, they might not have a competitive advantage when it comes to these requirements. Nonetheless, from the findings it can be claimed that due to their interdisciplinary degree, non-business MiM graduates are seen as being one step ahead in the following two aspects:

- Firstly, based on their specific in-depth subject-related knowledge in any chosen undergraduate discipline and their essential business knowledge gained in their master degree, they have access to two worlds. These MiM graduates cannot only contribute with an understanding of the core business but also serve with managerial skills, a huge profit for any company, considering they go back into a related industry.

- Secondly, based on this access to two worlds, they can act as interpreter between departments as they speak more than one ‘academic language’. They are able to ‘build a bridge’ that can help to prevent miscommunication and misunderstandings between employees from different disciplines.

Particularly in respect to these two qualities, non-business MiM graduates provide an additional value compared to traditional, consecutively educated graduates. Considering this, their synthesis of knowledge potentially creates a competitive advantage in a dynamic business landscape.

5.4 Research Question 1: How are graduates that synthesise non-business bachelor knowledge with a managerial master degree perceived in the workplace?

Companies value Suitable Combinations

Even though the perception of non-business MiM graduates differed among the interview participants, in general they perceived them as a “*powerful employee*” (Chisholm) due to their interdisciplinary knowledge (Heinemann, 2009), something employers look for. Described in interviews as “*extremely attractive for the labour market*” (Graf), this matches the quantitative research findings. These showed that 75% of Lund’s 2015 MiM graduates felt that employers paid attention to their undergraduate degree (Figure 8) and 70% believed companies valued the synthesis of their twofold academic background (Figure 9). Consequently, the perception of interview partners seemed to mirror students’ real-life experience. However, a strong consensus between the interviewees existed that the assigned value is dependent on the first degree and whether this is a good and suitable match with the company (and its core business) or not. They saw the benefit exactly in the additional value these T-shaped graduates can provide based on their undergraduate discipline, thus merging the specific with the overarching managerial knowledge and skills (Karjalainen, Korja & Salimäki, 2009). The quantitative findings showed that more than half of the graduates believed that companies made use of their combined educational background (Figure 11) and that they received assignments that built on their undergraduate degree knowledge (Figure 13). However, if students want to work in domains where their undergraduate subject does not match the company’s core business, they need to “*make a compelling case for themselves*” (Wood). The analysis of the quantitative data brought to light that only around one third of graduates actually applied for jobs complementing their previous degree subject (Figure 3). Taking this into consideration, students not applying for jobs directly related to their previous discipline might arguably face more challenges, as they need good arguments to justify this.

Companies are concerned about the Level of Business Knowledge

Management Education critics reason that the narrow silo teaching approach, the lack of soft skills and the sole focus on specialised knowledge in business education, does not prepare students for management positions (Thomas, Thomas & Wilson, 2013). As some MiM

programmes are only one year long, interviewees expressed scepticism and voiced misgivings to what extent these courses actually impart business knowledge (Vries). Given the name of the programme, it was unclear to some interview partners what kind of content is taught (Bruhn). This feeling was seemingly reflected by employers shown in the quantitative findings. Here, nearly half of Lund's 2015 MiM graduates felt that they were assessed on their business understanding during the application process, indicating that scepticism might exist (Figure 10). Keeping in mind that all of these graduates are new to business, it is only natural that the question arises whether the communication of knowledge is too flat. To answer this, two thirds of Lund's 2015 MiM graduates perceived that their programme gave them a business background (Figure 6). Even though interviewees were sceptical, in reality eight out of nine students were confident to apply for jobs that required a business background in their job description (Figure 4). Out of these, 80% successfully moved further in the application process, implying that these graduates had 'enough' business background to meet the requested criteria (Chapter 4.2.2). However interviewees saw the big potential of these graduates in "*interface functions*" (Völk) as they believed their knowledge is not sufficient for specialist business positions, which require "*very precise analysis*" (Thomas).

Companies value Personality

A significant number of interviewees highlighted the importance of an employee's personality as "*at the end of the day it somehow does not matter what background one comes from and what exactly one has studied but today it all goes deeper*" (Bruhn). The findings showed that even though the interviewees perceived the interdisciplinary nature of the MiM degree as valuable, it arguably was not the decisive criteria. Simply studying a managerial degree does not readily imply a good personal fit with the job role. One has to entail several attributes employers look for, but also needs to be aware about personal strengths and weaknesses (Knight & Yorke, 2004; Pool & Sewell, 2007). Companies want "*hard-working*" (Thomas) individuals, who "*know [themselves] well*" (von Homeyer). This correlates with the literature, which points out that self-awareness about one's own capabilities is important for a successful managerial career (Crilly, Schneider & Zollo, 2008; Drucker, 1999). These criteria are also key factors in the USEM and CareerEDGE employability models, where efficacy beliefs and metacognition as well as emotional intelligence are desired factors for employers (Knight & Yorke, 2004; Pool & Sewell, 2007). Given that a person's development takes longer than the duration of a MiM programme, it is difficult to assess to what extent these graduates are aided in this process during their MiM degree. Therefore, it depends on the whole combination of the personality an individual has developed over the course of a lifetime.

Companies are Concerned about Lack of Professional Experience

The literature refers to the ongoing debate about whether management can be learned in business schools or is a role acquired through experience (Kransdorff, 2006; Mintzberg, 1989; Mintzberg, 2005). The findings of this study indicated that some interviewees conformed to the idea that management is a practice (Thomas, Thomas & Wilson, 2013) and "*solely the management*

degree does not enable somebody to become a manager” (Schmitz). In their opinion it is a role that graduates grow into over time once they are in the job. Therefore, some interviewees had concerns about non-business MiM graduates lacking too much work experience to start as managers (Vries). As also indicated in interviews and the literature, professional experience is perceived as beneficial and a crucial factor for employability (McMurray et al., 2016; Pool & Sewell, 2007; Völk). The quantitative sample from Lund’s 2015 MiM graduates showed however, that the majority of students (38%) had between 12-24 months prior work experience, thus lessening the interview partners’ doubts (Chapter 4.2.1). Moreover, more than half of these graduates felt that they were given the same tasks as any other graduate would get (Figure 12). This indicates that companies seemingly do not distinguish between non-business MiMs and consecutive graduates. Overall, the results showed that interviewees believed a management degree alone does not make a manager (Joseph; Schmitz). However, if done right, these interviewees agreed that the MiM is a good preparation for graduates, who want to pursue a managerial path (Joseph; Möhrle). It arguably follows an integrated approach (Thomas, Thomas & Wilson, 2013), by adding interdisciplinary knowledge and soft skills to a student’s toolbox. Particularly, the development of soft skills was perceived as important by interview partners as well as the literature, as they are one necessity in a successful managerial career (Robles, 2012; Zehr, 1998; Bradshaw; Crisp).

5.5 Summary: Values outweigh Concerns

Looking at the results of the research, it can be concluded that interviewees expected a great heterogeneity and consequently widely differing employability chances for non-business MiM graduates. The overall perception seemed to be very positive and the accomplishment of such a degree was highly valued. Therefore, interview partners expected the popularity of such programmes from a market’s perspective to grow in the future. However, the perception of non-business MiM graduates is highly influenced by two variables:

- Firstly, the interviewees perceived the value of MiM graduates higher, if the undergraduate discipline and the industry the graduate aims for are a suitable combination.
- Secondly, due to the concern about the level of business knowledge as well as professional work experience, interviewees did not expect MiM graduates to work in deep analytical business fields. Instead, their interdisciplinary knowledge was valued in interface functions, where they can assert their qualities and bridging skills.

5.6 Surprising Outcomes

Masters in Management Employment Profile

Findings from Chapter 4.2.3 as well as from the interviews indicated that Lund's 2015 MiM graduates enter "into a whole range of industries" (Bradshaw). Consulting as well as Finance and Banking were mentioned among the most prominent sectors (Chapter 4.2.3, Rottmann; Calmer & Bennett; Möhrle). These findings are in line with the MiM Survey 2014, which however includes MiM graduates from all academic backgrounds (Graf, 2014). The sameness of the results shows that seemingly, non-business MiMs have no disadvantages in these sectors compared to undergraduate business MiMs. While the interviewees were indecisive about the size of receptive companies, the quantitative findings showed that the vast majority of non-business MiM graduates were employed in larger companies (Chapter 4.2.3).

Companies lack Awareness

Throughout the study, it became clear that the majority of recruiters and companies were not aware of MiM programmes before. Even though we did not expect this outcome, the experts did not seem to be surprised. Their perception was in line with the quantitative findings, where only around 15% of Lund's 2015 MiM graduates got the impression that employers knew about MiM's existence before (Figure 7). We believe that this is due to two reasons:

- The programme is fairly new and has probably not reached a large share of the business world yet. Seemingly only companies, which keep up with the latest education trends and recruit at universities, actually know about it.
- Moreover, some countries and/or companies seem to be more traditional in their hiring practices.

Whereas interview partners perceived Germany as an example for being a rather traditional country, quantitative findings did not confirm this (Chapter 4.2.3). Following Sweden, Germany was the second most frequently named country in which Lund's 2015 graduates found a job. Additionally, recruiters who have themselves gone the traditional education path might be more reluctant to hire these graduates. Therefore, recruitment practices are expected to take a longer period of time to adapt to this novel management education concept. Experts believed that once companies realise the strength of this interdisciplinary degree, the acceptance is going to increase.

6. Conclusion

This study aimed to develop an understanding of companies' perception of graduates with a non-business bachelor degree and a MiM for managerial positions. Recruitment and MiM experts were interviewed about companies' reasons to hire these graduates as well as the qualities they offer based on their synthesised knowledge. This helped to shed light on how these interdisciplinary individuals are perceived in the workplace.

While exploring the research questions, the empirical data conveyed that external drivers such as the dynamic business environment as well as technological progress have caused changes in hiring practices in order to meet today's complex requirements. This has created several reasons for companies to recruit non-business MiM graduates. The findings showed that they need employees, who are equipped with soft skills, who can flexibly adapt in uncertain situations and who at the same time increase desired informational diversity based on their interdisciplinary knowledge. Companies are particularly interested in individuals who come equipped with an understanding of the core product as well as business. Therefore, they have come to appreciate non-business MiM graduates, who can be characterised as T-shaped and who display a wide range of sought-after qualities. They were not only described as flexible, adaptable and open-minded, but they also bring in new ways of thinking and intercultural awareness. Arguably, these qualities are rated highly by employers but could potentially be acquired by any other consecutive graduate throughout their lifetime. However, based on their T-shaped set-up, their deep knowledge within their undergraduate subject and their broad knowledge about management and soft skills, these graduates offer valuable qualities and thereby help to bridge different disciplines. MiM graduates' competitive advantage lies exactly in this synthesis of knowledge. They have access to two worlds and can act as interpreter since they speak more than one 'academic language', which is extremely valued when they go back into an industry that is related to their bachelor discipline.

Overall, the perception of non-business MiM graduates seemed very positive. Their interdisciplinary knowledge was particularly emphasised as a powerful combination if undergraduate degree and industry sector match. However, scepticism arose based on the depth of acquired business knowledge and limited work experience of these young individuals. As a result, non-business MiM graduates are potentially predestined for interface functions instead of deep analytical business job roles. While they are able to start their career on a managerial track in suitable domains, it is unlikely that MiM graduates are going to be managers right away, but with experience they are well suited for such roles.

Findings revealed that a great heterogeneity in employability can be expected as in the end, it comes down to several variables in a complex equation. Despite little current awareness in the industry, companies seemingly want more interdisciplinary graduates. However, scepticism exists and only suitable combinations are really appreciated, which arguably makes it hard for non-business MiM graduates to gain ground in unfamiliar sectors. In the future, the popularity of

these programmes is expected to rise as soon as more companies realise the benefits that can be gained through such a synthesis of knowledge.

Practical Implications and Contributions

This project shed light on the qualities of individuals with an interdisciplinary educational background. It offers practical implications for management and gives an impression of non-business MiM graduates employability. Thereby, it can facilitate decision-making processes of affected stakeholders: universities can design their programmes accordingly, the awareness amongst companies can be raised and prospective MiM students can get a deeper understanding of their potential career opportunities when graduating from such a degree.

Research Limitations

Over the course of this research project, some limitations were encountered. Even though we introduced the research topic before every interview, it cannot be assured that all interviewees grasped the concepts such as ‘managerial track’ or ‘qualities’ in the same way. As the interview partners came from different backgrounds of expertise, their knowledge and awareness about MiMs as well as their insights into recruitment practices differed widely. Therefore, it has to be thoroughly assessed and differentiated between spot-on answers and rather vague statements of participants. Moreover, retrieving behaviour patterns and perceptions from interview candidates means that it cannot be tested whether their statements correlate with their actual behaviour as no proof or verification is available. In addition, it is difficult to generalise the findings as this thesis studies a subjective matter. However, on an aggregated level we believe that we have received substantial answers to analyse our research questions in a sound manner.

Recommendation for Future Research

This study is only a starting point in a scarcely researched area and thus, opens up opportunities for future research in the field of non-business MiM graduates. Firstly, to overcome previously listed limitations of the quantitative sample size, a larger study including more graduates could be conducted. This would not only help to evaluate data statistically but also to compare and verify previous findings to the ultimate end-consumer demand from companies. Secondly, during the interviews it came to light that the participants had some ideas to improve the structure and the content of MiM programmes (Appendix C). Therefore, future research in this area could be beneficial to adapt the degree to the industry’s demand. Lastly, literature and previous studies about MiMs do not make a distinction between students’ academic backgrounds. As they include individuals with a business as well as non-business undergraduate degree, it is not possible to separate data accordingly. This project has motivated Thomas Graf, MiM Compass Founder, to conduct further research solely focusing on non-business MiM students. This could serve as an attempt to discover if differences exist and to further narrow the current research gap.

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Appendix

Appendix A - Interview Guideline

Dear Interviewee,

In this study, 'MiM graduates' define individuals who have combined a non-business undergraduate degree with a Master in Management (MiM). These MiM graduates come from disciplines as diverse as humanities, technology, social or natural sciences (non-traditional degrees) and add managerial knowledge to their former specialisation.

1. Trend:

How do you perceive the development of recruiting MiM graduates for managerial positions?

Do you also see a development in recruiting graduates from non-traditional degrees without managerial training for managerial positions?

Which industries or types of companies in specific seem to be receptive?

2. Need:

In your experience, what are the reasons for companies to hire MiM graduates for managerial positions?

3. Benefit:

How do you think companies can benefit from hiring MiM graduates for managerial positions?

4. Qualities:

In your experience, what are the qualities MiM graduates could offer that are of interest for employers?

5. Future Outlook:

What development do you expect to see in the future?

Thank you very much for your time and support,

Eva Hecht & Lisa Wiedmann

Appendix B - Questionnaire

MiM Perception in the Workplace

Dear MiM graduate,

we are two MiM students from Lund University and currently researching for our Master Thesis. The study deals with the industry's perception of MiM graduates with diverse educational backgrounds (first degree other than business) working in business related positions. Since you already went through the process of applications and interviews, we are curious to learn about your experiences and to get an insight on how you think you are perceived in the working environment.

This survey is only going to take 5 minutes of your valuable time and we highly appreciate your cooperation.

Thank you very much for your participation.
Best wishes from Lund,

Eva Hecht & Lisa Wiedmann

gma15wi@student.lu.se | gma15ehe@student.lu.se

* Required



LUND UNIVERSITY
School of Economics and Management

1/4 Personal

1. **What is your nationality? ***

.....

2. **What did you study in your Bachelor degree? ***

.....

3. Did you have work experience prior to applying for jobs after graduation of the MiM? *

Mark only one oval.

- None
- 1-6 months
- 6-12 months
- 12-24 months
- 2 - 5 years
- More than 5 years

4. If applicable, in which field did you work before?

.....

2/4 Job Search

5. When applying, were you looking for jobs that are related to your Bachelor discipline? *

(e.g. You studied biology and now work within a pharmaceutical company)

Mark only one oval.

- Yes
- No
- To some degree

6. Did you apply for jobs that required a business background in the job description? *

Mark only one oval.

- Yes
- No

7. If yes, did you move further in the application process?

(e.g. invited to an interview, assessment center, etc.)

Mark only one oval.

- Yes
- No
- No applicable

8. In which country/countries did you look for jobs? *

.....

9. How many different companies did you approximately apply for? *

.....

10. In which industry/industries did you apply for positions?

(You can select more than one answer)

Check all that apply.

- Agriculture
- Automotive
- (Digital) Media
- Construction
- Consulting
- Education
- Engineer
- Environmental Services
- Event
- Fashion
- Fast-moving consumer goods
- Finance & Banking
- Government
- Insurance
- Natural Sciences
- NGO
- Technology / Electronics
- Tourism
- Other:

11. How many months did it take you to find a job? *

Mark only one oval.

- 0-2 months
- 2-4 months
- 4-6 months
- 6-8 months
- 8-10 months
- 10-12 months
- More than 12 months

3/4 Current Job

12. What is your current job description? *

.....

13. In which country did you find a job? *

.....

14. In which industry is your current job?

Mark only one oval.

- Agriculture
- Automotive
- (Digital) Media
- Construction
- Consulting
- Education
- Engineer
- Environmental Services
- Event
- Fashion
- Fast-moving consumer goods
- Finance & Banking
- Government
- Insurance
- Natural Sciences
- NGO
- Technology / Electronics
- Tourism
- Other:

15. How big is the company you are working for? *

Mark only one oval.

- Less than 50 employees
- Between 50 and 250 employees
- Between 250 and 1000 employees
- Between 1000 and 5000 employees
- More than 5000 employees

4/4 MiM Perception

16. Do you feel that the MiM gave you a business background? *

Mark only one oval.

- Yes
- No
- Not Sure
- To some degree

17. Did you have the feeling that companies knew about MiM programmes in general?

*

Mark only one oval.

- Yes
- No
- Not sure
- To some degree

18. During your application process and job interviews, did you get the impression that...

* *

Mark only one oval per row.

	Totally disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Totally agree
... companies paid attention to your bachelor degree?	<input type="radio"/>				
... companies emphasized your combined educational background?	<input type="radio"/>				
... companies valued your combined educational background?	<input type="radio"/>				
... companies asked the same questions that they would potentially ask students with solely a business background (not combining two disciplines)?	<input type="radio"/>				
... companies tested your theoretical business knowledge?	<input type="radio"/>				

19. Now working within a company, do you feel that..

* *

Mark only one oval per row.

	Totally disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Totally agree
... the company makes use of your combined background/bachelor knowledge?	<input type="radio"/>				
...you are given the same tasks as any graduate would get?	<input type="radio"/>				
...you are perceived differently from graduates that are hired with solely a business background?	<input type="radio"/>				
...you receive assignments that build on your bachelor knowledge/ combined educational background?	<input type="radio"/>				

20. **From your personal experience, what qualities are employers looking for in MiM graduates?**

(Please name at least 3)

21. **Based on your experience, what are reasons for companies to hire MiM graduates with diverse backgrounds for business related positions?**

(Please name at least 3)

22. **Do you have any additional remarks you would like to share?**

Appendix C - Programme Recommendations

The interviews revealed interesting insights that could not be used for the purpose of this study but which were seen as valuable information. Participants pointed out suggestions and ideas to improve the structure and content of MiM degrees. Overall, it was appreciated if programmes have a solid (alumni) network, build up a reputation and help students with career coaching (Graf).

Interviewees consented that it is crucial, especially for a programme that accepts students without prior business knowledge, to cover the most relevant business subjects in order to acquire a “*solid base of a number of insights, tools and techniques*” (Vries). These hard-skills need to include the “*essentials*” (Siegers) such as “*finance, marketing, HR or organisation*” (Bruhn; Rottmann). Mark Thomas and Matthew Wood emphasised the teaching of sales skills, which has been neglected in some business school programmes. Moreover, the majority of interview partners highlighted that the MiM degree should offer students the possibility to learn digital skills and techniques as they become more important in a technological world (Bruhn; Crisp; Siegers; Vries). In addition, interviewees suggested that soft skills should be taught in MiM programmes in an “*underlying layer*” (Bruhn; Bradshaw; Schmitz).

In today’s interconnected and global world, intercultural skills are seen as a must have. Therefore, MiM courses should provide conditions in which students can develop these skills by having internationally diverse classrooms (Siegers; Thomas). Crisp and Bruhn indicated that it is valuable if students speak several languages, which is why MiM programmes could incorporate such an element in their curriculum.

Interviewees set the largest focus on the “*mix between theoretical education and practical experience*” (Graf). Della Bradshaw knew from experience that “*certainly it is the models, which have a lot of internships as part of the programme, that have the best employment rate*”. In addition to internships, interview participants suggested case-study teaching, project work with companies and field trips (Bruhn; Chisholm) to “*get some real experience*” (Crisp) and to “*get to know the playing field*” (Schmitz). Andrew Crisp pointed out that “*anything like that will strengthen the CV of a MiM graduate*”.

Throughout the interviews, it became apparent that concerns about the depth of acquired business knowledge existed, particularly as these students do not have any prior business background. Therefore, it might be worth considering if MiMs should either demand a GMAT as an application requirement or run longer than ten months to eliminate these concerns and diminish the scepticism.

Appendix D - List of Themes and Sub-themes

Theme	Sub-Theme
DEVELOPMENT Student Demand, MiM, Business World	Past
	Future - Supply and Demand
	Traditional View
REASONS TO RETHINK	Complexity as Driving Influence
	Diversity
	Skill Set and Employability
	Technology and Digitalisation
	Benefits and Profits
	Expectations and Needs
QUALITIES OF MIM GRADUATES	Internationality & Intercultural Competence
	Out-of-the-Box-Thinking
	Flexibility - Open Mindedness
	Bridge - Communication
	Interpersonal Competence - Soft Skills
	Theoretical Knowledge - Hard Skills
	Benefits gained from MiM Programmes
PERCEPTION	Supportive
	Reserved
	Sceptical - Potential Issues
	but... Prove yourself
	but... Personality dependent
	but... Self-Awareness
	Downsides of MiM Programmes
SURPRISING FINDINGS	Awareness
RECEPTIVENESS	Country
	Industry
	Company Size
FUTURE IMPLICATIONS	Programme must-have - Content
	Inspiration and Feedback

Appendix E - Additional Quantitative Findings

Job Search

The graduates were asked to select the industries they applied for. Amongst the top answers, consulting was by far the most frequently mentioned sector, followed by fast-moving consumer goods. (Digital) Media, Finance & Banking as well as Technology & Electronics were referred to on third position.

As for the location, graduates predominantly looked for jobs within Europe. The countries they applied for included Belgium, Canada, China, Czech Republic, Denmark, England, Germany, Hungary, Indonesia, Ireland, Italy, Malaysia, Malta, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland and the United States. Sweden was mentioned most frequently, followed by Denmark, the United Kingdom, Germany, China, Czech Republic as well as Switzerland. The remaining countries appeared once in the list of findings.

The graduates came from a wide range of academic backgrounds. The biggest group had studied their undergraduate degree in Humanities and Social Sciences including programmes such as Communication, International Relations, Anthropology or Psychology. Graduates from a technological and engineering background made up the second largest group, covering degrees such as Computer Science or Engineering. The remaining respondents belonged to the group of Natural Sciences and studied programmes such as Sustainable Science and Sport Science.

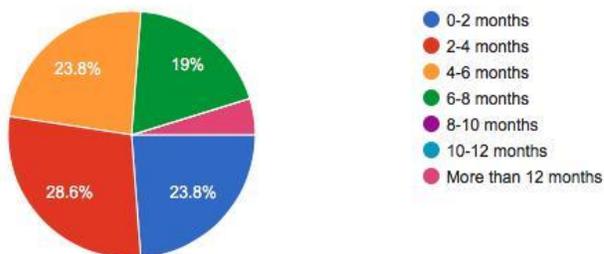


Figure 15: Time for Job Hunt

The time it took graduates to find a job is represented in Figure 15. Some individuals found a job right after graduation, whereas others stated that it took them a maximum of eight months. Close to a third of all respondents needed 2-4 months to be employed and only a small fraction of 4,8% was unemployed for more than 12 months.

The amount of application letters, which graduates sent to companies, spans on a wide range covering numbers between 1 and 100. On average respondents applied to around 25 firms and only one individual (4,8%) sent more than roughly 100 applications. Worth mentioning is that more than half of the respondents applied to less than 15 companies before getting hired.

Current Job

Different business related positions were mentioned when asked for the current job description. They cover a whole range of job roles in the various industries. The greatest percentile of 19% got into trainee graduate schemes, followed by 14,3%, who now work in business development

related positions. Another 14,3% of the job descriptions can be grouped and categorised in Logistics as well as Human Resources (9,5%).

Master in Management Perception

During your application process and job interviews, did you get the impression that...

▶ Totally Disagree ▶ Disagree ▶ Undecided ▶ Agree ▶ Totally Agree

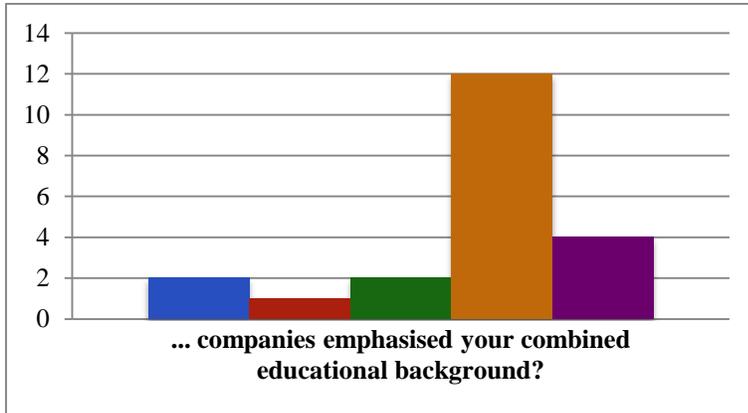


Figure 16: Emphasis on Combined Educational Background

Figure 16 illustrates that three-fourth of the respondents believed that companies put an emphasis on their combined educational background.

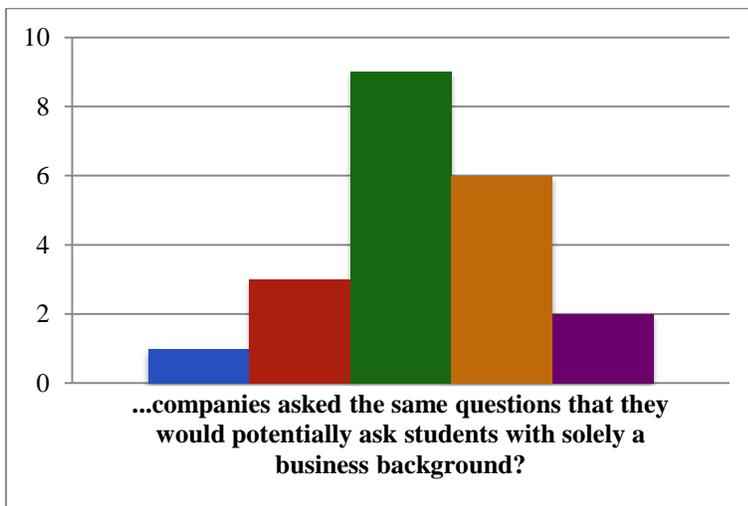
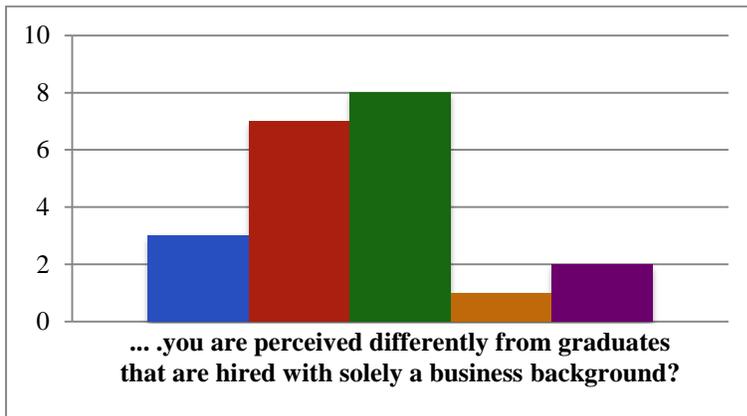


Figure 17: Distinction During Application Process

However, the largest group of graduates (42,9%) was indecisive if companies would make a difference between MiM and traditional business students in terms of the questions asked during the application process. A slightly lower percentage of 38,1% did not observe a difference (Figure 17).

Now working within a company, do you feel that...



Almost 50%, and therefore the vast majority, claimed that they were not perceived differently from graduates with solely a business background. Only 14,3% thought that employers made a distinction (Figure 18).

Figure 18: Perception in Comparison to Business Background Graduates