

This paper is a result of my opportunity to go to Denmark and experience their technical education program, along with their work fields and culture. I will briefly compare Denmark and the United States from my limited observations granted to me by Scan Design.

Denmark is a society that not only learns from the past it also builds off the past and coincides with it. In the city of Copenhagen there are ancient builds right next to modern construction they contrast and yet compliment one another. An example of this is that the new buildings have not only improved on their earlier design, but have taken aspects of them and included them. One design aspect is their love of ascending elegant staircases. Staircases in old churches give an idea of ascending, growing and developing. In the new construction staircases can be a sign of power, reaching new heights, and always moving forward and upward.



Denmark is moving forward in the area of wind energy. I had the opportunity to tour Vesta, one of the production floors for their many types of windmills. The windmills I went to see can power an American household for an entire year with just 3 hours of rotations. It is crazy to think that the technology in these windmills is about three times more complicated that what we used to land the first man on the moon. Denmark is moving forward towards clean energy as well. Sometimes they use older power sources, such as coal plants, but Denmark reduces emissions to a minuscule amount in these coal plants. Denmark is also studying new sources of energy such as wave energy.



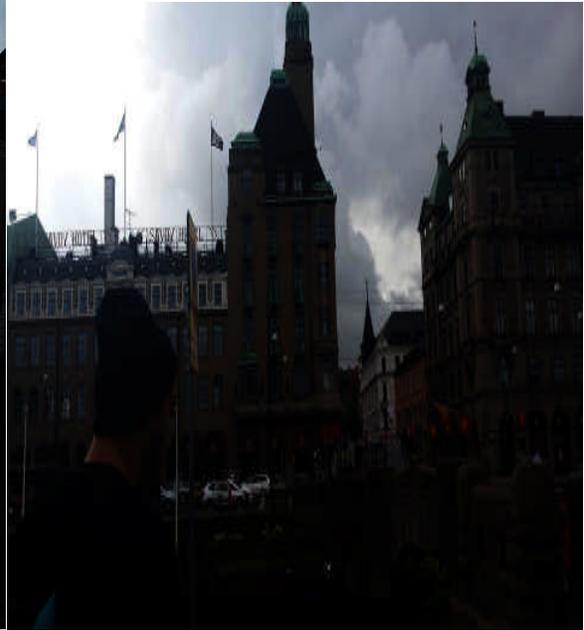
We can see the same crossover from old to new in the ways education and careers have developed in Denmark as well. Denmark has taken the traditions of apprenticeships, which is one of the oldest forms of education and have coupled it with our newer forms of education. One key of moving upward and forward in careers is their self-dependence. For example, in every ship we toured there was a complete workshop in the engine room with lathes, tools, TIG welders and more. These shops allow



them to manufacture parts they need. Manufacturing everything themselves may not be the cheapest option, but they know they can depend on the part to meet their specifications. Manufacturing most things also creates work for people in Denmark. In some ways this makes their education broader, because in each field they need a wide variety of skills, so that they can produce what they need. Compare this to America where the screws come from China, the computer programming from India and the motor from Germany.

America is built from the people of many nations. Denmark on the other hand is surrounded by many nations. Denmark can get up close and examine how other nations around them work and educate their people. This gives Denmark many opportunities to learn from other countries' successes and mistakes. This proximity may cause Denmark to be more aware of their competition and how outsourcing can affect their prosperity. Denmark like many European countries, have come to give their technical trades a greater value than we tend to in the United States. People are encouraged to go into technical schools, and their schools tends to be more apprenticeship focused. For example, you have approximately four years of education, but in the end you have spent about 1 year in school and three years in the field. Students switch back and forth from being in school and working in their field. Also, students are paid their hourly work wages while in school. Of course Denmark's taxes are much higher than our taxes, (I have heard there taxes are 60%). For the most part people in Denmark have a good work ethic so this system works for them. I do not think it would work as well in America, because some American's seem to lack work ethic. Sometimes Americans also appear to lack understanding of other cultures.

I went to both Germany and Sweden while I was in Denmark, because they have open borders and fantastic transportation in Europe. Transportation is one advantage of having a small country that has been around a long time. Denmark has a strong infrastructure of train transportation. Some statistics say Denmark has a ratio of two bicycles to one person, of course it helps that Denmark is relatively flat geographically. Similar to the train infrastructure there are well maintained bike routes.



One reason people may choose bicycles over cars is that cars are taxed at 108%. Not only does tax double the price of your car you must keep it well maintained. The government requires you to bring your car in every other year for maintenance and admissions check. How many cars would pass a maintenance and admissions check in Whatcom County? Denmark continues to update and maintain their transportation systems so they do not become relics of the past.

We can be critical towards the United States, but we have not been around as long as Denmark. The true measure of the United States is what we can amount to in the long run. Can we learn a lesson from Denmark, by looking at where the people of our nation have come from and learning from the successes and mistakes of their cultures?

I feel companies like Scan Design are leading the way in providing students with a broader understanding of the global workforce, and how to find a place in it. I would personally like to thank them for giving me this experience which will help hone my international skills with regards to my career in the future.



Sincerely,

Jonathan Lawler