

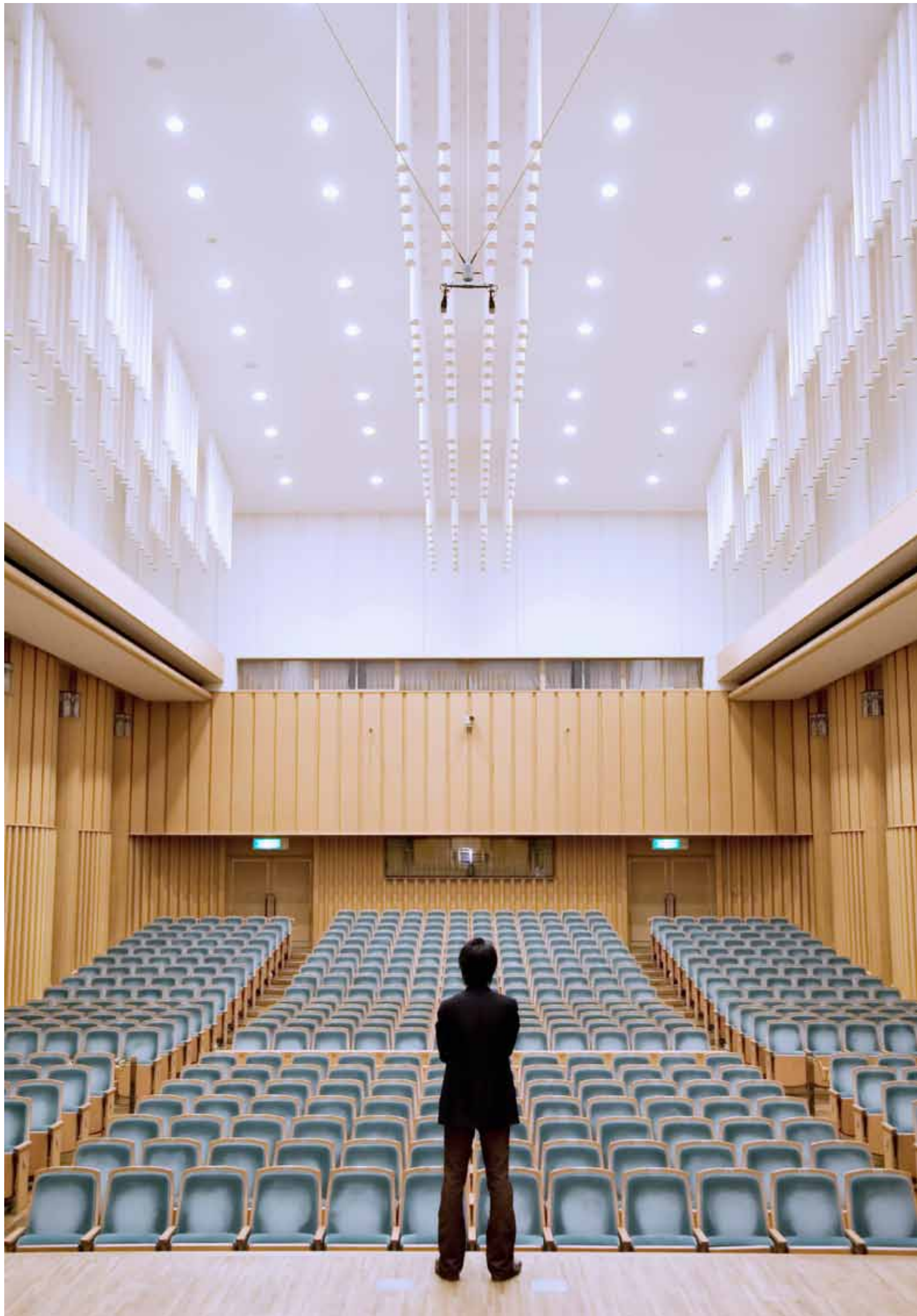
# Perceptions of employers on private university graduates in Cyprus

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PRICEWATERHOUSECOOPERS  UNIVERSITY OF NICOSIA

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## Introduction

The objective of this survey was to identify the prevailing perceptions among employers on private university graduates in Cyprus. The results aimed at identifying the perceptions of employers vis-à-vis Cypriot graduates of private, state and other universities abroad. The survey also aimed at establishing the factors which employers take into account when recruiting graduates (e.g. work experience, personality), the sources they apply to, their opinion on the abilities of graduates as well as the standard of educational services offered by universities. The methodology adopted in conducting the survey consisted in a quantitative study with the use of questionnaires, which were completed by employers representing a range of sectors of the Cyprus economy. The qualitative features presented in the analysis of the survey have been identified thanks to the long experience of PricewaterhouseCoopers' Employment Consultants on matters related to this survey.

## Methodology

The methodology adopted in conducting the survey consisted of a quantitative study with the use of questionnaires, which were completed by employers representing a range of sectors of the Cyprus economy. The survey covered all free areas of Cyprus.

Appendix A presents the demographics of the survey as well as other general information on the businesses which took part. The information presented in tables 6, 7, 8 and 9 of Appendix A regards the legal framework of the businesses as well as their field of activity, years of operation and number of employees.

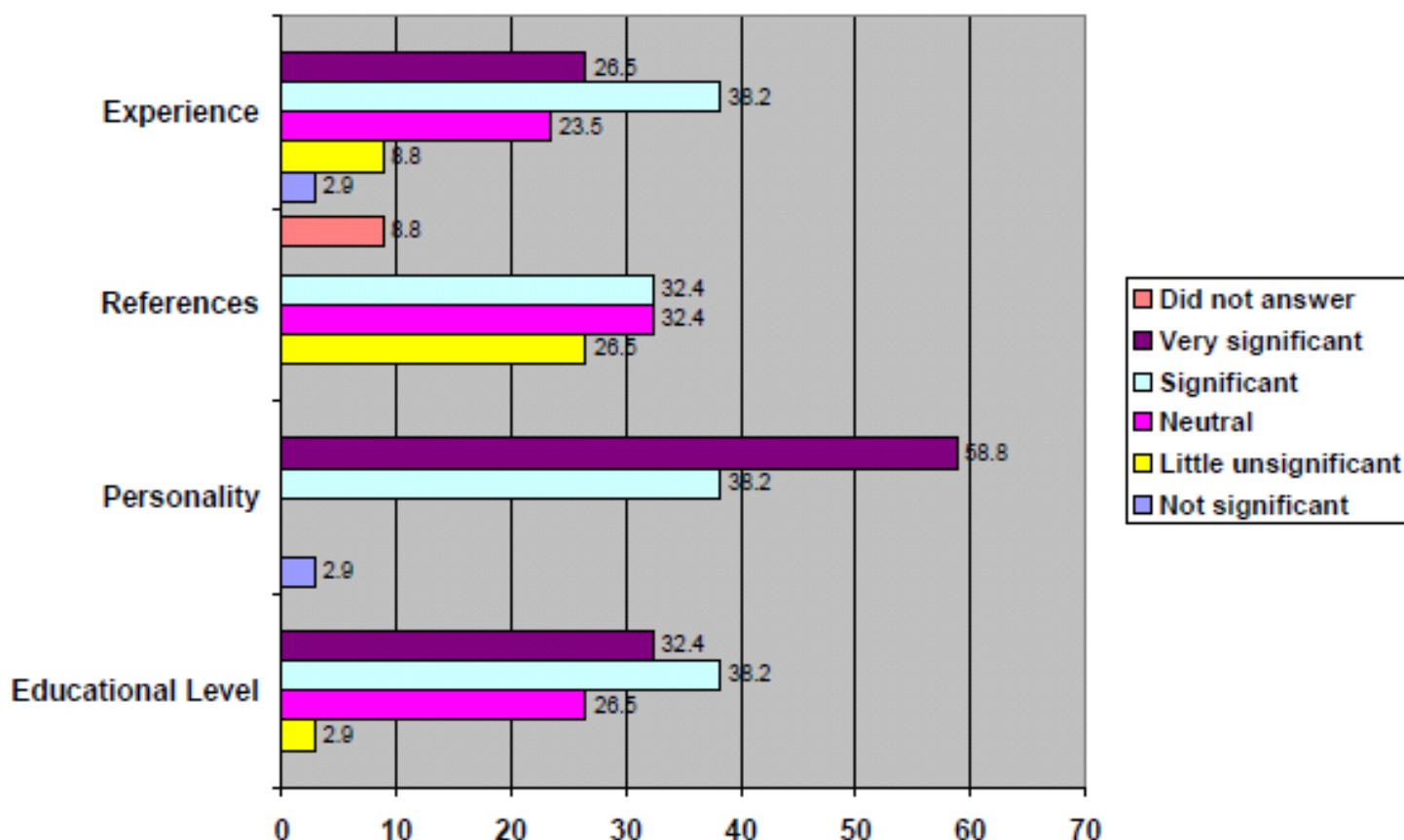
# Analysis of the results

## Qualifications of University Graduates

The respondents (employers) stated that the most important qualifications they look for when employing university graduates are their 'Personality' with 97% (Very Important/Important), followed by the 'Educational Level' with 70.6%, 'Experience' with 64.7% and finally 'Third Party References' with only 32.4%. The experience of PricewaterhouseCoopers' Employment Consultants confirms the above data and notes that the weight of these parameters varies based on the level of the position. For positions open to university graduates, the most important parameters are academic qualifications and personality.



Table 1: Which is the most important qualification you look for when employing an individual?



## Educational level

When asked about the educational level of prospective employees, most employers (61.8%) mentioned that 'Managerial Staff' need to be holders of a postgraduate degree. As far as 'Administrative Officers' are concerned, most respondents (58.8%) stated that they must hold a university degree. For 'Clerical Staff', most respondents (64.7%) said that candidates must hold a college diploma and finally for 'Supporting Staff', most respondents (64.7%) considered that they must be holders of a secondary education school leaving certificate. Employment Consultants at PricewaterhouseCoopers have noted that for some positions, professional qualifications are also required in addition to academic ones, such as being a member of the Cyprus Scientific and Technical Chamber (ETEK), the Institute of Certified Public Accountants of Cyprus (ICPAC), etc. Table 2 shows employer preferences in more detail.

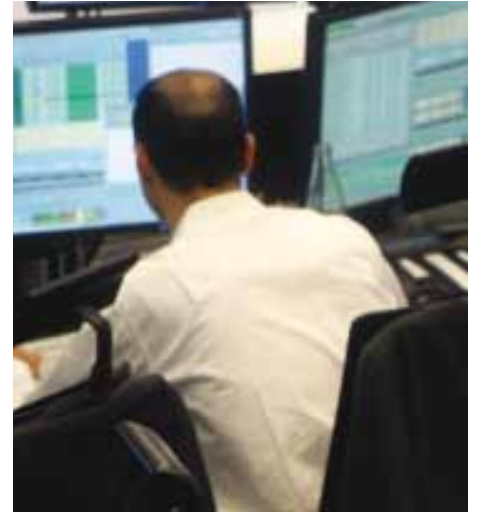
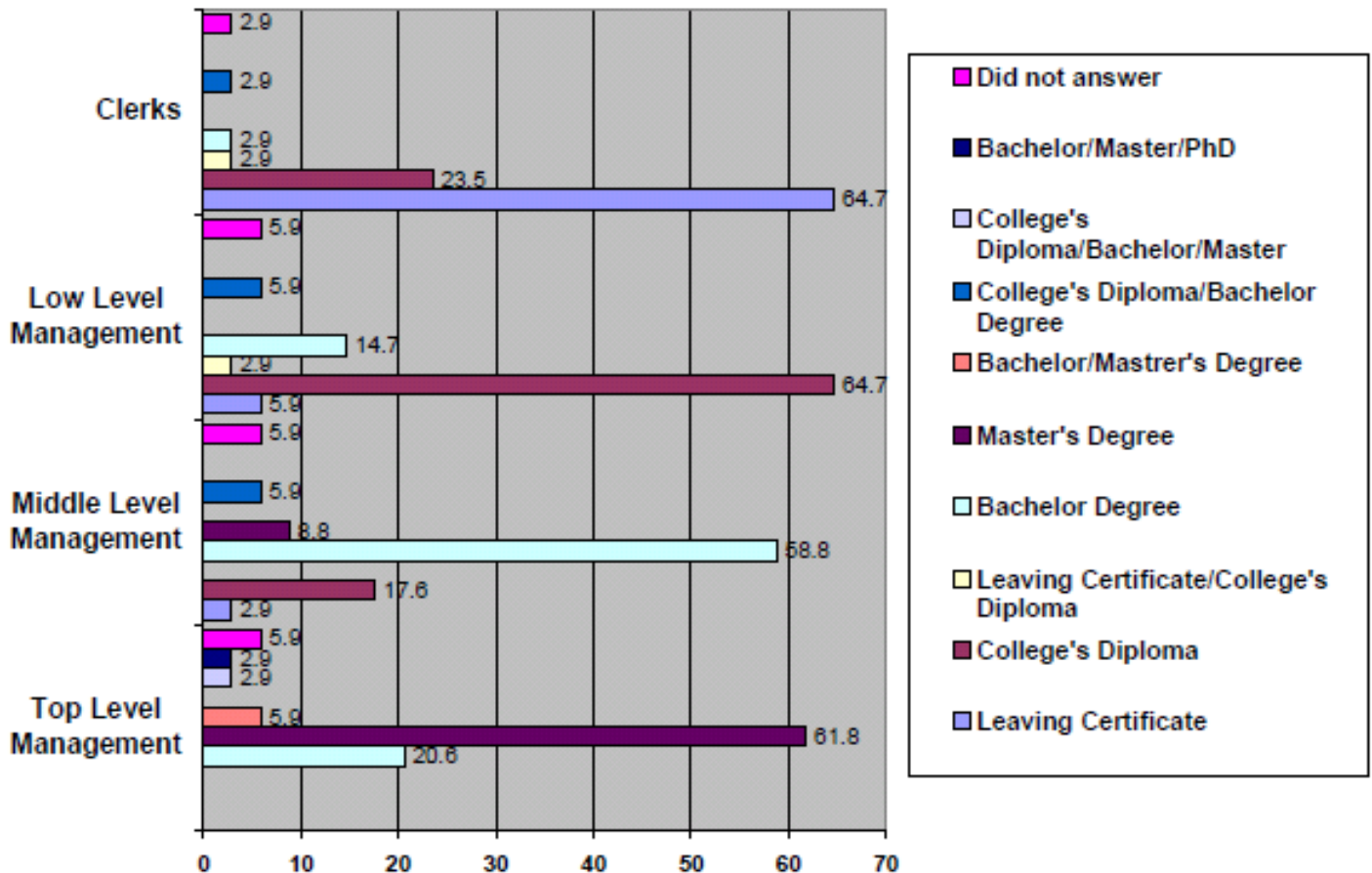


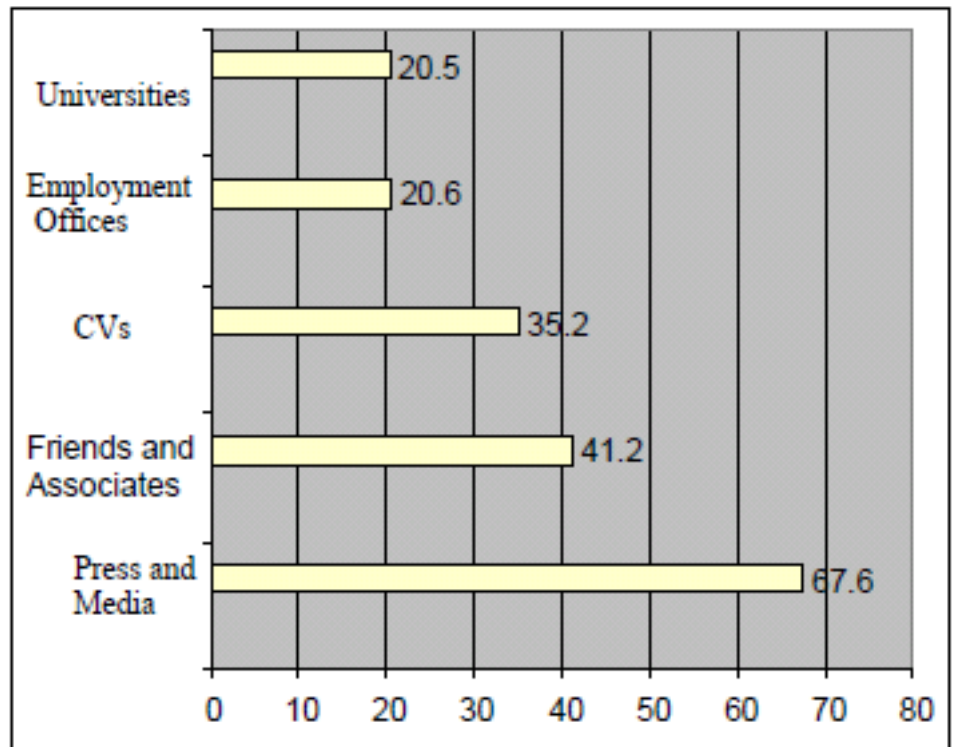
Table 2: What is the educational level you would look for in prospective employees for the following positions?





## Finding employees

When asked where do they usually apply in their search for employees, the majority (67.6%) (4/5 positive answers) mentioned the Media, followed by Friends and Associates (41.2%), CVs sent in the past and kept in the company files (35.2%) and finally 20.6% and 20.5% mentioned employment agencies and universities respectively. According to PricewaterhouseCoopers' Employment Consultants, the most important factors affecting the choice of the specific means are the level and degree of specialisation of the position, the availability of candidates on the market, an urgent need to fill in the position, the need to attract candidates from other countries, etc. PricewaterhouseCoopers' Employment Consultants consider third party references a good practice and recommend employers to request references from one or two previous employers (excluding the current employer for reasons of confidentiality) to be able to confirm the level of experience and the main traits of the candidate's personality.

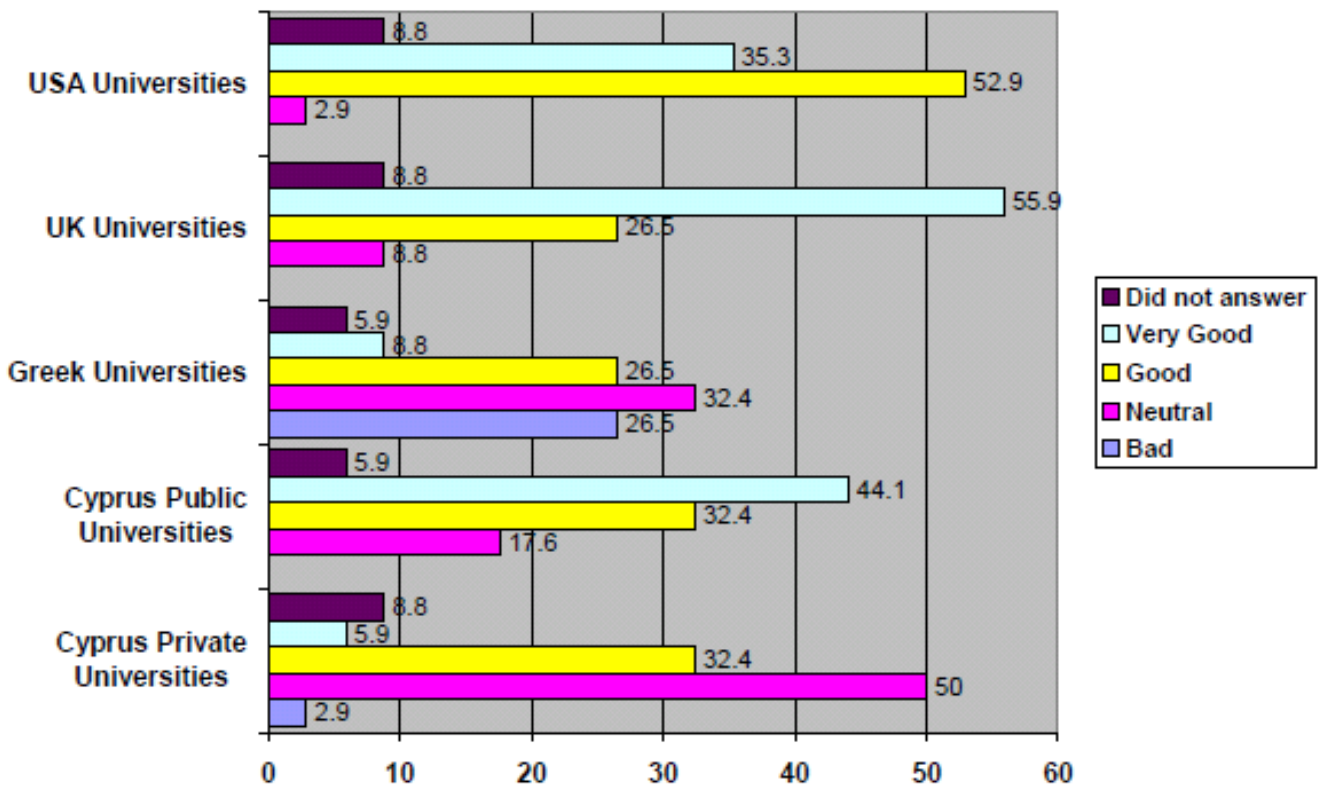


## Employers' opinion

With regard to their opinions on university graduates in respect of the university where they graduated from, employers have the most positive opinion (good/very good) for graduates from the US with 88.2%, followed by England with 82.4%, the graduates of state universities in Cyprus (76.5%) and finally with much lower rates, graduates of private universities in Cyprus (38.3%) and graduates from Greece (35.3%).



Table 3: What is your opinion of university graduates?





## Standard of education

When employers were asked to rank educational institutions based on the standard of education they offer, the hierarchy was almost the same as above. Universities in England rank first with 85.3% (two more positive rankings), followed by the US with 79.4% and state universities in Cyprus (73.5%), private universities in Cyprus (32.3%) and finally state universities in Greece (26,5%).

## Employment preferences

To the question whether companies employ foreign university graduates, all employers were positive, followed by a rate of 82.4% who stated they were positive about private universities in Cyprus and finally 61.8% concerning state universities in Cyprus. Contrary to the high standard of education in state universities in Cyprus compared to private ones, employers show a very high rate of preference for private university graduates. This demonstrates the trust of employers in the standard of private universities in Cyprus but also the knowledge they offer to future employees.

Despite the fact that employers have shown a preference for foreign universities, when asked to which graduate they would offer a position in their firm, 50% of respondents stated that they have no special preference whilst 26,5% would offer the position to foreign university graduates and 20,6% to graduates of state universities in Cyprus. This reply can be justified if we take into account the fact that, as stated above, 'Personality' is the most important qualification employers look for in recruiting employees.



Table 4: Does your company employ graduates of:

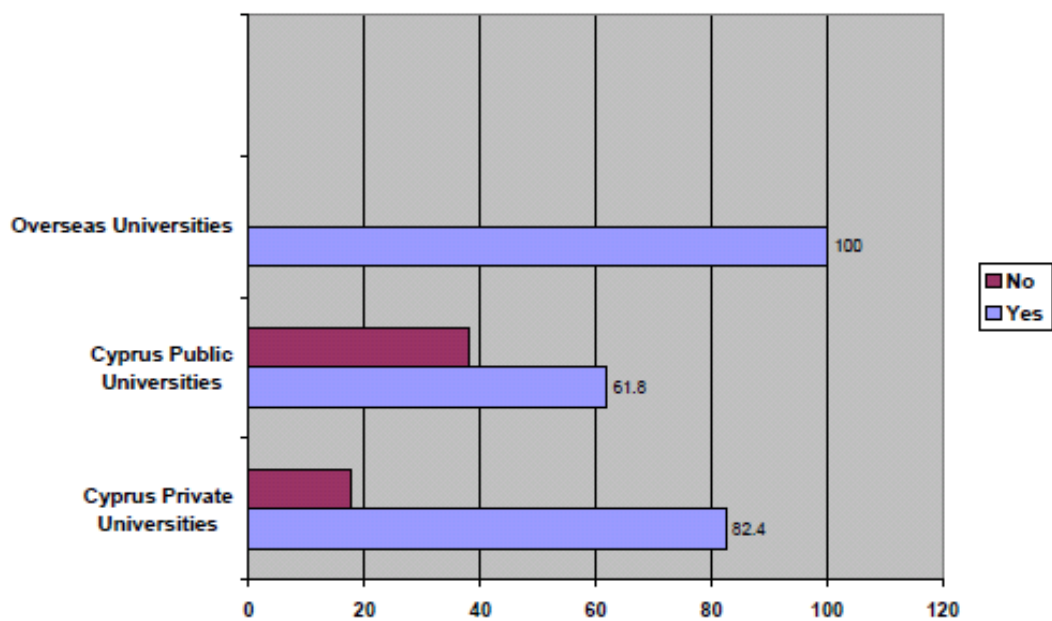
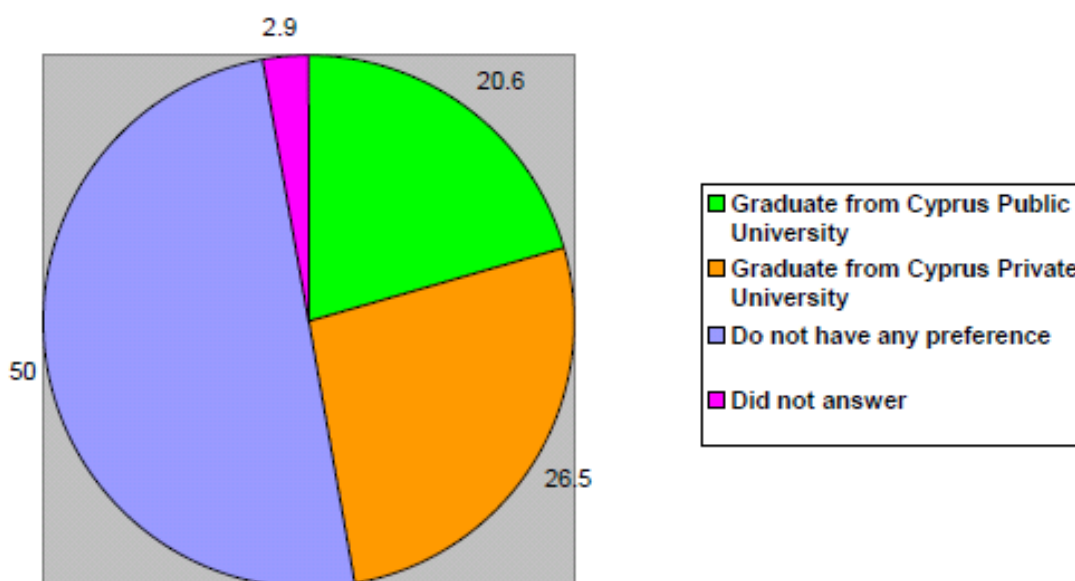


Table 5: If you were in a position to choose only one person for a vacancy in your firm requiring university education, who would you choose?



## Cooperation between employers and universities

With regard to prospects of cooperation between employers and certain universities in view of recruiting graduates, almost all employers (82.4%) stated that they have no cooperation with universities. However, 55.9% of respondents said they would be interested in such cooperation prospects.

Fifty per cent of employers believe that graduates of private universities in Cyprus lack in some areas, such as the English language and practical implementation. Cooperation between employers and universities gives graduates the opportunity to obtain practical experience before they complete their studies. This will help graduates adapt more easily to the working environment and the needs of the organisations that will employ them. In respect of their level of adaptability, employers believe that university graduates from the US (58.9%) and the United Kingdom (58,8%) adapt more easily to the working environment, followed by graduates of state universities in Cyprus (55.9%), private universities in Cyprus (50%) and finally graduates of Greek universities (33.5%).

Finally, almost all employers (91.2%) believe that private universities can help develop the abilities of prospective employees in an adequate manner. This shows that employers realise the significant improvement in the services offered by private universities in Cyprus. It is also an indication that private universities can continue to develop the abilities of their graduates in a very adequate manner.





## The labour market in Cyprus today

A significant slowdown in recruitment rates on the labour market - probably the highest in recent years - was observed in 2009 and the first months of 2010. This was to be expected since the labour market is directly associated with economic conditions. Decreased demand for staff was noted in all areas of the economy. Even organisations affected by the economic conditions to a lesser degree had their reservations in respect of recruiting. In the last year, employees also appeared hesitant to change employer. This was more marked at the beginning of the previous year, when the course of the economy was in general characterised by greater uncertainty. Many individuals preferred to stay with their current employer, mainly for reasons of security.

The last few months saw a significant increase in recruitment rates (compared to last year) as well as greater willingness on the part of candidates to change employer. This increase has been observed in all position levels.

Based on the experience of PricewaterhouseCoopers, this period offers itself for investment in new human resources available on the market to staff the organisations. At the same time, organisations can make use of the various employment schemes promoted by the Cyprus Government. This might be the right occasion for businesses to create the proper infrastructure (e.g. implementation of human resource systems), to invest in developing their already competent human resources, but also enrich it with new and talented professionals. They will therefore be ready to seize the opportunities that will follow economic recovery.

## Conclusions

Based on the results of the survey, but also the experience of PricewaterhouseCoopers' Employment Consultants, the main parameters examined in the selection and recruitment process are the academic and/or professional qualifications, professional experience and personality (abilities/skills required for the position). Many employers request references from previous employers to confirm the level of experience and the main personality traits of the candidates. It is good practice to obtain references from more than one employer (where applicable) and, if possible, through personal contacts.

The weight of the above parameters varies based on the level of the position. For positions open to university graduates, the most important parameters are academic qualifications and personality. The following academic qualifications are examined: the overall grade obtained at the secondary education school leaving certificate, other exams such as GCEs, degree grades, university, field / specialisation. In cases where positions regard managerial staff, we note that greater weight is given to work experience and the personality of the candidate, whilst academic and/or professional qualifications are considered less significant. For some positions, professional qualifications/titles are required in addition to academic ones, such as membership to the Cyprus Scientific and Technical Chamber, the Institute of Certified Public Accountants of Cyprus, etc.

As regards professional experience, experience in relation to the specific position is also taken into account. More specifically, the factors under review include the following: total number of years of relevant experience, level of responsibility and decision making, duties, lines of reporting (to and from the position), achievements and the size and industry of the organisation.

Identifying the right candidates may be achieved by different means such as through acquaintances, announcements in the press, employment agencies, universities/associations, etc or a combination of the above. Factors which affect the choice of specific means are the level and degree of specialisation of the position, the availability of candidates on the market, an urgent need to fill in the position, the need to attract candidates from foreign countries, etc.

The graduates of private universities in Cyprus are gaining a lot of ground as far as employment is concerned since a very high percentage of employers (82.4%) prefer private university graduates. It appears that this trend will be further consolidated given that 55.9% of employers wish to cooperate with universities in view of recruiting their graduates.



# Appendix A: Demographics

Table 6: Legal Framework

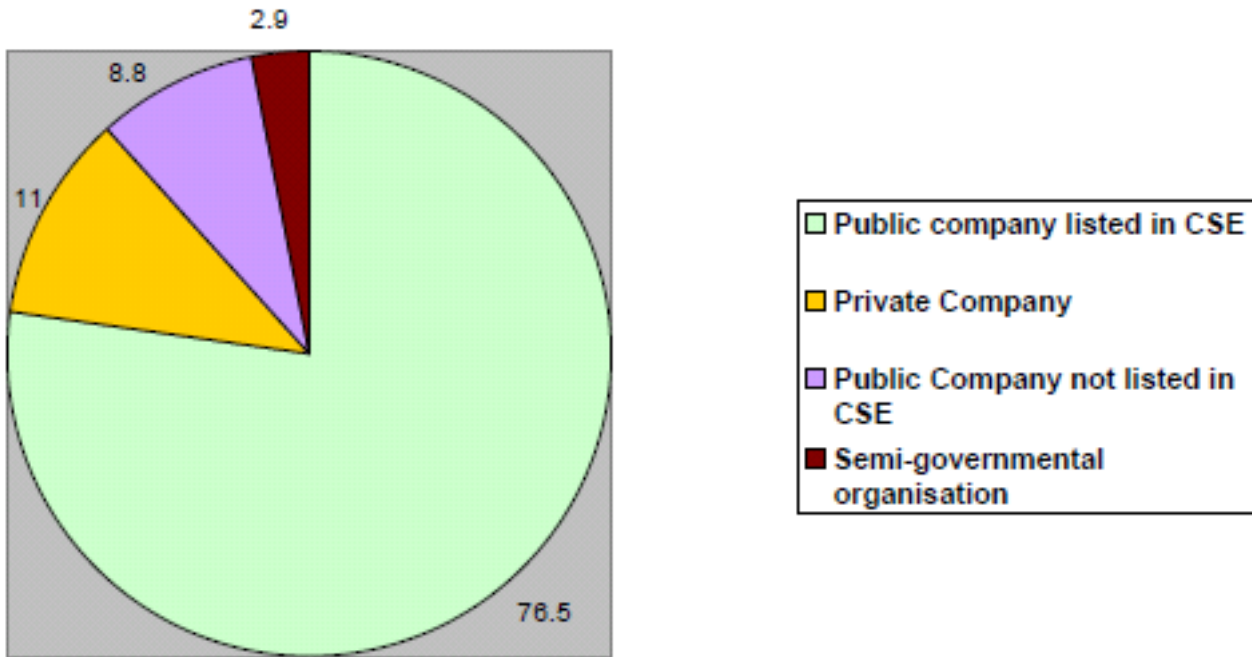


Table 7: How many years ago did your company start operating?

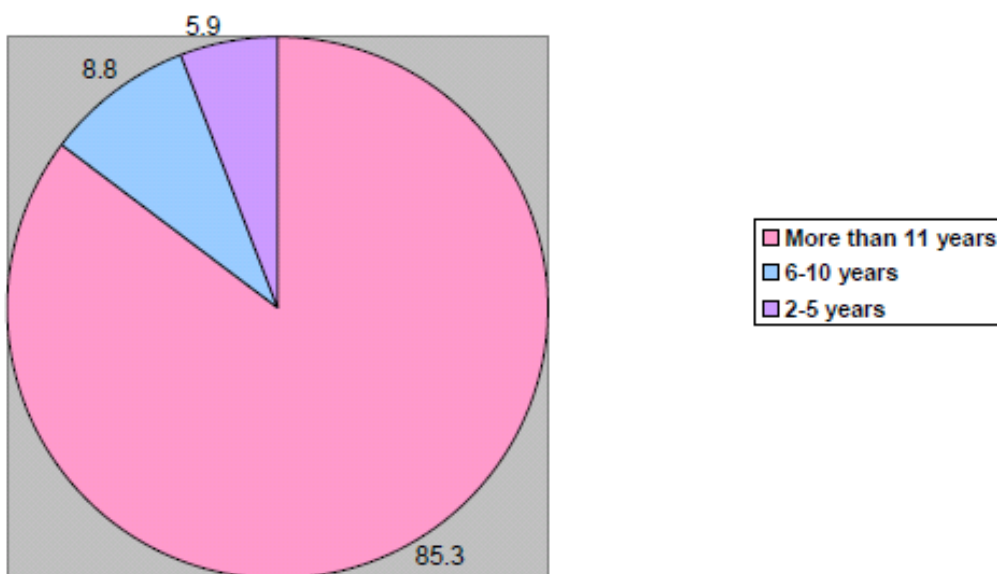


Table 8: Sector of Activity

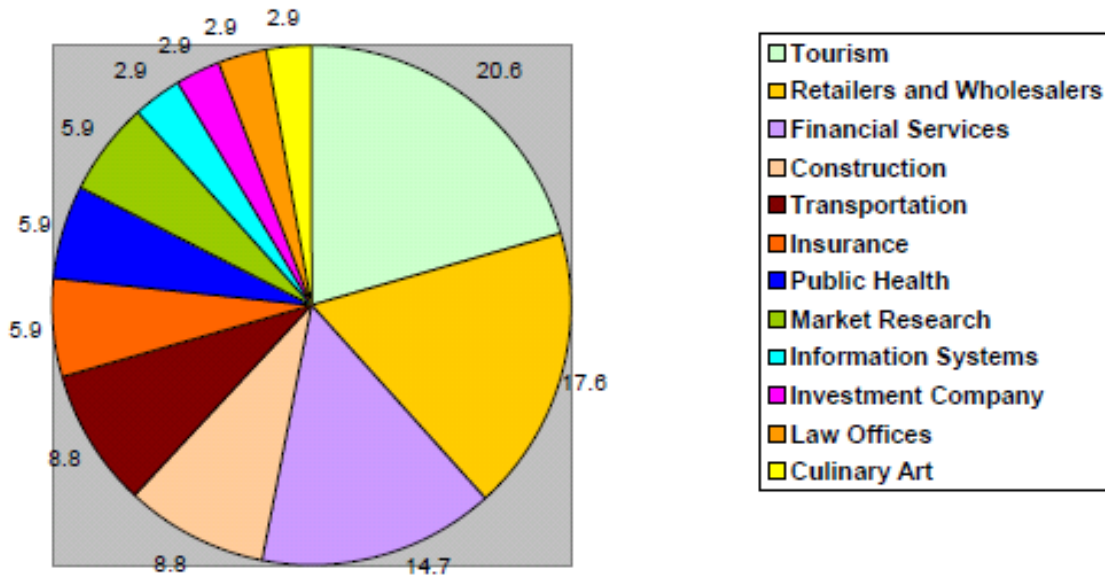
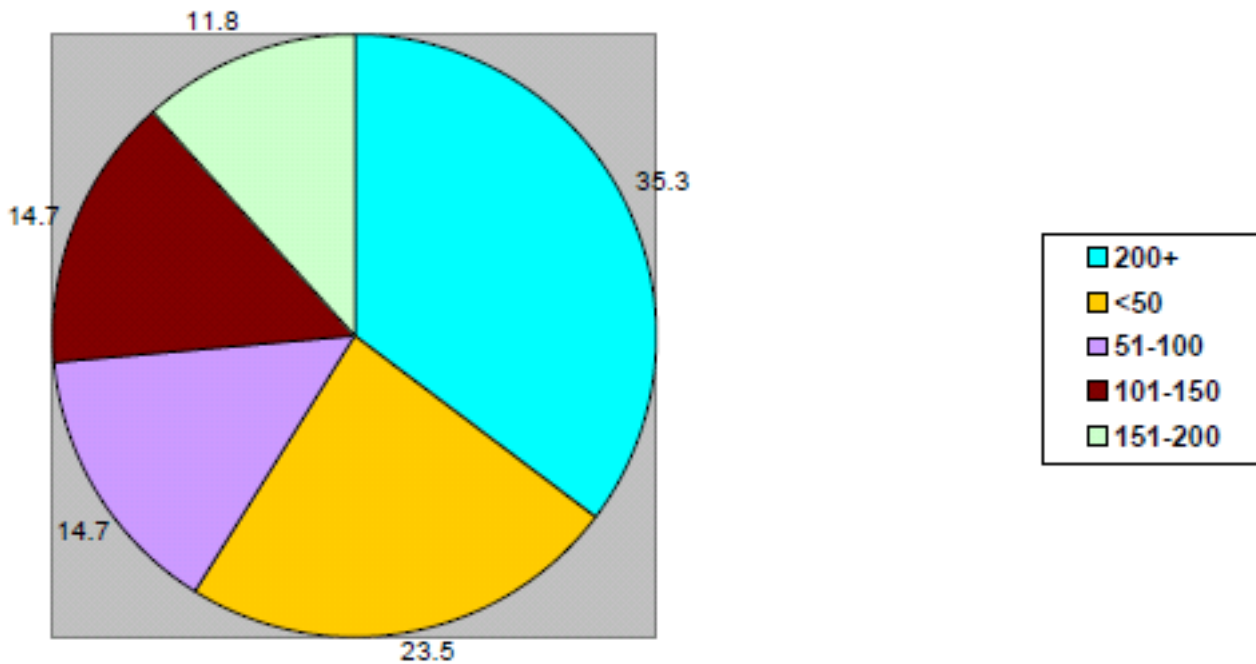


Table 9: Number of Employees



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