



WORK BASED HIGHER LEARNING FOR THE DANISH TOURISM SECTOR

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Abstract

The paper reports on an investigation of the business needs for work-based higher learning in the Danish tourism sector and the match with the supply of higher education, emphasizing opportunities for and barriers to work based learning (WBL) in the Danish university system. The Danish tourism sector's need for development through further and higher education of employees is widely recognized, while Danish higher education is challenged to develop a more demand-led approach.

The research consists of completed empirical studies and literature review on Danish tourism and Danish higher education programs for tourism. This is the basis for reflexive analysis of how demand and supply for higher education can be aligned in the sector. The research focuses on the role of WBL as a way to meet the need for flexible competence building. Special emphasis is put on innovation and environmental management programs and competence building targeted at Danish tourism. The paper discusses the challenges of WBL for the Danish university system in this regard.

The research and analysis is based on a literature review, in-depth semi structured interviews and e-survey among 12 employers in the Danish tourism sector and in-depth semi-structured interviews with university staff and management of one Danish university. The research has taken place in a comparative European context of the WBLQUAL lifelong learning project on WBL, which is applied to the Danish tourism sector. Flexible WBL programs are found to be suitable for the tourism industry and need to be developed within the higher education institutions in Denmark.

Keywords: Work based learning, higher education, tourism, innovation, environmental management.

1 INTRODUCTION

Tourism is well associated with the concept of the 'experience economy' (i.e. an industry which provides consumer with 'an experience' rather than a commodity or service), which includes creative industries in a broad sense to highlight the needs and potential for the development of the sector away from a narrow focus on accommodation and restaurant services. By adding creative input and experiences, tourism as well as other business sectors are envisioned as adding value to products and services and to increase innovation and competitiveness [1]. Along these lines, tourism in Denmark needs to be further integrated with the entertainment and cultural industries. Environmental issues and sustainability are also emerging as issues for future tourism activities and sustainability creates an experience in itself. These trends raise the demand for new skills and competencies in the tourism sector. There is a wide variety of higher education opportunities specifically targeting the tourism sector in Denmark as well as a wide range of higher education programs specifically focusing on environment and sustainability. Despite the wide range of opportunities, the tourism sector suffers

from a lack of the right skills. The existing programs offered by higher education institutions (HEI) do not correspond to the sector-specific challenges and needs.



Our research question addresses, 'What are the possibilities for alignment of demand and supply in tourism higher education and how and why work based learning may contribute to this in the future?'

The paper belongs to a series of publications regarding the tripartite view of WBL. It is based on investigations reported in [9] and together with [10], [12], [13], [14] and [17], forms the conference section 'WBLQUAL' devoted to the results of the project 'An Approach to Qualifications through Negotiated Work Based Learning for the EU – WBLQUAL' [28], project Number: 510022-LLP-1-2010-1-UK-ERASMUS-ECUE.

The Project WBLQUAL, its aim, objectives, and methodology are described in [10] while the rest of the 'WBLQUAL' section papers focus on particular aspects of the tripartite view of WBL.

2 THE DANISH TOURISM INDUSTRY

Tourists created a domestic demand of estimated 103.000 full time jobs in 2010, that is 3,5 % of total employment, well distributed across the Danish regions and counts for 3,4 % of Danish exports [1]. The tourism industry is a diverse sector comprised of hotel and restaurant businesses, but also leisure and culture activities and wider experience economy of creative industries. Greenandsustainable tourism is an important future growth area within the tourism industry.

In the early 1990's Danish tourism increased, but the growth has come to a standstill for the past 10 years. For the last years there has been a decrease in the number of overnight stays by foreign tourists and this happens while the tourism industry globally is going through high growth. Experts and stakeholders believe that politics more than economics is a conditional driver for growth in the tourism industry [2]. It is acknowledged in the Danish tourist industry that there are serious problems of stagnation; there is a need for renewal. Tourist industries in Denmark's neighboring countries are "doing much better", which underlines the importance of serious innovation in the industry. The lack of upgrading of the tourism workforce is closely linked to the current stagnation, and therefore it is important to take the right steps towards new ways of educating the tourism workforce now.

There is a need for innovative new products, services and concepts and Nordic Innovation Centre (governed by the Nordic Council of Ministers) has long focussed on disseminating best practices [3] and pointing out that it takes new modes of collaboration for the utilization of resources [4]. In other words communication and collaboration skills are extremely important for the tourism industry.

The Danish level of education is unequally distributed among different business sectors, and employees in the tourism industry have a relatively low level of formal education. The educational profile of the employees in tourism shows a lower level of formal competencies than in the average in Denmark. About one third of the workforce in tourism has no education after primary school and half has only secondary school as highest level of education. The workforce is younger than the average workforce (30% compared with 14% average) and very seasonal oriented in terms of activity levels. Oxford Research has conducted a study for the Danish Ministry of Education [2], outlining the Danish tourism industry's future need for up-skilling the workforce. Their assessment is that there will be a demand for 3.000 – 10.000 new full-time employees in the industry by 2015, and one third of these must be professionals. There is broad agreement that within the tourism industry there is a need for a change in the educational level of the employees in the future, meaning less employees will have no formal education and more educated employees will be needed, including many more with short and medium-length higher education [2 p.33]. 75 % of the interviewed companies in the survey report that they expect to employ more business graduates (professionals). The study also reveals that there are already difficulties in recruiting the necessary manpower. There is a decrease in the number of students who complete training within a tourism relevant sector, and many skilled employees are leaving the industry, particularly in the hotel and catering areas [2 p.6].

When it comes to skills, a number of tourist organizations point out that the tourism industry has to deal with a number of challenges. They state that the realization of Denmark's tourist potential requires qualified personnel with both creative and commercial capabilities. This applies, among other things to market and business development, hosting IT, organization and management, communication, service and innovation [5 p. 21]. Oxford Research emphasizes that the tourism companies they interviewed during their study are demanding stronger personal and social skills [2].

According to Oxford Research the educational needs of the tourism industry should be characterized under the headlines; services and hosting, the experience economy and employees’ ability to be part of a workplace. According to the research, services and hosting are the most sought-after skills in the future tourism industry. Service is a key competitive factor in the current tourism industry, for example an overnight stay at a hotel. In this context, intercultural competencies are part of the service concept as the service must be adapted to the specific situation and the specific customer. Intercultural competence involves both knowledge about other countries’ cultures, but it is also about the employees’ ability to relate this knowledge to the individual company [2 p.49]. The employees must be able to think for themselves and ‘think their workplace into the experience economy’. This competence is needed – also from the professionals. The ability to ‘be part of the workplace’ is a competence that is highly appreciated and sought-after among many companies. It means that the employees must be able to work together and communicate satisfactorily, and also have an understanding of how to contribute to the business and ‘the whole enterprise’.

From an educational point of view, the tourism sector is not only a diverse, but also contradictory sector. From the broader experience economy point of view, it is comprised of the below average formal educated accommodation businesses together with the above average formal educated leisure businesses (Fig. 1.).

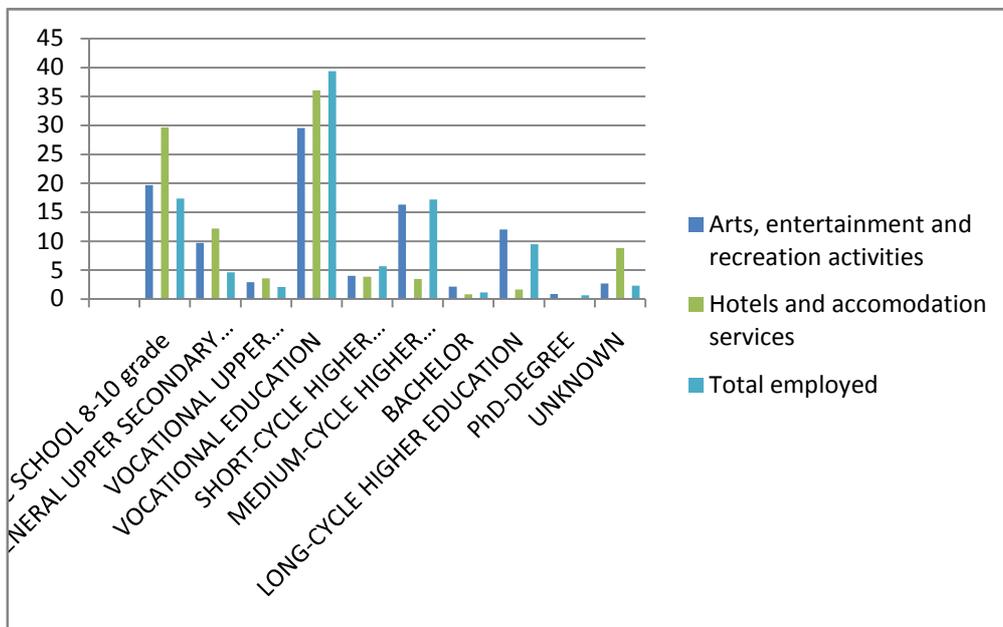


Figure1. Educational profile of experience economy. Employees highest completed formal education in % of total employed in leisure industry, accommodation services and in total in Denmark 2011. [10]

3 NEW TOURISM NICHES

In the Nordic countries attention is turning towards the potentials of new tourism niches, and health, well-being and wellness are among the areas of interest. However, the Nordic countries are definitely not alone in the move towards harvesting the potential in these particular niches. The whole EU is working with green and sustainable tourism. In June 2010, the European commission issued a notice to the European parliament (among others) about a new tourism policy and the establishment of a new action plan to enhance tourism competitiveness and the capacity for sustainable growth [6]. The Commission has introduced a series of tools and initiatives at EU level to help companies manage the environment in a responsible manner.



Green tourism and the desire to brand Denmark as a green nation has been one of the key areas of focus for the marketing of Denmark. The Danish government has adopted an Action Plan for the

Global Marketing of Denmark in 2011-2012, in which eco-tourism is one of the most important parameters. A nation's green reputation spills over into areas like tourism and other industries. In line with this, the company Dual Citizen publishes a Global Green Economy Index, an analytical tool measuring the national green reputations and performance, each year. In fall 2011, the global green tourism index showed that Denmark is in the 4th place when it comes to ACTUAL PERFORMANCE. Depressingly, Denmark is in the 10th place when it comes to PERCEIVED REALITY [7 p.27]. This naturally indicates, that the Danish tourism industry lacks competencies in communicating their actual performance. In a report [6] a number of recommendations are provided to the tourism industry, which point to a number of measures that are considered to be essential in keeping up with the competition and strengthening Denmark's green profile.

Throughout the report, the recommendations refer to websites and search engines that should be upgraded and translated into English. Partnerships are also recommended. The report has the limitation that it does not mention the upgrading of the workforce in the tourism industry as a prerequisite for many of the recommendations can be implemented. OECD and Nordic Innovation have recently published a study of the innovation capacity of 28 tourism companies in 10 countries. The study shows that tourism enterprises lack focus in order to prioritize their work on green innovation [8 p.12, Figure 1]. In the study it is stated that sustainable innovation is typically not prioritized in corporate long-term strategies. Also small- and medium-sized companies have an especial need for new simple tools in order to improve their innovation processes. In the report 'Green business model innovation in the tourism and experience economy' cases from a number of countries including Denmark are analyzed [7]. The researchers identify drivers and barriers to the development of green products and services. They point to the fact that in order to embrace sustainability and to integrate 'green innovation' into the business model of the company, it requires some fundamental changes to the existing way of doing business. The green business model will challenge companies in many ways. To make the step of introducing 'green business model innovation' does not only require courage, but capabilities among managers and owners of tourism and experience based companies must be changed [6 p.11]. As a conclusion to the report, it can be added that in order to achieve these steps it will be required to achieve considerable up-skilling of all the employees of the companies involved.

4 HIGHER EDUCATION FOR TOURISM AND EXPERIENCE ECONOMY

The large supply of HE educational opportunities in environment and sustainability has the limitation that in relation to the needs of the tourism industry that they are generally not interdisciplinary, and are not focused on the necessary 'soft skills' such as collaboration, communication and intercultural competencies. This indicates that the tourism industry could benefit greatly from staff being trained in targeted WBL courses in these areas, and that an interdisciplinary approach upgraded the employees' soft skills with their professional knowledge about the environment and sustainability. Danish employers within the tourism industry express positive interest in receiving educational offers from HEI [9]. For example, 35 % of employers state that if it was relevant or had an impact on their business they would be encouraged to work with an HEI on developing their employees and 23 % of the employers are interested in locally delivered courses. [9 p.61]. This view is confirmed in the two Danish case studies of Guldborgsund Zoo & Botanical Garden and Falster Golf Club as shown in Table 1.

4.1. Case Studies in Denmark

The WBLQUAL project has looked at the employers' view on competence needs and WBL through a number of case studies based on in-depth interviews. The Danish cases are summarized in Table 1.

4.2. Higher Education in Tourism and Environment

The demand for competence building and higher education in tourism has been indicated in the literature cited above. There are many challenges for the sector, which is why the supply of higher education programs is of interest. In Table 2, the supply of HE tourism and environmental programs in Denmark is listed according to the faculties in which they are offered. It may be surprising here to see how traditional the supply of programs are as they are distributed with humanities faculties exclusively active in the tourism sector, the social sciences faculties are actively mixing business and technical programs, while the natural and health sciences are exclusively active in environment and sustainability programs.

The case studies Guldborgsund Zoo & Botanical Garden (GZBG) and Falster Golf Club(FGC) are typical of organisations in the Danish tourism industry as they are operating in the experience economy, have similar problems to other companies in the survey of Danish employers [9] and show similar employment needs. It is apparent, however, that their approaches to HEI and WBL are different. For instance, GZBG has problems recruiting workers with language skills, whereas FGC regards itself as having a well-skilled workforce. Both organizations are co-operating with local educational institutions and training partners and both regard 'added value' in terms of 'soft' factors such as increased motivation and job satisfaction. Neither company has a formal or fixed strategy for educating the workforce in the workplace in conjunction with accredited HEI qualifications (i.e. WBL).

Table 1. Case studies of Danish tourism companies on competence needs and HE [9].

<p>Guldborgsund Zoo & BotanicalGarden www.guldborgsundzoo.dk 24 employees.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foreign language skills, especially German is a major problem for the organisation. Social skills concerning tolerance and competence development is also a problem for the organisation. A business understanding and sales skills among employees is also a problem for the organisation, especially front desk personnel. • WBL and internal training is the economically most attractive for the organisation. It is a relatively small organisation with limited means for external training of the employees. It is also a limiting factor that it is difficult to have staff away from the workplace for training, leaving tasks undone. • The zoo works together with local vocational training institute and business academy on general business development issues and on practical training of future zookeepers. As part of the municipal organisation, the zoo uses the HR of the municipality for special training activities e.g. a theme on conflict management among employees. • The manager prefers to cooperate with the formal public education system, where quality and price match. The manager proposes that employees (one individual or a group) can participate in special courses of e.g. 10 ECTS at the business academy level with support from the Danish SVU system to compensate the income loss of the employee in the course period. The courses must be relevant and meet the needs of the organisation. • The organisation has not developed any formal or clear strategy for WBL or competence development. Accreditation of qualifications is not considered of any importance by the manager. Competence development is part of the career progression plans for the individual employee, which is developed at the annual employee development talk (MUS). • Added value is understood as increased job satisfaction and self confidence of the employee together with increased effectiveness measured as user satisfaction, i.e. customer satisfaction of the visitors. • Workforce development is seen as a continuous process together with the annual plans and targets of the organisation. It is difficult to measure individual performance accurately, but competence development and WBL is part of the management strategy for overall organisational performance and growth.
<p>Falster Golf Club. www.falster-golfklub.dk 10 employees.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The workforce is well skilled in their respective fields of activity, but general there is a need for improved competences in the areas of management and communication. There is a gap in communicative skills in the organisation considering the many diverse staff groups that need to work together (golf course, restaurant, accommodation) on the location. A special challenge concerns the communication and cooperation between the staff and the members of the golf association who acts as volunteers in different activities. • WBL is not a formal strategy of the organisation, but more informal learning takes place in order to address competence needs. The organisation is relatively small and has very limited resources for internal as well as external training activities. • Falster Golfklub works together with the local vocational training institute on education of an apprentice (EGU) and with a sector specific vocational training institute in Denmark on special courses for green keepers etc. Falster Golfklub also works together with the national golf association (DGU) which offers various courses in e.g. accounting and business law. • The organisation has not developed any formal or clear strategy for WBL or competence development. Accreditation of qualifications is not considered of any

	<p>importance by the manager. It may be considered important for the employee in their career. Competence development is part of the career progression plans for the individual employee, which is developed at the annual employee development talk (MUS).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Added value of workforce development is understood as increased motivation and engagement of the employee together with increased effectiveness in terms of supply of new knowledge to the employee and the organisation. The informal strategy for competence development succeeds in delivering job satisfaction and skills development.
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Table 2. Higher Education in tourism and environment in Denmark 2012.

	Tourism HE Programs	Environment HE Programs
Faculty of Humanities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Tourist Guide with diploma. RUC</i> <i>MA in Tourism. AAU</i> 	
Faculty of Business and Social Sciences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>BSc in Business Administration and Service Management. CBS</i> <i>Bachelor of Leisure Management. Business Academy Sealand</i> <i>Bachelor of Natural and Cultural Heritage Management. University College North Jutland</i> <i>MSc in Service Management. CBS</i> <i>BA.negot in International Tourism and Leisure Management. SDU</i> <i>MSc in International Tourism and Leisure Management (negot). SDU</i> <i>MSc in Experience Management. RUC</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>BSc in Environmental Resource Management. SDU</i> <i>MSc in Environmental and Natural Resource Economics. KU</i> <i>MSc in Environmental and resource management. SDU</i> <i>MSc in Environmental and Energy Law. AU & KU</i>
Faculties of Nature, Science, Health		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>MSc in Technical Environmental Management, DTU</i> <i>MSc in Environmental Management, DTU</i> <i>Technical Diploma in Human Ecology. AAU</i> <i>Diploma & BSc in Sustainable Energy Technology,. AAU & IHK</i> <i>MSc in Environmental Management & Sustainability Science,. AAU.</i> <i>MSc in Urban Planning and Management. AAU</i> <i>MSc in Sustainable Cities. AAU</i> <i>MSc in Sustainable Energy Planning and Management. AAU</i> <i>BSc in Sustainable Energy. IHK</i> <i>BSc in Urban- Energy and Environmental Planning. AAU</i> <i>MSc in Forest Ecosystems, Nature and Society. KU</i> <i>BSc in Natural resources. KU</i> <i>MSc in Sustainable Development in Agriculture. KU</i> <i>Master in Agro-Environmental Management. AU</i> <i>MSc in Environmental Engineering. DTU</i> <i>MSc in Urban-, Energy- and Environmental planning. AAU</i> <i>MSc in Environmental Planning-TEKSAM. RUC</i> <i>Environmental Biology. RUC</i> <i>BSc in Sustainable Biotechnology. AAU</i> <i>MSc in Water and Environment: KU</i> <i>MSc in Sustainable Energy. DTU</i> <i>MSc in Wind Energy. DTU.</i> <i>MSc in Sustainable Biotechnology. AAU</i> <i>MSc in Wind Power. AAU</i>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>MSc in Water and Environment. AAU</i> • <i>MSc in Indoor Environmental and Energy Engineering. AAU</i> • <i>MSc in Sustainable Energy Technology (from 2013). AAU</i> • <i>MSc in Chemistry, Environment and Biotechnology. AAU</i> • <i>MSc in Engineering - Energy Technology. SDU</i> • <i>BSc in Public Health. SDU</i> • <i>MSc in Public Health. SDU</i>
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Note: AAU=Aalborg University, AU= Aarhus University, CBS= Copenhagen Business School, DTU=Technical University of Denmark, IHK=Copenhagen University College of Engineering, KU= Copenhagen University, RUC= Roskilde University, SDU=University of Southern Denmark.

5 FUTURE WORK-BASED HIGHER LEARNING

Danish lifelong learning and further education can take place at the diploma, bachelor and masters level as part time studies. Admission to a master program normally requires a minimum of three years of prior work experience on top of a bachelor's degree or equivalent. The part time programs are financed by admission fees paid to the institution. A diploma program is designed for two years of part-time study (i.e. half of a normal working week) and a master's program also requires two years of part time study. Recent statistics referring to the education system in Denmark [11] indicate that the provision of higher degrees from HEIs in Denmark is not well matched to the needs of either of the companies in the case study or many of the other companies in the WBLQUAL survey [10].

Studies as part of the European-side WBLQUAL research project [10] suggest that WBL in higher education can be defined by the following characteristics:

- A partnership between a business organization and a higher education institution with a formal agreement and infrastructure for cooperation;
 - The employees to engage as learners are contractually related to the business organization, education is negotiated to reflect the needs of the workplace and the learner;
 - Work is the curriculum and recognition of current competencies and learning is in place. Learning takes place at the workplace with advice and support from within the organization and from the educational institution;
 - Learning outcomes of negotiated programs are assessed by educational institution, often transdisciplinary in nature and subject of quality control.
- These characteristics form the basis for the working definition of WBL taken as part of the WBLQUAL project on work based learning qualifications and higher education in the European Union [10].

5.1. Challenges for Higher Education WBL

Political/legislative challenges for upgrading the level of education in the Tourism Industry through WBL.

A very important factor for the upgrading of the level of education in the tourism industry is, of course, that there is political support, which can facilitate the introduction of WBL at HEI. One of the recommendations that a number of tourism organizations provide is to organize a national strategy with initiatives to boost skills development in order to train sufficient employees with the necessary skills [5]. Nordic Innovation is pinpointing partnerships as a key driver of green innovation. They conclude that policy considerations must support the tourism providers with driving forces that motivates them to develop wellbeing products that knit together collaborative structures [4].

Danish legislation provides some challenges regarding the creation of customized university courses (WP5, Denmark). In an interview with a danish HEI program leader, it is explained that if the university desired to deliver teaching approaches that "really work", the university would be "relatively close to the edge of what is legal in Denmark" [12]. Danish regulation requires that learners/students who lack formal competencies as secondary education, (which is a mandatory entry requirement for business Diploma program in Denmark, can seek to obtain recognition of their skills through The Prior Learning Assessment System (Realkompetence målings systemet). But not many use the system because it is expensive.

The Danish Prior Learning Assessment System is based on law no. 556, adopted on the 6th of June, 2007. EVA, the National Evaluation Institute of Denmark has conducted comparative research about the current design of the system and points to three main problems for HEIs:

1. Prior learning is primarily recognized as giving access to educations and to a lesser degree as compensation for or shortening of training;
2. Knowledge of the system is very limited among the population;
3. The professionals that are conducting the assessments are not well enough trained for the task.

Another barrier to the deployment of the system is an economic one. If the competence assessments are made in relation to business goals that are not identical to the educational goals, then it is outside what can be financed within the law and may not be practical for this reason alone.

Challenges at HEI-level for upgrading of the level of education in the tourism Industry through WBL.

In an in-depth interview with an employee employed in Danish company within the experience economy (WP4, Denmark), the informant explains that she was very motivated to do a training course in order to improve her performance at the workplace. She also tells that her workplace doesn't have any educational partner. She explains that although she was almost satisfied with the course, she missed it being tailored specifically for her organization. Due to the season-shifts within the experience industry, courses should take place during low-season and the informant claims that HEI should offer middle length courses instead of very long courses. The research thus provides indications that HEI should offer flexible and tailored training. However, our research also indicates that there are some big challenges for Danish universities in order to offering targeted WBL courses including attitudes among the employees of the university, the organizational structure of the university (including the existing and the recognized career paths within academia), the university employees' competencies, etc.

One of the barriers is attitudes within academia about the role and purpose of universities and their educational offerings. Our research shows that attitudes among HEI employees at management and academic level constitute a major obstacle for the implementation of WBL courses. The attitudes can be summed up under the headings; 'The academic standard will decline if education is being based on the learner's work' and 'Personalized learning offers will be too expensive'. Both at the academic and the managing level, the informants are pointing to the existing accreditation system for the learning activities as a barrier to WBL [12]. For an example a faculty manager is pointing to the ECTS system, claiming that it would not be possible to organize the number of exams that would be required in order to approve each ECTS for each student even though that in theory it would be possible to divide the existing courses into smaller chunks because this would increase the costing of organizing the necessary exams. [12].

In order to make more individually targeted educational offers, it would require fundamental organizational changes at the university. In order for the offered training to meet the tourism industry's need for interdisciplinary skills, cooperation between different departments at the university should be strengthened. At the same time a specialized unit should be established, specifically working to build targeted WBL courses and find the suitable supervisor forces among the population of teachers and researchers from different departments of the university. This point to another challenge at the university level: the competencies of the employees. The challenge is that the employees need to be change-oriented. There is a need of change in the way the research programs are being organized; in order to develop an excellent WBL training it's necessary to focus on educating interdisciplinary researchers. Here the credit structure of the university is a major problem: As it is now, there is neither money nor recognition in being an interdisciplinary scientist. If the university should/must be able to deliver a customized learning offer to the employees of an employer the educational training should cover elements from different disciplines/faculties, and thereby it is crucial that staff is offered alternative career paths and that these career paths are being recognized equally to existing career paths [12].

Challenges at Company-level for upgrading of the level of education in the Tourism Industry through WBL.

The Danish WBLQUAL cases from the tourism sector (Table 1) points to some important challenges for higher education from the employer point of view. An important barrier is the costs for SMEs with a limited



budget for further education. Another barrier is the information about the many program possibilities. A third is the resources needed in terms of time for employees to engage in higher learning activities. The survey among employers within the tourist sector also points to the need for higher learning activities to take place in proximity to the workplace. Oxford Research draws attention to the fact that employers also have a responsibility to provide a good framework for the development of the employees' personal and social skills [2 p.7]. With this in mind, it is important to develop good cooperation between HEI and the workplace. The study by Oxford Research also recommends the need to create a more attractive working environment in the tourism industry, which can help the retaining of skilled workers. The educated tourism workers interviewed by Oxford Research mention the working conditions and the workplace environments as reasons for leaving the industry after a few years [2 p.34]. This confirms our assumption that the training effort, that should take place should largely focus on the employees' social skills, also when it comes to the internal work environment in the workplace. But it also highlights the corporate responsibility to be aware of their own share in that students and employees may be included in the workplace. For example Legoland, the Danish amusement park, highlights that the employees must be offered professional and personal development, and that the organization must have a social culture of community and team spirit. In the same vein Meyers Deli, a Danish company in the restaurant industry mentions that schools should focus on social and personal skills, but that the companies also must follow up with courses in personal and social development [2, pp.54–55].

5.2. Strategies for Higher Education WBL

A number of indicators in our research points to WBL as a very appropriate method for upgrading the workforce and meet the needs of the tourism industry. Upgrading of the tourism workforce is necessary in order to keep up with the rest of the world and the tourism workforce need to be strengthened in a number of areas such as innovation, partnerships, cooperation etc. The seasonal nature of the industry should be seen as an advantage because the employees outside the high season have the opportunity to engage in education.

Enablers

Universities must change on both organizational and attitude levels. For an example, universities ought to organize and recognize other (interdisciplinary) career paths. WBL requires universities to seek a more problem-oriented approach, which emphasizes the need for universities to strive for developing career paths that are recognizing interdisciplinary skills as the role of tutor in WBL learning differs from the one in traditional teaching model. There is a need for the further development of legislative structures to support a more demand-led approach of universities. One example could be to make it easier and less expensive for learners to seek to obtain recognition of their skills through The Danish Prior Learning Assessment System. Positive steps has already been taken as a new Danish law which comes into force from 1/1 – 2013 are making the pass criteria for academic courses more flexible. For example it becomes possible to use "presence/participating in the course" as a pass criterion. The existing "prior learning assessment system" in Denmark can also be developed to meet the needs of WBL models. In order for the system to provide a broader approach to the needs of individual citizens, it would be an advantage if special institutions, separated from interests in relation to educational institutions, were to be responsible for assessment and recognition of prior learning. Another idea would be to let the assessment take place at the workplace (as it happens in Finland), this would provide the employees the possibility to be assessed in a more realistic context. In Norway a concept of competence certificates based on in-house competence assessment in relation to company-specific goals are being used. If this system is implemented in the Danish context it would provide the companies the advantage of improving their work with systematic skills, and thus these competence certificates could form part of the Danish Prior Learning Assessment of the employees. Following some of the recommendations that EVA gives, the Danish Ministry of Education could consider the economic structure of the system, where currently there is very little incentive for using the system and that the professionals responsible for the assessments are being educated better [14].

It is also crucial to change the attitude among employees in HEIs. There is a tendency to see the role of the universities as a provider of theoretical, not practical, education and training. The attitudes among university staff is, of course, closely linked to the educational structure and recognition system of the university. In order to change employees' attitudes new career paths must be developed and recognized [15]. University of Southern Denmark has already started to create customized courses that are tailor-made for specific sectors. This positive willingness to engage with employers needs is an important step towards making it possible to implement WBL at the university. There are employees among university staff that sees the



potential in offering education taking place in the workplace. The Danish employers within the tourism industry express positive interest in receiving educational offers from HEI [9]. Having one third of tourism SMEs to express positive interest in higher education and WBL must be considered as a very positive message to move forward in this direction.

6 CONCLUSIONS

The work enables the following concise conclusions to be drawn. Flexible WBL programs are found to be suitable for the tourism industry and needs to be developed within the higher education institutions in Denmark. With the demand for HE in tourism and environment and the wide range of educational opportunities related to the tourism industry and (green) experience economy, alignment efforts are needed. WBL when offered to the tourism industry must be designed in a flexible and negotiated way due to the diverse and cross-disciplinary competence needs of the sector and the working of the targeted industry with many seasonally occupied employees

Employers and HEIs are key agents for changing the drivers for WBL, from the individual learners to the participating organizations, thus investing in learning together with employees to improve the organizations performance and competitiveness.

A negotiated curriculum in the tripartite relationship of employers, learners and higher education institutions is the way forward for a demand-led approach to higher learning [10].

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DISCLAIMER

This publication reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

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