

The Opinion of Business Administration Graduates on the Skills Acquired During Undergraduate Studies

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Abstract

The main objective of the study presented is to identify the opinion of graduates on the skills acquired during a bachelor's degree program in business administration, in order to enter the labour market more easily. The role of universities in the training and qualification of specialists in business administration is underlined, together with theoretical considerations on skills, method, hypotheses, research results and conclusions. The data necessary for this study was obtained through direct research, an occasional survey-type survey based on a questionnaire, administered to graduates of the Economics of Commerce, Tourism and Services study program (from Resita). The results of the study confirm the satisfaction of the graduates of the study program regarding the professional training provided in the field of business administration.

Key words: knowledge, skills, competencies, insertion, labour market

J.E.L. classification: M31, M39

1. Introduction

Currently, at a global level, the labour market is looking for qualified staff in various fields of activity. Universities have an important role in training graduates, who can hold positions of execution and management in both public and private systems. In this sense, it is important to know the opinion of the graduates regarding the degree of satisfaction they have after graduating a bachelor's degree program, respectively the appreciation regarding the acquisition of skills in order to obtain a job in the field of graduated studies.

The strategic management of higher education must necessarily take into account major changes in the knowledge society and adapt to a dynamic accelerated lifecycle of information to correlate with the attitude of lifelong learning skills (Minică and Gherghina, 2014, p. 211).

In order to get a qualification for a study program, universities must conduct documentary and field research on the importance of the program in the local, regional, national economy, evolutionary trends, training requirements and the need for specialists in the field.

2. Theoretical consideration

Studies underline the fact professional development can be achieved throughout life, through initial training that ensures the minimum professional skills needed to get a job, as well as through continuous professional development that ensures the development of previously acquired professional skills or the acquisition of new ones.

”The concept of action competence systematically combines constructs of the cognitive and motivational approach related to the goals, demands and tasks of a particular action context (e.g., a profession)” (Weinert, F.E., 1999, p. 14).”Lifelong learning and development of management skills attuned to the needs of the current millennium is a virtual reality. The need is quite strong from both the domestic and international fronts as the field of global management continues to change” (Gempes G., 2015, p. 15).

Beheshtifar M. appreciated that “in career planning, it is needed to identify competencies in different levels, and determine movement paths in different levels. In addition, it is necessary to individual be aware of their skills, talents, and abilities to move toward a satisfactory job” (Beheshtifar M., 2011, p. 6). Azevedo A. et al. add: “indeed, pressure from employers with regards to the expectation that undergraduate-level education should reflect labour market requirements has pushed the issue of labour market linkage to the forefront of recent debates about quality in higher education” (Azevedo A. et al, 2012, p. 25).

Field-specific professional skills are represented set of knowledge (knowledge, understanding, use, explanation, interpretation) and skills (application, transfer, creativity, innovation, reflection) that allow a person to adapt to change and solve problems in an efficient manner.

We appreciate that it is necessary to adapt the professional skills of graduates in the field of business administration to employers’ requirements. Otherwise said, universities must hold regular meetings with employers in the field to identify the need for qualified human resources.

3. Research methodology

In order to identify the opinion of undergraduates in the field of business administration compared to the skills acquired for an insertion in the labour market, we conducted an opinion survey applied to graduates of the Economics of Commerce, Tourism and Services study program (from Resita) - ECTS (from Resita), “Babes-Bolyai” University Centre of Cluj-Napoca - Extension in Resita, Faculty of Economics and Business Administration.

“The survey is a method of collecting primary data, based on a questionnaire applied to a representative sample of respondents” (Gherghina L., 2014, p. 20). “In designing and applying a questionnaire, the questionnaire must be first tested before being used, being an inseparable stage, prior to the actual research” (Gherghina L., 2010, p. 98).

I used an online questionnaire on Google forms as a tool. The questionnaire was applied during the month of June: 02.06.2021-04.06.2021 by to ECTS graduates (from Resita) from previous years, currently students in the master's program of Business Administration in Tourism, Commerce and Services - BATCS (from Resita).

The main objective of the study aims to improve the professional training offered in the field of business administration to the graduates of the Economics of Commerce, Tourism and Services (from Resita), in order to enter the labour market. The data used in this study was obtained by a direct research method, the occasional survey, the measurement being performed with Likert’s scale, the semantic differential and the percentage method. The questionnaire was designed with 9 closed questions: 4 being identification questions and the remaining 5 on the study topic.

Out of the total of 50 (100%) students in the BATCS study program (from Resita), only 32 (64%) students - ECTS graduates (from Resita), completed the online questionnaire. One can state that the survey is exhaustive and takes into account the sample size because the survey rate is higher than 1/7 (14.29%). The distribution of students by years of study and as respondents is presented in the following table:

Table no. 1 Number of students and respondents by years of study at the BATCS program (from Resita)

Program and year of study	No. of students	Percentage students	No. of respondents	Percentage respondents
BATCS I	22	44%	15	46.88%
BATCS II	28	56%	17	53.12%
Total	50	100%	32	100%

Source: Processed by the author

When designing the questionnaire the following were used: a nominal scale with bifurcated and multiple alternatives for questions Q01, Q02, Q03, Q04; the ordinal scale, the Likert’s scale for questions Q7, Q9; the interval scale, the scaling method being the semantic differential for questions Q5, Q06, Q8.

The research hypotheses aimed at the insertion on the labour market of the graduates of the Economics of Commerce, Tourism and Services study program (from Resita), who after graduation stated that:

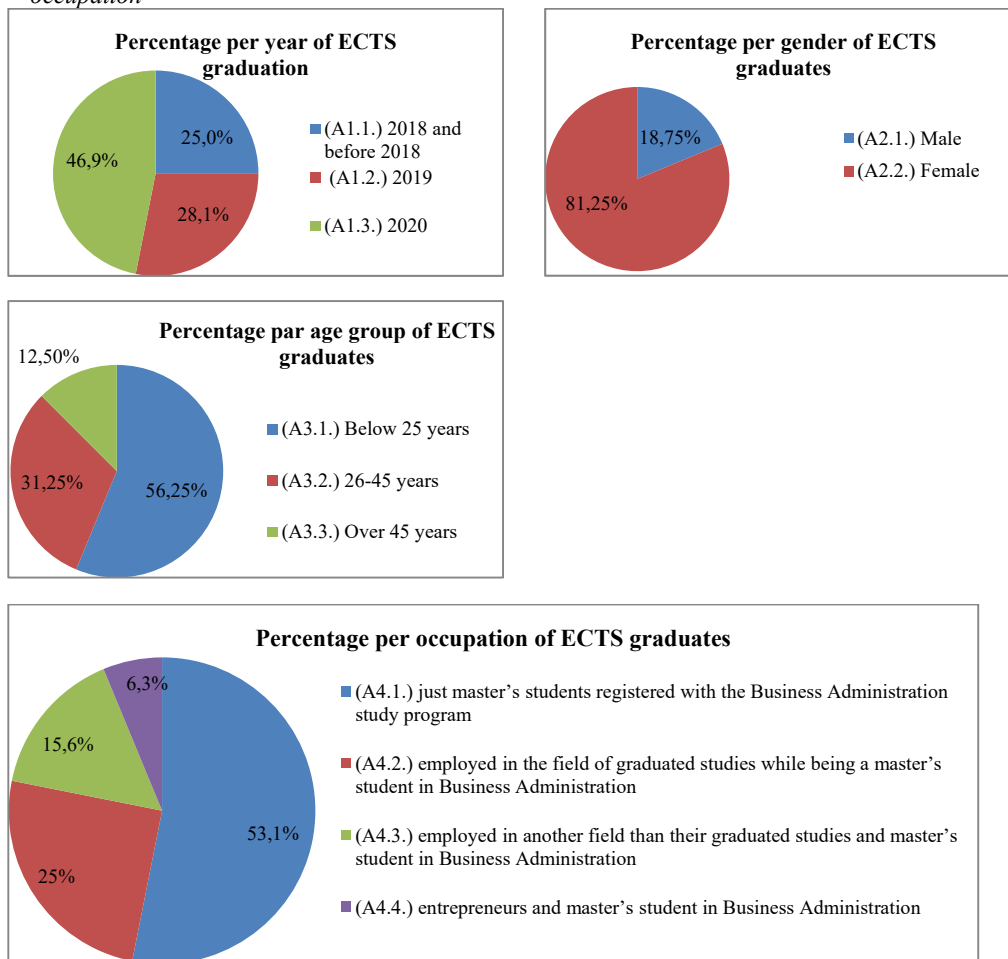
- there is a need for specialists in the field of business administration in commerce, tourism and labour market services;
- they are satisfied with the professional training provided during the study program, according to the requirements of the labour market;
- they agree that the theoretical knowledge and practical skills acquired through the curriculum ensure their usefulness at the workplace, as an entrepreneur or administrator within an organization;
- through the specific competencies acquired during the faculty, graduates can largely perform analyzes and evaluations of the activity, quality services and other activities of organizations.

4. Results

The results of the survey applied to graduates in the field of business administration, the Economics of Commerce, Tourism and Services study program (from Resita) are presented in the following rows, underling the opinion of graduates on the skills provided for insertion on the labour market.

➤ Results regarding the *identification of the respondents*, graduates of the ECTS program (from Resita)

Figure no. 1, no. 2, no.3, no. 4. Identification of respondents graduates –year, gender, age group, occupation



Source: realized by the author

From the graphs one can observe that most respondents graduated in (A1.3.) 2020 - 46.9% (15 respondents) and in the year (A1.2.) 2019 - 28.1% (9 respondents), 81.25% (26 respondents) are females (A2.2.) and 56.25% are part of the under 25 years age group (A2.1.) - (18 respondents) and (A2.2.)31.25 % (10 respondents) from the age group between 26-45 years. When speaking about their occupation, (A4.1.) 53.1% (17 respondents) are just master’s students registered with the Business Administration study program and (A4.2.) 25% (8 respondents) are employed in the field of graduated studies while being a master’s student in Business Administration, respectively (A4.3.) 15.6% (5 respondents) are employed in another field than their graduated studies and master’s student in Business Administration and (A4.4.) 6.3% (2 respondents) are entrepreneurs and master’s student in Business Administration. At the same time, we identified that 25% (8 respondents) graduated in (A1.1.) the 2018 and before 2018, 18.75% (6 respondents) are males and 12.50% (4 respondents) are part of the group of age (A2.3.) over 45 years.

(A4.1.) just master’s students registered with the Business Administration study program

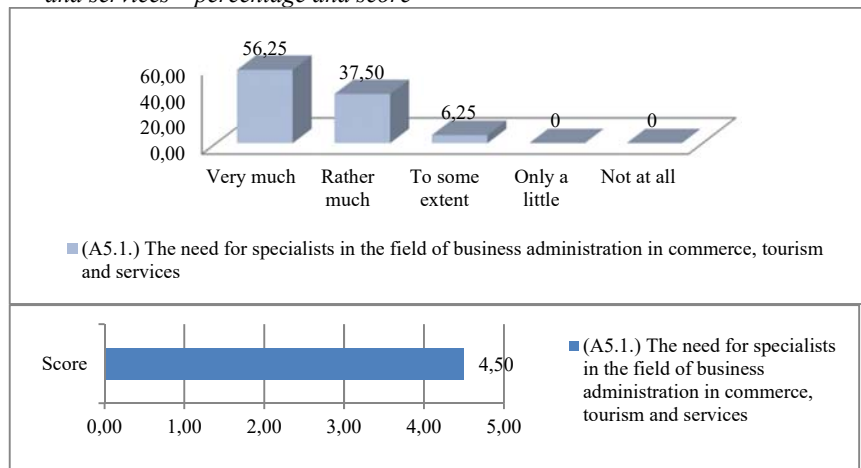
(A4.2.) employed in the field of graduated studies while being a master’s student in Business Administration

(A4.3.) employed in another field than their graduated studies and master’s student in Business Administration

(A4.4.) entrepreneurs and master’s student in Business Administration

➤ Results regarding the extent of the need for specialists in the field of business administration in commerce, tourism and services on the labour market

Figure no. 5, no. 6. The need for specialists in the field of business administration in commerce, tourism and services – percentage and score

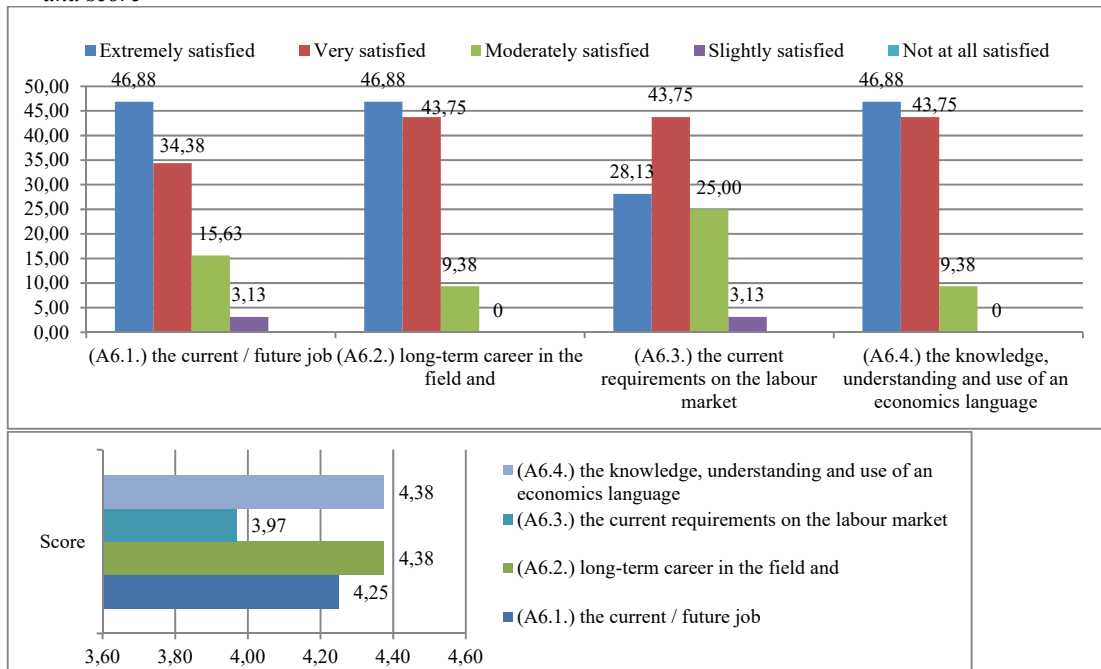


Source: realized by the author

Most respondents believe that the labour market needs specialists in the field of business management in commerce, tourism and services, very much - 56.25% (18 respondents) and to a large extent - 37.50% (12 respondents), the results being supported by the score of 4.50. The trend is towards *very much*.

➤ The results of the degree of satisfaction regarding the professional training provided by the Economics of Commerce, Tourism and Services study program (from Resita)

Figure no. 7, no. 8. The degree of satisfaction regarding the professional training provided – percentage and score



Source: realized by the author

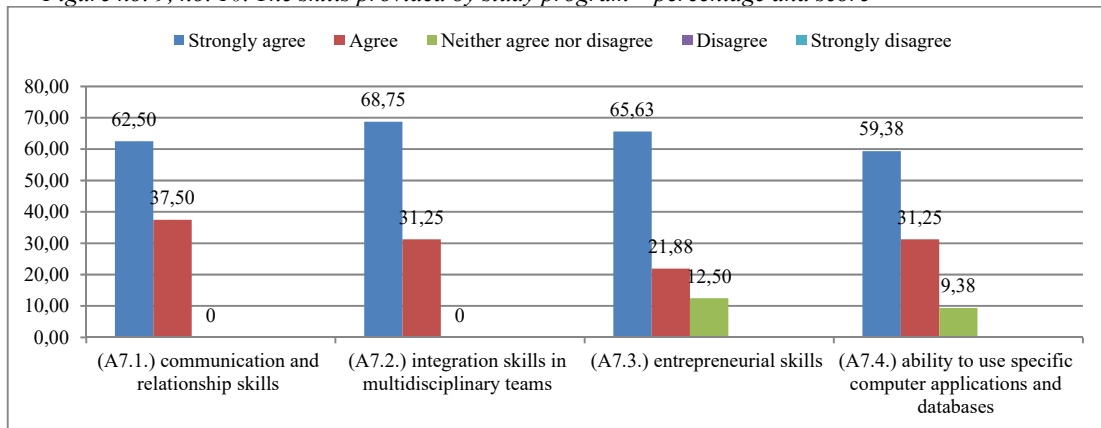
From the graphs one can observe that most respondents consider that they are *satisfied* with a tendency to be *very satisfied* with the professional training provided by the Economics of Commerce, Tourism and Services study program (from Resita), as evidenced by the total score of 4.24.

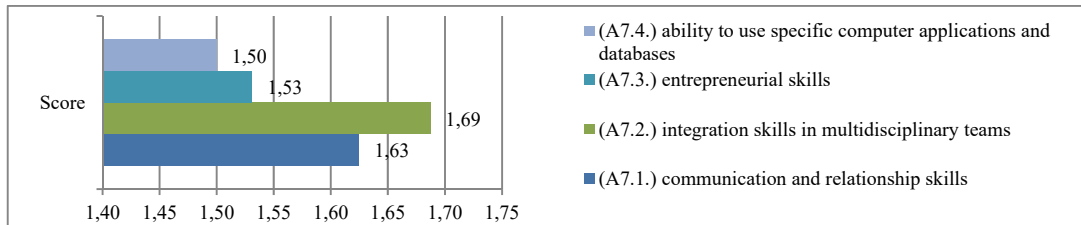
Respondents are *very satisfied* with the training provided by the ECTS program (from Resita) for a (A6.2.) long-term career in the field and (A6.4.) the knowledge, understanding and use of an economics language - 46.88% (15 respondents) with a score of 4.38, as well as for (A6.1.) the current / future job - 46.88% (15 respondents) and with a score of 4.25.

They are *satisfied* with the training provided by the ECTS program (from Resita) for (A6.3.) the current requirements on the labour market - 43.75% (14 respondents) and a score of 3.97.

➤ Results regarding the *skills provided* by the Economics of Commerce, Tourism and Services study program (in Resita) for *their usefulness in a job*.

Figure no. 9, no. 10. The skills provided by study program – percentage and score





Source: realized by the author

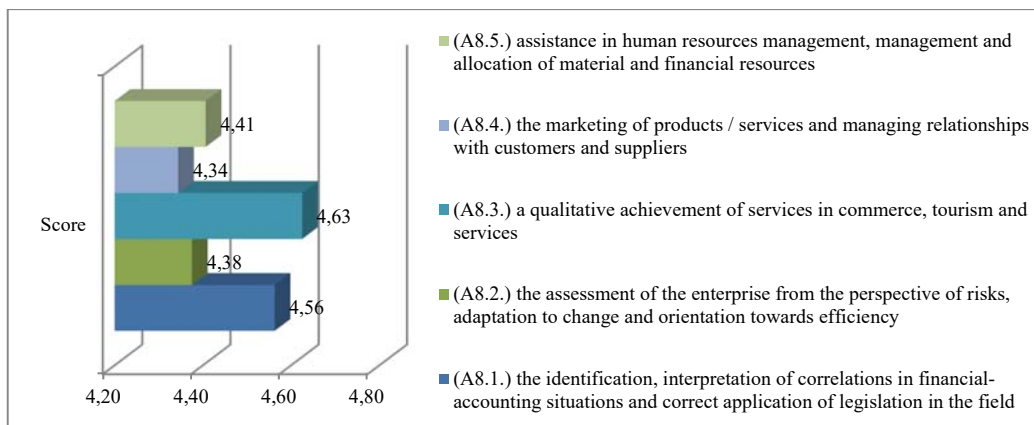
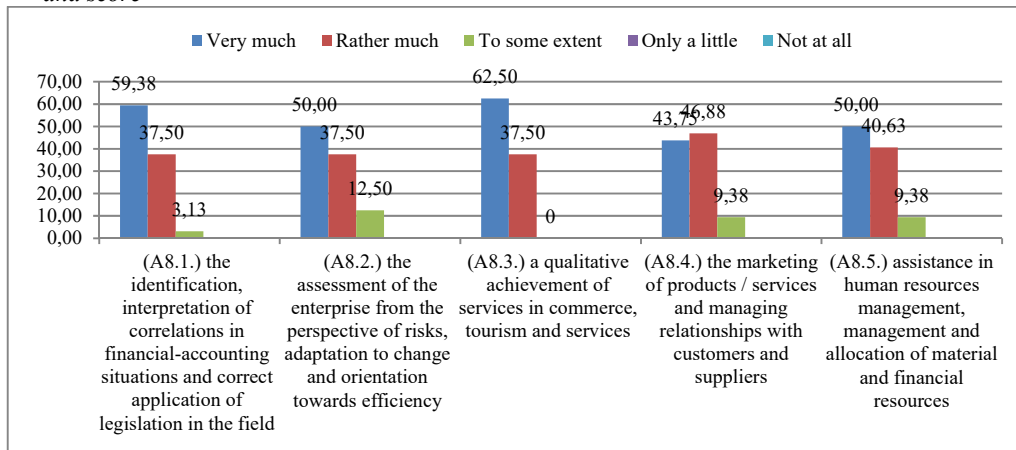
From the graphs one can observe that most respondents *agree* with a tendency towards total *agreement* on the skills provided by the Economics of Commerce, Tourism and Services study program (from Resita) and for *their usefulness in a job*, as evidenced by the total score of 1.21.

Respondents fully agree that the ECTS program (in Resita) provides for a job:

- (A7.2.) Integration skills in multidisciplinary teams - 68.75% (22 respondents), score of 1.69;
- (A7.3.) Entrepreneurial skills - 65.63% (21 respondents), score of 1.63;
- (A7.1.) Communication and relationship skills - 62.5% (20 respondents), score of 1.53;
- (A7.4.) Ability to use specific computer applications and databases - 59.38% (19 respondents) score of 1.50.

➤ Results regarding *the extent* to which the Economics of Commerce, Tourism and Services study program (from Resita) *provides specific competencies* to graduates regarding:

Figure no. 11, no. 12. The extent to which the study program provides specific competencies – percentage and score



Source: realized by the author

From the graphs one can observe that most respondents appreciate that the Economics of Commerce, Tourism and Services study program (from Resita) *provides specific skills to graduates moving towards to a very large extent, very much* as evidenced by the total score of 4.46.

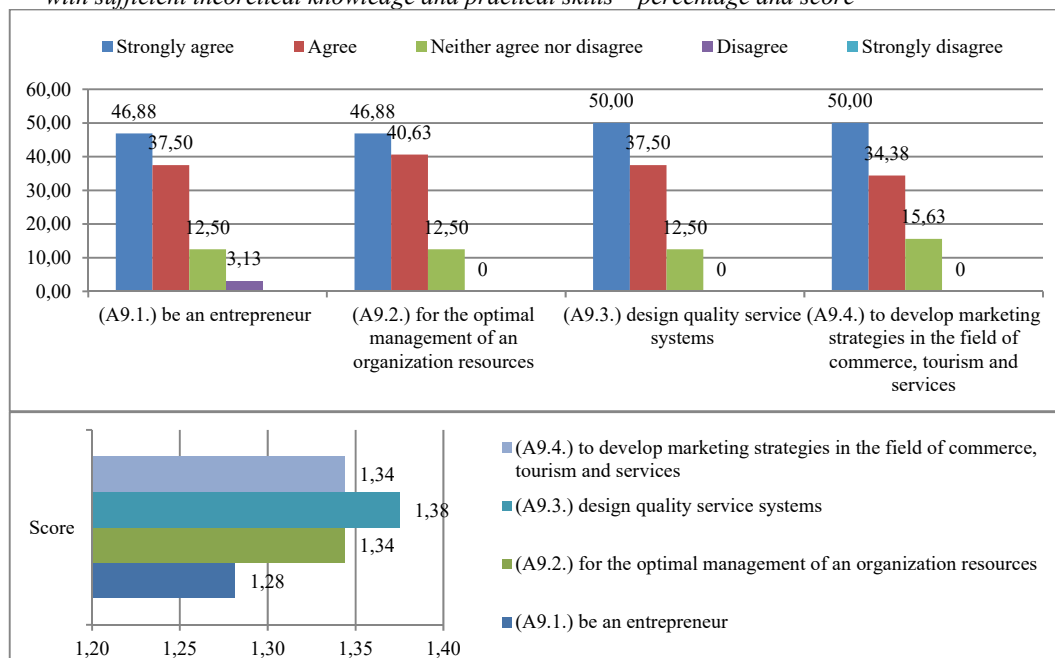
Respondents appreciate that the ECTS program (from Resita) provides to a large extent *specific competencies for graduates* referring to:

- (A8.3.) a qualitative achievement of services in commerce, tourism and services - 62.5% (20 respondents) and a score of 4.63;
- (A8.1.) the identification, interpretation of correlations in financial-accounting situations and correct application of legislation in the field - 59.38% (19 respondents) and a score of 4.56.
- (A8.2.) the assessment of the enterprise from the perspective of risks, adaptation to change and orientation towards efficiency -50% (16 respondents), as well as (A8.5.) assistance in human resources management, management and allocation of material and financial resources - 50% (16 respondents) and a score of 4.38.

The ECTS program (from Resita) provides specific skills to graduates in a large extent for (A8.4.) the marketing of products / services and managing relationships with customers and suppliers - 46.88% (15 respondents) and a score of 4.34.

➤ Results regarding the *agreement* of the statements through which the Economics of Commerce, Tourism and Services study program (from Resita) *provides graduates with sufficient theoretical knowledge and practical skills*

Figure no. 13, no. 14. The agreement of the statements through which the study program provides graduates with sufficient theoretical knowledge and practical skills – percentage and score



Source: realized by the author

From the graphs one can observe that most respondents *agree* with a tendency towards *strong agreement* that the Economics of Commerce, Tourism and Services study program (from Resita) provides *graduates with sufficient theoretical knowledge and practical skills*, as evidenced by the total score of 1.34.

Respondents *fully agree* that the ECTS program (in Resita) will provide sufficient theoretical knowledge and practical skills to:

- (A9.3.) design quality service systems - 50% (16 respondents) and (A9.4.) to develop marketing strategies in the field of commerce, tourism and services - 50% (16 respondents);
- (A9.1.) be an entrepreneur - 46.88% (15 respondents) and (A9.2.) for the optimal management of an organization resources - 46.88% (15 respondents).

6. Conclusions

Through the study realized we found that the graduates of the Economics of Commerce, Tourism and Services bachelor study program (from Resita), appreciate that after graduating they will find a job in the field of business administration more easily.

Although 53.1% of the respondents graduating from the ECTS study program (from Resita) are only students in business administration, there are also 40.6% master students who are also employed in the field of graduate studies or in a field other than graduate studies, as well as 6.3 % who are entrepreneurs.

Out of the total respondents, 93.75% consider that on the labour market there is a need for specialists in the field of business management in commerce, tourism and services, largely tending to a very large extent. They are very satisfied with the professional training provided by the ECTS study program (from Resita) for a long-term career in the field, for the knowledge, understanding and use of an economic language, as well as for the current / future job, and only satisfied with the training provided for the current requirements of the labour market.

Respondents agree with a tendency towards full agreement on the skills provided by the ECTS program (from Resita) for their usefulness in a job, respectively integration in multidisciplinary, entrepreneurial, communication and networking teams, as well as the use of IT applications and of specific databases.

Most of the respondent graduates appreciate that the ECTS study program (from Resita) provides to a large extent specific competencies regarding: the qualitative realization of services in commerce, tourism and services; identification, interpretation of correlations in financial-accounting statements and correct application of legislation in the field; assessing the enterprise from a risk perspective, adapting to change and focusing on efficiency; assistance in human resources management, management and allocation of material and financial resources. At the same time, the graduates consider that the study program largely provides skills for marketing products / services and managing relationships with customers and suppliers.

Respondent graduates agree with a tendency towards full agreement that the ECTS study program (from Resita) provides sufficient theoretical knowledge and practical skills to: design quality service systems and develop marketing strategies in the field of commerce, tourism and services; to be an entrepreneur and to optimally manage the resources of an organization.

Taking into account the pandemic situation induced by COVID-19 in the last two years and the restriction of the free movement of people worldwide, Romanian entrepreneurs are developing their business at local, regional and national level which will lead to an increase in the number of jobs in the business administration domain. In this sense, graduates in the field of business administration appreciate that they are ready for insertion on the labour market due to the skills provided in the ECTS undergraduate study program (from Resita).

This research may form the basis of in-depth research or comparisons with other research in the field.

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