AALBORG UNIVERSITY
DENMARK

The multilayer challenges that underpin Danish SME's while recruiting and retaining an international/culturally diverse workforce and strategies to overcome/mitigate them.

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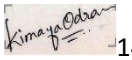
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Executive Summary/Background

This research takes inspiration and extension from the Fall 2020 internship at an agricultural advisory firm, founded in 2008, headquartered in Aalborg, Denmark called Agri Nord (AN) where the researcher was working for the human resource department as an international recruitment intern for a period of four months internationalizing to India for potential interns enrolled full-time at an agricultural and veterinary university to work for Danish farms. The main activities of AN, the pilot company, about their recruitment department and the researcher's role at the company can be found in appendices (1). Moreover, for firms who want to internationalize or manage their diverse workforce, it is crucial for them to understand how culture varies across countries and influences international human resource management (IHRM). As such, among the several widely known cultural theories such as Hofstede, Hall and Trompenaars, Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory was used to look in-depth at the major cultural differences between Denmark and India in terms of working culture, leadership styles, lifestyle and way of communicating as India was their new market for recruiting interns in (Appendix 1). During the internship period, the author made some observations and came up with some recommendations to take note of and build upon what the firm does well, to address shortcomings so risks can be minimized, to inspect and examine what they have been doing so far and propose novel ideas for them to do better. Those observations are discussed using SWOT analysis in the above (Appendix 1) which is a useful framework for analyzing AN strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. Based on the internship role, practical experience gained and observations made at the organization, the research problem was formulated.

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Abstract

A 2020 report from DI (Confederation of Danish Industry), Denmark's largest employer and business organization representing over 18,000 small and large companies states that the shortage of qualified labor is indeed a reality for many Danish companies today and much implies that it will be one of the substantial challenges for them in the future. Therefore, a lot of businesses are looking abroad when they are searching for new employees. International employees not only contribute with competences and know–how that generates growth in Danish companies but also bring value to the Danish society and economy. A number of reports in recent years have shown a correlation between the presence of global talent in Danish companies with increased competitiveness and economic growth.

International workforce is worth considering for all companies, regardless of size and stature, with growth ambitions for the coming years; however, a lot of questions arise, and many considerations need to be made when a company is recruiting or planning to recruit internationally and welcoming new international employees. An important question that needs to be asked is whether Danish businesses are actually ready to welcome and integrate an international workforce and how knowledgeable and resilient their staff is about other cultures, customs and communication norms? This is not always a smooth sailing type of process. First, it is crucial that the company becomes acquainted with the legislative requirements when recruiting global talent. Second, companies need to identify why it is relevant to recruit an international talent, what is the purpose of the hire and what set of expectations the company might have. This will make it easier for them to prepare for welcoming the new worker and to ensure that both the parties find the experience satisfactory. One of the vital considerations to be made is whether the internal communication should be in English or Danish. Lastly, it is important for management to allocate the necessary resources to ensure a smooth process both for the firm and for the future employee not only in relation to the hiring process, but also long term in order to retain the international talent in the company (Guide to International Recruitment 2020, 2020).

The purpose of this research is to make a meaningful contribution to the field of IHRM and the target audience for this study are the Danish Small Medium Enterprises (SMEs) who recruit, manage and retain expats. Also, the research area and problem were selected due to personal interest in the subject domain while internationalizing to India considering huge psychic distance and multiple cultural differences between both countries. The general belief is that a

greater psychic distance creates instabilities that might affect a firm's entrance into any market. Differences within the social and business environment of two markets create distance, which can cause instability and uncertainty. Such differences incorporate society, culture, language, religion, economic development, education, representation, governmental issues, financial conditions, market structure, and business practices. Nevertheless, with globalization on the horizon for many firms around the globe, having a culturally diverse workforce could be leveraged to help their business expand worldwide.

Despite multifold benefits of having an international workforce there is a gap between the concept of IHRM and its practical implementation due to multiple challenges/barriers underpinning these Danish SMEs. As a result, this study will aim to answer:

The multilayer challenges that underpin Danish SME's while recruiting and retaining an international/culturally diverse workforce and strategies to overcome/mitigate them.

Key words: Challenges, Danish, Small Medium Enterprises (SMEs), International, Recruitment, Culture, Diversity, Expat, IHRM, Retention, Strategies, Denmark.

Chapter I. Introduction

Since this chapter forms the main body of the entire study, it focuses on the definition of SMEs, the number of SMEs in Denmark, their contribution to the Gross Domestic product (GDP), how many people are employed by these SMEs followed by how the study is structured and the identification of the research problem.

Figure 1. Definition of an SME

Definition of SMEs as per the European Commission Recommendation of 6 May 2003

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are defined in the EU recommendation 2003/361.

The main factors determining whether an enterprise is an SME are

1. **staff headcount**
2. either **turnover** or **balance sheet total**

Company category	**Staff headcount**	**Turnover**	or	**Balance sheet total**
Medium-sized	< 250	≤ € 50 m		≤ € 43 m
Small	< 50	≤ € 10 m		≤ € 10 m
Micro	< 10	≤ € 2 m		≤ € 2 m

Source: (SME definition, n.d.)

According to the European Commission, global markets are an important source of progress for SMEs not only limited to Denmark but around the European Union (EU). Expanding the internationalization of SMEs and helping them access third markets is essential for Europe's economic growth, competitiveness and innovation. Strong reasons point out that in the coming years, an estimated 90% of global growth will originate outside the EU and that emerging markets are expected to account for 60% of world GDP by 2030. Hence, SMEs can play a crucial role in global value chains given the increased market integration (SME internationalisation beyond the EU, n.d.).

When it comes to Denmark, the big business houses are not what constitute the backbone of the Danish economy. According to the confederation of Danish industry, SME's are considered growth locomotives and form a significant part of the economy as they make up 99% of

Denmark's businesses. There are roughly 300,000 of them nationwide and in a class of their own by the special high-growth companies and a whopping 94 percent of Denmark's high-growth companies are these SMEs (Olsen, 2019).

Figure 2. SMEs basic figures

1. SMEs — basic figures

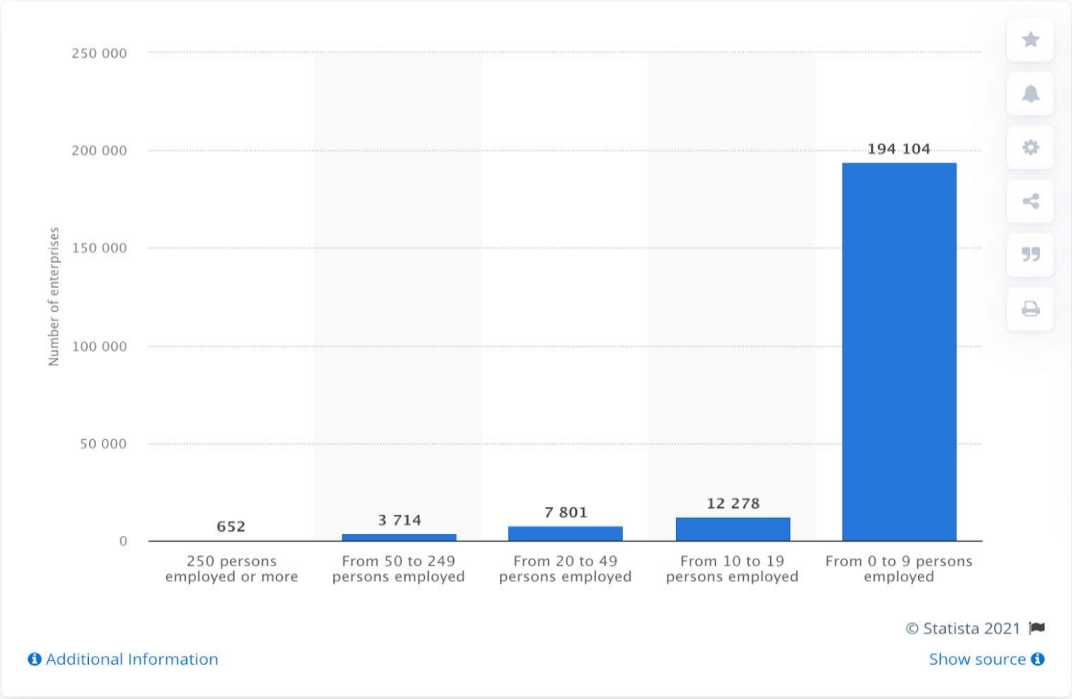
Class size	Number of enterprises			Number of persons employed			Value added		
	Denmark		*EU*	Denmark		*EU*	Denmark		*EU*
	Number	Share	*Share*	Number	Share	*Share*	Billion €	Share	*Share*
Micro	200,849	88.2%	93.0%	337,192	18.8%	*29.7%*	28.9	19.3%	*20.8%*
Small	21,977	9.6%	5.9%	416,928	23.2%	*20.1%*	29.1	19.5%	*17.6%*
Medium-sized	4,276	1.9%	0.9%	395,665	22.1%	*16.8%*	33.0	22.0%	*18.0%*
SMEs	**227,102**	**99.7%**	**99.8%**	**1,149,785**	**64.1%**	***66.6%***	**91.0**	**60.8%**	***56.4%***
Large	727	0.3%	0.2%	643,673	35.9%	*33.4%*	58.7	39.2%	*43.6%*
Total	**227,829**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**1,793,458**	**100.0%**	***100.0%***	**149.7**	**100.0%**	***100.0%***

These are estimates for 2018 produced by DIW Econ, based on 2008-16 figures from the Structural Business Statistics Database (Eurostat). The data cover the 'non-financial business economy', which includes industry, construction, trade, and services (NACE Rev. 2 sections B to J, L, M and N), but not enterprises in agriculture, forestry and fisheries and the largely non-market service sectors such as education and health. The following size-class definitions are applied: micro firms (0-9 persons employed), small firms (10-49 persons employed), medium-sized firms (50-249 persons employed), and large firms (250+ persons employed). The advantage of using Eurostat data is that the statistics are harmonised and comparable across countries. The disadvantage is that for some countries the data may be different from those published by national authorities.

Source: (Denmark 2019 SBA Fact Sheet, 2019)

The total number of enterprises in the non-financial business economy in Denmark in 2016, by size class of employment as published by Statista Research Department exhibits that in 2016, there were 652 enterprises with 250 or more employees in Denmark whereas a whopping 194,104 firms with 0 to 9 employees on board.

Figure 3. Total number of enterprises in the non-financial business economy in Denmark in 2016, by size class of employment



Source: (Denmark: Enterprises in the non-financial business economy 2016, by employment size, 2021)

The SMEs, just like the bigger companies, are among the most innovative businesses interested in exploring and gaining new knowledge and advancing their businesses (Lykkegaard, 2021). Although this may be true, these SMEs are still uncharted territory and do face their share of challenges which impedes their development and apart from tedious, inflexible labor laws and lack of the usage of flexible forms of employment, lack of qualified personnel in the labor market tops as one of their major obstacles (Jedynak, 2015). So, it is important and relevant to reflect on the challenges they face while recruiting and retaining a culturally diverse workforce.

Structure

To present the research, the study is structured as follows:

Section 1 is the introduction chapter which serves as the roadmap for the study; stating crucial statistics about Danish SMEs and identification of the research problem.

Section 2 covers the review of literature. The review first defines the various concepts or theoretical constructs, proposing relations between them followed by what are the multilayer challenges that Danish SMEs face before, during and after hiring expats while arguing some of the pros and cons of having multicultural teams while also understanding the increasing

importance of culture and how it impacts hiring and retention. Next, the author tries to find out the top reasons for attrition i.e what attracts people to good companies and what leads them to quit. Finally, strategies and ideas for integration and retention of international employees are proposed.

The subsequent section represents the reasoning approach (philosophical) and methodology, research design and strategy. The research philosophy implemented has been that of interpretivism because the nature of reality is socially constructed. The approach to the study is inductive and made use of qualitative research in the sense that there will be no numeric or quantitative data in order to answer the research question. The research used case study as the research strategy. Data was collected using both primary and secondary sources. In terms of sampling strategy, a purposive sampling technique was used in order to recruit participants. Also, since the research is exploratory in nature, the study made use of triangulation because triangulation gave the author the opportunity to approach the research objectives from different standpoints and draw better connections between the different variables.

Finally, findings and discussion are presented leading to logical conclusions and suggestions for future research to guide more scholarly work in this field. Based on the findings in this study, it can be concluded that both; the companies in Denmark and expats who arrive can experience multiple hardships and cultural challenges when living and working in Denmark, however it depends greatly on their personality, upbringing, generation and educational background. It is further concluded that people's behaviours are also strongly affected by their cultural background.

Identification of problems

The entire international hiring process offers a lot of points, where the problems could arise, due to upbringing and cultural differences between the employer and the employee. HR activities in organizations face diverse challenges in practice, such as occupational shifts, growth in casual workers, quality of available workforce, technological shifts; gender diversity; age limit, racial/ethnic diversity, globalization and organizational restructuring (Adeniji & Osibanjo, 2012). As such, the process of recruiting diverse employees is vastly different and complex as compared to hiring from within the home country in which the business already operates. The challenges can begin even before the entire process of recruitment kicks off as Danes focus mostly on the language skills while forgetting that the candidates come from distinct cultural backgrounds. There are multiple steps in the overall process and a lot of moving pieces to juggle including intricate issues like work permits, visas, ensuring the

willingness of the candidates to relocate, authenticating their credentials, expatriation costs, mitigating relocation difficulties, instilling cultural awareness, onboarding, handling culture shock etc. The employees can sometimes be misled or taken advantage of by the employer due to cultural differences leading to many problems. Thus, a solid process is a decisive component of the international hiring process, to ensure there are no hiccups along the way and after the expats arrive.

Knowing the greatest challenges of managing an international workforce will allow a firm to prepare accordingly, and this preparation could be make-or-break between a sizable investment and that investment's success. The objective of this study is to obtain a critical evaluation of the challenges faced by Danish SMEs while hiring and retaining international workforce and how those challenges can be mitigated. As such, the challenges faced by the pilot company Agri Nord, a Danish SME based in Denmark shall be uncovered. In addition, four Danish SMEs were targeted in order to determine what stressors they have, what are the main cultural differences and if the part of the country they come from also plays a part in relation to adjustment. Most of the data is based both, on semi structured interviews with employees of the HR department or people from top management. That will help to get a different perspective and to design and come up with better solutions and suggest a future research outline to guide more scholarly work in this field. The scope of the study is however limited to the descriptions of recruitment and selection practices of these SMEs while industry level problems were excluded. The following research topics (RT)/themes emerged in order to answer the overall RQ: ***The multilayer challenges that underpin Danish SME's while recruiting and retaining an international/culturally diverse workforce and strategies to overcome/mitigate them.***

I. Pros and Cons of Diversity in the Workplace

The issue with diversity is that it takes governments and companies out of their comfort zone and if diversity is so important, why don't companies in Denmark have more of it? As such, this question will aim to argue and answer some of the pros and cons of having multicultural teams where cons are the multilayer challenges that Danish SMEs face before, during and after hiring expats while also understanding the increasing importance of culture and how it impacts hiring and retention.

II. The top reasons for attrition - what attracts people to good companies and why do people leave?

There are a number of reasons top employees start looking to see if the grass is greener on the other side. Since people nowadays are very particular about workplace culture, this question will aim to answer the top reasons why people quit their jobs i.e what leads to expatriation failure while also understanding how organizational culture plays a major role in increasing the probability that employees will stay longer with them.

III. Strategies and ideas for integration and retention of international employees.

There is a great deal of pressure on the organizations to keep their most talented resources and provide them with the best environment and benefits for the benefit of the organization in the long run. Hence recommendations for retaining and integrating a new international employee successfully will be discussed.

Chapter II. Literature Review

In this chapter, the review first defines the key concepts or theoretical constructs, proposing relations between them followed by three different themes which lead to understanding of what are the multilayer challenges that Danish SMEs face before, during and after hiring expats while arguing some of the pros and cons of having multicultural teams while also understanding the increasing importance of culture (national/organizational) and how it impacts hiring and retention. Next, the author tries to find out the top reasons for attrition i.e what attracts people to good companies and what leads them to quit. Finally, strategies and ideas for integration and retention of international employees are identified. Then, a conceptual model has been developed based on such findings in figure 5. The review resulted in identifying 72 challenges that underpin companies and 74 possible ideas/strategies to overcome/mitigate those challenges.

Since IHRM is distinguished from domestic HRM and is all about recruiting and selecting the best cultural fit i.e an expat for international assignments in a more complex international environment (Adeniji & Osibanjo, 2012); (Ahmad, Rehman, & Ali, 2019) the concepts of HRM, recruitment, selection, IHRM, culture and expat play a major role in the investigation and will later be measured, they are essential concepts to define within the framework. Starting with the former and concluding with the latter, this section briefly introduces the historical origins of the concepts, compares and synthesizes the chosen definitions, and discusses the notions' relevance. The difference between recruitment and selection is important to understand and therefore defined separately due to clear distinction (Otoo, Assuming, & Agyei, 2018). While recruitment refers to the process where talented applicants are searched for, and then encouraged to apply for a vacant position, selection is the process of choosing the best fit among the shortlisted candidates and offering them a job (Arora, Lasune, & Karande, 2014). Knowledge about these terms and their relationship is relevant for conceptual clarity, as well as to reveal the goals and interest behind the use of these terms by academia, companies and policymakers.

I. Key Concepts

Human Resource Management (HRM)

Much has been written and debated in the literature regarding the field HRM; its contents, practices and applications, and its scope and limitations (Adeniji & Osibanjo, 2012). HRM has been argued to be a substitute of the term personnel management in firms. In this light, scholars like Armstrong (1987) saw HRM as 'old wine in new bottles' while; Guest (1987) argued that HRM is not a replacement but by some way differs from personnel management (Adeniji & Osibanjo, 2012). Storey (1995) built on this definition and defined HRM as "a idiosyncratic approach to employment management which seeks to achieve competitive advantage through the strategic lineup of a highly committed and capable workforce, using an integrated array of structural, cultural and personnel techniques" (Odrani, 2020).

In addition, Boxall & Purcell (2000) argue that "HRM involves anything and everything associated with the management of employment relationships in the firm." whereas Byars & Rue (2004) defined HRM as "activities designed to provide for and coordinate the human resources of an organization" (Adeniji & Osibanjo, 2012); (Odrani, 2020).

Edwin B. Flippo (2007) in addition to the above concepts defined HRM as a personnel function which is concerned with outlining, organizing, procurement, directing, development, compensation, integration, maintenance and separation of HR to the end that social, organizational and individual objectives are accomplished (Kejriwal, Prajapati, & Gaikwad, 2015).

Edwin B. Flippo's definition is the most relevant to the aims of this study, given the emphasis it places on how employees should be managed in order to successfully achieve objectives.

Recruitment & Selection

Authors Edwin B. Flippo (1984), Armstrong (2006), Bratton and Gold (2007, page 239) jointly pointed out recruitment is a process aimed at searching for potential aspirants and invigorating them to apply for a vacant position. Flippo further elaborated, terming the process both positive and negative. Positive because recruitment stimulates people to apply for jobs, in order to increase the scope and hiring ratio, i.e. the number of candidates for a job while selection, tends to be negative because it turns downs a good number of those who apply, leaving only the most capable to be signed up. (Raghavendra, Charitha, & Rajitha, 2017); (Otoo, Assuming, & Agyei, 2018); (Mansour, 2015). According to Barber, Wesson, Roberson and Taylor (1999) the hiring

process is effective if it brings an adequate pool of applications making the selection process easier to handle. So to say, the effectiveness of the selection process is directly influenced by whatever happens during the recruitment process (Otoo, Assuming, & Agyei, 2018). According to Bratton and Gold (2007, page 239), Selection is 'the process by which managers and others use specific instruments to choose from a pool of applicants the person(s) most likely to succeed in the job(s), given management goals and legal requirements" (Mansour, 2015); (Otoo, Assuming, & Agyei, 2018).

According to Armstrong (2009), recruitment and selection process comprises four stages: defining requirements, attracting aspirants, selecting the best fit and placing them on the job (Recruitment and Selection (Human Resource Management), n.d.). There are various steps involved in the entire selection process which varies from one firm to the other and between two different jobs thus making the whole procedure lengthy and rigorous as various tests and rounds of interviews have to be taken so that companies get the best fit onboard (Raghavendra, Charitha, & Rajitha, 2017).

International Human Resource Management (IHRM)

The concept of IHRM originated from entrepreneurs who had Subsidiary Business Units (SBUs) across nations and the need to relocate directors or managers to manage these subsidiaries in various countries other than the parent country is said to be in practice since 1900BC. Essentially, there is a need to manage expatriates, and it has been argued that managing international human resources is more convoluted and demanding when compared with domestic HRM (Adeniji & Osibanjo, 2012).

According to Lazarova (2006), IHRM is the term used for firms that manage their conventional HR activities at an international level. Additionally, IHRM may also encompass additional tasks such as expatriate management, numerous industrial relation activities (e.g. varying employment contracts/international collective agreements to meet differing country tax and legal requirements), global succession planning and so on (Adeniji & Osibanjo, 2012); (International HRM, n.d.).

IHRM is a convoluted area which has usually been approached in the literature from three distinct perspectives:

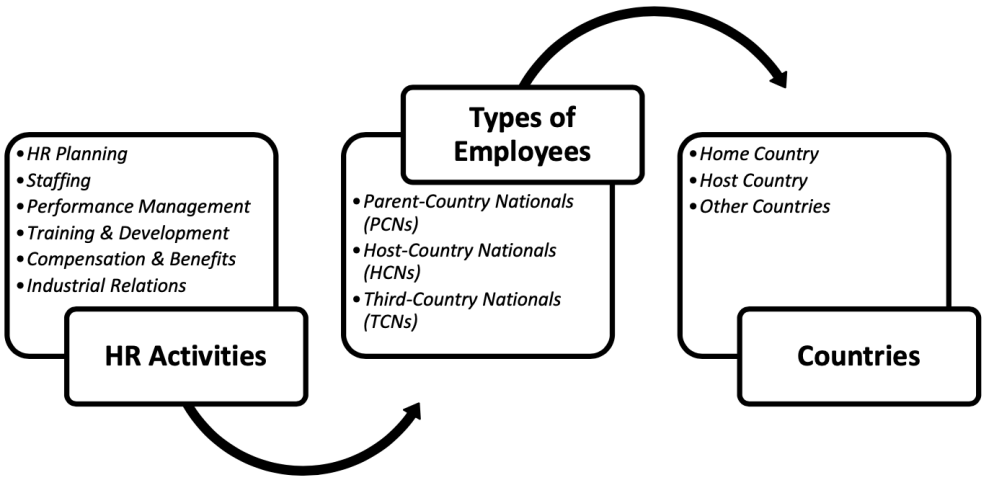
a) Cross-Cultural Management which focuses on differences between nations in terms of values and attitudes which makes them unique, and they are mirrored in the way in which societies operate, the economy operates, and in how employees are managed.

b) Comparative Human Resource Management which explores the degree to which HRM differs between countries. It is the comparison between industrial relations in various countries. So, it is not about cultural differences but in terms of labour markets (composition, size, ages, training), the educational systems, or different employment laws and trade unions.

c) International Human Resource Management (IHRM) focuses on the way in which companies manage and deal with their employees in various international contexts. The IHRM perspective is probably the broadest of the three and it is the study of how a firm standardizes or adapts its HR functions and activities globally, considering the culture (cross-cultural management perspective) and the specifics on industrial relations (comparative HRM) of various countries (Bornay-Barrachina, 2018); (Odrani, 2020).

As depicted in figure 4 Dowling, Festing and Engle (2008), perceived IHRM as the interplay that exists amidst three different dimensions such as HR activities, type of employees and countries but at a global level with multicultural people from different nations (Adeniji & Osibanjo, 2012); (Briscoe, Schuler, & Tarique, 2012)**.**

Figure 4. Model of International Human Resource Management



Source: Adapted from Morgan, P. V. (1986) as cited in Dowling, Festing, & Engle (2008)

Source: (Adeniji & Osibanjo, 2012)

Culture

Culture is defined as the peculiar way of behaving (Sukanya, 2015) and believing that a group of individuals have developed over time and share in common where "groups" could mean members of particular countries, professions, regions, racial and age groups (Briscoe, Schuler, & Tarique, 2012).

Harvard Business Review (HBR) states culture is a shared and group phenomenon that acts as a kind of silent language. It is the implicit social order of an organization. Cultural norms define what is encouraged or discouraged or what is accepted or rejected within a group (Groysberg, Lee, Price, & Cheng, The Leader's Guide to Corporate Culture, 2018).The academic literature on the subject is far reaching and the concept of "culture" is pretty complex due to its multiple layers of meaning which include:

Surface or explicit culture (the outside layer): Characteristics that are clearly visible such as signs and symbols, architecture, customs, food, historical landmarks, ways of eating, clothing, greetings, body language, etiquettes, and presenting gifts.

Hidden culture (the middle layer): Views of what is right and wrong, religions, values, and philosophies about childbirth and raising them.

Implicit or Invisible culture (the core): Culture's universal truths, the base for all of a culture's values and beliefs (Briscoe, Schuler, & Tarique, 2012). Since the concept of 'culture' exists at multiple levels and every aspect of IB and IHRM are influenced and impacted by national and organizational culture in ways that make both much more complex and challenging. Firms need greater understanding and appreciation for these differences as well as cultural competencies in working within these varying cultural contexts (Briscoe, Schuler, & Tarique, 2012).

Expat

Traditionally, IHRM revolves around how to fill international vacancies or how to staff globally and has been customarily centered on the study of "expatriation" i.e international assignments of employees who stay abroad for a significant period of time. These workers are among the most expensive human resources of the organizations which operate globally. They have issues and problems which go beyond those of most other employees (Sukanya, 2015). Hence, the study of the practices of expatriation is very relevant for the business world (Bornay-Barrachina, 2018).

In the most simplistic sense, globally mobile employees also referred to as 'Expatriate 'or 'international assignee' is an employee who is temporarily residing and working in a foreign

country. They are referred to either as traditional expatriates (on assignment by their employers) generally from a context of familiarity (a home country) to one of greater novelty (a host country) (Adeniji & Osibanjo, 2012); (Caligiuri & Bonache, 2016) or hired to emigrate to fill vacant jobs in other countries for a fixed period of time (Briscoe, Schuler, & Tarique, 2012, p. 205).

However, an expatriate is somewhat different from an inpatriate and so it is important to note that the use of these terms differs from one organisation to another, while some companies prefer to use the term 'expatriate' to describe their employees transferred from their respective home countries to any of their SBUs or the headquarters,(Briscoe, Schuler, & Tarique, 2012 p. 201) some use the term 'expatriate' only for employees transferred from the parent company i.e. headquarters to any of their SBUs, and 'inpatriate' for workers transferred from any of the company's SBUs to the headquarters (Adeniji & Osibanjo, 2012).

Investopedia and (Sukanya, 2015) maintain an expat or expatriate is an individual living and/or working in a country other than their country of origin/citizenship, often temporarily and for work reasons. An expatriate can also be an individual who lives for a while overseas or has relinquished citizenship in their home country to become a citizen of another (Kagan, 2021).

Taken together, most of the literature on IHRM has assumed that the current expatriate profile is a diverse one and all employees not just from the headquarters who are on international assignments or are being relocated for a variety of reasons are traditional expatriates and studies have invariably referred to "international assignment experience " or "expatriate" to simply refer to anyone who has been on an international assignment for more than one year (Briscoe, Schuler, & Tarique, 2012, p. 207-208);(Caligiuri & Bonache, 2016).

II. Pros and Cons of Multicultural Teams

II.A) Advantages/Pros

Over the past 50 years, the politics surrounding diversity and inclusion have shifted dramatically (Herring, 2009).

Diversity can be defined as understanding, accepting, acknowledging and valuing differences among people with respect to class, race, age, ethnicity, gender, disabilities, etc. (Farnsworth, et al., 2019) ;(Kundu, 2001).

The business world has long debated the effects of diverse workforce on business outcomes. Does diversity make a company more productive? Some researchers argue that diversity leads to more innovative thinking, creativity, signals to investors that a company is dexterously run

while signals an attractive work environment for talented professionals. Others say no. Conflicting research indicates that diversity can sometimes sabotage firm performance. Countries and industries that view diversity as salient capture benefits from it while those that don't, don't (Turban, Wu, & Zhang, 2019) ;(Nagarajan, Sethupathy, Ramana, Parvathy, & Sachin Saj, 2018).

Although prior research on diversity at the workplace has suggested diversity's negative impact on communication and group dynamics, this study makes the case for diversity in clear financial terms. According to new research, workplace diversity is among the vital predictors of a business' profitability, sales revenue and customer numbers (Diversity Linked To Increased Sales Revenue And Profits, More Customers, 2009).

Proponents of value-in diversity claim a diverse workforce relative to homogenous one, recognizes differences between people from different backgrounds and acknowledges that these differences are a valued asset. It enriches the workplace by broadening employee perspectives, enriches one's understanding of the pulse of the marketplace, improves the quality of products and services offered, offering greater resources for problem resolution and strengthening their teams at all levels of organizational hierarchy (Herring, 2009); (Kundu, 2001) ;(Nagarajan, Sethupathy, Ramana, Parvathy, & Sachin Saj, 2018); (Mannix & Neale, 2005).

This is in contrast to other accounts, the critics of the diversity model, who see "diversity as process loss" argue diversity as either counterproductive, something that incurs significant potential costs, is nonconsequential to business success or actually detrimental by creating conflict, diminishing group cohesiveness and thus decreasing productivity in addition to dividing a nation (Herring, 2009).

As opportunities open up for women and underrepresented minorities in the 21st-century, research shows that greater diversity may also be akin to lower quality because it can lead to positions being filled with incompetent employees. In short, skeptics suggest diversity impedes group functioning and will have negative effects on social integration and cohesion, can lead to absenteeism, brain drain thereby affecting the businesses' bottom line (Mannix & Neale, 2005).

A third, paradoxical view proposes that greater diversity is associated with more group conflict and advanced business performance. This is possible because diverse groups are more decumbent to conflict, but conflict forces them to go beyond easy solutions common in analogous groups. Diversity leads to more creativity, contestation of different ideas/viewpoints, rapid response to change and high caliber solutions to problems (Kundu,

2001). In contrast, homogeneity may lead to greater group cohesion but less innovation and adaptability (Herring, 2009); (Guide to International Recruitment 2020, 2020)

On the other hand, the business case for attracting a wider range of internationals will only get stronger as the country grows more diverse. Smart companies see diversity as a business imperative and business leaders understand that yesterday's workforce can't lead them into tomorrow (Parsi, 2017).

Importantly, the cultural diversity of a firm has cascading effects on how business news is conceived, collected, delivered, received and interpreted (Nagarajan, Sethupathy, Ramana, Parvathy, & Sachin Saj, 2018). A belief has developed among management scholars, laypeople and social scientists alike that diversity in teams will not only lead to opportunities for synergistic knowledge and information sharing, variety of perspectives to a given problem but also better utilization of talent and greater quality of team performance (Mannix & Neale, 2005).

Global management consulting firm McKinsey & Co's research finds that ethnically diverse businesses are 35% inclined to have financial returns above national industry medians whereas gender diverse companies are 15% in favor to have financial returns above their national industry peers (Parsi, 2017).

In numerous studies, research has indicated that employees in pro-diversity regions, like Western Europe and the U.S., prefer diverse work environments and that top female candidates, in particular, single out gender diverse work environments and look at the gender diversity of the employer's leadership/management team when deciding where to work (Turban, Wu, & Zhang, 2019).

However, it is vital to note that diversity is a catchphrase, that is, sometimes it is trendier than it is helpful and in fact, tech companies are ill-famed for the lack of gender diversity and ethnicity (Tulshyan, 2015).

Diversity is a hot issue in human resource management and is increasing in day to day life of individuals and enterprises around the world are forced to restructure their business due to globalization and in order to meet the constant change in demand. For some, having a multicultural workforce is a norm whereas for others, it takes them out of their comfort zone and they would rather trade short-term comfort for long-term profit or losses (Ahmad, Rehman, & Ali, 2019); (Parsi, 2017).

Nevertheless, diversity at the workplace not only increases the number of job opportunities for minority workers but also exposes societal bias. Hiring women, minorities, disabled, etc. will help businesses to tap niche markets (Kundu, 2001).

Diversity allows for strengths and weaknesses to be laid out so that their effects are minimized and maximized respectively (Herring, 2009).

International employees not only create value for business houses but also for the economy, industries and companies have access to special skills and knowledge when homegrown talent is not enough, international employees with knowledge of foreign markets, culture, language and local conditions may lead to an increased international customer base and enhanced customer satisfaction. Besides, an international workplace is attractive to both Danish and foreign labor (Guide to International Recruitment 2020, 2020).

All things considered, the creation of a diverse workforce should be seen as a social and moral imperative as all the segments of society have a stake in the prosperity and development of the society as a whole (Kundu, 2001).

II.B) Challenges/Cons

There is plethora of reasons why expats make great company investments but in working with them inevitably comes unique, multilevel challenges and such challenges should be carefully considered by companies.

Though SMEs play an important role in the Danish economy some of them are most likely to struggle (Jedynak, 2015) with serious internal barriers even before they think about internationalizing or start recruiting expats from various countries. Barriers initiate from identifying, researching, selecting and analyzing the right international markets to hire from due to information inefficiencies and unreliable data (Briscoe, Schuler, & Tarique, 2012) followed by inefficiencies of human resource teams to deal with internationalization. Fortunately, a great deal of practical information, material and a number of useful, and for the vast majority, free advisory services exist for businesses in Denmark that recruit or plan to recruit international employees. However, it can be quite time consuming to navigate through this information, which is often spread among various authorities and stakeholders (Guide to International Recruitment 2020, 2020).

Managers lack sufficient time, energy and resources towards designing country specific hiring strategies. To add to that, problems associated with untrained or insufficient numbers of personnel along with lack of specialized knowledge and expertise within the company to deal with international business tasks and to handle the excess work demanded by international hiring including knowledge of foreign languages, cultures, institutions and dealing with international candidates (Glossary for Barriers to SME Access to International Markets, n.d.).

Apart from that, some of the external barriers stemming from the home or host country which hinder or impede the development of SMEs include lack of funds as this is the most pressing problem for many small businesses (Jedynak, 2015) ;(Glossary for Barriers to SME Access to International Markets, n.d.).

Additionally, the complexity of international HR could be attributed to different factors such as procedural barriers in host countries related to complex and unclear administrative procedures such as paperwork, communicating with recruitment agents or candidates, language translation services add to the problem. Finally, unfavourable home rules and regulations such as international taxation, inflexible labor laws, international relocation and orientation, administrative services for expatriates, host-government relations, lack of the usage of flexible forms of employment, lack of qualified personnel on the labor market, union interference, visa restrictions, type of government and the state of the economy are some of the internal and external challenges that underpin Danish companies (Jedynak, 2015); (Bornay-Barrachina, 2018).

The treatment of "international" in the management of employees in a company gives it a certain degree of intricacy which makes it very relevant to study. Nevertheless, Internationalization is overriding for the survival of businesses today (Bornay-Barrachina, 2018). Managing expats has increased pressure on HR managers to identify and adapt to cultural differences, which when ignored can result in cross-cultural misunderstandings (Sukanya, 2015). In an era where creativity and flexibility are keys to competitiveness, diversity is critical for an organization's success. However, the consequences, loss of money and time should not be overlooked (Farnsworth, et al., 2019).

Managing diversity is more than simply acknowledging differences in people. There are some downsides such as communication differences i.e language barriers where employees from distinct cultures find it difficult to understand each other and resistance to change(Sukanya, 2015).

Besides, leading or working with a diverse team can be a strenuous task as diversity gives rise to ambiguity, confusion, complexity, misinterpretation, inappropriate behavior between individuals and dubiousness, causes problems when employees and managers overgeneralize organizational strategies, policies, practices and procedures, cultural diversity creates problems for a company when they want to reach a consensus (Kundu, 2001);(Nagarajan, Sethupathy, Ramana, Parvathy, & Sachin Saj, 2018);(Mannix & Neale, 2005).

Authors (Farnsworth, et al., 2019); (Nagarajan, Sethupathy, Ramana, Parvathy, & Sachin Saj, 2018) argue negative attitudes and behaviors such as stereotyping, discrimination and prejudice

can be barriers to organizational diversity because they can damage morale and work productivity as well as harm working relationships. Thus, it should never be used by management for hiring, retention, and termination practices. However, we also argue that there are multiple ways and strategies to manage, and even capitalize on, diversity in teams (Mannix & Neale, 2005).

The role of national and organizational culture (OC) is critical to the entire process of hiring and retaining a diverse workforce and is more poignant within small firms that are scaling rapidly because every hire can impact the OC and business trajectory in the long run. OC can be described as "the way we do business". Schein (1985) defined OC as the values, beliefs and basic assumptions that are shared by organizational members (Sukanya, 2015). These cultural beliefs are deep-rooted and may differ greatly from the ''espoused values'' touted by organizational leaders (Catanzaro, Moore, & Marshall, 2010). OC illustrates the values that underpin the way the business is run, impacting the leadership, work environment, communications, management, workplace practices and a host of other factors. So, for recruiters, the challenge is to understand both the firm's culture and then to hire a good match for that culture and share the same values (Robert Walters Whitepaper) because even the most proficient candidate can turn out to be a disastrous hire if they are not a good cultural fit (Sukanya, 2015). Unfortunately, one of the main barriers to workplace diversity is lacking an official diversity recruitment policy or system. The HR practices in recruitment and selection are still of the stone age in many organizations (Raghavendra, Charitha, & Rajitha, 2017).

Infact, according to the attraction-selection-attrition model which was first introduced by Benjamin Schneider (Groysberg, Lee, Price, & Cheng, The Leader's Guide to Corporate Culture, 2018), OC plays a vital role in increasing the probability that applicants will accept or reject a job with the organization and also influences the length of their stay once hired. In short, if talented men and women choose not to apply to work in a firm because they believe that the OC is disparate with their needs and values, the company will lose out on the talent that this population could contribute to its workforce (Catanzaro, Moore, & Marshall, 2010).

But the bigger question is who is responsible for building the workplace culture? While culture and strategy are among the fundamental levers at top leaders' disposal many of them either let it go ungoverned or entrust it to HR departments, where it becomes a secondary concern for the firm. They may lay out detailed, thoughtful plans for strategy and execution, but because they fail to understand culture's power and dynamics, their agenda goes off the rails. As Peter Drucker wisely said, "culture eats strategy for breakfast". So, this is a huge mistake, because when culture is properly aligned and managed, it can help them achieve change and build

businesses that will flourish in even the most trying times (Groysberg, Lee, Price, & Cheng, The Leader's Guide to Corporate Culture, 2018).

Firms that lack knowledge or sensitivity towards cultural differences result in making grievous mistakes (Nagarajan, Sethupathy, Ramana, Parvathy, & Sachin Saj, 2018).

Though aware of the differences, they can mistakenly count on that their way of doing things provides the optimal way to conduct business. This can not only result in dismissing or overlooking improved and novel ways of doing things that can be found in other nations and their firms but can also estrange their foreign counterparts and the people with whom they interact from other nations or companies, such as foreign suppliers, customers, and employees.

Culture affects the way we preserve and develop relationships over time. Literature indicates that cultural values shape the conduct of HRM and is identified as the key factor that determines the degree of convergence or divergence, centralization or decentralization of HR policies and practices (Bornay-Barrachina, 2018) ;(Briscoe, Schuler, & Tarique, 2012) ;(Boopathi, 2014).

Companies are "culture-bound" and management practices, attitudes, ideology, technology transfer and even government-business relationships are laboriously influenced by collectively shared values and belief systems (Kundu, 2001) ;(Bornay-Barrachina, 2018) ;(Boopathi, 2014).

Research by an American management consultancy firm, Bain & Company indicates that fewer than 10% of the organizations succeed in building a winning culture. Their research also indicated that more business leaders fail than succeed at creating a winning culture given that transforming a culture requires conditioning people's deepest beliefs and most habitual behaviours. Of course, changing cultures is no easy task and firms, like the people in them, actively resist change. The challenge is to "unfreeze" traditional behaviours and create the motivation to change so that employees can learn contemporary behaviours, and then "refreeze" those behaviors over time (Rogers, Meehan, & Tanner, 2006).

By and large, when companies fail to consider how other nations or people do things, they cannot expect to develop an outlook for the future, nurture goodwill, inspire a workforce or develop marketable products and services that can directly hit the bottom line results. So, developing cultural understanding and knowledge fundamentally affects how we run our businesses, what skills/characteristics to look for while hiring people, how to develop global talent, how to conduct meetings, and how to manage employees and work with teams (Briscoe, Schuler, & Tarique, 2012). To add to the above challenges COVID-19 crisis has had an enormous impact on people's mobility and has enhanced the challenges towards globalization and the International Business field (Alon & Bretas, 2021). It has already left dramatic rippling effects across the global economy and such economic consequences reach far beyond the

immediate impact leading to several adverse economic, political, and social effects, such as global value chain disruptions, waves of nationalism, protectionism, higher unemployment, regionalization of the value chains and reduction in wages along with lower economy-wide demand (Economic Consequences of the COVID-19 Pandemic, 2020).

A diverse workforce reflects a changing world and marketplace. Diverse teams bring high value to business and require commitment from every level of the chain of command for it to be a successful experience (Farnsworth, et al., 2019) ;(Nagarajan, Sethupathy, Ramana, Parvathy, & Sachin Saj, 2018).

In practicality, a multicultural workforce is associated with a wider range of pros that have overshadowed some of its trivial cons (Nagarajan, Sethupathy, Ramana, Parvathy, & Sachin Saj, 2018). The advantages and disadvantages of diversity in the workplace must be carefully managed for the results to be successful. It may be an evolutionary process that challenges everyone in the firm, but it is also an initiative that can help businesses and its teams thrive today, tomorrow, and well into the future.

III. Expatriation Failure- Top reasons for attrition

Hiring a diverse workforce can be complex and challenging but the greater challenge is to retain that diverse workforce (Kundu, 2001).

For approximately 617,000 foreign nationals residing in Denmark (Population, n.d.), strict residency requirements, uncertainty, and difficulty accessing the labor market are few of the crucial reasons why some foreign nationals leave Denmark to seek opportunities elsewhere. Moreover, navigating an expensive and confusing immigration system has left many foreigners to question the viability of their future in the country. By introducing stringent and controversial laws, immigration and integration has become more of a prickly political issue in Denmark. While Denmark is renowned for high levels of trust, equality and respect, some foreigners feel that this level of trust is not reciprocated for immigrants working and living in Denmark. On one hand, the country has shortage of skilled and qualified labor (Raimondos-Møller & Grauballe, 2020) on the other hand the government does not see foreigners as the bonuses they are and immigration laws are changed to make sure people do not come to Denmark. Professor Michelle Pace at Roskilde University states, “Denmark stands out as a very discriminatory country when it comes to foreigners.” and “this comes to the detriment of those who come to this country with a lot of skills and experience” (Standen, 2021). But what exactly causes a sense of dissatisfaction in the workplace, leading to a high attrition

rate? When it comes to Denmark, prior research suggests that the primary challenge of managing expatriates is culture shock. A predominant shortcoming of global mobility is the discomfort of living far from home which can lead to predictable psychological challenges and maladjusted expats show signs of uneasiness, emotional stress such as homesickness and depression which can lead to premature return (Caligiuri & Bonache, 2016) ;(Bornay-Barrachina, 2018).

Most foreigners take time to become familiar with the new country, its laws, job and the OC. In fact, Forbes further pointed out that culture is the secret sauce that keeps employees driven and clients happy and that employees do not just quit leaders and companies, they quit organizational cultures (Engel, 2018).

Moreover, difficulty of learning the Danish language appears to have caused many students and expats to consider Denmark a less attractive destination. They argue that they do not feel a part of Danish society. While the Danes are international in their outlook, in general, they champion a paradoxically "inward" orientation toward their friends and families. The average Dane has a limited number of friends and these seldom include foreigners suggesting that although he works alongside Danes, he does not have any Danish friends with whom he could socialize outside of the workplace (Tung, Worm, & Petersen, 2008).

Among the major problems which explain the failure of expatriates, literature also points out family problems as one of the many failures. The inability of the employee's family to adapt to a new country, the foreign language and the economic, social and political-legal environment (Caligiuri & Bonache, 2016). Also, when companies give excess importance to technical qualifications than to other soft skills, such as cultural sensitivity or the capacity for cultural adaptation, lack of recognition or blocking of professional career and lack of cross-cultural training/awareness prior to leaving which later becomes a problem because candidates do not know how to deal and adapt with a new culture and to develop their capacity for cultural sensitivity (Bornay-Barrachina, 2018).

There has also been plenty of discussion on the expats' wellbeing in the kingdom where 8 Expat Insider Reports published by InterNations and 3 Oxford Research Study Reports from 2014-2021 state that while Denmark is an expat heaven when it comes to digitization, work-life balance, safety, family life, healthcare and child care; it is however, the worst-rated destination for settling in, making local friends and feeling welcomed which is what drags the overall ranking down. Although there has been a lot of efforts to retain expats from a diverse range of organizations, and from all parts of the country but a lot less from the political establishment

(Cantir, 2021).

As opposed to, sometimes, instead of adopting to a new work culture, the worker tries to impose his/her values on the local employees. This factor is labelled inability to relate to people of distinct cultures or lack of "cultural intelligence" (Sukanya, 2015).

Year 2021 was considered as the "great resignation" period or rather a workers' revolution. Microsoft found that 41% of workers worldwide as well as 54% of Generation Z are considering quitting their jobs (Wiseman, 2021) ;(Fleming, 2021).

It is an employee's market. Workers are empowered and more informed than ever before, the employer-employee dynamics has changed, and companies are struggling to retain their top performers. Global management consulting firm McKinsey & Co's research finds that a record number of employees are quitting their jobs or thinking about doing so. Since April 2021, A whopping 19 million US workers and counting have quit and businesses are struggling to address the problem because they fail to understand the reasons for attrition and rather than investigating the true causes, many firms are jumping to well-intentioned quick fixes that fall flat (Smet, Dowling, Mugayar-Baldocchi, & Schaninger, 2021).

If the past 18 months have taught employers anything, it is that employees covet investment in the *human* aspects of work. Employees around the globe are tired, and many are grieving. They want a renewed and revised sense of purpose and unity in their jobs. Employees look to their superiors for direction, some level of guidance, inclusion and, in some cases, defense. A lot of companies are making feeble moves based on faulty assumptions. They are failing to meet new demands for autonomy and flexibility at work. As such, a lot of employees are deliberately choosing to withdraw entirely from traditional forms of full-time employment. Today's employees not only desire a level of autonomy but they also want to be trusted that they will get the job done whether working remotely or on site. What they don't want is to feel disempowered, micromanaged or overlooked. Lack of social and interpersonal connections with their managers and colleagues pushes employees to move out of organizations. They want to feel a sense of shared identity (Paulise, 2021).

Besides pay, benefits, and perks, employees want to feel valued by their organizations and managers. Moreover, a toxic work environment not only affects productivity, but it can have a negative impact on client relationships as well as cause damage to relationships at multiple levels causing damage to your brand and potentially even prompting a loss of business. Today's employees want meaningful though not necessarily in-person interactions, not just transactional relationships (Smet, Dowling, Mugayar-Baldocchi, & Schaninger, 2021).

Irrespective of the circumstances that led to the failure of the whole process of expatriation, the underlying costs that firms presume are worth considering. A failed international relocation is likely to have an adverse impact on the candidate, the candidate's family and to the employer itself. Literature highlights that the direct costs including relocation, training, healthcare, post arrival services and remuneration ranges from 200,000 dollars to 1.2 million dollars. It further states that when the total cost of an expatriation package is calculated, the investment in an expat is three times as high as the investment in a local employee. Moreover, when such an employee leaves, the possible non- financial costs that the company absorbs would include the loss of market share, business opportunities, damage caused to the company's image, loss of valuable experience & knowledge, loss of morale for those left as well as a decrease in productivity (Bornay-Barrachina, 2018).

Effective human resource functions can help ensure that every employee establishes a long-term association with the organization beyond the paycheck. And while offering a good environment of growth and transparency is important, companies need to go that extra mile to ensure their attrition rate is low.

IV. Strategies and ideas for attracting, integrating and retention of international employees.

An expat insider 2018 survey puts Denmark at the 64th position out of 68 countries when it comes to the ease of settling in. This second-rate ranking makes it clear that Denmark has a challenge when it comes to retaining international employees. Many leave within the first years, and five years down the line more than half of the highly-educated foreigners have left Denmark. That is just not good enough, because expats make an essential contribution both to Danish companies, which are in dire need of skilled labor, and to public finances. Naturally, a big part of the responsibility lies with the firms themselves, but they cannot overcome the challenge alone, because a big part of why foreign employees leaves the country has to do with what happens outside working hours. It is therefore crucial that Denmark as a country and society support efforts to create better conditions for retaining foreign employees (Blog: 5 ways to better retain international employees, 2018).

In today's hyper competitive business environment, foreign employees are a source of competitive advantage. It is a known fact that a lot of Danish companies find it arduous to find the right person with the right skills, right knowledge, right attributes, at the right time, for the right job, so, it makes sense businesses and politicians to grease the wheels of the supply chain

of international residents, right from attracting them, over fueling their desire for a career in Denmark to giving them the appropriate skills to land their first job (Kejriwal, Prajapati, & Gaikwad, 2015);(Raghavendra, Charitha, & Rajitha, 2017);(Raimondos-Møller & Grauballe, 2020);(Guide to International Recruitment 2020, 2020).

Howbeit, through diligent recruitment and disbursement of vital information regarding all aspects of the new culture, the risk of managing foreign employees can be met with much preparation. A 2020 report from DI (Confederation of Danish Industry) published a fairly detailed guide to attracting, welcoming, integrating and retaining international employees in the kingdom (Guide to International Recruitment 2020, 2020). It is vital for companies to allocate the necessary resources to ensure a good process for the future employee as well as for themselves not only in relation to the recruitment process, but also long term in order to retain expats in the company. Effective utilization of social media is a great way to do so because it is not inevitably costly to advertise job listings and find the right candidate. In 2017, only 64% of Danish companies were active and recruiting on social media. For those with more than 250 employees, the number was 84%. A poll among DI's company panel showed that 27 percent of the companies use Facebook to recruit new employees while 45 percent use LinkedIn as a recruitment channel (Guide to International Recruitment 2020, 2020).

Successful recruitment & selection practices are key components at the entry point of HR in any organization because efficient strategies result in improved organizational outcomes (Raghavendra, Charitha, & Rajitha, 2017).

For those firms hoping to attract a large pool of qualified and skilled applicants and retain them for a longer period, authors (Catanzaro, Moore, & Marshall, 2010) suggest that it is advantageous to highlight supportive organizational cultural values bound by participation, emancipation, collaboration and interpersonal relationships over masculine cultures or in other words "competitive" culture bound by respect for authority, competition, individualism, independence, and task-orientation. However, those OC values should only be advertised and highlighted if they are actually representative of the values that exist within the company. So, the language that firms use in their job posting also makes a difference. For example, to attract more females, avoid using too many "masculine-type" words in the job posting. To add to that, a valid and reliable personality assessment is a great tool to measure candidates' personality traits, motivations, and skills. Furthermore, firms that offer the best workplace policies such as flexibility in terms of hours or working from home or a company culture that emphasizes work life balance not only helps firms to attract more diverse candidates, it helps prevent expensive employee turnover. Tapping sourcing methods that contain more diverse and novel candidate

pipelines can attract a diverse workforce. Firms can take advantage of third-party websites to post open job opportunities. In addition, firms can provide potential candidates ways to find out more information about their company and employees. One of the best ways to do this is by creating an exclusive, media-rich page of your company showcasing your leadership, culture and diverse employees. Also, a “two in the pool effect” serves as a promising method for reducing unconscious biases and effectively increasing diversity at the workplace besides artificial intelligence powered software technology is enabling talent acquisition professionals to increase diversity by using automated resume screening over manual shortlisting, blind resume and blind interviews that extends the blind resume concept (Mondal, 2020).

Authors further suggest that smart firms should shift from reactive to proactive recruitment, from selecting on skills to selecting on values and personality and from recruiting for jobs to recruiting for assignments where firms are more creatively using the opportunities of a more flexible workforce. Additionally, the practice of creating talent communities around businesses, a kind of “fan club”, is also growing. Such communities work best for forward-thinking HR and talent acquisition teams that want to future-proof their candidate pipeline (Raghavendra, Charitha, & Rajitha, 2017).

With candidates putting big emphasis on company culture, in order to attract and retain top calibre professionals, HR departments must focus on first developing a positive workplace culture and then building a reputation by taking advantage of a range of tools and communication strategies for being a desirable place to work (Guide to International Recruitment 2020, 2020). Effectively and clearly communicating the company’s working culture throughout the recruitment process is vital to finding candidates who will thrive within your organization. By giving the prospective hire the opportunity to meet their future colleagues during the recruitment process, both employers and applicants can gain valuable insights into whether or not that candidate is likely to excel within the company’s culture. In the same way, employers should also consider offering clear criteria to the new hires as to what will be expected of them if they are to be promoted and achieve the career progression they want. Moreover, as employer review sites become an increasingly popular resource, management may need to monitor reviews on these sites and receive and respond to any criticism in a constructive and professional way demonstrating your company culture is your priority and willingness to engage with your staff. Smart employers may even want to consider dedicating a specific stage of the interview process to identifying whether a candidate has the desired qualities that will make them a good cultural fit (Robert Walters Whitepaper); (Guide to International Recruitment 2020, 2020).

Since Denmark is home to an increasing number of qualified international citizens and students, if a company has international employees employed already, it can be an advantage to make them part of the international recruitment process as they will help draw on acquaintances, friends and other fellow students from their connections. Companies can make their current employees the best ambassadors for reaching a larger public. Business networks may also provide access to a potentially interesting candidate pool. A talent who was not considered fit for a specific position in one company may be so in another. Likewise, it can be a good idea for firms to support underrepresented employees through mentorships and employee resource groups and cultivate relationships with relevant educational institutions as international students form a potentially interesting target group for hiring as they have already taken the first step towards a career in Denmark (Guide to International Recruitment 2020, 2020).

In recent years, Denmark has seen both a tighter immigration policy, but also a removal of certain bureaucratic barriers regarding international recruitment. Several special schemes exist with the purpose of making it easier for Danish companies to recruit and retain their international workforce (Guide to International Recruitment 2020, 2020). As such, head of DI Global Talent, Linda Duncan Wendelboe suggested concrete ways to prevent Danish companies from losing their talented foreign employees to other countries.

A warm welcome: Foreigners' first encounter with the country and Danish authorities has a considerable effect on the impression expats get of Denmark and hence their desire to stay. A smooth and efficient reception that applies to the entire process, from work permit application to tax registration to the municipal citizens service should be a political priority (Blog: 5 ways to better retain international employees, 2018).

The fundamental challenge of managing and retaining expatriates is culture shock. Overcoming it will be much easier if firms put themselves in the shoes of their expats. One solution to help expatriate employees integrate into their new lifestyle is providing them with as much information as possible about their new home from the start of the whole process. Even linking a current employee as a point of reference can help expats make a more well-informed commitment. When they become confident of their decision, their ability to self-manage culture shock will improve (Sukanya, 2015).

Typically, when firms and people develop an ability to work with multiple cultures, they go through a process called *"Development of Cross-Cultural Competence"* where they must discern their own cultural baggage, values and beliefs before they can develop appreciation and respect for other people's cultural differences which will help them become more minded

which eventually leads to the ability to move towards reconciliation and integration with contrasting countries and OC (Briscoe, Schuler, & Tarique, 2012).

Firms must also consider providing orientation on arrival as well as assign a local employee who could give the new hire a tour around town, and to be their point of contact if they have any questions (Blog: 5 ways to better retain international employees, 2018).

Today, a growing number of firms are devoting considerable resources toward training their employees by adopting multiple cross- cultural training methods, avoiding stereotypes, making use of Agent/Interpreter and discovering new ways to bridge cultural gaps in an effort to foment a positive cross-cultural experience (Sukanya, 2015) ;(Nagarajan, Sethupathy, Ramana, Parvathy, & Sachin Saj, 2018).

Cross cultural training not only helps an expatriate to overcome culture shock but also adjust to the cultural diversities and to work comfortably in the host country (Sukanya, 2015); (Kundu, 2001). In fact, by giving cross-cultural education throughout the organization, HR can help their companies to become more tolerant (Nagarajan, Sethupathy, Ramana, Parvathy, & Sachin Saj, 2018), competitive and achieve their aims and objectives. After all, cross culture is all about the difference between the visible and invisible content of culture (Ahmad, Rehman, & Ali, 2019).

Language barriers can be difficult to surpass, because overcoming them involves learning of a brand-new hard skill which is no easy feat. In a country like Denmark where English is not a primarily spoken language but if the company's business language is English, they can make sure that the current employees know that they are hiring a foreigner who doesn't speak the local language so that they can willingly take the new hire under their wings and help them adjust and integrate into the local culture. If most of the internal communication is in the local language, it is worth considering extra help for the foreign employee to translate the written and spoken communication as well as decoding the unwritten rules. Experience from business houses shows that it is a good idea to implement mentors already in the hiring process. The mentor is often an employee at the recruiting company who can assist the international employee during the process and answer his/her personal as well as professional questions (Guide to International Recruitment 2020, 2020).

Additionally, companies must consider linguistic flexibility where they can consider setting up language lessons for the new hire either paid for by the company, directing them to a language school or assigning them a language exchange buddy from within the country (Guide to International Recruitment 2020, 2020).

The recently introduced user-financing of Danish lessons is a step in the wrong direction and foreign employees and their families should both be encouraged and given incentives to learn Danish rather than create barriers (Blog: 5 ways to better retain international employees, 2018). Good employees quit for many reasons**.** Expats face intense pressure from the family's ability to adapt and adjust to a new place and it's easy for companies to overlook this, especially when managing expatriates on international assignments. By sending family-specific information such as accommodation, international schools' options, nearby grocery stores, recreational activities, parks, and the contact information of other families within the company can put those moving with the expat at ease. There is a dire need for a coordinated effort across municipal borders to make the road to employment shorter for accompanying spouses (Blog: 5 ways to better retain international employees, 2018).

Alternatively, some companies in Denmark make use of professional relocation companies to ensure that the international employee, as well as his/her accompanying family/partner, settle as quickly and smoothly as possible in Denmark (Guide to International Recruitment 2020, 2020).

In Denmark there is meager culture for inviting colleagues over, and Danes can come off as difficult to get to know due to their cultural upbringing. Employees must have something to do outside working hours and a good way to create social relations is by inviting people to join local sports and recreational clubs (Blog: 5 ways to better retain international employees, 2018).

The competition for talent is fierce. Besides being conscious of what the firm has to offer, and in which way it stands out positively, it is crucial to be prepared to advocate the positive aspects of life as an expat in Denmark as well. It is imperative to explain to potential international employees what they get in return for their tax in the country in terms of security, welfare, good conditions for the family as well as work-life balance. Is important to communicate to the foreign employees of both the written and the unwritten rules regarding the Danish labor market model, terms of employment, social security and the Danish work culture considering they come from different cultures and backgrounds (Guide to International Recruitment 2020, 2020).

Firms must prioritize open communication and create conflict management strategies to address any issues that may arise. Supporting mentoring programs and linking pay to diversity goals could foster diversity and help in retaining talented employees. Firms which do not take a holistic approach to eliminate injustice and discrimination will adversely affect both employees and customers. They must create a post bureaucratic organization based upon trust

and respect in which diverse employees are valued and integrated into all aspects of work. Further, they should redefine and rethink missions, reevaluate the values and management practices that define their OC, strategies, cultures, markets, and products to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse body of employees, stakeholders and customers. Synergistic organizations value diversity by conducting organizational audit by continuous monitoring of all HRM decisions around hiring, assessing the pulse of the company, establishing and communicating clear performance standards, giving and receiving feedback continuously on clearly identified undesirable behaviours and avoiding benchmarking/copying latest strategies (Kundu, 2001); (Nagarajan, Sethupathy, Ramana, Parvathy, & Sachin Saj, 2018). The younger generations, Millennials and Gen Zs are looking for purpose and want to work for firms where they can make a difference. They are demanding that businesses act ethically, responsibly and sustainably. As such, in recent years, sustainability and UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's) has become an increasingly vital tool for global talent attraction and retention. So, many organizations in Denmark are using sustainability as a branding tool for their advantage (Guide to International Recruitment 2020, 2020).

The entire process of onboarding an expat is a costly investment. To protect their investment, firms could consider requiring a contract for expats, with a clause stating that they must pay back a certain amount if they break their contract or leave early. That way, firms have the chance to at least break even in case of a turnover disaster. Interestingly, Harvard Business Review suggests that in order to retain talented employees, organizations must not only focus on diversity but also on inclusion. Employees who differ from most of their colleagues hide important parts of themselves at work for fear of negative consequences known as "identity cover," which makes it difficult to know how they actually feel and what they want. In essence, most employers understand the concept of diversity and its advantages, it is the inclusion part that they dodge. The key to inclusion is understanding who your employees really are. So, creating an environment that values their unique talents and perspectives, where people can be themselves will make them want to stay (Brown, 2018).

Correspondingly, Howard J. Ross, founder and chief learning officer at the diversity consultancy Cook Ross cited an oft-quoted maxim: *"Diversity is being invited to the party; inclusion is being asked to dance."* (Parsi, 2017).

A 2021 research by Microsoft showed that over 40 percent of the global workforce is considering leaving their employer this year. A thoughtful approach to the hybrid work model will be critical for attracting and retaining diverse talent (Wiseman, 2021).

Overall, by creating a company culture that focuses on flexibility, collaboration, teamwork, balancing one's career and family, offering shorter work hours and 4-day work week, businesses can maintain a competitive edge in attracting, recruiting and retaining a diverse sample of highly qualified job candidates (Catanzaro, Moore, & Marshall, 2010); (Paulise, 2021).

Ultimately, the key to create, develop and retain a diverse workforce is to find a way to make the workforce feel connected to their company (Kundu, 2001).

Despite the ongoing debate about whether to hire workers from overseas, it's evident that foreign workers have multiple advantages for organizations. Fostering workforce diversity, especially at the managerial level, ranks high in the list of priorities in many companies. Yet, all too often the role played by global mobility to help companies reach their goal is underestimated. Whether talent mobility will deliver its promises (or not) will depend on the future strategies and choices being made at the organizational, departmental, or individual levels. If Denmark is to pull off in the increasing global competition for talented employees, it must be an attractive place to take up residence and make it easier for expats and their families to settle in.

Conceptual Framework

The following conceptual model was created based on the topics/themes that emerged from the literature reviewed. The challenges that underpin companies are to the left whereas strategies and ideas for attracting, integrating and retention of international employees are to the right.

Figure 5. Challenges & Solutions based on Literature Review

Challenges & Solutions based on Literature Review

Challenges that underpin companies

How culture (national/organizational) affects recruitment & retention

IB and IHRM are influenced by national and organizational culture
Company culture and values not memorialized on paper.
Less than 10% of the firms succeed in building a winning culture.
Company culture is key when it comes to hiring and retaining good employees.
Employees do not quit leaders and companies, they quit organizational cultures
Culture affects the way we develop and preserve relationships inside and with customers/suppliers
Lacking an official diversity recruitment policy or system.

Internal & External Barriers

Identifying, researching, selecting and analysing the right international markets to hire from due to information inefficiencies and unreliable data
Lack of funds and time is a major setback for SME's
Unfavourable home rules and regulations such as international taxation.
Inflexible labour laws.
Administrative services for expatriates.
Host-government relations
Lack of the usage of flexible forms of employment
Lack of qualified personnel on the labour market
Union Interference
Visa Restrictions
Type of government
The state of the economy
Organizational and legal conditions

Challenges during the process of International Hiring

Inefficiencies of HR teams to deal with internationalisation
Managers lack sufficient time, energy and resources towards designing country specific hiring strategies
Untrained or insufficient numbers of personnel.
Lack of specialized knowledge and expertise within the company to deal with international business tasks
Expatriation costs- cost of flights, relocation, training etc
Competition with larger firms- Talent war
Compliance Requirements
Restrictive Employment Verification Process
Lack of Human Contact During the Recruitment Process.
Need to make group specific accommodations
Readiness of expat to relocate
Generalizing/stereotyping employees and countries
Lack of effective utilization of social media and technology tools for hiring
Tedious and time consuming affair for Danish employers to navigate information on hiring and retaining internationals which is readily available and published by DI (Dansk Industri)
Not allocating enough resources to ensure a good process for hiring and retaining employees
Communicating with recruitment agents or candidates
Lengthy, complex and unclear administrative procedures such as paperwork in host country
Language translation services
International relocation and orientation.
Less emphasis on hiring a cultural fit, more emphasis on technical skills
Covid-19 has affected internationalization.
Waves of nationalism, protectionism, higher unemployment, lower economy-wide demand due to Covid-19

Challenges with Diversity at Workplace

Language barriers
Resistance to change
Leading or working with a diverse team can be a strenuous task
Inappropriate behaviour between individuals and dubiousness
Managers and employees overgeneralise organizational policies, strategies, practices and procedures.
Creates problems for a company when they want to reach a consensus.
Negative attitudes and behaviours such as stereotyping, discrimination and prejudice
Firms lack cultural sensitivity to differences
Presuming company's way of doing things provides the best way to conduct business.
Dismissing or overlooking to new ways of working.

Top reasons for attrition

Strict residency requirements
Uncertainty
Difficulty accessing the labour market
Navigating a expensive and confusing immigration system
Introducing stringent and controversial laws
Lack of trust
Culture shock
Time Taken to Get Used to the New Environment- Not feeling a part of Danish society
Difficulty learning Danish
Family problems in terms of adapting and getting a job in a new country
Lack of cross-cultural training/awareness prior to leaving/upon arrival
Blocking of professional career
Excess importance to technical qualifications
Socializing with Danes is difficult outside working hours
Lack of "cultural intelligence"/inability to relate to people of distinct cultures
Toxic work environment.
Attrition leads to loss of valuable experience & knowledge, loss of morale for those left, decrease productivity and tarnish company image.
Lack of social and interpersonal connections with their managers and colleagues
Employees feeling disempowered, micromanaged or overlooked.

Strategies & Ideas for attracting, integrating & retention

Strategies to build a winning culture

Diligent recruitment and disbursement of information regarding all aspects of new culture during the whole process.
Shared-responsibility approach to culture-building.
Company's culture needs to be flexible and adaptable.
Re-evaluate values and practices that define organizational culture eg-supportive organizational cultural values over "masculine" cultures
Make organizational culture part of your recruitment process by promoting it.
Contemplate stakeholders as employees while shaping company culture.
Changes to the culture must be communicated explicitly and vetted by all.
Having a flexible and diverse leadership team.
Align culture with achieving the vision and goals of the company
Developing a positive workplace culture and then building a reputation for being a desirable place to work.
Properly documenting diversity policies is an effective means of communicating an organization's stance on diversity.
Firms should redefine and rethink missions and management practices.

Strategies to attract diverse candidates/ improve the hiring process

Re-word your job posting to attract diverse candidates (refrain from using too many "masculine-type" words)
Offer the best workplace policies to attract diverse candidates.
Increase your diversity hiring in your candidate sourcing and shortlisting
Use third-party websites to post open job opportunities
Partnering with universities.
Reduce pipeline issues and unconscious biases using technology tools
From selecting on skills to selecting on values and personality.
Building talent communities- "Fan club"
Giving prospective candidates the opportunity to meet their future colleagues during the recruitment process.
Implement mentors in the hiring process and at the workplace
Make current employees your brand ambassadors
Make international employees part of the international recruitment process.
Create business networks in order to gain access to a potentially interesting candidate pool
Monitor reviews on employer review sites and receive and respond to any criticism in a constructive and professional way.
Shift from reactive to proactive recruitment.
Giving as much information about the country and working culture while hiring new employees

Strategies to Integrate & Retain Employees

Bring more "human" aspects to work rather than having transactional relationships.
Provide autonomy and flexibility at work whether on site or working remotely.
Build trust with your employees- Micromanagement signals that you do not trust your employee.
Build social and interpersonal connections with colleagues
Give employees a sense of shared identity
Give employees renewed and revised sense of purpose and unity in their jobs
Value your employees- They are a source of competitive advantage
Grease the wheels of the supply chain of international residents
A warm welcome to your foreign employees.
Companies must put themselves in the shoes of their expats
Provide orientation to employees on arrival.
Guided tour of the premises, various departments, colleagues and town by a local employee.
Development of Cross-Cultural Competence i.e understanding your own cultural baggage.
Establish and communicate clear cut expectations in terms of performance standards
Building an agile organization.
Adopting cross- cultural training methods.
Avoiding stereotypes.
Make use of Agent/Interpreter
Discover new ways to bridge cultural gaps
Make employees feel connected to their company.
Linguistic flexibility- give incentives to employees and their families to learn Danish
Make use of professional relocation companies to help employees settle smoothly
Assign a language exchange buddy from within the country
Cultural exchange with other employees.
Be open minded.
Remember the family by providing family-specific information.
Develop a culture for inviting colleagues over or/and invite employees to join local sports and recreational clubs
Advocate the positive aspects of life as an expat in Denmark
General well being of the employee.
Encourage a more heterogeneous environment through promoting a culture of tolerance
Prioritizing open communication and creating conflict management strategies to address issues that may arise.
Support mentoring programmes.
Give and receive feedback continuously on clearly identified undesirable behaviours.
Linking pay to diversity goals.
Take a holistic approach to eliminate injustice and discrimination
Create a post bureaucratic organization based upon trust and respect
Consider requiring a contract/bond for expats.
Focus not only on diversity but also on inclusion
Encourage a hybrid work culture (blend of in-person and remote work)
Avoid benchmarking/copying latest strategies.
Conducting organizational audit-continuous monitoring of all human resource management decisions around hiring
Assess the pulse of the company.
Sensitivity training.
Encourage all employees to work in diverse groups.
Use sustainability as a branding tool.
Make Denmark an attractive place to take up residence and make it easier for expats and their families to settle in.

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Source: Own composition based on literature review

Chapter III. Research Design and Methodology

Business research methods can be defined as "a systematic and scientific procedure of data collection, compilation, analysis, interpretation, and implication pertaining to any business problem. Research goes beyond the process of accumulating information; rather, it is also about finding answers to unanswered questions as part of discovering and/or creating new or advanced knowledge (Types of Research Methods, n.d.).

The type of research problem sets the strategy for the overall research methodology and design so that various components of the study can be integrated in a coherent and logical way, thereby ensuring that the research problem will be addressed effectively and in an unambiguous way. The researcher will justify the choices through describing pros and cons of each of the tools chosen considering their practical applicability followed by a discussion on their ability to produce valid results, meeting the aims and objectives set by this study. In more detail, the chapter then goes on to discuss the sampling strategy and the sample size applied and the data analysis methods which have been used. It concludes with a brief discussion on the ethical considerations, inclusion/exclusion criteria and limitations posed by the research methodology, as well as problems encountered during the research.

i. Research Philosophy

The research philosophy is the basis of any study as it describes the set of beliefs the research is built upon and can be described from either an ontological or epistemological point of view (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006).

Ontology in business research can be defined as "the science or study of being" and it deals with the nature of reality (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2007) ;(Ontology, n.d.).

In other words, ontology is associated with a central question of whether social entities should be perceived as subjective or objective. Accordingly, objectivism (or positivism) and subjectivism (or interpretivism) can be specified as two important aspects of ontology. Objectivism "portrays the position that social entities exist in reality external to social actors concerned with their existence" (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2007).

Subjectivism on the contrary, perceives that social phenomenon are created from the perceptions and consequent actions of those social actors concerned with their existence (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2007).

Epistemology, on the other hand, is about "how" we can obtain knowledge and come to understand things in other words, how can we figure out what reality is, what forms valid and reliable knowledge, how do we acquire and communicate it, what are the limits of this

knowledge and how a researcher can get it and transfer it (Tengli, 2020) ;(Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2007).

The three main research philosophies that function on different ontological and epistemological assumptions include positivism, interpretivism and pragmatism. Positivism states that there is only one reality and that all meaning is consistent between subjects. For the positivist, knowledge can only be true, false, or meaningless. So, if something is not found to be accurate or false, it no longer holds any ground and is thus rejected (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006) whereas interpretivism or constructivism focuses on people's ideas and thoughts, in light of the socio-cultural backdrop. With constructivist philosophy, the researcher plays an active role in the study, in order to draw a holistic view of the participant and their actions, thoughts and meanings (Interpretivism (interpretivist) Research Philosophy, n.d.). Lastly, pragmatism highlights the importance of using the best techniques possible to investigate phenomena (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2007).

The main aim is to approach research from a practical point of view, where knowledge is not fixed, that there are many ways of interpreting the world and undertaking research and where reality is constantly questioned, renegotiated and interpreted (Pragmatism Research Philosophy, n.d.).

As such, the research philosophy implemented in this study has been that of interpretivism with subjectivism as the ontological assumption because the researcher plays an active role in the study and approaches the research with the intention of understanding "the world of human experience" and where the nature of reality is socially constructed (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2007).

ii. Research Approach, Design & Strategy

Research approaches can be inductive, deductive or abductive (Tengli, 2020). While inductive approaches lead to generating theories from research, rather than starting a project with a theory as a foundation, deductive approaches begin with a theory and aim to test it or build on it through research (Research Approach, n.d.).

This study is inductive, as the data is collected to build theory, rather than test it. Closely linked to research approaches are quantitative and qualitative research. As such, inductive approaches are commonly used within qualitative research, whereas quantitative research tends to reflect a deductive approach which leads to choosing the right paradigm (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006). Since the topic is extensive, highly complex and requires narrow and in-depth investigation, this research uses case study in a qualitative way to critically analyze and discuss a company

called ***"Agri Nord"*** as the pilot case. The case study research design is also useful for testing whether a particular model or theory actually applies to phenomena in the real world. It allows the author to take the culture and social context into account, meaning this type of research is more often than not qualitative in nature and tends to be inductive. However, a single or limited number of cases offers little basis for establishing reliability or to generalize the findings to a far-reaching population of people, places, or things (Research Guides, n.d.). As such, carefully selected participants from four Danish SMEs were targeted and interviewed in order to expand knowledge, quality of discussions, broaden the reach on this topic, gain more insight and the extent of contribution of the text to the development of the research area. Data regarding the multiple challenges that underpin recruitment of foreign workers in these Danish SME's was collected and examined. Thereafter, the challenges that have been discussed in the literature review were compared with the findings of these SMEs to measure the repeatability.

Also, the study made use of triangulation which refers to the use of multiple data sources, individuals or methods in qualitative research to render a holistic picture and develop a comprehensive understanding of the phenomena. So, triangulation gave the author the opportunity to approach the research objectives from different standpoints, improve dependability of findings and to test validity through the convergence of information from multiple sources (Carter, Bryant-Lukosius, DiCenso, Blythe, & Neville, 2014); (Mabuza, Govender, Ogunbanjo, & Mash, 2014).

iii. Methodological Choice

Since only a single data collection technique is utilized for the entire study, the choice of the mono research method is justified as an appropriate research strategy since the research is analytical in nature and uses facts or information already available and analyses them in order to make a critical evaluation of the material. Moreover, the study is designed to answer specific questions and aimed at solving practical problems, so it is applied research. Also, based on the research design, the research is exploratory in nature, which allows the researcher to explore different aspects of the research area and increase their understanding, they do not attempt to offer final and conclusive answers to the research problem (Types of Research Methods, n.d.).

iv.Time horizon

Since this thesis was conducted in a short period of time due to time constraints, a cross-sectional time horizon also known as 'snap-shot' study was applied as compared to longitudinal or successive independent samples which refers to the study of a phenomenon or a population over a period of time (Tengli, 2020).

v. Techniques and procedures

In this section, the data collection methods, sampling strategies and data analysis techniques are described.

Data collection tools and procedures:

In order to answer the research question(s) and meet the objectives of the study, data can be collected through primary and secondary sources (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2007, p.246) Primary data was collected through personal experience, observations followed by semi structured interviews with seven participants from five Danish SME's. Semi structured Interviews were chosen to understand the experiences and impressions in more detail and be able to expand or clarify responses on a specific issue. Such interviews often have better response rates than surveys, allowing the interviewer to gather more in-depth information, produce greater insight while allowing flexibility in questions. The smaller sample size helps the interviewer to discover new ideas, get more elaboration and deeper exploration during the data collection process, however, interviews are time consuming where rigor is more difficult to maintain, requires exceptional interviewing skills and is more easily influenced by the authors personal biases and idiosyncrasies. To add to that, such qualitative data is difficult to analyze and may add on follow up questions. Moreover, while the results of the data obtained are more valid, the findings cannot be generalized to other companies due to the subjectivity of data collected (Anderson, 2010).

For secondary data, the author chose ABI/INFORM and Google scholar as the database since it is the biggest database for business research. Abstracts resulting from the searches were thoroughly scanned to filter out irrelevant publications. Moreover, data was collected by synthesizing existing knowledge from sources such as books, journal articles, company websites, survey reports and newspaper articles.

Alternate methods

The researcher, while embarking on this study, initially considered focus groups, ethnography and company surveys as possible alternate research methods, however due to time constraint, feasibility, practicality and costs these research methods were not opted for.

Research population, instrument design and sampling procedures:

The participants to investigate the research problem included three workers out of five from Agri Nord (AN), the pilot company whose area of expertise was relevant for the study. First, team leader Vittus Bernlow was tabbed to gather information as his position provided an overview of the entire department and vast knowledge was collected from such a position. Second, full-time recruiter Eva Jensen, was tabbed to get insights about the hiring process and the challenges she faces on a daily basis from farmers and candidates. Finally, Christina Guldbæk, responsible for dealing with work permits, paperwork and residence visas for the internationals was chosen to get a bigger picture and the challenges she faces in dealing with institutions in multiple countries. Taking her stance was both intriguing and vital for the research as there is a lot of communication back and forth with candidates, clients, farmers and SIRI (agency for processing applications) which cannot be ignored. Additionally, in order to cover more intricate aspects of the research, four more Danish SMEs were targeted, and the sample size was increased where relevant people such as managers and carefully selected employees from the same firm and team were invited for interviews forming a subgroup of the original sample. Participants from those companies included:

Lisbeth Lauritsen, HR partner from DEIF with an employee strength of little over 250, Leonardo Miodrag, Marketing Manager at DIGURA with an employee strength of 15, Marianne Betzer, HR Director at OJ Electronics A/S with an employee strength of 160 and Sisse Zinn, Sales and Marketing Assistant from Victor Energi- & Køleteknik A/S with an employee strength of 80.

The size of the sample was relatively small where the author created a database of companies with less than 250 employees, which met the research criteria using a simple google search, attending career fairs and networking events. A total of five managers and two employees were invited for an interview, and the interviews took place virtually depending on the preferences of the participant in English and their audio was recorded then transcribed by the researcher. The interviews lasted between 20 minutes to an hour depending upon the availability and interest level of the participant. Data was collected first during internship in 2020 with AN and

the rest from August 2021 to November 2021, from selected four Danish SMEs. The full transcripts of the interviews are attached in the appendices (4,5,6,7,8,9,10).

Instrument Design

The interview scripts for both managers and employees consisted of 24 brief, but open-ended questions often referred to as an *interview guide* (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p.467). The questions for the managers were designed to discuss in detail the overall challenges the company faces while recruiting, managing and retaining culturally diverse expats, the major stressors they have, about the leadership team and how those challenges are tackled. The questions for the employees were more process specific as they are the ones who are responsible for the entire recruitment cycle from job posting to sourcing the candidates, interviewing them to signing the contract, dealing with the immigration authorities and onboarding them. The questions were asked based on the flow of the interview and in no exact particular order as in the interview guide. Some questions were asked even outside the interview guide to get more inputs from the interviewee due to flexibility (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p.467). The full scripts of the interview questions are available in the Appendices (3).

In terms of sampling strategy, a non- probability purposive also known as judgmental sampling technique was used in order to recruit participants based on the researcher's judgement that were most useful to the purposes of the research and gain detailed knowledge and information about a specific phenomenon and meet the objectives (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2007, p.230).

Ethical considerations

This study was subject to certain ethical norms to ensure accountability, trust, mutual respect, and fairness especially during the process of gathering and presenting research data as broken down by Diener and Crandall (1978).

All participants were informed in advance about the purposes of this study and gave their written acceptance regarding their participation in the research. The nature of participation in the research was voluntary and the participants involved had the right to withdraw partially or completely from the process. The interviews did not contain any offensive, discriminatory, or other unacceptable language. Finally, all the information collected in the course of this research has been used only for the purposes of the study, and will be kept confidential (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p.128).

Delimitations

This research had some delimitations that need to be duly considered as they influence the flow of the research design.

First, the findings in this report should be interpreted with discretion, as the size of the sample of Danish firms participating in the research is quite small and can therefore not be considered representative of all the other Danish firms.

Only Danish SMEs with an employee strength of less than 250 were targeted, company level challenges were studied while industry level problems were excluded. Besides, there is considerable variation between the types of firms, including their industry affiliation, which can reduce the generalizability of the findings. A bigger sample would probably add to the reliability of the research.

Second, due to definite time and available resources, the researcher could not carry out in-depth analysis on AN's business strategies on corporate, business and functional level broadly. Since AN is out an out a Danish company with the researcher being the only non-Danish international intern, the researcher faced many difficulties since all day to day activities including meetings/presentations were dealt in Danish and as a result, the researcher lost out on a lot of crucial information as to what is going on in the company and it was practically impossible to translate everything to English.

Thereafter, while selecting participants for interview only 3 employees out of 5 were chosen because their job roles seemed relevant for the study whereas of the job roles of the other two, where one was working mostly with farmers, focusing on leadership styles while the other employee was responsible for preparing tax cards and courses. Their roles seemed unrelated and would have brought a great amount of extensiveness to the research question and hence they were left out. Moreover, Christina who handles visas, work permits and legal paperwork, was unable for the interview due to year ending and tight deadlines, her interview was covered by Vittus. The report was completed in a shorter period of time due to a hectic work schedule of the participants and sometimes unavailability of employees on multiple occasions due to frequent COVID lockdowns.

Finally, DIEF as a participating company is an exception to the criteria of the study, because they have an employee strength of a little over 250 in Denmark. The author had a considerable amount of challenge while recruiting a sufficient number of participants because many times the requests of the researcher were turned down by multiple firms and they were the first company to participate in the research hence their inputs were valuable and included.

Data Analysis

The results of the semi structured interviews with all the five companies were analysed manually via thematic analysis where the researcher aimed to detect common phrases, words, and group them together, in order to determine tendencies and trends in the answers of the respondents. This research follows an inductive approach where the themes are data driven. Then the data was coded based on the conceptual framework developed during the literature review (Anderson, 2010). The major challenges that underpin Danish SME's and strategies to overcome those challenges were presented in the format of tables in figure 6. The major findings from the data collected will be discussed in detail in the next chapter.

Chapter IV. Findings

This section interprets the qualitative data that was collected through semi structured interviews from all the five companies. The main activities of Agri Nord, the pilot company about their recruitment department, the SWOT analysis and the researcher's role at the company can be found in appendices (1). To add to that, a small introduction for each of the other four companies can be found in the appendices (2) due to space constraints and due to the fact that none of the above is discussed in this chapter. The findings from the interviews are summarized below but the full interviews can be found on appendices (4,5,6,7,8,9,10).

Throughout this chapter, participants who were interviewed will be called as below:

Vittus, Eva, Christina = Agri Nord (AN) where Vittus=VAN, Eva= EAN & Christina whose interview was covered by Vittus will also be called VAN

Lisbeth Lauritsen, HR partner from DEIF = DEIF

Leonardo Miodrag, Marketing Manager at DIGURA = DIGURA

Marianne Betzer, HR Director at OJ Electronics A/S = OJ

Sisse Zinn, Sales and Marketing Assistant from Victor Energi- & Køleteknik A/S = Victor

The interview questions were carefully designed based on the themes generated while reviewing the literature in order to probe a company's dedication and commitment to providing an equitable and inclusive environment for its workforce. The interview process was an opportunity for the author to get to know if the companies know their business case and if they are aware of the concrete benefits diversity provides and whether they actively promote it. Broadly, the questions were designed to understand how critical is culture to the process of hiring and retaining a talent, the level of diversity in the leadership and recruitment department, how well does the company make sure they attract diverse candidates, questions about the challenges of international hiring in general, the multiple challenges that companies face before, during and after the arrival of the expat, the pros and cons of diversity, questions about cultural differences and how to deal with them, top reasons for attrition and to understand ways in which companies can retain their employees from quitting. The last set of questions were to get a broad understanding on if recruiters can sense there are any loopholes in their current recruiting process and if they need to improve on something. The interview ended on understanding what stops a country or company from hiring internationals.

The interview started with a question helping to establish the employees name and position in the organization. It was necessary to ask about their background to get an overview of the entire department before getting into the deeper aspects of hiring and retention. While Agri Nord had one person each dedicated to recruitment and paperwork, the remaining four companies namely DIGURA, DEIF, Victor and OJ were overworked, handling multiple tasks and responsibilities, considered as very typical in Danish SME's to save costs.

Prior research suggests diversity, change and impact starts at the top and trickles down; the first set of questions were asked to understand how diverse is the leadership/executive team and what value does diversity bring to get a glimpse into their culture because if the CEO does not buy into the process, neither will the entry-level workers. When companies were asked how diverse their executive team was all the five companies had only locals, however, DIGURA, DEIF, Victor and OJ stressed that diversity is in their DNA because the leader/owner of the company came out of their comfort zone, took the leap of faith and kickstarted the internationalization process.

Also, all the five companies "collectively agreed that diversity does bring in a lot of value to their company". DIGURA stated that "their office culture is opening up and encouraging diversity. The Danes have realized that if they switch their business language to English then they open the doors to all the talent present in the country. The company is trying to be as diverse by gender and nationality, realizing the importance of different perspectives, work ethics, ways of working and complementing each other's competencies as well as learning from each other. The Danes in his company are getting comfortable by speaking in English and realizing it is not that scary, getting out of their comfort zones and their typical Danish mentality and looking at the bigger picture. Diversity is supported due to gender equality in their leadership team".

DEIF, Victor and OJ on the other hand added that "diversity is in their DNA". "Diversity is much more where you come from. It is more to do with respecting who you are as a person and not where you come from. If an individual has the skills and the visa, they are welcome". Next, the respondents were asked if they had any official diversity recruitment policy or system in place or if they could share any data or statistics on organization's diversity. The whole purpose was to gauge how highly they value diversity and while leaders are regularly communicating about their commitment to diversity, do they have strategies in place to back up that commitment. While AN, Victor and OJ stated they had none, DIGURA replied that "they do not have an official system in place because they are too small but the company will eventually have a diversity policy/system in place once they start growing bigger". Their

company “values gender equality”. The company plans to get bigger and more international. On the other hand, DEIF stated that their company does have a code of conduct that supports diversity and their recruitment strategy aims to have an increasing number of women in management positions and secure a diverse workforce while supporting United Nations (UN’s) SDG’s (Sustainable Development Goals).

Advancing further, the respondents were asked department specific questions to understand how diverse is the recruitment team in order to probe on the makeup of the team because diversity attracts diverse candidates. While OJ and Victor had only one person in their hiring department so there was no question of diversity, the recruitment department of AN was homogeneous while DIGURA’s recruitment team was made up of one international employee out of three.

The next question was to understand how these hiring/talent managers make sure that the pipeline of candidates is diverse in order to gauge if the recruiters are proactively committed to diversity and if they cast a wide net to attract and recruit a variety of backgrounds and talent. EAN expressed that their recruitment cycle is disorganized and job postings for some positions are not elaborated enough to attract candidates. They are also close to ground it terms of using social media platforms. DIGURA mentioned that initially the company used to recruit from a closed network where only the Danes would apply but now, they have expanded their job posting to multiple Facebook groups used by internationals, LinkedIn, international house Denmark making sure they reach potential candidates. The previous recruitment manager knew only one way of recruiting thinking that was the only way where she would write the job post in Danish and post it on LinkedIn automatically signalling, they do not need internationals even though they were open to internationals and it is only recently after the hiring of an international, the advertising and promotion of the company has expanded. OJ on the other hand puts no special efforts in terms of recruiting or marketing. They also use limited social media platforms (Facebook & LinkedIn) and prefer to recruit international students from SDU (University of Southern Denmark) as and when required. When it comes to Victor, they too do not actively market or advertise their positions much. The Romanians working in their company have their own community and hire through word of mouth and this is also because there is only one person handling too many tasks and are overworked to do anything for the hiring process. DEIF on the other hand takes diversity seriously and believes in promoting gender equality. They would want to work with suppliers and partners that measure up on Diversity too, believe in hiring and investing in personalities along with skills and aims to provide equal opportunities and outcomes for men and women and do not prefer one gender to

another when a position becomes available. The company also recruits differently abled candidates and has a tie up with a school for autism where they hire young people for small jobs.

When companies were asked about the international hiring process in general and the top challenges they face before, during and after hiring an international workforce they all came up with numerous challenges which are presented in figure 6.

Broadly, paperwork and the visa process is tedious and time consuming and companies do not want that headache. The Danish system is very complex and difficult to understand and so they would prefer candidates who are physically present in Denmark with a valid visa. One of the biggest drawbacks for the companies is when they are unable to meet the candidates physically because the company is unable to get the real impression of the candidates. Moreover, they want to hire people with some experience and do not want to invest time and money on freshers due to the fact that so many companies are so fast paced, that they cannot invest in a paid internship nor babysit such a candidate. Some companies prefer outsourcing their process to cheap countries within the European Union (EU) to spin diversity and save costs as domestic diversity is expensive. To add to that, SME’s who work locally and have no international customers or markets, for them language is a major barrier, and their internal language and activities would remain in Danish. Some of the SME's are scared and have no time and resources to invest on employees who are in Denmark on a short-term basis or will be deported in case the immigration rules change and are even sceptical to recruit people from polar opposite cultures because they do not want their investment to doom. A lot of companies have too many reservations and would prefer to hire the best fit for the job with the right competences even though the position lies vacant for months together. Those unfilled jobs mean more pressure on the rest of the employees as well as the companies and that increased workload can take a toll on them if it goes unchecked. Besides, the society loses out on income when firms are forced to turn down orders due to labour shortage.

Next, the companies were asked if expatriation can be a deal breaker sometimes considering physic distance and multiple cultural differences between non-EU countries and Denmark and why would companies prefer hiring candidates from nearby countries.

Victor replied distance does not matter and they are open to any person around the world as long as they have the right skills and competence. Gender, colour, race, ethnicity does not matter for them. EAN went on to express that there is good work-life balance in the country and the key to having a successful collaboration is to have the right mindset, teamwork and a good dialogue with the employer at their specific workplaces no matter where they come from.

Some of the employers are not so good at English but if the understanding is from both sides there will be harmony. There are situations when candidates from certain countries do not tell the employer if something is going wrong and the Danish farmers do not welcome that. Honest communication is the key, and it should be from both sides so that mistakes can be dealt with in a professional way and misunderstandings can be downplayed. DIGURA replied that when a company is small, they do not want to take that risk on you because of the huge psychic gap and the time difference between two countries even when it comes to outsourcing work. Plus, if they do not like the person after hiring them, they would generalize the whole country. Danes focus more on the negative stuff than on success stories, but things might change when they meet the candidate in person or when the experience is a positive one. OJ replied that physic distance is not an issue once the candidate has already stayed in Denmark because then you have been accustomed to the Danish way of living and probably choose to stay in Denmark because you like it here. For DEIF, distance does not matter, it is the people who matter. Subsequently, when asked about how well is the Danish way of working explained or conveyed to the prospective applicants before or while recruiting them, EAN mentioned that for those candidates who have never been to Denmark before, they are given ample amount of information about the country, Danish work ethics, what is expected out of them, about housing and the salary levels as compared to candidates who have lived and worked in Denmark before. The entire purpose of doing this is to make the candidates think about what it really means to come to work in Denmark. Victor on the other hand said that they do not do anything different between people from other countries and Danish people. Everybody is treated equally. OJ responded that due to their universal mindset, there are no cultural clashes because the candidates get a chance to see how people interact and work during the recruitment process. DEIF talks to the candidates a lot before and during the hiring process, providing them with a lot of information while DIGURA stated that sometimes the candidates get scammed by the employer and have no choice but to stick to them. Their company wants to focus on candidates who have the right skills and competence, plus who can fit well within the company culture because the company culture is very much dictated by the people in the company. They look forward to hiring people who will be comfortable with the company culture and the expectations of both parties would match.

When companies were asked about what are the various diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence trainings do they offer after an employee arrives considering they come from different backgrounds and it takes time for a person deal with the initial culture shock and integrate into the company and the country, VAN stated that they do have cultural exchange

and integration programs in place where candidates come together to discuss their working culture and how is it different from the Danish way of working and that integration is a two-way process and there should be equal enthusiasm and interest. DEIF on the hand stated no official training is given to their employees and that they are not very good on the social part. In fact, they don't do anything special for their employees in that regard. The company talks to the candidates a lot before and during the hiring process but after they arrive, they are not really included. The company focuses on diversity but not on the inclusion part. Victor stated that they do not offer any cultural competence training unless asked for it and in terms of integration it is the responsibility of the Kommune (local municipality) to help them integrate when they come to Denmark whereas OJ stated no specific training per se is given because they do not find it necessary, but they do have an onboarding program where they assign mentors to help their new hires with personal integration and professional help on the job. DIGURA differed by stating that their company believes in giving hands on kind of learning over LinkedIn style of learning. Immersing the employee into Danish culture and society by speaking to them in Danish, talking about Danish traditions, food, music, drinking culture, Danish bodega songs and openly promoting their office culture. When companies go without offering cultural competence training, they are likely missing the intricacies of diversity and do not have the necessary skills to deal with cultural clashes leading to multiple gaps and eventually attrition. When probed about the top reasons for attrition EAN, OJ, Victor and DEIF collectively said that employees quit because of better pay packages. AN even went on to say that some of the farmers feel that for some of the employees, salary is the only biggest motivation and that they do not have the right mindset to stay in the country and contribute or the willingness to work with the animals. As a result, it is very important that they have the right fit for the job. DIGURA differed stating that when “companies over analyse, focus on perfection, doubt the expertise and micromanage their new hires, they quit”. Also, one of the biggest reasons for attrition is when “companies are unable to get a culture fit”. Balance between skills and personality is essential. EAN also expressed misunderstanding, miscommunication and disagreement between employer and employee and also with other workers in the workplace leads to disharmony. DEIF continued to add that they do not prioritize social events and lack of socializing, underestimating or neglecting employee needs, lack of professional development where growth stops after a certain position, underestimating the cultural differences aspect where the foreigners are treated just as the Danes even though they come from different cultures, expecting everybody to know everything even without talking about it, not communicating and not being clear on expectations and how you want people to integrate

and poor management/lack of training leads to laying off the employees with family. Victor supported DIEF that even the Danes do not mingle among themselves in their firm and so the company prefers when internationals have their own community while OJ stated that the young people quit to test their market value and have more experience outside, but the more experienced guys stay for longer. The fact of the matter is, if companies do not prioritize these key relationship-building events, employees will not progress in their careers simply from being left out.

When asked if their company was flexible to new suggestions and agile ways of working because agility can become an essential factor in a business's success as it helps them to continuously reinvent themselves and cultivate their flexibility. VAN stated there is sometimes resistance to change and farmers would prefer to work with a particular nationality over others while DIGURA, DEIF and OJ said that they were very much open to suggestions and new ways of working. Victor slightly differed by stating they have their standard way of doing things but agreed that everything can be done in a different way.

All things considered, when asked about the various strategies to prevent attrition and retain their employees, it was to probe the company's willingness, proactiveness and efforts to promote a culture in which employees at all levels and of all backgrounds feel supported and motivated enough to stay and be themselves, all the five companies came up with a lot of interesting suggestions which are presented in figure 6.

Broadly, companies should reduce excessive focus on language skills while considering the cultural background of the employees. Companies may like it or not, but English is the global language of the business houses around the world today. Fostering a common mode of speech isn't just a good idea; it's a must. If the company's official language of business is English, then they open doors to more talent and more perspectives and learn from each other. Companies must set clear expectations as to what is expected out of their employees and what they can expect from the company, acceptable and unacceptable behaviour at work and encourage open dialogue because internationals help challenge all the unwritten rules and things that companies do not talk about otherwise. It is important that management has the global mindset, there is no bias against people from abroad and diversity should be a part of your DNA. Being open minded, forming new friendships, having a more down to earth approach, welcoming, understanding their own cultural baggage and open to new ways of working. DIGURA expressed that they not only believe in diversity but also promote gender equality because they have females in the leadership position. Current employees of the company should make sure they welcome and integrate the person into the company and the

Danish culture with open arms and socialize with each other. AN expressed that it is important to take feedback from previous employees/interns in order to know about their experiences with the company and the country so that mistakes can be avoided with future employees. Employees' expectations are changing and companies need to define productivity much more broadly inclusive of value addition, learning, well-being, collaboration and career advancement not just transactional relationships.

The last set of questions were to get a brief understanding on if recruiters can sense if there are any loopholes in their current hiring process and what the company still needs to work on in terms of creating a more diverse and inclusive workplace for their future talent. EAN stated that their recruitment department was disorganized, the job postings were not elaborated so as to attract potential candidates. They would want to revamp the recruitment process/system along with better management skills. DIGURA on the other hand expressed that international hiring should be supported and promoted by companies. Giving personalized and small touches such as welcome flowers, Danish gifts along with country specific flags for the new joiners so that they feel welcomed would be a great start. DIEF has an interesting strategy in the pipeline to increase diversity and reduce bias by testing the blind hiring method where managers won't be able to see the candidate's name on the resume. OJ on the other hand does not see any loopholes in the hiring process. The company wants to recruit people with the right skills and qualifications even if the position is open for longer than expected while Victor hopes on getting more professionals into the company and exhausting one person with 3 to 4 job titles without having a formal education is not a good idea.

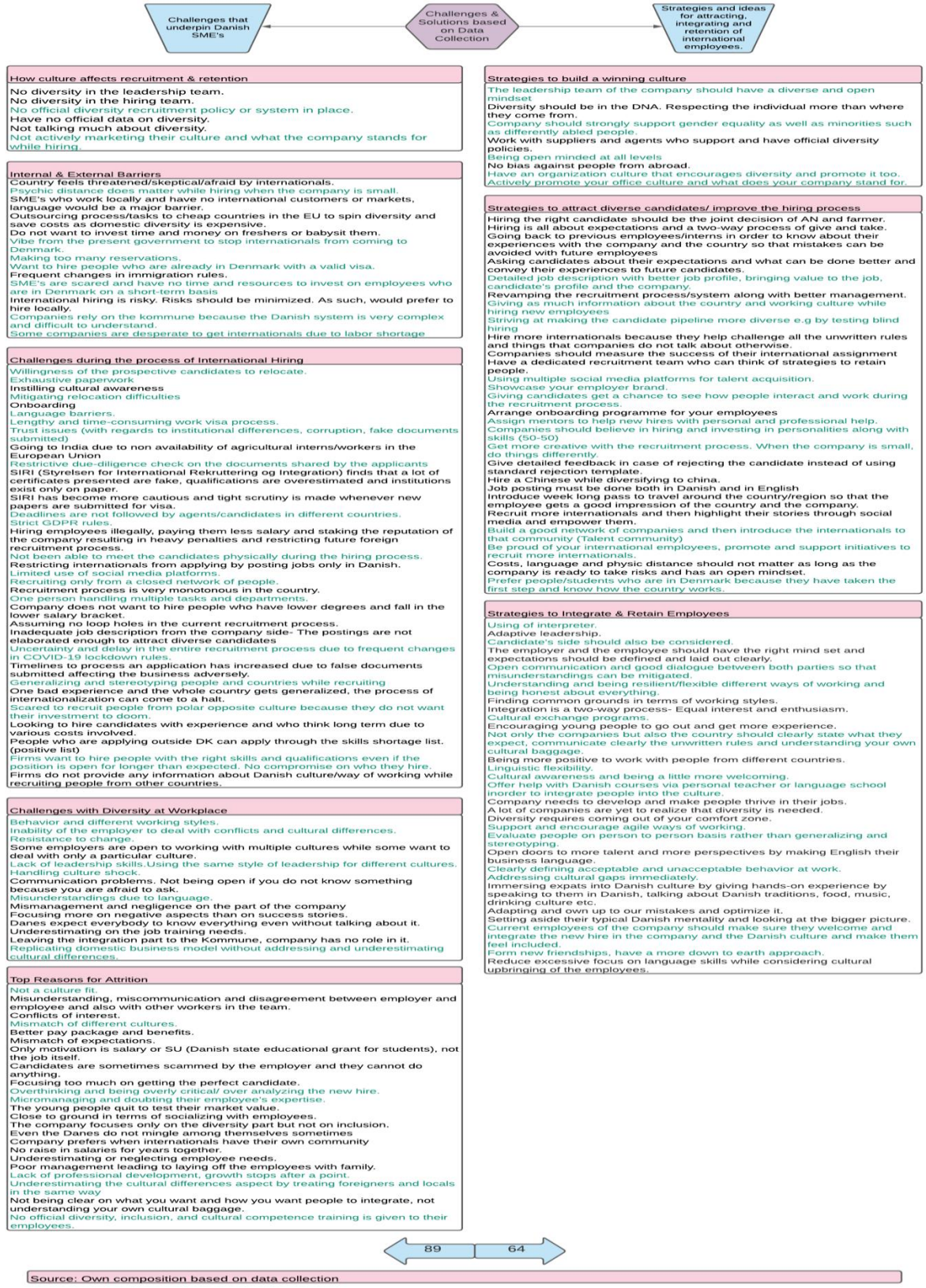
Second to the last, companies were probed on how they measure the success of any international assignment because a lot of firms remain unclear about the benefits. Existing research shows that there is limited measurement to determine how the costs and benefits compare, and to therefore establish what the return on investment is for organizations. Without a clear understanding of the return, it is difficult to determine how effective its expatriate program is as part of its overall international talent management strategy. VAN replied that success is measured when a candidate gets a visa. DEIF said they do not measure the success, but they would want their international employees to stick with them as long as possible while OJ expressed that, their hiring process is successful if the candidate fits the job the way they think and stays at the company and thrives in his job, they are happy. Victor on the other hand stated that "getting the right person who has the right skills, that is how we measure the success of an international assignment".

Lastly and most importantly, to round up the interview companies were probed with the following question: On one hand, there is a severe shortage of skilled and qualified labour in the country on the other hand, the government and some companies do not see foreigners as the bonuses they are, and immigration laws are frequently changed to make sure people do not come to Denmark. What stops a country or a company from hiring an international workforce? Victor stated that the government indeed comes up with controversial laws that stops people from coming to the country. DIGURA expressed that they 'do not like the vibe from the present government who are trying to stop internationals from coming to Denmark.' Some companies are desperate to get internationals onboard while the government is discouraging by introducing controversial and frequently changing laws. Smaller companies especially the SMEs are scared and have no time and resources to invest on employees who are in DK on a short-term basis or will be deported in case the immigration rules change. They would prefer to hire a local candidate or someone who is from the EU with a valid visa. OJ stated that the country somehow feels threatened by internationals from the past two decades which is a shame because diversity is indeed needed, it has been there but has not been recognized yet. In fact, DEIF agreed with OJ and even went on to add that instead of adopting a soft-handed approach, overlooking everything and then actually neglecting people both, the country and the companies must first understand their cultural baggage and then clearly state what they expect and how do they want the immigrants/internationals to integrate and clearly communicate all the unwritten rules so that the whole process becomes easier for both parties. Of late, this is a remarkable shift for a progressive country who does not see internationals as the bonuses that they are and the contribution they make to the economy and the society at large.

Results from the data collected reveal exhaustive paperwork, language barriers, trust issues (in general and with regards to institutional differences corruption, fake documents submitted), communication problems, inadequate job description, close to ground in terms of marketing and using social media, not using hiring methods that contain more diverse candidate pipelines, different working styles, lack of human contact during the recruitment process and focusing too much on learning the local language while forgetting cultural upbringing as the major challenges faced by the Danish SME's. Besides, the top reasons for attrition include not hiring a good culture fit, mismatch of expectations, better pay package, when employees are not included and no socializing. On top of that, companies expressed that the COVID-19 pandemic has brought in a lot of uncertainty and delay in the entire recruitment process due to frequent

changes in lockdown rules. Timelines to process an application has increased and this is affecting the businesses adversely. Not to forget, every company is different, treats diversity differently, has varied commitment levels, strategies and faces different sets of challenges while working with the international workforce. The results are significant and a lot of these findings support previous research findings and the interview questions were able to answer the overall research question along with the sub questions to a considerable extent. The interviews resulted in identifying 89 challenges that underpin the five Danish SMEs and 64 possible ideas/strategies to overcome/mitigate those challenges. These challenges and strategies were then matched to the challenges and strategies found in the conceptual framework (figure 5) which was developed from the literature reviewed. The matching is highlighted in "GREEN". A total of 40 challenges and 30 strategies from data collected matched the data found in literature review. The findings about the challenges that underpin Danish SME's and strategies for attracting, integrating and retention of international employees are summarized exhaustively in the figure below.

Figure 6. Challenges and Solutions based on Data Collection



Source: Own composition based on semi structured interviews

Chapter V. Discussion

This section summarizes and explains the implications of the findings whether they improve, add or change the field, why they are important and how they affect our understanding of the research problem: *The multilayer challenges that underpin Danish SME's while recruiting and retaining an international/culturally diverse workforce and strategies to overcome/mitigate them.*

This study first critically analyzed the literature available on the topic, after which a conceptual framework was developed, followed by data collection using qualitative interview methods. The findings were then compared to the existing literature leading to this chapter and to a logical conclusion and recommendations for future research. Due to space constraints, the discussion will just briefly refer to the literature and will not go into details.

The hiring process says a lot about all the five SMEs in terms of what they truly value, the extent to which different functions within the firm truly collaborate or not, their viewpoint on diverse employees, why these companies cannot ignore culture in their hiring process because while hiring the best talent is the number one priority for many SME's, every hire can impact the organizational culture in the long term, tangential effects of poor hiring or even replacing a poor fit can affect the business trajectory adversely. Any business leader will acquiesce that their success is directly related to the team they have built and finding the right fit to move their business strategy forward while ensuring that they do so in ways that magnify their culture rather than derailing it can be an uphill battle. The diversity in the leadership and the recruitment team says a lot about the upward mobility and commitment for diverse candidates. Diversity stats will give prospective employees a clear picture on where the company stands, if their efforts are performative or inspiring change and how strongly they promote and advocate it. Companies that value diversity have formal policies, procedures and systems in place and they prioritize it through various initiatives (Raghavendra, Charitha, & Rajitha, 2017). So when companies like DEIF who have diverse employees speaking 16 different native languages and OJ who have employees from 20 different nationalities have no stats on diversity, it is a visible indicator whether or not a company prioritizes diversity. While putting diversity on the radar is a first step, it is important to bear in mind that it needs to be followed by a pragmatic strategy i.e to build a diverse talent pipeline (Mondal, 2020). While, there is no easy fast track to diversity, unless firms want risk frictions within the workforce or even reverse discrimination. Building a strong talent pipeline takes comprehensive training, willingness, commitment and time and recruiting efforts demonstrate

how leaders and talent managers envision the future of the organization (Raghavendra, Charitha, & Rajitha, 2017). When companies fail to cast a wide net to attract and recruit a variety of backgrounds and talent, it demonstrates how leaders envision the future of their organization.

Moreover, the recruitment game has changed and many in the talent space would argue that the balance of power resides with the candidates (Smet, Dowling, Mugayar-Baldocchi, & Schaninger, 2021). Today hiring is about mutual evaluation and finding the right fit through more engagement, interaction, time and energy and lack of it is perhaps the biggest gap created by recruiting technology. To make matters worse, the hiring process is still of the stone age in many firms which serves as their own barrier to finding the best quality talent for them (Raghavendra, Charitha, & Rajitha, 2017). Firms that value diversity have formal hiring teams with dedicated roles to support hiring of diverse candidates. So, when companies like DIGURA, DEIF, Victor and OJ who have limited staff dedicated to recruiting, sometimes with no formal education, being overworked, handling multiple tasks and responsibilities considered typical in Danish SMEs to save costs will miss out on attracting the right fit. International mobility is both part of the problem and part of the solution when it comes to achieving diversity. While the awareness of the problem has increased when talking about diversity in the mobile workforce, some companies present remarkable success stories, but the advancement remains sluggish. Women and some minorities are inadequately represented in the workforce, opportunities in terms of career progression at decision making level remain limited. While some organizations struggle with the practicalities of the diversity concept at the beginning of the journey, others that have made progress can attest the business value of gender parity, equal opportunities and diversity (Mannix & Neale, 2005).

The rapid pace of change in IHRM in general keeps accelerating as newer generations enter the workforce, technological innovation and new forms of global mobility are emerging. These ongoing changes bring a mixed bag of upheaved employee expectations, hopes of superior management practices and business uncertainties, and force HR teams to re-evaluate their organizational policies, strategies and practices. The employee value proposition is progressing towards a more flexible one in the coming years ahead (Paulise, 2021).

However, a close look at IHRM practices of these SME's, several unresolved issues, or gaps, appear. They are related to the incongruity between initial objectives and the reality of international hiring from technological, diversity, generational and talent management and retention perspectives. These issues illustrate the ambivalence of international talent mobility,

if well managed, it can help bridge business and talent gaps, but if poorly executed, it could widen them.

When it comes to retaining and integrating new international employees successfully, previous literature and experience from a number of firms show that a top decisive factor in whether the international employee chooses to stay in Denmark is whether he/she and the accompanying partner/family feel integrated at work as well as in the country in general. It is vital that the company should follow up on the employee's well-being continuously and does its part to make the international employee settle well not only into the company, but also outside working hours. To add to that, when firms have no company-wide or team-wide social activities for their employees to take part in, they would end up feeling left out and isolated. Moreover, creating an environment of cultural exchange, belonging and allowing employees to bring their full selves to work must be a top agenda (Caligiuri & Bonache, 2016).

It is time for companies to create awareness and review global mobility from a diversity perspective and ask themselves whether their current hiring policies and practices are truly helping them achieve gender parity, integrate minorities and people from diverse backgrounds in the workforce or, on the contrary, are their policies failing to meet the needs of unambiguous categories of employees? Firms only get what they measure. The success or failure of an international assignment must be evaluated and measured and must be aligned with performance ratings, merit increases, and bonuses of talent managers. Lastly, it is important to move from diversity to real inclusion as it is not just the number that matters, but the active participation and contribution of diverse employees to the business at a strategic managerial level that is the goal to successfully retaining and valuing talented employees (Brown, 2018).

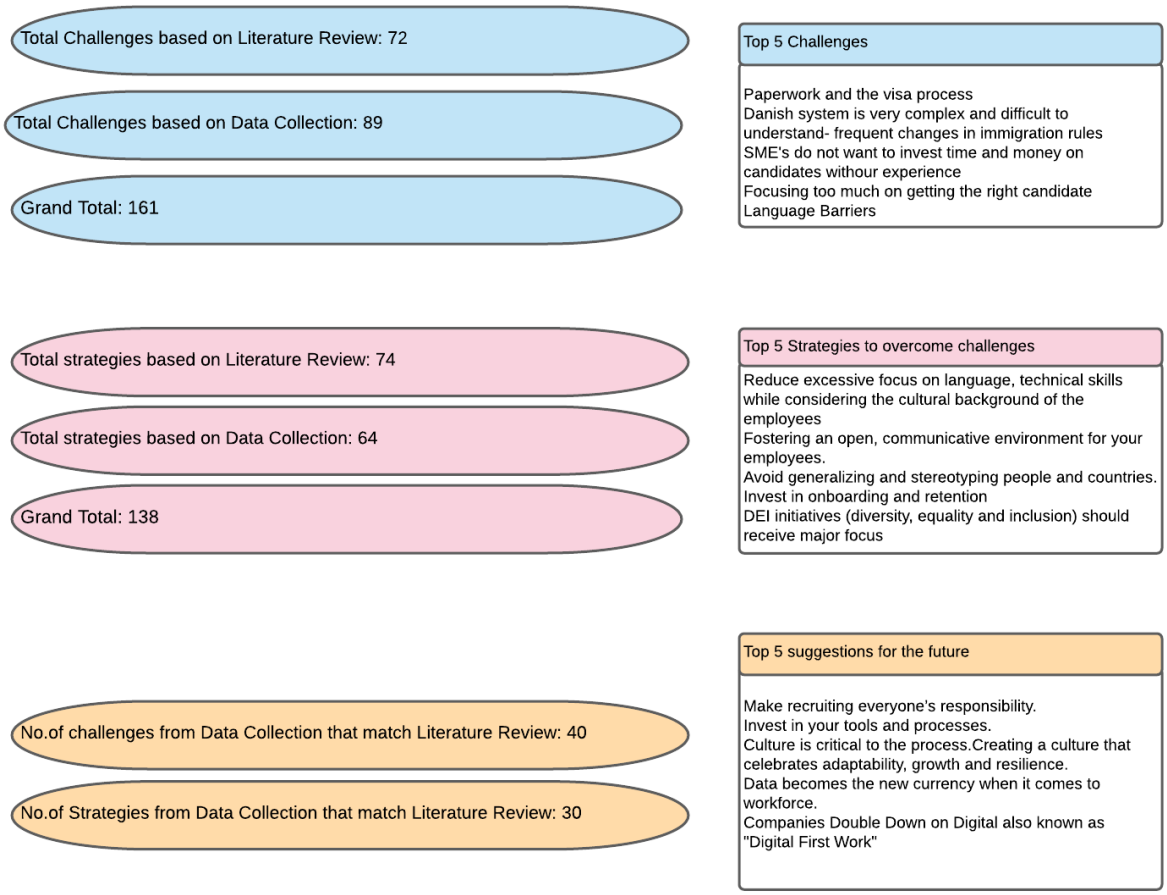
Whether IHRM will deliver its promises or not will depend on the future strategies and choices being made at the company, departmental, or individual level.

Chapter VI. Conclusion and Future Research

The overall aim of this research was to find out whether Danish SME's which form a major part of the economy are open to a culturally diverse workforce despite considerable shortage of skilled employees by answering the research question: *The multilayer challenges that underpin Danish SME's while recruiting and retaining an international/culturally diverse workforce and strategies to overcome/mitigate them.*

The study also aimed to find out what are some of the pros and cons of a diverse workforce, the internal and external barriers that underpin these SME's before, during and after the candidate arrives, the influence of the culture on hiring and retention, the top reasons for attrition and strategies to overcome those challenges. The study made use of a qualitative research method using an inductive approach where five Danish SME's were interviewed through semi-structured interviews. Combining literature and data, a total of 161 challenges and 138 strategies to overcome those challenges were identified. 40 challenges from data collection matched the literature review whereas 30 strategies from data collection matched the literature review. The challenges and strategies from the data collected that did not match the literature review aid as a great supplement to the literature on this topic. Academics can further research it or test it. Also, this research can serve as a comprehensive guide for other Danish SME's who face multiple challenges while attracting, hiring and retaining diverse workforce. Results from the data collected reveal that cultural differences (national/organizational) do bring its challenges to the entire process of international hiring and those can be narrowed down to exhaustive paperwork, communication problems leading to misunderstandings, language barriers, using the same leadership style for all expats, resistance to change, lack of trust (in general and with regards to institutional differences corruption, fake documents submitted), stereotyping/generalizing too much, less importance is given to the candidate's spouse and focusing more on learning local language while forgetting the cultural upbringing as the major challenges faced by the Danish SMEs. Besides, the top reasons for attrition include not hiring a good culture fit, mismatch of expectations, better pay package, micromanaging, frequent changes in immigration laws, when employees are not included and when there is no room for socializing. Those challenges can be mitigated if companies understand their own cultural baggage, being more sensitive and respectful towards other cultures, being more open minded, welcoming, adapting and own up to their mistakes and optimize it.

Figure 7. Summary of total challenges and strategies identified based on literature and interviews



Source: Own composition based on literature and interviews

Future Research

Regardless of limited time and resources at hand, this study gives an indicator that every business faces its share of challenges/barriers while internationalizing and recruiting global talent. A diverse workforce allows companies to think outside the box first, by taking them outside their comfort zone and second by bringing previously excluded groups inside the box. Embracing cultural diversity in the workplace is a crucial yet indispensable first step for governments and businesses that want to be competitive and thrive in a fast-paced, unpredictable, and fundamentally international business environment.

Moreover, this study could guide us to conduct further research within this topic extensively with more comprehensive aspects. It is found that international recruitment and selection is a thought-provoking topic that has captivated increasing research interest among practitioners and gained worldwide importance. Strategic human resource planning is, by far, a basic ingredient for the success of any company in the long run. There are ample opportunities for future research in this domain, of which we trust are particularly critical and fundamental to the advancement of research. Possible future research in this area could be studying and understanding the multiple challenges that international employees face while taking up an international assignment in Denmark, how included do they feel when they join these companies and if diversity and inclusion is just a buzzword for companies that talk a big game, but ultimately fail to act. Moreover, if a company is able to provide all the required help, then why do employees leave the country within a short period of time? What leads to their premature return? Is the country to be blamed or the mindset of their countrymen?

However, it is vital to note that institutional pressures are distinct in different nations which directly or indirectly affect IHRM. The context or the environment in which businesses perform is emergent, so continuous research and development is required to benchmark the intricacies of IHRM. Additionally, Green HR & Green Employee Engagement might prove an intriguing area for future research.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. About Agri Nord, Researcher's Roles & Responsibilities, SWOT Analysis, Geert Hofstede cultural dimensions theory, the 6-D Model

About the Company

Agri Nord (AN), a Danish agricultural advisory firm was incorporated in 2008 as a result of a merger between Vesthimmerlands Landboforening and Hobro-Aalborg Landboforening with the intention to provide professional knowledge and sparring to players in the agricultural industry. With 1,124 active members, AN is Denmark's second largest farmers association only surpassed by Zealand's Gefion which has 1,350 active members, where the company emphasizes BUSINESS & ASSOCIATION in balance, and deals with advice to agriculture in all disciplines. (Bang, 2020)

Currently headed by Carl Chr. Pedersen who is the chairman and Kim Koch, the CEO, the firm is part of the management, technical and scientific consulting services Industry generating $9.27 million in sales (USD) and has 11 companies under the AN corporate family. (Agri Nord, n.d.)

Located in Aalborg SV, Nordjylland Denmark, the company's goal is to recruit the best qualified and motivated employees for their farmers. With an employee strength of 152, AN has three centers in Aalborg, Hobro and Aars where the company advises clients on product development, plant breeding, fundraising, organic production, economics, finance, construction / engineering, livestock and environment and legal advice on real estate transactions. (Agri Nord, n.d.)

The vision is to create value for the greater community, entire business and strategic focus on delivering long-term sustainable solutions while the mission is to provide tailor made consulting services with great professional insight (Agri Nord, n.d.)

About the Department

Being the potential link between the farmers and the prospective candidates, the Human Resource & Recruitment department has existed since 2011 with five people in the team who are specialists in their field and help the farmers as and when required with regards to sourcing and shortlisting or in order to deal with any problems that could arise. The department is led by Vittus Bernlow who has considerable cross-cultural knowledge in terms of dealing and

hiring people from East European countries such as Ukraine and Romania where they currently recruit from. (Odrani, 2020)

The department helps the farmers to get the desired intern/worker right from understanding their requirement, posting jobs on different platforms, sourcing, shortlisting them, managing paperwork, dealing with SIRI (Danish Agency for International Recruitment and Integration), preparing work contracts, rent contracts, work schedules, resident and work permits. There is also a possibility of making a tax card if the employee wishes to besides providing a brochure to every international about the most important things they need to know before and after they arrive in the country. (Odrani, 2020)

Researcher's Roles and Responsibilities

As part of their internationalization strategy, AN wanted to take under advisement internship applications from English speaking students who were enrolled at a veterinary/agricultural university on full-time basis in India to work on particularly pig or cow farms for a yearlong paid internship and gain valuable experience in the agricultural sector in one of the developed countries in Europe.

Since India itself is a global agricultural powerhouse and for centuries agriculture has been the predominant industry even in Denmark there has been enormous potential for developing and strengthening the cooperation on education and student-mobility which is at a relatively low level between both the countries.

As a result, on 1st Sept, 2020 the researcher was given the exciting challenge to take up an internship for four months to put theory to practice, lead the internationalization process, to explore the feasibility of bringing the two countries together and how to connect to the brightest universities/partners/students in India. Apart from that, given the huge psychic distance, the researcher was responsible to figure out what was the outlook for future, the multilayer challenges that AN would face while recruiting and receiving international workforce from India for Danish farmers as well as critically analyze, review current recruitment practices and gain insight into their recruitment cycle. Moreover, responsibilities revolved around networking with various institutions and governing bodies in India & Denmark, effective utilization of social media platforms in order to market/promote the company considering India as a new market, developing multiple country specific strategies and possibility of signing MOU's (memorandum of understanding) between universities in both countries in order to boost student exchange and mobility in the future. Based on the internship role and

observations made at the organization, the multilayer challenges are presented and the justification to how the research problem was formulated. (Odrani, 2020)

SWOT Analysis for Agri Nord

Figure 8. SWOT Analysis of Agri Nord

Source: Own composition through Observation & Personal interviews

Theory: Geert Hofstede cultural dimensions theory, the 6-D Model

When firms plan to jump their national borders, it is vital for them to understand the distinctive cultures that exist around the globe and how they work.

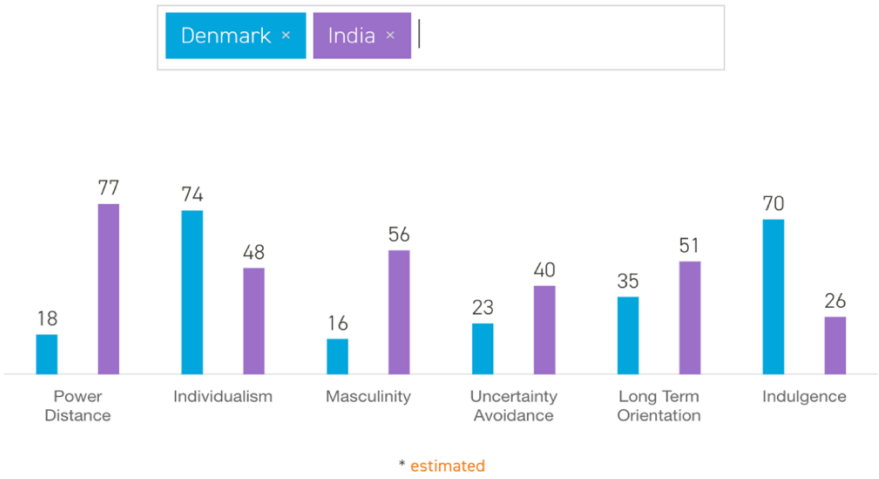
There were multiple reasons why AN wanted to internationalize to India. Firstly, due robust bilateral ties and a friendship that dates to 1957. (India Denmark Relations/India, 2021) Secondly, the company could not find many interns from Denmark nor from the European Union and because the trends are changing. Lastly, AN was eager to welcome applicants considering India has a booming agricultural economy and that Indians are flexible and could work and blend well into the Danish culture. (Odrani, 2020)

However, since India has a huge psychic distance and is a multicultural country, it is vital and necessary for any Danish firm who wants to recruit and manage international workforce, to reflect on their own their cultural baggage that is so different than their country of internationalization in order to understand the culture differences, introduce and educate them about their way of working and how to tackle the differences with ease.

For businesses who want to internationalize or manage their diverse workforce, it is crucial to understand how culture influences IHRM and one of the most relevant and generally accepted works is that of Eminent Dutch social psychologist and a former IBM employee- Geert Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory. When firms explore the Danish culture through the lens of his 6-D Model, they can get a good overview of the deep drivers of Danish culture relative to other cultures of the world. In this framework, "cultural distance" can also be defined as "the distance perceived between the home country and the host country, in terms of culture, economic system and business practices" (Bornay-Barrachina, 2018) (Odrani, 2020).

Hofstede identified six categories that define culture:

1. Power Distance Index
2. Collectivism vs. Individualism
3. Uncertainty Avoidance Index
4. Femininity vs. Masculinity
5. Short-Term vs. Long-Term Orientation
6. Restraint vs. Indulgence



Source: (Country Comparision, n.d.)

Individualism vs Collectivism

For some nations it is important to value the performance of the team whereas for some others they value the performance of individuals. This has significant implications on how workers are rewarded at work.

Individualism means greater emphasis is placed on attaining personal goals whereas collectivism implies that there is a greater emphasis placed on the goals and well-being of the group. A person's self-image in collectivism is defined as "We" whereas in individualism it is "I". (Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory, n.d.)

With a high score of 77, Denmark is an Individualist country where individuals prefer for a loosely knit social framework and are accustomed to taking care of themselves and their immediate families only. Starting a business with Danes is comparatively easy. They believe in speaking their mind and without a filter. Communication is very direct and to the point while they write to each other or while they speak, and small talk is kept at a minimum. This may come across as impolite, but their intention is to get straight to the point and are result oriented. (Country Comparision, n.d.)

Whereas India, with an intermediate score of 48, is a collectivistic society where individuals act broadly as members of a cohesive or life-long group or enterprise and where the interest of the group members influence over the interest of the individual which is viewed in the families and also in the firms. Moreover, people in India have large extended families, which are used as a protection in exchange for unconditional loyalty (Boopathi, 2014).

Power distance (PD)

The power distance index considers the extent to which power, authority and inequality are tolerated. It deals with the fact that all individuals in societies are not equal.

High power distance score signifies that a national culture accepts and encourages inequity and power differences, exhibits high respect for rank, authority and encourages bureaucracy whereas low power distance score indicates that a national culture encourages egalitarian business structures and features decentralized decision-making responsibility, participative style of management, prefers delegation, empowerment and places emphasis on power distribution. (Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory, n.d.)

In terms of PD, with a score of 18, Denmark is at the very low end of this dimension compared to India. Power is decentralized and managers count on the experience of their workforce. (Country Comparision, n.d.)

A typical Danish workplace structure has a flat hierarchy with an informal work environment, where team members are treated equally, titles are given less importance and where the leader or the boss is not always thought to be right and the employees have the freedom to challenge their decisions not to undermine the leader, but to ask pertinent questions and give their inputs. Since Danes are independent and believe in autonomy, the decision making is quick when they must meet certain deadlines and are willing to take responsibility for their mistakes. If employees are conscientious and quick to speak up about the errors so it can be fixed, there is no harm done (Country Comparision, n.d.).
India on the other hand scores high on this dimension where communication is top down and your title at the workplace is a way of gaining social recognition. Although things are shifting gradually, the younger generation cares less about power and hierarchy, but for people above 40 it matters a lot. Age also matters because it is believed that having grey hairs brings a lot of credibility. Graduates from renowned institutions are highly respected and expect to be respected. As such, educational background is another factor because having a higher degree gives you more rank and status over many years of hands-on experience. Indian employees expect to be supervised and told clearly what is expected of them right from the onset to avoid misunderstandings and confusion. It is vital to be aware especially of your own tacit expectations because what might seem "common sense" Danish point of view, might not be common sense at all in India (Clem & Mujtaba, 2011).

Masculinity vs. Femininity

This dimension also referred to as “tough vs. tender,” considers the differences in decision making style in an organization between various cultures.
While the Masculine approach to decision making is more aggressive, hard edged, fact based and concentrated on wealth-building, distinct gender roles and material achievements compared to a Feminine decision-making style which involves greater degree of consultation, concerned with the quality of life, nurturing, modest, greater emphasis on intuition rather than on science and data and fluid gender roles (Hofstede’s Cultural Dimensions Theory, n.d.). With a low score of 16 Denmark is considered a feminine society where there is sufficient work life balance, and it is important that everyone is included. As part of their democratic values, they are not afraid of disagreements or confrontations and can be open and sometimes have heated discussions. Danes are known for their lengthy discussions until consensus has been reached and conflicts are resolved by negotiation and adjustment (Country Comparision, n.d.).
India scores high on this dimension and is thus considered a Masculine society where visual

display of achievement and power is prevalent. A person who has the actual powers will be surrounded by colleagues who behave in a way that indicates respect and that person will likely display a lot of "bling bling" signs of wealth and status, such as expensive watches, a sizable office and exclusive cars. Since the culture is typically dominated by males, women in dominant positions in organizations are lesser in Indian companies (Boopathi, 2014).

Uncertainty Avoidance

This category considers the extent to which ambiguity, uncertainty and unexpected events are dealt with or tolerated, how anxious do employees and managers feel at work when they are put under complex or stressful situations and the different attitudes towards risk taking. A low uncertainty avoidance score indicates a high tolerance and willingness to risk taking, ambiguity, uncertainty and openness to a more entrepreneurial approach. There are lenient rules, regulations and the unknown are more openly accepted etc. Conversely, high uncertainty avoidance index indicates a low tolerance for uncertainty, risk-taking ambiguity, and change. The unknown is minimized through strict rules, regulations, etc (Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory, n.d.).

India with a medium score on this dimension is a country where flaws are accepted, and it is ok when things do not go exactly as planned. India is traditionally a tolerant country and there is a saying that "nothing is impossible", as long as one knows how to "acclimatize" which would mean a lot of things from bypassing the whole system to finding an uncommon solution to a seemingly insurmountable problem (Country Comparision, n.d.).

Denmark scores low on this dimension as well. Danes do not depend upon a lot of structure and monotony in their work life. Plans can change overnight, and new things can crop up any time and they are ok with it. Inquisitiveness is natural and is encouraged from childhood. What is unconventional is attractive! This attitude is the driving force for the country's reputation within design and innovation. A low score is also reflected in the fact that Danes are comfortable when you tell them that you do not know something or are in doubt. (Country Comparision, n.d.)

Long-Term Orientation (LTO) vs. Short-Term Orientation (STO)

This dimension describes the various levels of emphasis national cultures have on the time horizons for business planning, performance and objectives. The key implication of this dimension is the impact on investment decisions and risk taking.

STO emphasizes speedy results and respect for traditions, focuses on the immediate future (so called short-termism) involves delivering short-term success or gratification, and prioritizes on the present than the future.

LTO emphasizes perseverance, diligence and long-term growth. It involves deferring short term success or fulfilment in order to achieve long-term success (Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory, n.d.).

A low score of 35 indicates that Danish culture is standardized and tend to attach more importance to the here and now. They choose to maintain time-honored traditions and norms while viewing any societal change with suspicion. In such societies, people have a strong concern with establishing the absolute truth. They focus on achieving speedy results and also exhibit a relatively meager propensity to save for their future.

LTO cultures like India with an intermediate score of 51 will tend to attach more importance to the future and have a changing game-plan based on changing reality. Deep sense of harmony and stable relationships are crucial for doing business in LTO societies. Time is not linear and is therefore given less importance as compared to western counterparts. (Country Comparision, n.d.)

Indulgence vs. Restraint

This dimension revolves around the extent to which societies can curb their desires and impulses. A big challenge that encounters humanity is the degree to which young children are socialized or the way they are raised because without socializing, we do not become "human". While indulgence signals that a society allows relatively free gratification of basic and natural human drives related to having fun and enjoying life, restraint implies that a society curbs gratification of basic needs and regulates it through strict social norms (Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory, n.d.).

India scores less (26) on this dimension making it a restraint society. Such societies have inflexible social norms, where gratifications of drives are regulated and suppressed, and freedom of speech is not of primary concern (Boopathi, 2014).

Denmark scores high (70) in this dimension, making it an indulgent country. They value their leisure time, believe in enjoying life to the fullest, spend money as they wish, maintain a positive attitude and act as they please (Country Comparision, n.d.).

Appendix 2. About the participating companies

1)DEIF A/S

Established in 1933 by Erling Foss ,DEIF (Danish Electro Instrument Factory) an electronics manufacturer headquartered in Skive is a global supplier of green, safe and reliable control solutions for decentralized power production, marine & offshore and wind turbines. The company is currently headed by Toke Foss and his three children with the purpose to supply the world's best and most reliable control solutions for a sustainable future. The company has around 550 employees worldwide and 300 employees in Denmark. The company is privately held and is well placed in the electrical and electronic manufacturing industry. Lisbeth Lauritsen, HR partner was interviewed for her valuable inputs (About, n.d.).

2)DIGURA APS

DIGURA is your digital tenancy law expert. If tenants need legal advice regarding their tenancy, they are most welcome to submit their case to DIGURA for free and take up the battle against their greedy landlords for being treated unfairly. The tenants can have their case assessed on the same day as they submit it, and it is assessed based on more than 4,500 decisions and 7-11 simple questions. The company was established in 2018 by three young students from Aalborg namely 24-year-old Mike Vestergaard, who created Lejerens Frie Retshjælp, is behind the company together with his two business partners Nicklas Nymark and Mads Klokkerholm. The current employee strength is around 15 people. Leonardo Miodrag, Marketing manager was interviewed for his valuable inputs (About DIGURA, n.d.).

3)Victor Energi- & Køleteknik A/S

Victor Energi & Køleteknik A / S is well established in designs, developing and producing heat pumps, process plants, piping systems, refrigeration and freezing systems for customers within the energy-, offshore and maritime industries. The company has 25 years of experience working offshore in the North Sea and the main market is centered around the North Sea and the Baltic Sea but also supply worldwide. With an employee strength of 80 in Denmark, the company was founded in 2000 and is headquartered in Frederikshavn with Per Laulund as the chairman of the board and Ole Nygaard as the CEO. The company is privately held and well placed in the metals and metal products industry. Sisse Zinn, Sales & Marketing Assistant was interviewed for her valuable inputs (About Victor Energi og Køleteknik A/S, n.d.).

4)OJ Electronics A/S

For over half a century, OJ Electronics have been designing and developing electronic controls for electric underfloor heating thermostats solutions and HVAC Controls & Drives. The company was founded on 1 May 1964 by the now deceased Leif Pauli Christiansen. The company is currently headed by CEO Erik Damsgaard and Logistics Director Allan Ohlsen.With an employee strength of 160 in Denmark, the company is headquartered in Sønderborg. The mission of the company is to improve the climate for both, people and the planet. The vision of the company is all about being innovative and to win the next generation in HVAC Controls & Drives and electric floor heating thermostats. The company is privately held and well placed in the electrical and electronic manufacturing industry. Marianne Betzer, HR Director was interviewed for her valuable inputs (The OJ Story, n.d.).

Appendix 3. Interview questions for participating companies

Overview of the entire company/ Buildup of the leadership team

Q. Could you please introduce yourself, your position with the company and the tasks you do on a daily basis?

Q. How important is diversity to your company, and what value does it bring?

Q. How diverse is the executive team? What does the current team look like?

Q. Does your company have an official diversity recruitment policy or system in place?

Recruitment department

Q. How diverse is your recruitment department? What does the current team look like?

Q. How does your hiring team make sure that the pipeline of candidates is diverse?

Q. What do you think about the international hiring process in general and the top challenges that your company faces before, during and after hiring an international workforce?

Before an international employee arrives

Q. What are the important things that need to be conveyed to the candidates while interviewing them considering they come from a different culture?

Q. Top countries that the company recruits from?

Q. Why only candidates from east European countries such as (country of origin). Why not from countries having greater psychic distance? Any particular reason?

Q. What are the major cultural differences between (country of origin) and Denmark? How are those challenges tackled?

Q. How is (country of origin) way of working different from the Danish way of working?

Q. How are Conflicts at workplaces dealt with considering people from various cultures work together?

Q. Can expatriation sometimes be a deal breaker considering the psychic distance between (country of origin) and Denmark?

After the arrival of the international employee

Q. How does the company help international employees upon their arrival in Denmark?

Q. It takes time for any foreign national to integrate into Danish culture, how well does the company take care of the integration process and help the candidates to deal with the initial culture shock? What steps does the company take?

Q. What diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence training do you offer? Are they mandatory?

Q. Is your company flexible to new suggestions and agile ways of working?

Q. Top reasons for attrition?

Q. Could you suggest some novel ideas and ways in which companies can retain their international employees?

Q. Considering the high cost of hiring and international employee, how does your company measure the success of any international assignment?

Q. Are there any loopholes in the current recruitment process? Where do you think the company needs to improve the most?

Q. What are some of the pros and cons of having a culturally diverse team? Do cons outweigh the pros?

General question: On one hand, there is a severe shortage of skilled and qualified labor in the country on the other hand the government and some companies do not see foreigners as the bonuses they are and immigration laws are changed to make sure people do not come to Denmark. What stops a country or a company from hiring international workforce? **Total :24** Questions

Appendix 4. Interview with Team Manager HR Vittus Bernlow

Vittus Interview - Dec 21, '20 @ 11.00.m4a

Vittus [00:00:00] Morning.

Kimaya [00:00:00] Morning Vittus. Are you able to hear me?

Vittus [00:00:04] Yes, It's fine.

Kimaya [00:00:06] OK because I'm not able to hear you that well

Vittus [00:00:12] It because maybe I'm in the car, so it's not too clear.

Kimaya [00:00:17] OK. So, yeah, it's better now.

Vittus [00:00:24] OK, fine.

Kimaya [00:00:26] So Vittus I have some questions for you. Should I start?

Vittus [00:00:32] Yeah, just start.

Kimaya [00:00:34] OK, so can you just start with introducing your name and position in the company and how did you start your journey and how did the department get established and what were you doing before joining Agri Nord.

Vittus [00:00:47] Yeah, well it's, it's a big question. I am team leader in Agri Nord and I'm a 1st July next year. I've been working in Agri Nord 10 years.

Kimaya [00:01:01] Yes, OK.

Vittus [00:01:03] Yeah. And what I was doing before, I was teacher on the farming school some years ago, that teach in pig production. So, I teach finance and Danish in agriculture. And before that I was working on like a manager on a pig farm on Iceland and in Denmark.

Kimaya [00:01:34] Oh, that's great. So, when and how did you think of getting interns from Romania and Ukraine? How did that journey begin?

Vittus [00:01:45] But some many years ago I was working on a agriculture school and we have contact with the farming school in Romania. And then we start to have five from Romania and in Denmark to teach them in pig production. And after that, I started praktik on farms and farmers were very happy to have Praktikants from Romania and so we started to have contacts to a lot of agriculture schools in Romania and therefore I was travelling a lot and make interviews with the new candidates and the teachers. So, so I think it's almost 20 years ago we were starting this in 1992.

Kimaya [00:02:36] Oh and then how did Ukraine come into it?

Vittus [00:02:41] Yeah. But it was because of some farmers also started with Ukraine, but it was a little bit difficult because it was outside European Union, but it was the same, like Romanian, it was also on that time outside the European connection. So it was just started a little bit slowly. But the same to affairs because of many Ukrainians would like to come to Denmark and work in agriculture.

Kimaya [00:03:14] But did you directly get in touch with the agricultural schools or did you have some recruitment agency?

Vittus [00:03:20] We have some local agents their work with schools. I've only been to Ukraine one time to visit, you know, our companies that they've work together with agriculture schools. So, I was there one time, four or five years ago.

Kimaya [00:03:41] Oh, okay. And so, what did you notice about the major cultural differences between both the countries and Denmark.

Vittus [00:03:49] OH the biggest difference there are I think is in Denmark we trust the people when we meet new people we **trust** them. In Romania & Ukraine when you meet new people you will not trust them before they show you can trust them. So, in Denmark, we trust people and so when they show we cannot trust them, it will go down. But so, we start for two points

Denmark, we trust and then in Romania & Ukraine and you are not trusting people before the people show you can trust them.

Kimaya [00:04:36] Oh, so trust is one of the major cultural differences. How about language?

Vittus [00:04:43] Because what **language** its yeah, it's of course if you not know how to speak with people, it's a little bit difficult but so you can have one to translate. When they started in Romania I always have one to translate it together with me.

Kimaya [00:05:06] Oh, so whenever you're dealing with these countries, you have someone who can translate it to English or in their local language?

Vittus [00:05:16] Its a, English, local language. And so. So, it was as you know, I meet my wife, Romanian. She was a translator.

Kimaya [00:05:26] Oh, okay.

Kimaya [00:05:27] So she's the actual translator so that there is ease of understanding between both the countries.

Vittus [00:05:35] Yes.

Kimaya [00:05:36] OK, OK. And Vittus how are these cultural differences and challenges tackled, when they arrive to Denmark and how does the company help them to deal with these cultural differences and culture shock?

Vittus [00:05:50] Yeah, maybe in the start it is very important because of this culture shock. You now, when you come from Romania or also from Ukraine, your boss come and tell you to do something you will never say no when you come from Romania. I know. I don't understand. You do something wrong because you are afraid to ask him about to show him one times more, in Denmark we expect, you know, so if there is something we don't know, we ask one times more. So some of the culture are different. It's also in the start it’s the praktiks must learn how to ask more than one times if there something you don't know.

Kimaya [00:06:39] And is Romania's way of working different than the Ukrainian way of working?

Vittus [00:06:45] Yeah, it is different from Romanians to Ukraine. It's also how you react. It's, you know, in some way you are softer when you come from Romania and you are very hard when you come from Ukraine. You just have like I don't know what is how I can explain it to you are more tough in some way. Your Romanians they don't like when to say something stupid to them, but Ukraine's just have like a wall and when you say something hard to them, they just say they will not say something and just work. So it's a little bit different from country to country.

Kimaya [00:07:42] OK, so the Romanians, they react to certain things in a particular way whereas the Ukrainians, they are pretty quiet and they remain silent? And Vittus is the Danish work culture and how it works is that explained to the internationals when they arrive?

Vittus [00:08:03] Some farmers are good to do with; some farmers are not so good to do it. When we are out on the farms to know me and Ulla are also sometimes to come on to farms and make some on-stage, not the language but leadership, how can we need to treat East Europeans in a good way, how can we learn how it's wise and what's not wise?

Kimaya [00:08:33] Oh, yeah, because my next question. Yeah.

Vittus [00:08:39] Leadership. It's maybe also there also needs to translate sometimes leadership.

Kimaya [00:08:45] Mm hmm. Yeah. Because my next question was about the farmers that are the farmers aware of these cultural differences because it is ultimately them who will be dealing with the praktikants and the new employees.

Vittus [00:08:59] I often tell the farmers, you will need to lead the first year, when you have interns up on your farm so your question is sometimes yes. Often, we tell the farmers to tell them because they lead what is easy to do. It's you know, just to tell them what to do or not more. And so, we did not learn to take decision by themselves. And what we would like to do is also when you come from other countries to learn how to take decisions by yourself. Yeah,

it's other kind of leadership you must do on farm. So, it's some of the things we work with, with the farmer.

Kimaya [00:09:47] Yeah. Because it's important to understand that when people come from other countries, some of them they prefer to be mentored and coached before they are given their responsibilities whereas in Denmark it's absolutely autonomous. I mean, you have full authority to do your things and you accept whatever you are doing and you also deal with the mistakes that you do.

Vittus [00:10:10] Yeah, yes.

Kimaya [00:10:10] Vittus how do the farmers deal with the conflicts on the farms? Because when they are working with multicultural people how do they deal with the conflicts?

Vittus [00:10:27] Some of some of them are good to deal with conflicts and some of them are not. And so they call us so our job is to make sure it's going fine on the farms. And some farmers are good to have a lot of different cultures on the farms, you know, people from other countries and some only would like to have Romanians & Ukraine's, they are not good to mix them. So, so it's often it's because that we have a lot to do with the farmers. It's because of many farmers are not so good to handle this with the big culture for many how we lead when we have two or three cultures.

Kimaya [00:11:16] Yes, because Vittus if you expect to have people from different cultures, it's important for them to know the cultural differences and accept and adapt to them. Isn't it?

Vittus [00:11:26] Yes.

Kimaya [00:11:27] So now coming down to India, I mean, you know, what are the top reasons that led you to choose students from India, not from any other Asian country or any other European country?

Vittus [00:11:42] It's it's hard to have praktikants from European countries now. It's just a fact because there's not many people out on agriculture schools in European Union today. Its the same like in Denmark it's going down and because of that, we need to do something else.

Kimaya [00:12:04] Oh.

Vittus [00:12:05] And so India is a very big country. And I know we have some experience with Indians before in Denmark. And so it wasn't just because of that, I was looking a little bit about work together Denmark & India. And there I could see in the past there were some schools that have been done that in the in the 70s, 72s, I think it was Salem there was doing something with some schools in India. And so, I got this idea. Maybe we can do something with India.

Kimaya [00:12:50] Hmm. However, it usually takes a lot of time for any foreign national to integrate into the Danish culture. So how does, Agri Nord takes care of the integration process? How do they make sure that the employees or the interns feel included into the culture and the team and with farmers?

Vittus [00:13:17] Yeah, I mean, sometimes when it's not corona times, you know, sometimes we take make some courses in the evenings for students that are working in Denmark to tell about Danish culture so that they come to Agri Nord in the evenings some hours. And so with me and the other person, we talk about Danish culture and they talk about their home country culture. And so we make some exchange there to that. And it's normally it's it's working fine when you have a little group, maybe 15 students and so have them one time every three months in Agri Nord to speak with them about what can be done better. How they see Denmark when they come from outside and so on. And there we also have some knowledge we can use when we speak with farmers.

Kimaya [00:14:16] Oh, so there is some kind of cultural diversity training in Agri Nord?

Vittus [00:14:22] Yes and we have not done this this year because we could not be together so many. But normally we do that sometimes we also have one from, you know, a bank that work in the bank, to tell about the Danish system and or how I'd like to buy a house in Denmark and how all these things work and what you need to do if to stay in Denmark, we have some person and we have on these meetings to tell about something.

Kimaya [00:14:56] Oh, so this is a very good thing that I learnt today because that was my next question. You know, when new people are hired, are they briefed about the local know - how and the essential government rules and regulations and their rights in the country? Because it's also important for them to know what are they expected to do? And because it's a completely new country for them plus considering India has quite a lot of psychic distance, it is going to be very difficult.

Vittus [00:15:28] We do all these things and also sometimes we try to have actually we have some questions from some of the students when they are working on Agri Nord and they would like to speak with a Danish priest to see a church and so on. And so, we went with the priest. We will have the next meeting in the church where he will tell a little bit about the Denmark and in the church. And that was very good but then with some of the things we got for the students to ask about.

Kimaya [00:16:02] Hmm.

Vittus [00:16:03] So we tried also to have questions for the students and see what we can do with that and help them to the next meeting.

Kimaya [00:16:14] Mm hmm. Just one more question is what are the chances of the employees being taken for granted or misled in some way, unintentionally? Are there any chances or sometimes you think that maybe because some of the employees belong to European union/EEA countries, they have certain days of visa may be three to six months, they are allowed to stay in the country and then they are taken advantage of by the farmer?

Vittus [00:16:42] What I don't, I'm not sure I understand what I must, what was the question?

Kimaya [00:16:51] OK, so citizens from the European Union are allowed to move freely and spend certain amount of days in a particular country. But they are not allowed to work. But sometimes get misled and then they end up working on the farms? Can you throw some light on that?

Vittus [00:17:12] Yeah, we see that. We see that they are working on the farms sometimes when they must be only on holiday in Denmark and it's not good.

Kimaya [00:17:21] Mm hmm. So how is that allowed?

Vittus [00:17:24] Yep. I cannot say so much to that because sometimes, you know, the farmer needs workers urgently and so you cannot get anything out of to work until the workers have got permission. But I cannot say it's okay because, if something happened on a farm, maybe accident and so on, nobody can, health insurance cannot be covered up if something happens on the farms, but not good at all.

Kimaya [00:17:54] And it also affects the visa of that person. Isn't that the person's visa also gets banned, right?

Vittus [00:18:01] Yes. If if the police come in and can see you are working, that you are not permitted to stay in Denmark to work. So, you will have to leave the country.

Kimaya [00:18:16] Hmm. And Vittus how has COVID affected the recruitment at Agri Nord? How was it before and after the COVID situation?

Vittus [00:18:26] You know, before it was easy to have but after COVID it is very hard because we don't know what will happen next week to know the borders is closed. So, you can do that. So, you cannot do that. This year has been very hard to work with.

Kimaya [00:18:51] Yeah, and Vittus if the company is planning to collaborate with India in the future on long term basis considering India is a bright spot and since you are aware we have a lot of students into top agricultural schools. So how does the company plan to deal with those cultural challenges and ensure that the process gets smoother? Are there any plans?

Vittus [00:19:19] Well, right now, it's I think the first step is to have some good contacts in India. Next step I think we need to visit some schools. The best dialogue will be that when you come to buy yourself and take cup of coffee, I mean, one friend from a school and speak with him in person to person. So, I think when we get over with covid-19, I need to visit India.

Kimaya [00:19:53] So your next step is to visit India, visit some agricultural schools and build contacts with them and then deal with other things.

Vittus [00:20:06] Yes.

Kimaya [00:20:06] OK and Vittus have you noticed any loopholes in our current recruitment process? Are there any loopholes?

Vittus [00:20:16] One times more.

Kimaya [00:20:18] OK, are you experiencing any loopholes in the current recruitment process? Are you happy with Agri Nords recruitment process? Do you see any loopholes or something that you would like to change?

Vittus [00:20:30] I am aware it's a hard question. Sometimes I think it's good to use more time with recruitment, but I sometimes, you know, we when we have praktikants it could be you don't know the person because you only have to make interviews with the person over Skype to do not know how he's working on the farms and so on. So sometimes it's you can have a very good feeling about the person but when they come to Denmark, it is not good because of what you think it was not good because he was not good to work. So it's when you take person from other countries, you don't know how they are working in the praktik time. It is lot of it's often that that's something they're not going right.

Kimaya [00:21:29] Hmm. Is there anything else, that you would like to mention or highlight that I have not covered in this interview?

Vittus [00:21:38] oh no, I don't think so.

Kimaya [00:21:39] OK, so according to you, the top challenges in terms of cultural differences, one is the language, another is the trust issues?

Vittus [00:21:47] Yes.

Kimaya [00:21:48] OK, that was it for you Vittus. Thank you for the interview.

Appendix 5. Interview with Full-Time Recruiter Eva Jensen

Eva Interview - Dec 22 @ 10.00.m4a

Kimaya [00:00:00] Hi Eva, are you able to hear me?

Eva [00:00:03] Yes.

Kimaya [00:00:11] Thank you so much for your time. So how are you?

Eva [00:00:15] Yeah, I'm fine.

Kimaya [00:00:18] I have some four or five questions for you because these are part of my project writing. So, can we start?

Eva [00:00:30] Yes.

Kimaya [00:00:30] So ever could you please introduce yourself and the tasks that you do on daily basis?

Eva [00:00:35] Yeah, well of course I'm on maternity leave right now, so my task will also be different when I start again. But yeah, I, I'm hired as a recruiting worker where my tasks are dealing with the daily recruitment and taking the CV from the workers and talking with the farmers, helping them, making the job posting. And yeah, basically all what is involved in the recruitment process from making the job posting and signing the contract with the worker.

Kimaya [00:01:21] Mm hmm. And when they do join the company, did you have any prior experience with the agricultural industry?

Eva [00:01:28] No, I've been employed for, what is it now? Well, I started when I was unemployed in this kind of internship, so I've been there for what is it? One year and a half or something, I think.

Kimaya [00:01:52] Hmm

Eva [00:01:53] I'm not quite sure.

Kimaya [00:01:56] OK, so more than more than a year now.

Eva [00:01:59] Yeah, yeah. But I've not been I've not worked with recruitment before, but I have an education that is relevant to the job.

Kimaya [00:02:09] Hmm. So, what do you think about the hiring process in general, the recruitment process in general, and how is it different in Agri Nord?

Eva [00:02:19] You think of the recruitment process for our customers, our farmers?

Kimaya [00:02:24] I mean, recruitment in general first, what do you have any if you can share some knowledge about recruitment in general and how is it different in Agri Nord?

Eva [00:02:33] OK, well. In general, I think I think I'll answer the question to go with the what is it different in Agri Nord? Because most of the time when I have been on the job myself, it is up to me to tell what can I do for the company? And that is also what many farmers think that they're the new worker must do, that the applicants they want us must also tell them what can you do for me? But they forget that. You must also tell them that what can you do for the worker? And so I think the recruitment is a lot of expectations and also finding out what is the need for the employer, but also for the the future employee and in Agri Nord, it's different because they have also been used to many farmers that someone just checks up and they have a new worker and enough they have not been that organized in the recruitment process, they know that well, we have to do a good job posting, make sure that they understand what is our company, and because the workers say they want more than just a job.

Kimaya [00:04:05] Yeah, that's true. That's true. I mean, I am also looking at those things. So what do you think Eva are the top challenges while dealing with international hiring?

Eva [00:04:20] And of course, there's some challenges that we cannot meet all of the applicants, if they are sitting in Romania somewhere and it will be over the phone most of the

time, and it can be difficult to get a real impression of the applicants when you cannot see them face to face. And also, that the contact with the farmer that we are, this middle link, talking with the applicants, talking with the farmer, and thus it can be difficult getting whole run.

Kimaya [00:05:00] Yes.

Eva [00:05:00] Yeah. And also, because they some of the applicants, they just think, well, if I contact you, you'll find me a job and that's it. And I'm not sure they don't know what to expect from a Danish employer. Hmm.

Eva [00:05:19] And so it's also about the expectations, both from the farmer, that maybe he expects something, then we can tell him, well, that's not realistic. We cannot tell applicants that they must do this.

Kimaya [00:05:35] Could you give an example as to what has the farmer really expected?

Eva [00:05:42] And let me just think. Well, I cannot remember a specific example, but if but it's also about this job posting, if they just say that, well, I want someone to do this and this and this work, these hours for this salary. And then we can say, well, you cannot get someone to work for that kind of salary or you cannot get someone to meet these expectations. Are you asking too much or maybe they are asking to do too little? You know what they don't describe what is the job? So, you kind of expect someone to travel from Romania for this job. They don't have more information.

Kimaya [00:06:28] So from what I have seen, you know, the job postings are of just two lines. You are expected to work on a pig farm with 2000 pigs, but it is not elaborated. I mean, what would I do with those pigs? Am I correct?

Eva [00:06:45] Yes

Kimaya [00:06:46] How about reaching out to the candidates, how difficult is it to reach out to the candidates or the recruiting agents, considering, you know, in a lot of countries you have to deal directly with the recruiting agents?

Eva [00:07:04] Yeah.

Kimaya [00:07:04] How difficult is it to deal with them?

Eva [00:07:06] And that's also why my task level would be different when I come back from maternity leave, because we have decided not to take in these recruitments where they only give us very few information to say, well, they don't have to know much about finding. They just have to do these kinds of task. We will focus more on the ones where we can get an elaborate job posting and really tell the applicants what they will get from this job, but also have a good collaboration with the farmers. So we will focus more on these [00:07:42] bigger jobs, [0.4s] if you can say it, because it brings more value to us, but also to the farmers and the applicants. If we can make a good recruitment process and not just focus on those where we can always say, yeah, like you said, we do have to work with pigs and the working hours of this and this and the salary is this.

Kimaya [00:08:04] Yeah, because you have to go deeper and elaborate as to what what is expected out of a future applicant, because the candidates might also have their set of expectations. And if I just see that it's just a two-liner job, what do I do? So I as a candidate would be disinterested to even apply for that job, right.

Eva [00:08:21] Yeah. But also, it is very difficult for us as the recruitment agency because maybe the farmers don't really have many expectations. They just need someone to come and do a job. But the difficult thing for us to find a worker where we know if they are really motivated for this job because we cannot say much, Yeah.

Kimaya [00:08:43] So, Eva, how about dealing and negotiating with farmers? How well do they understand this process of recruitment what we do for them?

Eva [00:08:52] It's very difficult to find Farmer to farmer because some of them have ever worked with recruitment before and are very aware that they also have to make a workplace that is good for their employees and knows this process that they must also sell them to the applicants. And they understand this process and also that it is a process that you cannot just call and say, give me a [00:09:24] worker, [0.0s] ok, here's one. And they know that it can take some time and you will maybe get some good applicants. You maybe also get some bad ones.

But it is a process where we move back and forth and and also maybe changing something on the way as we will find out what applicants we can get. But then that's also the farmers who are not aware of how this process work. They just call us and say, hey, can you just have a look in your database and find me someone I need someone come next week and we say, that's not how it works.

Kimaya [00:10:04] OK, yeah that's true.

Eva [00:10:07] I also tell them. Well, it's a process also that I have that task. I can just take a look right now. I am sitting with something else, but I can take a look this week and then we can do and then I explain the process and for some of them, they they won't wait for them. They will just go on Facebook or something and see if they can find someone themself.

Kimaya [00:10:30] Oh, OK, even that happens. OK.

Eva [00:10:35] So it is a different phone from farmer to farmer.

Kimaya [00:10:39] Ok and Eva when you talk to candidates from different countries, while interviewing them, do you tell them something about the Danish culture or explain them, you know, how how the work culture in Denmark is, is that conveyed to the candidate?

Eva [00:10:58] Yeah, we have them when we have candidates where we can see that they have been to Denmark before and worked we don't explain much to them. But if it is someone who has never been to Denmark before we always make an interview and yeah tell them about what is the work ethic in Denmark, how does it work, what is expected and also something just about Denmark and the salary levels. And then you have to find your own place to live and some other things.

Kimaya [00:11:31] So that is mentioned to them very clearly before they come to Denmark?

Eva [00:11:35] Yeah, we want to make sure that they know what are they to expect from Denmark when they arrive here. Mm hmm. And also, we want them to to think about it, that they don't just think, well, I can just make an application and get a job and then move and we want to get them to think about what does it really mean to come to Denmark?

Kimaya [00:11:59] Yeah, yeah. Because Eva, as you are aware that Vittus hired me to, internationalise to India and gauge what are the prospects between Denmark and India, considering both the countries are agricultural powerhouse. So, if the company's planning to internationalise to India and have some Indian students work on Danish farms, do you think expatriation sometimes can be a deal breaker considering the psychic distance between India and Denmark?

Eva [00:12:35] Well, I think many of the applicants to the people who want to work in Denmark, they think it's a good country to work in. And so, I think it can also depend on the specific workplace that they can have a good dialogue with the farmer. And it's not all the farmers who are very good at English, for example. So, it's one of the workers they have on the farm if they can have a good collaboration with them also, but also that they have a mindset that they can match with the farmer that, for example, we have many who arrive and they are not used to telling the farmer if something is wrong. But that is very important for the Danish farmers. You have to tell me if something is wrong and then we can see if we can change something. And that is often where they have some problems between them. So, and you cannot handle all this just by telling about the culture, of course, because it is a mindset that you also have to change. So even though that you may be tell a student from India about how is it to be in Denmark, and of course, that can be a start for them to know ok, and I have to be aware of this when I arrive and when I talk to farmer but it's also an ongoing process from the employer that you must also keep telling them that you just have to tell me you must just come if you have some problems and so it's also about the culture on the workplace and that is important when they arrive. Kim: That's correct. I mean, the dialogue should be from both the sides. Yeah.

Kimaya [00:14:24] And Eva what according to you are the top reasons for attrition? Why do you think that candidates go home or why do they leave the job?

Eva [00:14:36] When I talk with the candidates and they tell me that they are looking for a new job or they tell me why they left the previous one, it's often some disagreement with the employer. Hmm. And, for example, if they wanted more in salary and he couldn't pay [00:14:57] and then just they want [6.6s] more salary and they cannot pay them on the salary, and then maybe this candidate leaves the job to find them better paid. Hmm. But we can also

tell them that, well, you can expect to get more in salary with your kind of experience. So and so, yes, it can be this and problems with the employer and the worker, but also with the other workers on the farm. If they have for example that are mainly from Romania and have someone from Latvia or something, and it can also be a mismatch between them and communication problems can also be between worker and also with the employer. Mm hmm. But this one with the salary. I've also heard several times that, OK, well, I get one salary, but he couldn't pay me, so I want to find something else. So for some of the workers, there is depth about the salary. But the farmers, they also want someone who really wants this job and wants to work with the animals.

Kimaya [00:16:17] OK, so you think that workers and interns, they usually come only to get a good salary and they're really not motivated enough to work on the farm and that's what the farmer notices?

Eva [00:16:32] Yeah. Yeah. It could be but for some of the students, they have to be paid a specific salary. And often the farmer, they can have them as students. But after one year they have to be paid quite big salary and then the farmer cannot have them anymore. And then the other farmers cannot have them because they only have one-year experience and they have to be paid a very big salary.

Kimaya [00:17:00] Oh, OK.

Eva So that's also a reason. But if they can show that they have a mindset where I really want to learn, I really want to work with the animals and sometimes the farmer has also called us and said, well, I have this student is very skilled, he really wants to learn and he has been very fast during this year, but I cannot pay him the salary that he deserves. Can you help him find something else? Of course. That's someone we really want to help because they have this and yeah.

Kimaya [00:17:31] Yeah. The mindset to stay in the country and contribute.

Eva [00:17:34] Yeah, yeah, that's true.

Kimaya [00:17:36] Eva, are there any of the farmers that are blacklisted?

Eva [00:17:44] Well, they are there are some different websites, for example, a Romanian website where they blacklist farmers. But we we we don't know if a farmer blacklisted all the time. Sometimes we get told by a candidate. Well, I know this is like this. I don't want to work for him. And then, of course, we want to try to find out what is this?

Kimaya [00:18:12] Oh,

Eva [00:18:13] What's this about? And sometimes this blacklisting can just be a result of a misunderstandings, something that has been wrong in the past and has been changed now, but so there is some kind of blacklist, but we're not always aware of it.

Kimaya [00:18:36] Hmm. OK, yeah, but if you see the entire the recruitment cycle that is used by Agri Nord to source candidates, are you happy with it? Or if you want to suggest some changes, what would that be?

Eva [00:18:51] Well, since I left, potentially, we have gotten a whole new recruitment system.

Eva [00:18:58] So I'm actually not aware how it works at the moment. But we have found something that this is not optimal and we need something to change and that's why we got this new system. So hopefully it works.

Kimaya [00:19:15] Ok, because I have browsed through HR ON. It's a new e-recruitment software and you can see everything that is going around.

Eva [00:19:24] I cannot say much about it now as I will have to wait and watch until I get back to the office.

Kimaya [00:19:24] OK, Do you have any suggestions as to how to better deal with cultural challenges? Because if we want to bring an international workforce to work in Denmark, culture is one of the biggest barriers. So how does the company plan to deal with these cultural differences?

Eva [00:19:53] Well, I don't know if they if we plan for it, but and of course, I don't know exactly what it would be when I get back. But I think that much of it is about communication, but also communicating with the farmer, because sometimes just hire us and so can you get me a worker and we will handle all the communication with the applicants. But often it is very good if they talk together themselves, because then they can also find out, is this a man who I feel comfortable with, who I can speak with, because maybe they have a way of speaking then the farmers, maybe if they are very direct and someone cannot work under this, but you will only know if you talk to it with them directly. So I think it's important not just you have us with Agri Nord and the applicant and the farmer, then it is not just going this way, [00:20:54] but also between the farmer and the candidate.[0.7s]

Kimaya [00:20:56] So you are suggesting that the candidate, Agri Nord and the farmer should come together while recruiting the candidate? Everything should be on the same platform?

Eva [00:21:04] Yeah, but and not come together physically. But that could be different. But at least then that farmer would always also speak with the candidate and not just through us.

Kimaya [00:21:19] Yeah. Yeah. I think that makes sense.

Kimaya [00:21:23] Is there anything else that you would like to share? I mean if you have faced any particular challenge that you would like to share that I have not covered in the interview?

Eva [00:21:34] I was just thinking about how you can maybe prepare them for Denmark and also be about hearing from other students, previous students, what they have been through and yeah, what experiences they have from Denmark. And I don't know, maybe I should also write this down for myself. Maybe it's something we could do in Agri Nord when we have some students we help and we talk with them after some time and ask, well, how is it to have this met your expectations, is there something that could be done better? And so, we know what to do next time and also that we can convey their experiences to another.

Kimaya [00:22:15] Yes, that makes sense. I think that is it. I just wanted to have a little chat with you and understand what are your thoughts, because I was not able to get an interview

with Christina so Vittus was the one who took care of Christina's part as well, because they stop working from today.

Eva [00:22:37] OK, when do you have to hand in your project?

Kimaya [00:22:40] On the 7th.

Eva [00:22:41] OK.

Kimaya [00:22:41] So I still have 10 - 12 days more. That's it. Thank you, Eva, so much. Thank you for your time. Bye.

Appendix 6. Interview with visas and resident permit specialist, Christina Guldbæk (Covered by Vittus Bernlow)

Kimaya [00:00:00] Hi Vittus you're free now. Yeah, fine.

Kimaya [00:00:03] OK, I am not able to see you on teams

Vittus [00:00:10] OK, so yes, now it's better.

Kimaya [00:00:13] How are you feeling Vittus?

Vittus [00:00:14] Yeah super, super.

Kimaya [00:00:14] OK so Vittus, since Cristina is not available, I just wanted 20 minutes of her time and Eva was also not ready. But eventually I convinced her that please give me 20 minutes and I need to know your views as well, because I'm sure that every team member will have their own views on cultural differences and various challenges associated with it and how they view things.

Vittus [00:00:49] Because Christina has no time because she needs to be finished with a lot of applications for long service before tomorrow 12 until she has Christmas.

Kimaya [00:01:00] Yeah, so the office closes down tomorrow.

Vittus [00:01:04] Yes we have Christmas holiday to 4th of January.

Kimaya [00:01:10] OK. OK.

Kimaya [00:01:12] OK, so Vittus should I start just to ask you her set of questions. Yeah. OK, so given the fact that you know, Denmark has quite a comprehensive checklist and stipulated time for hiring an overseas candidate, so how does the company plan and execute the onboarding part?

Vittus [00:01:32] And we we try to handle one on a secure system, on a computer, and it's very necessary that the farmers know how we do the things. And example, it could be when we make copies of passport and so on, we cannot keep them in long time. So sometimes farmers think we have all the information we need to ask about because we we have done that for one year ago also. But we we cannot keep all the information more than three months.

Kimaya [00:02:14] Oh, okay. Is it because of the GDPR rules?

Vittus [00:02:17] Yes. Yes.

Kimaya [00:02:18] OK, so what are the top issues now with regards to, you know, work and resident permit? How do we deal with SIRI, farmers, candidates, recruitment agents, just one by one?

Vittus [00:02:31] Yeah. In terms of their farmers, we help the farmers to make contracts and so on. But the biggest issue, it's it's because of a lot of schools in Ukraine there are too many students. So Danish governments think there are too many false papers for Ukraine's.

Vittus [00:03:00] Because of that, is because of maybe a school, only have 500 candidates. But what we can see in the system, they make 1000 candidates. So, they make double the interns of what we have on the school. And so, the Danish government think there are too many false papers. So because of that, when we make new papers now, the candidates must prove they are students from the school.

Kimaya [00:03:34] Hmm, OK,

Vittus [00:03:36] So they must prove they're not have bought and buy some papers from, so in Ukraine if you have money enough, you can buy the papers from someone that will make it to you. So right now, we must have proof that the students have been student on this school.

Kimaya [00:03:58] Oh, so. Oh, so it's like they have to prove that they are genuine, that they are genuinely enrolled in an agricultural school before they apply for an intern.

Vittus [00:04:11] Yes, and because of that it takes a long time now to have the finished paper from agricultural school in Ukraine and you're going to have to check all the paper, all the school papers, they check now.

Kimaya [00:04:25] OK, but Vittus when they submit the papers, does Agri Nord have any way to authenticate that the papers that they are submitting are genuine or only when it goes to SIRI then they come to.

Vittus [00:04:37] No, we cannot check it, it is only SIRI who checks it.

Kimaya [00:04:41] OK, so we don't have the provision to check.

Vittus [00:04:45] We cannot see these papers. OK, this paper is not OK. It's SIRI that will check it.

Kimaya [00:04:52] So the SIRI is finding that a lot of candidates are submitting false papers.

Vittus [00:04:56] Yes. Yes,

Kimaya [00:04:57] OK. So, these are some of the I mean, if you have to compare the institutions in Denmark and that with Romania and Ukraine, then this is the trust issue right now is one of the biggest. And what are the other issues when you are taking papers and other documents from the candidates and recruitment agents, do they give everything on time or do you have to follow up a lot?

Vittus [00:05:22] No, no. It's you know, it's all sometimes we need to push them. Sometimes, you know, they can't really not answer my question. Some sometimes I need to call them like - boss until now, we need to do something.

Kimaya [00:05:42] Hmm.

Vittus [00:05:43] So it also it's very difficult to work together with agency from Ukraine because it's not like things like we do it in Denmark, we trust them and then when we have a deadline or deadlines for my office in Ukraine, it's not the same like our deadline.

Kimaya [00:06:10] Hmm. Yeah, of course. Because of because their way of working is very different as compared to things in Denmark, right Vittus.

Vittus [00:06:17] Yes. Yes,

Kimaya [00:06:19] You know, because of that, the procedure becomes lengthy. There's a delay, right?

Vittus [00:06:25] Yes.

Kimaya [00:06:27] And then how do the farmers handle these delays, how do they react to these delays?

Vittus [00:06:32] No, sometimes they're not good to handle this. I cannot understand why it takes a long time to employ people when we've done. And so, you know, the candidates start to work not legal, but because of sometimes the candidates, I've been supporting that wait only wait to have the legal paper. And so, they start to work because we don't need to have money so they can survive.

Kimaya [00:06:57] Hmm. And so Vittus how long does it take for one person to, you know, come to Denmark? How much though the procedure takes place.

Vittus [00:07:06] Normally two months, now here we can see four and five months.

Kimaya [00:07:13] Oh because of COVID?

Vittus [00:07:15] Yes because of this paperwork also because they must prove the paperwork is right.

Kimaya [00:07:21] Mm hmm.

Vittus [00:07:22] And normally one year back it two months now it's four and five months.

Kimaya [00:07:29] Oh.

Kimaya [00:07:30] Also Vittus, because the procedure is so lengthy time consuming, it takes a lot of energy and money to, you know, and success is only measured when a candidate gets a visa. So, what do you think is the return on investment on a yearly basis for Agri Nord?

Vittus [00:07:51] What we ask now one time more?

[00:07:53] OK, because the procedure to get a candidate from a certain country is very lengthy and time consuming. And, the success of our company is only measured when a candidate gets a visa.

[00:08:07] No, we do it like this and the farmers will pay for the hours we use.

Kimaya [00:08:14] OK

Vittus [00:08:15] Yes, but it can take four or five hours to make this paperwork now.

[00:08:22] Hmm.

[00:08:23] And back in time, we witnessed between three hours now it's four and five, because we must Christina must call in SIRI and take up all the time, do we need something more and so on.

[00:08:35] OK.

[00:08:35] And the farmers pay hours for our things.

Kimaya [00:08:40] OK, so Vittus what do you think is the return on investment on a yearly basis? What is the success rate? How many candidates do you think we get on a yearly basis?

Vittus [00:08:53] No, I cannot I cannot answer this precisely, but I think it's we we have maybe 150 cases in a year. Some of them, Christina help 150 in the year to come to Denmark.

Kimaya [00:09:15] From Ukraine or from Romania?

Vittus [00:09:17] No, only Ukraine.

Kimaya [00:09:18] Only Ukraine and how about Romania?

Vittus [00:09:22] But, Romania and something else because of the European Union so they can come and work.

Kimaya [00:09:27] OK. OK.

Vittus [00:09:30] So it's not a problem. It's only a problem when they come outside the European Union.

Kimaya [00:09:34] Hmm and I also had, you know, a similar question for her that, you know, what does she thinks about the issue of integration into the Danish society because she might have her own views.

Vittus [00:09:46] Yes, I cannot answer that.

Kimaya [00:09:47] Hmm. OK, and Vittus, you know, in terms of suggestions, what do you think, you know, the changes that can be done in terms of the entire visa procedure, do you think?

Vittus [00:09:58] We tried to this year we have the university from Aalborg, some some they study there are to look on all the things we are doing and on the some of the things we can do better.

Kimaya [00:10:17] OK,

Vittus [00:10:17] And what do find out is to make Excel and so we know how all our clients do and to ensure we can send them a reminder maybe two months before the old praktikants finish. So, we try to do a lot of time schedules to when you do the things and the university help to make this.

Kimaya [00:10:45] Oh, so Aalborg university is helping Agri Nord directly.

Vittus [00:10:48] Yes.

Kimaya [00:10:49] To streamline the visa procedure?

Vittus [00:10:51] Yes. Yes.

Kimaya [00:10:52] Oh, that's a great idea. That's a great thing to know.

Vittus [00:10:55] There were some praktikants, not praktikants but students who study the lines, how we do it. And there was to do that this year with some of the things we will try to make another way. Yeah.

Kimaya [00:11:08] Mm hmm. I think that is it. I mean, I don't have much more questions for you in terms of asking questions to Cristina. Ok Vittus, I will stop, so. Yeah.

Vittus [00:11:19] How are you, like in the Christmas time and so on. I think, you know, we can I have Christmas for tomorrow and I and I have only, I will be out of the office two next year.

Kimaya [00:11:35] Okay. Thank you for your time. Merry Christmas to you.

Appendix 7. Interview with Lisbeth Lauritsen-HR Partner, DEIF A/S

Kimaya 0:01

Shall we start with the interview?

Lisbeth 0:06

Yea sure! Let's go. How long does it take by the way?

Kimaya 0:07

Depends on how quickly and how many questions you are able to answer Lisbeth.

Lisbeth 0:12

Alright, so in the range of

Kimaya 0:14

50 minutes

Lisbeth 0:16

Oh cool no problem?

Kimaya 0:18

Yeah. Okay, so let's start with it, could you please introduce yourself your position with the company and the tasks that you do on daily basis?

Lisbeth 0:29

My title is HR partner. That means I'm in HR and I am in the management groups of the part of the company that I do HR for, which is research and development. Also, it's my responsibility to facilitate leadership networks internally. I'm a coach, I have a master of law. I do contracts of course, I do the personal legal work.

Kimaya 1:08

So when did you join DEIF?

Lisbeth 1:12

DEIF! I would join six years ago. Almost On this day.

Kimaya 1:19
Okay, and I was going through the company website, and it says that you are over 550 employees worldwide. How many are you in Denmark?

Lisbeth 1:31
We are 300. A little more than 300.

Kimaya 1:34
Little more than 300. So you are more or less like a big company.

Lisbeth 1:40
We are in that strange range between as SME and a large company.

Kimaya 1:46
Okay. And how diverse is your executive team?

Lisbeth 1:54
Not diverse. Unless we talk about sex because there are two females and three men.

Kimaya 2:03
And they are all Danish?

Lisbeth 2:06
Yeah, exactly. Executive Management, they are all Danish.

Kimaya 2:09
Okay. And how many people are you in the recruitment department?

Lisbeth 2:19
Three people and they is also an intern. So four. My manager is the director of HR and part of the executive management.

Kimaya 2:27
Okay. And you're all Danish?

Lisbeth 2:35
We are all Danish.

Kimaya 2:37
Okay, so does your company have any official diversity recruitment system or policy in place?

Lisbeth 2:49
Official! Hmmm.. I guess you can say our code of conduct does have that policy and that diversity and that we respect all kinds of, we have joined that UN SDG's

Kimaya 3:14
And how many internationals are currently there in DEIF in Denmark?

Lisbeth 3:23
We do not register this.

Kimaya 3:25
Okay.

Lisbeth 3:26
It is actually not important to us what country they come from.

Kimaya 3:32
Okay, so,

Lisbeth 3:34
But we do have last time I made, you know, countless scientific proof, but I was just counting and looking one day at lunch, when we all gathered, we have at least 16 different native languages in the company in Skive.

Kimaya 3:55

That's cool. So 16 different nationalities is what the data says on the organization's diversity?

Lisbeth 4:06
No official data, because we don't register this.

Kimaya 4:08
Okay.

Lisbeth 4:11
And it is simply not important to us or which country people come from.

Kimaya 4:15
Okay, that's really nice. What do you think about the international hiring process in general? And what do you think are some of the top challenges that your company faces before during and after hiring international workforce?

Lisbeth 4:34
Um, I would say that we have hired 16 people since August 1st. That will be more than that if I go through summer but we have we have I would say at least 50% of those we have hired are international or non danish.

Kimaya 4:55
Okay

Lisbeth 4:57
The problem if there were any challenge as you say, there is a challenge on, you know, getting the work permits all the formal stuff that is a drag and to be honest I'm not doing it. It's my colleague that I know. It's it's a terrible process.

Kimaya 5:17
I have listed down some challenges. I mean, I would like to just tell you about it, for example there are language barriers, there are expatriation costs, there are visa restrictions and also interference from the union sometimes.

Lisbeth 5:33

We have no interference from the union. We do not consider the costs to be a problem. And language barriers is definitely not a barrier. And about administrative workload? I think that was option number three, right?

Kimaya 5:53

Sorry.

Lisbeth 5:54

Was that option number three that you mentioned?

Kimaya 5:56

The visa restrictions?

Lisbeth 5:59

Yeah, those restrictions and all that paperwork is a challenge.

Kimaya 6:04

Okay, another question, how does your recruitment team make sure that the pipeline of candidates is diverse?

Lisbeth 6:16

I can tell you that for I believe you will treat this confidentially. We just fired a search firm that we use for executive hiring, are searched, right? Because they did not have a policy about diversity. And then we hired another company that actually does have a, they measure themselves on diversity. And that will be women and men, mostly. And those are the ones we're using them. And I must say that the firm that we fired, we said we don't we didn't use them for this current position, they were shocked. Okay, this is an all well known search company, right? And we've just had to tell him, you're not doing well enough, in your diversity. You don't even have have a policy about it. And then they went, well, you know, we want to give you the best candidates. And if they're not women, then we're not presenting you women. And we were like, how do you know? I mean, that's for us to decide. Maybe the woman is not the one with the largest CV or the best qualifications in writing. But maybe she can do something else for us. It's very important for us not just to hire skills, we hire people.

Kimaya 8:02
That's a great thing.

Lisbeth 8:04
I mean it. I mean, it's not just something we say when we go out. I can tell you that I was just in a recruitment this week. Two women, two men, which is coincidental, I would say. But when we went through the paperwork, the men were absolutely best, with the most relevant background and qualifications. They didn't make it. We are choosing between actually one American woman and one Pakistani woman, just to tell you how diverse it was this time.

Kimaya 8:41
okay. So the woman got selected over the men?

Lisbeth 8:46
The men just didn't make it. They were not the personalities that we were looking for.

Kimaya 8:51
Okay, so you hire people based on their personality than over skills?

Lisbeth 8:58
I would say, over sex that has nothing to do with any no skills. Skills. Yes. I'd say it's 50-50. And, you know, I guess you're the one doing research in this area, but, but I really do believe that most wanted skills in the future will be the social skills. I mean, knowledge is getting older as soon as you leave school. Yes. And we should really try to get education into our work life. And I've read a book recently saying that kids should have no more than a bachelor. Stop there. Go out work. If you want a Masters, yeah you can do that. If you if you think it's relevant. Thing is very interesting.

Kimaya 9:46
Yes, indeed it is. And Lisbeth, I just wanted to ask, what are the top countries that the company recruits from?

Lisbeth 9:54

Oh, We do not select like that. But we do have quite a few people from India. But that's because we close down our development area. We do have an office in Mumbai. And we did have some R&D department down there, which we closed down a couple of years ago. And then we took some of the skills, very skilled and experienced people from there. And they moved to Denmark with their families.

Kimaya 10:36
Yeah.I came across one person who's at the vice president level now.

Lisbeth 10:45
He's probably Suresh?

Kimaya 10.47
Yes, I was checking the list of employees on linkedIn. I am also from Mumbai.

Lisbeth 10.48
Oh you are is it?

Kimaya 10.50
O yeah. Hahah

Lisbeth 10:52
Suresh, he was the general manager. But he moved before we close the development department. And he was a very, it was a recruitment that we were very much keen on.

Kimaya 11:07
Okay. Yeah. And what was the reason why did you shut down in Mumbai?

Lisbeth 11:14
Not because of Mumbai, but because of our neglecting skills in managing on this distance. And to be honest, this is also confidential. I know, I know, you can I can tell you this. But about half of the people we had to lay off are now consultants for us in Mumbai. So there was nothing wrong with them. It was rather us who did not manage to do this. There's mismanagement on distance.

Kimaya 11:52

Okay. And what are the other countries? The only reason Lisbeth I'm asking you is because I need to understand that can expatriation sometimes be a deal breaker considering there's so much psychic distance between two countries, because more the psychic distance more is the cultural differences and Danish SMEs or companies in general, they are very afraid of hiring people from a greater psychic distance, they would prefer people from the European Union, because the paperwork is less and it's easier to bring people from the European Union rather than going to countries which are so far away.

Lisbeth 12:35

I understand that but you must also understand that we are a company you have 13 different subsidiaries. Did you see that on our webpage? Singapore, China, India, we had that for a long time. It's just I think, it's part of our DNA that we are international, even global in that way.

Kimaya 12:56

And is it true that, when a company shifts from a small company to a bigger company, then having a culturally diverse team becomes a deeper part of your DNA. But till the time you are very small, you get afraid and you think about a lot of stuff?

Lisbeth 13:18

You know, I'm sure I'm sure that's the case, because we have had these subsidiaries, even when we're considered smaller, so personally, I think it has a lot to do. What the way we got our subsidiaries were people who were our distributors. And if they were really good, we bought that company. Okay. So they usually they're not all hired by us. They were there. They were in that company that we bought. And then this has been 15- 20 years, some of them and our owner, and our former CEO, Toke foss was the owner of the companies. I don't think he ever considered danes over any other countries, or people. He's very international, and he's got this really diverse thinking in everything he does. And that's what we follow.

Kimaya 14:22

So that was my first question to understand how diverse is the executive team and if the leadership team is flexible and committed to diversity? Because when the leader of the company has an open mind, then everybody in the companies thinks in a similar way.

Lisbeth 14:37

I'm sure they do. I have never heard I would never expect to hear anyone different people from where they come from. Okay. I didn't know that we have we do have challenges. I'm actually gonna do a very large challenge and I think it will be in the spring, we've had this plan for two years. Because of Corona, it wasn't possible. But we're trying to teach our Chinese managers about coaching. Do you know about coaching?

Kimaya 15:16

Yes, I have been with a Danish company, I have done my internship. So yes, because the working style in Denmark is different than that in India. I mean, we have a flat hierarchy system in Denmark. And in India, we have hierarchy. So we are used to having orders from our boss, but here, it's completely flat, and everybody is given that much equality and importance, and they have their own voice.

Lisbeth 15:44

And then double it when we go to Shanghai. So, so that's going to be a huge challenge to try to teach the coaching method into leadership in China, but there they are so much asking for it. So we're going to I'm going to do a three day course out there as soon as it's possible to travel again. And I am going to do that in India too by the way.

Kimaya 16:13

Yes, yes. Because Lisbeth to be honest, when I was with agri nord I did my internship with them and they hired me to understand how do we internationalise to India. And I opened a market for them in those three, three and a half months. And when my boss told me, we want to see India through your eyes, and I was like, wow. We are not used to such kind of things. I mean, we are always told and directed what we are supposed to do. But in Denmark, he gave me absolute authority to be myself and tell him what things I'm researching on, what are the challenges, what would be the possible bottlenecks while hiring interns from India. And it turned out to be so good, that the only reason that is stopping them from hiring me is the language. And I'm like, give the employee a chance because skills can be learned so can

language. But if you're stopping a person, if you're not hiring a person based on because they don't know Danish, then you're not open to different kinds of cultures, it sends a clear message.

Lisbeth 17:31

But of course, I would say it requires being that open does require that you have made this decision that your company language and corporate language is English. Yes. That is a decision that we made a long time ago. That's also why we get it, we get so many international applicants, of course, yes. I can tell you that in our marketing department there are five people because the manager while she's very Danish, even local from Skive, and, and one from England, London wherein he must be Asian, ethnical Asian, I believe but he grew up in London, a Romanian, another dane, and now possibly a Pakistan woman. That's diverse, right?

Kimaya 18:25

Yes, that is.

Lisbeth 18:26

And our technical documentation by accident by total coincidence, we are two from South Africa, One from England, and one from Denmark right.

Kimaya 18:38

And Lisbeth, what are the major cultural differences between these country and Denmark? And, how is their way of working different from the Danish way of working? How are these cultural differences tackled?

Lisbeth 18:58

I think it was not until four or five years ago that we actually from management to dare to say that we are a Scandinavian, we are a Scandinavian company. We used to say we are an international company, but we must admit that we managed from the Scandinavian point of, you know values for leadership. And now we are actually standing up for that. And that, then, of course, I mean, if you don't talk about it, it's very difficult to to also address the cultural differences that we need to stand up for this. We do believe in, I must say that DEIF is very value based and it's been from the very beginning. The values of the company include respect, ambition and perspective, we are made by the employees in in a long it was a long procedure. Then coming up with the the main three main values for the company. And these values are on

the walls of every subsidiary, in many different shapes and forms, glass, whatever, I just see it when I go around that, and the owner was very keen on promoting the DEIF family. Okay, so the values that we stand for are, of course not understood the same way in every country, I know that it's not even understood the same from every employee. But it's something we refer to, when we're having differences.

Kimaya 20:50
Ok. It takes time for any foreign national to integrate in the Danish culture, how well does the company take care of the integration process and help the candidates to deal with the initial culture shock? What steps does the company take?

Lisbeth 21:20
We don't do anything, and I don't think it's good enough. And we're really not very good on the social part. We don't have any thing we do for foreigners that we don't for Danes.

Kimaya 21:36
Okay, but don't you think that when an employee joins the company, he might be having so many expectations, he might be having so many questions in his mind that, oh, I need to know a new culture, oh, I need to know a new place, the laws? And, they might be having so many different types of expectations.

Lisbeth 21:58
Well, usually, we talk a lot with them before they start. But they apply with us, right? So they are, they are in the process of trying to find out what the things there are all about. And I think, yeah, we really should have a company grieving team or something like that. Because what most foreign people really don't understand is that when we go home, and we are off work, and we don't give our colleagues a second thought, right. But the next morning, we love them again. And we're not very good at going out and doing stuff, but other people then are longtime friends and family and that's what I've heard about this so many times, and we're really not good at that. And I would say that colleagues are, you know, close colleagues, if it was in my department, I would, of course, invite them out or something. But I wouldn't do that with other departments. So so it's really something that happens in each department and between people to be honest, yeah, it's nothing that's forced. It is, if it makes sense right.

Kimaya 23:13
Ok.Do you have any official diversity, inclusion and cultural competence training for your employees?

Lisbeth 23.23
No.

Kimaya 23.18
Okay.

Lisbeth 23.28
Do you think we should?

Kimaya 23.29
Yes, of course. Hahahaha. Because I would love to know more about the Danish culture, I am happy when I am in Denmark. And after my education, I want to contribute to the Danish economy. And I want to know, more and more, what is their way of thinking? How are they so flexible? What are some of the things that I need to know? I mean, having a cultural exchange in the company, so that more and more people get to accept their own cultural baggage, and they are also open to new cultures. That is how we grow together. I mean, would you agree that homogeneous teams produce the same results while some of the best solutions, or innovation and creative solutions comes after there is a conflict between people from different diverse countries in the company?

Lisbeth 24:28
I don't think so. I wouldn't say it has anything with different countries.

Kimaya 24:32
If you have different minds, if you have people from different countries, and when they sit on a table and they argue that if we have this product, this might work in this country, this might not work in this country while this might definitely not work in this country?

Lisbeth 24:50

I love conflicts, by the way, as long as they're not mine, but that's where the dynamics of the explosions and new ideas come out from. I have never thought of conflicts that will be on different mindsets, or different ways of working and different qualifications. I never thought of it in connection with where you come from.

Kimaya 25:20
Because the literature that I have been reading, and there have been a lot of reports stating that when companies get involved with people from different backgrounds, they come up with solutions, they never thought about otherwise.

Lisbeth 25:38
I totally agree, but I see that as a product of diversity. And diversity is much more than where you come from, to me.

Kimaya 25:47
Okay. And..

Lisbeth 25:51
I've never thought of that being, of course, there's a difference. In culture, maybe we are neglecting this because we really don't care. We care about the people and not where they come from.

Kimaya 26:05
Okay. And the only reason I was asking is because just imagine for a second, you are a complete homogeneous team and you are developing a product, which might work well for Europe, but it might definitely not work for the Asian market. But you have, say, for example, an Asian employee in your team, then he might tell you, Oh, this will definitely not work for the Asian market.

Lisbeth 26:32
I understand what you're saying. Absolutely. But the things we develop, we develop for every part of the world that's actually integrated with everything we do. We need to be able to create products that will go on grids in Germany and Japan and US. Okay, and that's actually it's part of our development. It's an integrated part. So, so we would never, we would never have I don't

think we would ever see that we are doing something wrong for a certain country I don't think so. Because that's just that's actually, we do things to ships, and they move all around the world all the time. So there's so such an integrated thing to think global in our products.

Kimaya 27:26
Could you throw some light upon what are some of the pros and cons of having a culturally diverse team? And do you think that sometimes the pros outweigh the cons or it's the other way around?

Lisbeth 27:43
It's really interesting doing this interview, because I'm really realising that where you come from is so not important. It's the person you're with. Okay. I think I'm being that you, maybe. But it's always respecting the individual more than where the individual is coming from.

Kimaya 28:11
So what are some of the good points of having a culturally diverse team? And what are some of the bad points? Or made Should I just ask you, what are some of the worst experiences that your company has had after hiring an expat?

Lisbeth 28:26
Well we had a very bad one a couple of years ago, it was actually a manager from India that we took him to Denmark to be a manager. And that did not work. I think i i and the rest of the company totally underestimated how Indian he was. We had known him for a long, long time. But he was such a cool and that he is he is a cool guy. And he still is, although it's not with us, but very European thinking. Okay, so we neglected, I think the training of him. And, and we also had some, it was a that was such a mistake from our side. He took over a department that was in ruins already. And I think we gave him the most difficult job in the company to be honest. Okay. And I hated the fact that he didn't succeed because it didn't. We had to lay him off. Oh, first we took his family and everything to Denmark and then we laid him off. We're not proud of that. But we underestimated the training especially in a management position. So that was due to cultural differences. Absolutely.

Kimaya 30:07

Okay, so was he not given enough training to survive and thrive and that is the reason he was not able to succeed in this role?

Lisbeth 30:15
Yes.

Kimaya 30:17
Okay.

Lisbeth 30:19
Absolutely. We learned a lot from that. I hope.

Kimaya 30:28
Okay. And Lisbeth, what do you think are some of the top reasons for attrition? Why do employees leave good companies? What are some of the top reasons?

Lisbeth 30:36
We're measuring that actually. Okay. We do exit interviews with everyone who are leaving us voluntarily. And the top of the 85% reason is lack of professional development. That's how I would say 98%.

Kimaya 31:02
Okay, 98%.

Lisbeth 31:04
That's what they tell us. Right? And we do have quite a high percentage of people who are leaving us, and then come back. And because we're not a large company, the career paths are not that bright. Okay. So you can get stuck in a position with that definitely, no wonder that the main reason is lack of professional development. We're working on that, of course, and we don't have titles like, we have a career track where we have all 90 different roles in our company described very well. And, and a few steps to go up, you can become a senior, but it stops there. Otherwise, you will have to change your career. In India and in China, with they have made 10 steps where we have one, okay. Also for the possibility of increasing the wages right, the salary increase every year, we don't have that. And we used to say it's not important for the Danes,

that, you know, that's, I think it's getting more and more important for the Danes also. Especially the younger generation. So I think we have to reset that mindset or try at least.

Kimaya 32:36
And Lisbeth, considering the high cost of hiring an international, how does your company measure the success of any international assignment?

Lisbeth 32:47
We don't measure

Kimaya 32:55
Because for some companies, for example, an employee has performed really well. Then they say, Oh, this is a successful assignment. Or if an employee has been loyal for like 25 years, or he loves your company. That's where the company measures Oh, this is the success of an international assignment because expatriation is a costly affair.

Lisbeth 33:18
I'm sure that if we had seen if we had experienced that the people who we took to Denmark would leave us within a few years. I'm sure we would give that some focus. Yeah, but we don't see that.

Kimaya 33:36
Okay, so what is the average number of years that an international spends in your company?

Lisbeth 33:44
I don't have data on that either. But as I said, a few years ago, four years ago, we took a lot of Indian people. Not a lot. Three people who moved here with their families, and they'll stay they are five now. And when I asked them because some of them are my friends, especially the wives, wives of the men that we hired. When I ask them how long are you going to be here for and we get the answer all the time, as long as my parents are safe and healthy. And that that you know, is really strange to us Danes.

Kimaya 34:34

Oh ok.

Lisbeth 34:36
Yeah. But we know that's a consideration that you guys have. So we just praying for good health for the parents and so they stay right. Yes. Yeah.

Kimaya 34:47
And could you suggest some novel ideas and ways in which companies can retain their international employees?

Lisbeth 35:08
I think it is really, really important that management has the global mindset. That's for sure. I think there would could be a risk of A&B employees, the Danes and the others. And if if you don't have that global mindset, and that diversity as a DNA strength in your body, right? I would, I would hate to work in a place like that. Okay. So if there is any bias against people from abroad, then please don't hire them I would say, and I have seen some of these blunders, some of these people right with a wrong, wrong attitude. And the right wing politicians doing what they can to scare the shit out of us.

Kimaya 36:08
That's correct. I mean, I have I have listed down some of the possible solutions that I would like to tell you and maybe find out if you agree to it to make the employees feel included right from the start. How about, giving your employees a guided tour of premises, the various department and to colleagues while interviewing them?

Lisbeth 36:39
So already in the recruitment phase, you would?

Kimaya 36:48
Yes, maybe. If you're able to meet them face to face, then making the employee feel included, right from the start?

Lisbeth 37:01

Yeah, we would not do that in the first round, but if you're making it to the second round, we will, that will be, of course, in our company. And if we're quite sure that this is going to be the one then we can give them a choice of course.

Kimaya 37:23
How about linking pay to diversity goals?

Lisbeth 37:41
I have never thought about it.

Kimaya 37:44
I mean, I was reading that DEIF was awarded as the best place to work in 2017.

Lisbeth 37:55
That's true. Yeah.

Kimaya 37:57
And there must be something that, you know, when 98% of the employees leave the company, some of them come back to the company?

Lisbeth 38:04
Oh not, not 98% Come back.

Kimaya 38:08
Okay. 98% leave, but some of them at least come back.

Lisbeth 38:14
But of those who leave 98% say they leave because they were not having the best possibilities of professional development. I don't have percentages of the people who are coming back. But it does happen. And, and and to be honest, that's also what we tell them when I do exit interviews, especially with the younger people. I say that I can understand why you want to try out new possibilities and a career but then go out, get some more experience and come back to us with it and it works. Okay, but linking pay to diversity. That's just not in my head. We are linking pay to responsibility and to how you do tasks.

Kimaya 39:08

And how about shifting from reactive to proactive recruitment? Maybe conduct organisational audit, continuous monitoring of all human resource management decisions and activities around hiring, to see how the company's hiring team is working towards making the company more diverse?

Lisbeth 39:37

Yeah, yeah, I get you that that could easily be a part of our audits for both internal and external. You know we do have an annual economic report we all have to do and also have some of those figures in it? There is also diversity into handicap. If you're disabled in any way, or if you're not able to work full time. We have some cooperation with a school for autism. Okay. There's a school in Skive for that, especially. And we've taken some of those those students and they are like 18-19-20 years old, take them in, in small jobs. And personally, the diversity to me is much more than where you come from.

Kimaya 40:37

Yes. And do you see any loopholes in your current recruitment process? And where do you think the company needs to improve the most?

Lisbeth 40:48

I really, I really do think we're very open to differences. But I can tell you what we are about to do, I think I told you that when we met the first time, we're gonna try out a pilot in blind recruitment. Which means that the managers will not see the name, sex, age, education, just by doing tasks. And that's going to be very interesting.

Kimaya 41:22

Yes, I mean, I also have one of that thing in my inspiration and ideas that companies can adopt, you know, not look at the nationality not look at where people are coming from, not even look at the name, gender, avoid everything and just interview people blindly. It's called Blind hiring.

Lisbeth 41:45

Agreed!! You sound so much like my colleague shraddha in Mumbai, I can't stop thinking about her when I talk to you. Hahahahah.

Kimaya 41:53
I mean, this thesis is so close to me because I am myself an international employee and having eight years of global experience having worked with so many good companies, I just cannot think of going back to India after finishing my education, like I really want to contribute to the Danish economy and honestly after having an internship with agri nord I was like, Okay, let me expand this to a thesis and find out with more and more companies, what is stopping them from hiring internationals?

Lisbeth 42:30
I was just thinking, if this, it could be interesting for you to do an interview with our HRM, manager in Mumbai? Because I think we're diverse. I wonder what she thinks.

Kimaya 42:43
But Lisbeth, my thesis is only concerned with what are the challenges that Danish SME's face in Denmark while recruiting internationals.

Lisbeth 42:50
That's true and I bet she sees some challenges that I don't see or even know about.

Kimaya 42:58
Okay. But if she were in Denmark, then I would love to interview her and find out what are her views around international hiring in here.

Lisbeth 43: 08
They are here once a year, we have two HR managers out in the world, one in Mumbai and in Shanghai. The rest we take from Denmark. And it's so strange for me is, you know, we spent, we spent three or four days together, discussing all kinds of topics of HR topics. And on that we always Totally agree. And then, you know, every time we meet, it just strikes me that when we close the door to the office, how different our lives are, how completely different our lives are. Yet, still, we agree, and we are totally aligned, and all the HR topics and trends and management and all everything else we are so aligned, but then she's got a different lifestyle,

told me last time she was here that we had never had a walk by the sea, in shorts and T shirts before by herself. I mean, I was like, you what? That's a huge difference also in the the circumstances in which you are a woman.

Kimaya 44:26
Yes. And also, India is a country with 1.3 billion, of course, and the kind of working style that we have in India and the kind of working style that we have in Denmark are poles apart.

Lisbeth 44:41
Yeah, of course, we're not as competitive as you are. We don't have to. hahhaha.

Kimaya 44:47
One general question Lizbeth on one hand, there is severe shortage of skilled and qualified labour in Denmark. And on the other hand, the government and some of the companies they do not see foreigners as the bonuses that they are and the immigration laws keeps on changing, making sure that people don't come to Denmark. So what stops a country and some of the companies from hiring international workforce?

Lisbeth 45:19
You want my personal opinion on this? Yes. I think it all started in the 1970s when we started hiring people from Turkey, and I think we as a country and as individual Danes underestimated the cultural difference between Arab countries and ours or Muslim countries you could say. and integrating people from those different places totally failed because we have been way too soft and you must know that I am definitely not on the right wing of politics but we thought being soft was good, but you know, when you're not, when you're not clear on what you want and how you want people to integrate, you are actually neglecting people. So I think it was a neglect of making requirements and telling people how we live in Denmark and that what what they have to integrate in their lives, to be a good a citizen and, and we left them behind. Just closed our eyes and hoped that everything would be right. Right? So not being clear on how to become a good danish citizen was actually neglected. And you live in Aalborg, right?

Kimaya 47:31
Yes I live in Aalborg.

Lisbeth 47:34

And that's a quite a diverse place. Right? And also here in Aarhus where I live. And some parts of Aarhus are, you know, almost ghettos. Okay. And Danes don't want to live there. They're afraid. And I have to say that some of those I have seen so many, almost near accidents, people driving like crazy. They don't respect even at a red light. Oh, Mm hmm. And I don't want to go there either. Okay, I have been so close to accidents, too many times. And it's just respecting, you know, the rules, like a red light, please.

Otherwise, you go to jail? So I think I think if there's a blame to do, it's on ourselves of not being clear on what we want to defend them. Yeah. And that's, I think that it has scared of a whole generation. That's, that's one reason and another reason is that a large part, a lot of, especially older people have never met anyone from abroad. And there is a tendency to be more afraid of things you don't know than things you know, right? I do have some I come from the Skive area. I've grew up there. But I've lived in Aarhus over thirty five years. And by the way, I have also travelled almost the whole world. Oh, but that's because I love the new perspectives. But some of the older people in that area, they don't see them. They only read about foreigners in the papers. And it's never something good, right? Yeah, it's never anything good. Of course, they're afraid I tried to talk to an 80 year old man. Tell them how many different that was when I worked at University of Aarhus? That was not a good life. But how many Turkish and yeah, maybe Muslim I don't know about the religion that really don't care and how well they're doing and he was was like, really? They have never heard about good stories. Okay. So of course, that will have an influence on on.... I think, I think younger people are much more open. Yeah. I can see in my kids generation. I mean, yeah, they also grew up in the white rich neighbourhoods, I know that it's still the diversity in their, their friends and that's a lot larger than it was my generation. And if I say anything that could sound biassed or could could indicate that some people are not better than others they will tell me, believe me. They get furious. Yeah.

Kimaya 51:10

So it is very important, not only for the country, but also for the company to coach the candidates and explain to them what is clearly expected out of them?

Lisbeth 51:21

Oh, yes, we're bad at that. And we're bad at that because we expect everybody to know we don't even talk about it ourselves. Yes. And that's a great part of having people from abroad in your company, all the unwritten rules or the things we don't talk about daily, they are challenged and we cannot help getting a little whiter.

Kimaya 51:44
And is it also important to understand your own cultural baggage?

Lisbeth 51:48
Absolutely. Yeah, absolutely. Yeah, absolutely.

Kimaya 51:53
Yeah. Well, yes, those were my questions. Great! If there's anything else that you would like to mention that I have not covered in the interview, then please go ahead.

Lisbeth 52:04
Not really. I understand why you're having your focus on diversity as in where you come from. But I must say that diversity in my mind, and my company's mind that's a lot more. Yeah. But I understand why I do that. And that, totally respect that. If you have any other questions, you know, just write me an email.

Kimaya 52:27
Yes, of course, as soon as I start my analysis and discussions, I am interviewing other companies as well. So I have another interview at 1230 today.

Lisbeth 52:41
Best of luck. Yeah! I think It's great that what you're doing.

Kimaya 52:43
Thank you.

Lisbeth 52:44
I know what's your major in?

Kimaya 52:47
International business economics.

Lisbeth 52:48
Right.

Kimaya 52:49
Yeah. So that's how I picked up this topic. And I wanted know, what are the reasons, challenges and what are some of the solutions that I can present to the companies like, for example how I told you linking pay to diversity goals?

Lisbeth 53:09
That would be a I think it will happen, to be honest.

Kimaya 53:12
Yeah. I mean, I would definitely share my thesis report. Once it's completed, right?

Lisbeth 53:17
That would be great. That would be great.

Kimaya 53:19
Yes. It will be submitted to my university and to the companies that I have interviewed with, because whoever I'm interviewing, the first thing that they say is, please share the thesis report with me so that we can go through it.

Lisbeth 53:35
And can I please see what you will be writing about us before you do that?

Kimaya 53:40
Oh, yes, of course, I can do that. Of course, I would definitely share it before submitting. And everything will be clubbed like if for example, four companies say the same thing, then it definitely makes sense to put it in the thesis.

Lisbeth 53:58

I understand.

Kimaya 54:00

But it will be only company specific because I will never generalise it. Because a lot of companies, a lot of other companies might have different views than what these four companies might have. So it's definitely not going to be a generalisation of all the companies in Denmark, but definitely only the four companies that I'm interviewing with.

Lisbeth 54:19

And I don't think you'll meet very many like us to be honest. It's quite special. I think that's that's also why we are so many people who drive a long way to go to work every day. This is really this really is a special company. If you like diversity, yes! If you don’t like diversity, go somewhere else. Yeah.

Kimaya 54:40

Because Lisbeth I will tell you, that today's generation, they are more focused on joining diverse companies. They want to know more about different cultures, what are people doing from countries around the world, how they think and how they live and how they work?

Lisbeth 54:57

Ofcourse they do. But I think also the younger generation, I can talk to my kids who are in the 20s. They have travelled more than I have, okay. That curiosity about other people is always there.

Kimaya 55:12

Yes, because when I came to Denmark, a lot of people, a lot of Danish friends, they just asked me how come you have chosen Denmark as a country for studies? Why couldn't you go to the US? Or why couldn't you go to the UK, I was like, I always decided that I want to take education from one Scandinavian country. And to be honest, I applied to Norway, Sweden and Denmark. And I said that whichever country comes first, that will be the country that I will land and make that my home. And Denmark was so quick and I was like, Okay, let's pack my bag and go to Denmark.hahhah

Lisbeth 55:47

Alright! Yeah, but you also pointed it out Suresh badri? Suresh that you found…

Kimaya 55:52
Yes. Yes.

Lisbeth 55:55
I believe if you have anything specific, I'm sure you could write an email to him . Yeah, he is a very friendly guy. Yeah.

Kimaya 56:03
I was just going through LinkedIn to check what are the various kinds of employees especially to check if the executive board is diverse or something like that? Because my questions were based on finding out more about the company and then...

Lisbeth 56:19
But he is Vice President, we have a vice president who is Austrian. We have a French vice president. So it's not it's not all Danes in that layer of the company.

Kimaya 56:33
Okay. But the top management is all Danes, who take decisions for the company and plan the strategies, they are all Danish?

Lisbeth 56:41
True true true.

Kimaya 56:43
Yeah. Because I guess the company was started by Erling foss?

Lisbeth 56:48
Yeah. Toke’s father.

Kimaya 56:49
And then yes, and now passed on to his son and it also gets passed on to his sons, right?

Lisbeth 56:56

Not in management yet, but they're in the board of directors. So I think they are only in their 20’s But I would not be surprised that if Toke went to the dies , one of his sons will to take over. Okay. And by the way, he's married to a Mexican wife, I think. And those kids are literally, they grow up in a very international environment. I'm sure it's, I really think that's key. Yeah. For the owner and and the ones who set them, the culture and the company. Right. Well, thank you very much.

Kimaya 57:43

Thank you so much. Lizbeth.

Lisbeth 57:46

All the best of luck. And keep in touch.

Unknown Speaker 57:49

Thank you so much. Yes, of course. I will. Definitely. And I will write back to you in case I have some more questions. I hope you will not bother you.

Lisbeth 57:57

No, no no it’s fine. And if it's too much, I'll tell you over.

Kimaya 58:00

Okay. Thank you so much. Have a nice day.

Lisbeth 58:03

You too.

Kimaya 58:05

Thank you. Bye bye.

Appendix 8. Interview with Leonardo Miodrag- Marketing Manager, DIGURA ApS

Leonardo 0:00

No worries, I'm glad I could contribute. I'm very, very excited to see where this is going to lead and what kind of answers that I have in my head. So it is going to be very interesting. I am glad.

Kimaya 0:12

I wanted to visit your company, but I'm so sorry, I have my submission on the 25th. And I'm super stressed right now. Plus, I have to go to SIRI today to extend my student visa. Because if I'm not able to submit my thesis on the 25th, I have interviews till the 25th. So I don't know how am I gonna submit my thesis doing all the analysis and stuff? Like even if I put 24 hours a day, I don't think I will be able to finish that.

Leonardo 0:47

True though, True though. Wow that's a little bit tricky. Yes. Of course, I know. You'll make it somehow. It'll just fall in place.

Kimaya 1:00

Shall we start with the interview? I have my questions ready.

Leonardo 1:06

Deal, I am ready.

Kimaya 1:10

Okay. Could you please introduce yourself your position with the company and the tasks that you do on daily basis?

Leonardo 1:13

Yeah. I am Leonardo, I'm currently marketing manager in Digura. My day to day tasks are basically around managing the whole marketing and communication channels, that we have in Digura some other external projects that we work with. We as well have been investing in some other companies. So what I do usually is as we'll have those companies with, if they have interns, for example, I help them help these companies our investments to basically recruit

interns and manage later on, and I do that as well, for Digura so. So under myself, I'm as well doing the recruitment for the marketing and commerce, the marketing and communication department that can be employment as well as internships.

Kimaya 2:07
Oh, okay. So when did you join this company?

Leonardo 2:13
It was December of last year, so so it is going to be a year very soon. Yeah. Almost a year.

Kimaya 2:23
Okay. And how many people are there in your recruitment department?

Leonardo 2:29
Yeah, recruitment departments, or Yeah, so in the recruitment department, it's me, and that's for the commercial and the commercial kind of parts of it. And then we have the legal department, which has another another person, one of my colleagues, she is due to the fact that recruitment is very much different in terms of us looking for interns and employees, for marketing and commercial purposes. And then for legal legal students, if they prefer for an internship or or part time job due to the fact that it's very much closely related with their union, the lawyers Union, and the university that needs to pre approve the workplace for internship, if we're talking about internships, and then we have financial controllers, which is another study as well, at UCN, for example, that is done by the CEO due to the fact that he has a financial background, and he's working with them. So we technically, if we have internships, if you're talking about internship, we have three supervisors, it's me, my, my colleague from the legal department and the CEO, depending on what role it is. And that as well is in terms of recruitment, also. So so if you're looking for a financial role, the CEO will take the role because he knows what is needed for this role.

Kimaya 3:53
So how many employees are there with your company at the present moment?

Leonardo 3:59

Yeah, I would say around plus minus 15 people, currently, so so we have we have around if I'm correct six, six full time employees. And then the rest is part time student workers that includes the legal department and then the commercial department as well.

Kimaya 4:19
And how diverse are these employees? Do they come from different countries?

Leonardo 4:24
I am the only currently person from a different country. They have kickstarted the whole internationalisation process with me, and they took a leap of faith. To be honest, they were not sure how this is going to evolve and how are they going to do but the they were very happy with it and now and this is why I am as well pushing for more international environment myself due to the fact that I know what the benefits could be and as well, they have been happy with me. So I was like, okay, you know, there is a different perspective that I'm bringing to the table. Let's bring more perspectives as well to the table so so this is why when we are now looking for potential new junior employees as well as interns, we are looking for all the positions where Danish is not required. We are looking for internationals, as well. So we are giving an opportunity to be to be able to basically kickstart internationalisation to another level here as well.

Kimaya 5:22
Great! So that brings me to, to the next question is that how important is diversity to your company? And what value does it bring?

Leonardo 5:32
Yeah. It's a very interesting question, because we have been. So first of all, our office is very, I would say very diverse in terms of the work we do due to the fact that Digura, the interviews revolving around Digura, is only one part of our projects that we do in inside. So what I mean with that is, we have currently have some other projects, one of them is an incubator, and we have come to a realisation that, which I was very happy that even though I was pushing for it already, the Danes in the team have realised, wow, we should just do it on English because then you are recruiting everybody in Aalborg who speaks English. And I was like, exactly, thank you for realising. It took them a little bit time and becoming more comfortable with English. So they understand that it's not scary. You can they are are still some times switching

like somebody telling, you know, can I just please say this word in Danish because I don't know the English word. So there's still these, I love it like, language barriers, like little little ones, not not that much. But they're, you know, the more they speak, it is all training the language. So so so for us, we are, it's becoming more and more important to have, first of all, different diversifying by gender. And by by nationality. Not only because, you know, it's a trend now in the industry, everybody's doing it. So let's do it ourselves. But we have seen, or I hope they have seen as well that I'm bringing a little bit of a different perspective than the Danish mentality is and was in the office. And this is exactly what we want to do with with our other employees. Because we believe that every every culture that is joining the team is bringing a different working in a working ethics that could be as well, very interesting to see how they're developed or over time and complementing to each other's competencies in doing so we believe it's very important to to give opportunity to everybody and to learn from each other first and formost.

Kimaya 7:44
So does your company have any official diversity recruitment policy or system in place?

Leonardo 7:51
Actually, no, we do not have any any any policy per se that we are, for example, saying, okay, we need to have a ratio of this and that we are very much. First and foremost, we believe that when we are recruiting somebody, we are looking for somebody that really fits the role. So, for example, currently, actually, we have the majority in the office, for example, are women. So so we are we are actually and in all the leadership positions there is from four people, its two women. So it's it's a 50-50. And it was due to the fact that that it because what stellar like set up, but that's all that we have diversity just arrived like that, because it was the natural way to do it. They were the two colleagues were there from the beginning. They were you know, they have a little background, and they grew to being a manager in the in the company. So so we do not have a per se recruitment Policy, like bigger corporations have due to the fact that we are smaller, but looking at looking at scaling now and looking at other other approaches that we have, we definitely looking in the fact how can we make a policy for diversifying the team due to the fact we are going to get a huge intake from internationals and we need to, in a way have had that in mind as well.

Kimaya 9:27

And since you are in the hiring team right now. How do you make sure that the pipeline of candidates is diverse?

Leonardo 9:36

Yeah, so we definitely look first of all, I think the most important way to approach this is for us at least how do we where do we post the job app? Primarily before it was within the network, which means that you know only the Danes were applying and only Danes were accepted due to the fact that, the job ads and job postings we are not on places where other nationalities and cultures are. So now we are not now we have been posting the job advertising, I have been posting them in multiple, for example, if you're talking about over here and our position in multiple Facebook groups that are including majority of internationals in Aalborg that are using social media. And then as well, LinkedIn and I have reached out as well to the International House, for example, Go to Denmark, where they have as well positive, so everybody who is following and, you know, entering the International House, and that can be anybody from the street can have the opportunity to to read about it, because we need to believe that information should be available to everyone. So this is why this is something that has not been done to a great extent before it was and I think it was as well, the way that my other colleagues who were Danish at that time, the past marketing manager who was doing recruitment for marketing was doing just because that was how she thought it should be done. So how she was doing, she was writing everything on Danish, she would make a LinkedIn post on Danish, and you're automatically excluding a big majority of people who might be, even though they were very much, okay with international interns, when you read something on Danish and everything is on Danish, you're automatically signalling that you're not very accepting in this way. So how I've been doing now I have been writing all the job advertising on English, even though the position is very much somebody for who's perfect Danish. And I was like, if you're going to join the team, you're going to speak English with me. So you might better as well start preparing for, for the whole journey with English. So it's as well now basically setting some expectations for a future employee that you know, English is going to be part of their day to day work.

Kimaya 12:00

So you have managed to break that stereotype. And you're taking the company forward, because having a diverse team is the need of the hour especially when you know that Denmark is a country, which has so many international students, they would love to, you know, stay back in Denmark after their studies. And if nobody wants to accept them, then they will either be

taken by the big companies or they will just go to other countries where they are accepted. Right?

Leonardo 12:29

Exactly. I totally agree that and that's something a very, very important topic right now due to the whole, you know, signal from the government and stuff like that. And we are very much as a company, we totally disagree with the decision with the whole, let's say, vibe that the government has been projecting on internationals. And I of course, I'm maybe biased because I am an international. But I know I know. I know a lot of people like colleagues, why if we have an opportunity now to employ two full time employees, I know who I will accept, it will be two internationals that I know very well, through my network. I know what they can bring, I know that they have a different outlook on the topics than I have due to the fact that we are not from the same country and not even from the same part of the world. And I know that this could diversify, as well. For example, okay, something that I have, this is a very interesting example, I have a colleague, she is her parents are Chinese, but she was born in Denmark, she is Asian, so but her whole mentality is very Danish though she's very much proud of her heritage and where she's coming, where her parents and families come from. So she has a very good cultural understanding of China and everything in Asia, for example. So that's, that's a very interesting outlook. So and I have as well, you know, sometimes when I'm talking with her, she's, as well as I am careful how I'm saying something because I don't want to offend somebody, or I know, you know. And I'm always asking her as well for feedback, like how, how do you approach this? How do you approach recruiting somebody, like, for example, if we like, because I believe like, if you're gonna say, we would like to accept people of colour, that's a red flag, like you're like, seeking for it, you know, so I was as well like, I'm a white male, so I'm not really in a position to like to think like, what would they think so that's why I'm asking my colleagues who and she is very much as well open minded that I can see she's, you know, I would say a different type of Dane, due to the fact that she is not, you know, originally like, like, like her roots are not in Denmark, very much in in China and Asia. So you can see that, you know, even though she was born in Denmark, was in school, the whole way of thinking is much different. And I very much appreciate that. And that's why we are as well stating the whole diversification process in Digura, because we can see, it does make a change. And she's in a leadership position for a reason, because she is, you know, her actions have a let her there.

Kimaya 15:19

Great. So let me ask you the next question, what do you think about the international hiring process in general? And what are the top challenges that your company faces before, during and after hiring an international workforce? Like, say, for example, you as an example, what are the challenges?

Leonardo 15:39

Awesome. So I would say that the whole I'm not from HR, so. So that's, that's, for me, I'm a very practical person. And I know, for example, in Denmark, HR is demanding this and less, and I understand we are a small company, which means that we have the opportunity to be different. And to do things differently. I remember when I was applying for a lot of jobs, they tell you exactly what you need to do, you need to write a CV, you need to write a cover letter, you do it. The Job Centre tells you what to do. Everybody has the same template, everybody's doing the same thing. And then you and then when I'm looking at the job, errata now from my perspective, because I'm recruiting, I see ten CV's that basically look the same with different texts, you know, and I'm like, How can I see who are you as a person, I'm very, it's very hard to understand. I understand for bigger companies, they do maybe have the resources to, you know, read about the employees that are applicants to great extent. But here, what we have done, and we would have done for all our positions, we said, please send your application in the way that you believe you can represent yourself the best. And when I've done that, I've seen actually how many people have not done anything to do to be different, because they the whole recruitment process was so always in the same direction, that they that there was one girl who sent the video and we were like, please come to an interview. Because, okay, you have understood the assignment to be different. And to just show it how you believe you can you can show your creativity, other people will just send a document, like a Word document. So I believe in the whole recruitment process, there are so many expectations set up on on candidates, by the big players, big corporations who have who are doing recruitment in one way, because I mean, as well, for resources and maybe efficiency, they're doing it like that. Fair enough. But but when they're approaching small and medium companies, they're as well, having the same mentality that they're, you're gonna, you know, look for, I believe you can have a much more personal approach to the recruitment process, if you are an SME. And this is my biggest problem, because everybody, the candidates think everybody is the same. So what I did was, I've already rejected a few people, due to the fact we were not feeding each other, their expertise, were not in the area we were open for. And what I did was I filmed the

video, I filmed a two, three minute video going into their application and telling them completely okay, this, this was a red flag, your LinkedIn profile is not edited, you don't have a picture, I cannot see your full name. And I was telling them, if you are going to improve this, you're going to have a greater chance next time when you are applying. Because if somebody is going to enter your LinkedIn, they're not gonna see anything. So I wanted to give a feedback. And they were all writing emails back, thank you so much, this is the first time I'm getting a feedback, if I'm getting any feedback. And and it's quite sad. So when you said, and I'm, I mean, I'm happy for myself, because I know now that Digura is going to be perceived differently in the, in the, in the circles around students, and when people are going to look for a job, they're going to know that they're going to get feedback. So if putting us in a different perspective, but it's just said that the general consensus is that you know, just reject with with an email whereas Hey! name, you have been rejected because select reason, thank you for applying, you know, it's there can be a little bit more of a personal touch. And I think that's, that's the biggest problem. There's not a lot of personal approach, and then people all think that you're all the same or all the SME's are the same, but it's not the case.

Kimaya 19:31
And Leonardo, Which country are you from?

Leonardo
I'm from Croatia

Kimaya
Croatia. Okay. And do you think that if any Danish company wants to recruit, do they find it easier to recruit from countries that are very nearby say Romania, Ukraine. What do you think about that?

Leonardo 19:54
Yes, yes. yes. We have been actually talking about recruitment from from different continents and different like I would say polar opposite cultures we and there is this understanding in Denmark like that the Asian culture is different and the way they are approaching you know, life, culture, religion is different, and then by all means Latina in a bad way, but then then they are scared, how they are going to approach like, what are their working ethics? I think a lot of companies they are scared, like, if I invest money in you will you be able to perform good.

And, and then if a company is looking for like a bare minimum saying like, I need a hardworking person, I think they're going to be like, Oh, then I need to hire, then I need to find a Japanese person because I know, in Japan, they work from day to night, you know, from from day night, and it's very generalisable. And then they say like, Oh, if I need a software developer, then I'm going to go to India because you're very popular with that area. And I feel that's very much generalising and very much stereotyping. You know, not everybody is a software developer, not everybody's hardworking in Japan, you know, we need to understand that different people, different culture and different overview of the world. So I believe it's much easier, and a lot of companies do the following.

A lot of companies small and medium businesses in Denmark, what they do, atleast in our network they do and what we actually plan to do as well, at some point, when you want to outsource, when you want to outsource some people and recruit them not in Denmark, companies, when they recruit outside of Denmark they do it because they want to save some money on salaries and mostly salaries, they're not doing it because of diversity pretty much. They're doing it because because of salary, because it can be two, three times cheaper to have, like you can have for one salary to have five people in Romania, for example.

So what they approach is they have a management or like the leadership team in Denmark. I've talked with one company from Copenhagen, his three co founders sitting in their office in Copenhagen, and then they have 15 people sitting in Sofia, Bulgaria, which they have marketing, because it is international too. So you don't need you don't need a Danish person doing marketing. Anybody who speaks English and is doing marketing can do it. So they have a cheaper marketing manager in Bulgaria. They have a whole developer team of 10-15 people in Sofia, which is very cheaper. I'd say 600 700 euros, they pay a salary for the developer compared to how much they would pay here like 40, 50, 60,000 kronor a month right, like they're saving so much money.

And then of course, you they're spinning diversity, that's the section because they want to be perceived different. And they don't do it because, you know, maybe a Bulgarian developer is going to do it in a different way than a Danish developer. They are not looking I think, by definition, they're not looking in that and it's easier of course due to the European Union and the whole way how you can recruit people it's much easier to do so there are actually so many companies that I am being reached out on a weekly basis saying we can help you with you

know recruitment in the for example, Belarus is very interesting, Ukraine, Serbia is very, very interesting for certain reason. I guess they have as well lower salary, for example, then Croatia, and they are out of the view and then what a lot of companies do they outsource customer support? I know for example, Amazon has it some, some bigger companies have in Serbia, big, big offices. I have a lot of friends in Serbia who are working for big brands as customer support and English, for example. So outsourcing is a popular thing, not because of diversity, it's mostly to cut costs. But I believe that at some point there is a cultural change in the company where they are figure out oh wow there's a different overview on this case. For my perspective, as a Dane or whoever I am, then another person in the in the team so I think diversity. The whole question about diversity comes in at some point, but it's not being done because of that.

Kimaya 24:07

So, you do believe that expatriation could sometimes be a deal breaker considering huge psychic distance between two countries like I come from India and and the psychic distance between India and Denmark is so huge that Danish people perceive that okay, they are they are going to face so many cultural differences just because of the psychic distance, more the psychic distance more the cultural differences. They believe that okay, if we have someone closer, then maybe we may not have those many cultural differences as someone who's so far from Denmark.

Leonardo 24:42

Yes, I can give a concrete example with with with, for example, India because I have a topic for another company who was telling me that they want to develop an app. And they were looking they were looking for for a cost effective way to develop an app and there's a lot of companies you can google it or you can find in India they do they do custom apps. And when they were thinking about doing it, they said that they're not sure if outsourcing to an Indian company would be a good idea due to the fact that they know that Indians have a different perspective on design, how to design, how to build apps, rather than Europeans. That's how they said. So they were they were reluctant to do it. And then they outsourced it to a European company I have no clue where but it was, it was as well, as you said, they felt they felt that the gap it was too big to manage to them.

And I believe as well, um, it can happen that if they encounter, or they have worked with, let's say, one Indian, who might have not been of their liking. They are automatically generalising

the whole country. And India is if I know they're gonna surpass China in terms of population, I believe. So if I'm correct. So imagine you're generalising 1.1 billion people, because you've met one Indian and and there are so many success stories from India and so many amazing apps. And you know, what, how would you how can you do that? It's 1.1 billion people, like, it's your thing, the whole continent, is wrong. So so it's as well, you know, approaching this in a different way, because it's easier just to say no, and then go with somebody else. So So, this, this whole communication, and as you said, it's very much relevant, and it's still, it's still it's still there. And as well, as well, something that is important is the time difference. So sometimes people are like, ah, you know, it's gonna be harder for me to reach somebody there if they are in India, per se. But if they move, it's definitely different. Because I've seen, I've seen and I've met a lot of Indians here in Aalborg, for example, who have amazing careers in software engineering, in robotics, and a lot of them are very passionate about it. And they're thriving, they are working as researchers, they're working in big companies, you know, and SMEs as well. And and I think when they're in the country, when they when people meet them in person, when they feel that they are there, like yes, they're as well a person, they're not a number on the, you know, on the on the screen, it gives us well, a different overview of the culture. So when you meet a person, life is different when you're like reading his resume online.

Kimaya 27:40

yeah. And, what are the important things that needs to be conveyed to candidates while interviewing them, considering that they come from a different culture?

Leonardo 27:53

Okay. Yeah, I will definitely. Have I seen that right now is I think people are still....Okay so from my perspective, I believe that, that some, the general consensus is, you know, Danes if they don't like, their job, they're just gonna quit, like, you know, what, they have an SU or whatever, you know, I do not need to be bothered bye! and then I see internationals, being being, you know, sometimes scammed or whatever, and they're still working, because, like, they have no other choice, like, I need to pay my bills, if I don't pay my bills, who's gonna pay nobody right. I don't have a father staying a 100 kilometres, you know, south, I can just go there.

So it's a different perspective in terms of dedication, and, and let's say how dedicated you are to the work and how, because I've seen generally, I need to really filter out people. Whenever I see a job application and I can, like a job application from somebody, I can always read the same I'm dedicated, I'm ready to learn. I you know, I and a lot of them are very honest saying I do not know, the materials that you do work with, but I'm ready to learn. And and I understand I was there I was there doing the same thing applying for my first job. And I know how desperate I was to find any experience because a lot of people were not ready to invest in somebody who has zero knowledge due to the fact that so many companies are so fast paced, that they cannot invest in, in a in a paid internship, how would you say like being a student and then you are like me to kind of babysit you. So in terms of that, I believe, you know, the way the internationals are communicating sometimes it's not always a I'm saying for maybe student jobs it's a little bit different. And then and then when you're interviewing them, you as well want to want to first of all how we do it. We want to we do if they are fit on competence as well and then what's very important for us that I think it's the most important thing is if they are fitting in the company culture, and the company culture is very much dictated by the people in the company. So if it's a Danish environment, it's going to be are you fitting the Danish culture, as all International, which happened to me, but I'm super happy that my CEO was very much open minded. And the whole other team was very open minded. And they were, they took a leap of faith. So so now when they know it's not scary to have a Croatian in the team, its not so scary to have an international, you know, meeting the person live having an interview and talking him about what are your passion and just feel like the body language and understanding like, are you comfortable being with us here? Are you comfortable speaking only English are comfortable working with some Danish, that's very important for us to, to understand, because it would be a waste of time, if we are uncomfortable, they're uncomfortable, and we cannot be a match. There's something's not a match. Sometime, it's a great match, and we start working for next week. So I believe the company culture, if they fit within a company culture, it's very important for a lot of companies in Aalborg as well for us in Digura. And, and, but as I said, the company culture is very much dictated by the people in it. So yeah!

Kimaya 31:14

Okay. And what what are some of the major cultural differences that you have seen, like the work culture in Croatia versus the work culture in Denmark? How do you work on these cultural differences? How do you find a middle ground in your company?

Leonardo 31:30

Yeah, It's very interesting, because the the mind the CEO has very much the same mentality as I have, I mean, like, a lot of proactiveness, a lot of, you know, example, what I hate, what I hate as a Croatian is when I know somebody can do their job and they're doing it on purposely, like, slower, because they're like, you know, like, not slower, in a way, you know, I could see that they're not passionate about it, or and then they're still doing, ahhhhh I am still going do it. And I'm like, tell him like, why are you not telling me, communicating with me, you don't need to be super direct, but you can give me a clue that you might want to change something or stuff like that. And then people do it. And then they you know, they talk behind the back. In Croatia, they talk a lot behind your back on work and low lights. Gossiping is a big thing.

So. So at first, when I arrived here, I was thinking, are people gossiping about me, like, what are they talking about me? And then I understood like, I really like that here. So you arrive with a lot of you a lot of your past experiences, thinking is going to be the same, and you might start acting on it. And then the other colleagues are thinking why you're acting weird. And then it's just a weird loop. So sometimes, even internationals are not as open minded. And I've seen sometimes people being so reluctant to connect with Danes, because I don't know, I have worked with them quite a lot. So I know, I know, I have so many colleagues that I have not been talking to quite a lot in the past months when I arrived, but now they're more opening up and more and opening up because we you know, they're getting more comfortable at English. So so so there's this issue with, you know, never being comfortable in English. And then they when they talk with me, they do quick, quick sentences, like just, you know, no chitchat, but now we're chit chatting. So it's only one person that happened because she was maybe not very comfortable. But now we are like, like, you know, chit chatting and everything. So it took a little bit time to break this barrier. And I know from now on, when you have broken the barrier with everybody in the office that it has been for longer than me. Now we can build a base like now we can prepare for that. And then when when the new internationals arriving in the company, we can we can we can have a clear slate and then tell them you know, on the interview already, what they can expect from the, from the company, what we expect from

them. And then when they arrive, they can they can be comfortable, because if they're coming uncomfortable to work, and I, we had one problem with that,

Unknown 34:17
for example, okay, this is a safe quickly, we had a very interesting HR issue in the company where the person is from Greenland, and it was an intern who finished the few weeks ago. And actually he asked one of our colleagues Hey you look different today. And she was like, Yeah, I was on a cosmetic surgery. And then then then he asked her like, oh, what kind of surgery and that was the first sort of like, you don't ask about surgeries like anything like that in the open office space. You do not ask here. I was not the day in office, but I've heard about it and I was very shocked when I heard it how it ended up then she said like yeah, I had like breast enlargement like she didn't she she just said the truth. He's like, Oh, what cup were you before? And what cup are you now? And we were like, are you really? Like, like, people were listening to it, and everybody was shocked. And everybody was like, and she was very uncomfortable. So she I don't know what they said, but I don't know if she answered that. But but then then then, then he said, like, oh, but yeah, it's great now, awesome and then then he continued doing like, like, he did not know that he would he did not understood that you do not ask that in the office space.

And I'm saying as well, he was a student, he's 37 years old. So I'm saying as well, you're older, you are a grown up, man, you know, you're like that as well maybe a cultural thing. I don't know, how they do it in Greenland. So I was as well. I had an opinion about people from Greenland immediately. And that is because you know, how maybe we as people are wired, like you immediately starts to, you know, generalising. And, and then I mean, everything like, is that what they do? Maybe in the real culture, they're very direct, not thinking about, you know, that, you know, there's other people in the office. And, you know, she was very uncomfortable. And from that point on, she did not really want to have the same shifts when he had, but he was leaving anyway. So we were very discreet about it.

But that was a concrete problem of him not understanding the working culture, and not understanding how you know, we work in the office. So we need to as well tell him a few times, hello, Paul you cannot actually come to an office, and then be behind somebody's back and look what they're doing on the computer because he was doing that quite a lot. Like he was just standing behind me while I was my computer. And I know why he did it in an innocent

way. He wanted to see what I'm doing, learn from me. But I was uncomfortable, because I felt like, I felt uncomfortable, because I felt like he's looking at me all the time. And like spying on me, kinda. So that was a culture gap between, you know, I feel like he was like, We are a way to open up reversal. But like, there's a certain you know, you can be that's invading someone's personal space, if they don't invite you. So we've dealt with that issue. We've tried talking with him, and I think it didn't really went across well. And then I realised, well, what if what if a Danish team has a problem with only one international who might have done something different than the working culture, it can spoil the whole company's overview of internationals and stop the diversification process. And that's why I'm always saying like, you need to give a chance to other people and really evaluate people on a person to person basis because we have different backgrounds we have we have different overviews as well.

Unknown 37:42

And does your company offer any diversity inclusion and cultural competence training when a new person arrives? Because you know, when a person joins, he's already dealing with a new country, he might have an initial culture shock. So how does your company make him feel comfortable? And do they provide any kind of training to him? Culture, especially related to culture?

Unknown 38:07

Yeah, so how they were doing with me, they were like, okay, Leonardo we are, we are gonna eat cake. This is the Danish cake. And then they were like, this is the Danish birthday songs or thing, but if it was not, not, you know, how you say it like LinkedIn learning style, like look at these videos and learn about Danish culture, it was like, we are going to immerse you in the Danish culture. So they started speaking Danish with me sometimes, and not in a way that made me totally uncomfortable. I told them, like, can you start and speak with me on Danish because I want to learn it. So they did that. And it was as well with with with with like, food, and drinking, you know, speaking. These these ways they were they were trying to approach me to Danish culture. And of course, in the office, the office chitchat, how have you heard about, like Kim Larson, for example, Danish singer who died not that long ago, but they were like, okay, Larson, you know, welcome Larson. And then they start speaking about Kim Larson. And then we had that Friday bar, and then they were playing like some Danish Bodega songs. And they were like, Yeah, this is like Danish culture. And this is what people listen to in Denmark, and then I would like to learn from that.

So they were, they were introducing me to this Danish society, you know, what they do with that on a general basis. And on a cultural level, like this is what Danes do while we work, they were introducing me to the flat hierarchy, how, you know, your my vote is the same as the CEO's vote, when we are having like some long discussions, if it's a critical decision, he can make, you know, the executive decision. But but when we are doing some other ones other decisions, and if for example, it's a marketing question, he would first go with what I say is rather than what he says because he doesn't have the experience in that, so they've they've they've learned me doing the way how we operate and I believe that I will as well do because now I've gone through it. So whenever a new intern gonna arrive, they're going to be, you know, introduced to the whole working ethic this way as well, because I think learning by doing was a very good thing. Because they, they've put responsibilities on me and they said, you know, it's a flat hierarchy so you know, you're, you're the lead on this and you know, you have responsibility and if you win, you know, it's your win and the teams win, but if you lose, it's your lose, and the team lose. So it was very interesting. So it was very much hands on kind of learning.

Kimaya 40:34
okay, so you mean to say your company is flexible and they are open to new suggestions and agile ways of working?

Leonardo 40:40
Exactly. Very much so, very much so that's very much yeah, very much from from my experience based as well, a culture like how would you do it? Because for example, we are now expanding to be more visible to internationals and everybody is asking me like what would you do? Like they are trying to listen to me out, what is the problem with Internationals for example, for our company perspective, like how can we help them with our products and stuff like that? So they are very you know, there there are definitely listening and adapting.

Kimaya 41:14
Okay. And what do you think are some of the top reasons for attrition? Why do why do people leave companies, why do they leave a particular company? What do you think might be the top reasons for attrition?

Leonardo 41:27

We had one girl who left not that long ago, she was Danish though, but she said that she didn't, she could not fit in the company culture. She was very much umm Danish in the way like I'm gonna work from 8 to 4 and 4:00, I'm out and our culture here is like, you know, there's no working times, you arrive when you want to go when you want, but you know, I felt like she was just like it was just a job for her and for us here, it's a little bit uh and this is as well that's why we're picking people who don't feel like this is gonna be just a job, it's going to be a passion. You know, I think that you love to go to work like you want to really like put your, you know, everything you have from your experience perspective, you want to put in the product because we really believe in it and everybody is doing that so we really want to find somebody. And I felt that there was a mismatch there when we're recruiting right now you're looking as well, like is this gonna be just a student job for people to get a SU or do we actually want to find somebody who is going to be like like uh living and breathing the product because then if and then, you know, there is an opportunity from student worker to be a full time employee after they finish. We really want to invest in people, but we do not want to invest in somebody who has this mismatch of expectations. And I believe, I believe sometimes expectations could be dictated by the culture and what they think because if I'm from Croatia, you know, in a lot of these companies, you're just, you know, you're replaceable, uh you know, a lot of unemployed people in the industry are looking for a job. So if you're not okay just buy but here it's more like, you know, if you're investing money, salary and tools and training you know we really want to be the perfect candidate, like perfect colleague in that way. So so and we had some fair share of misjudging, you know the whole situation but we are always trying to adapt and and uh you know own up to our mistakes and and optimize it.

Kimaya 43:35

Could you also suggest some of the novel ideas or what could be the possible ways or innovative ideas in which companies can retain their international employees because it's so costly to hire an international employee. You have a lengthy visa procedure, you have so many things to do with an international employee. And so if they are not comfortable what are some of the ideas or ways in which you know companies can help retain those employees?

Leonardo 44:04

So I think one thing that IKEA in Sweden is doing amazingly is they have this pass like welcome to Sweden pass, they give to their employees. They give you I think one week or two

weeks pass to use any train in Sweden to first of all get to know the country that you just moved in and you're going to work and they give you a lot of coupons for like local restaurants, local bars, local, you know IKEA furniture so they they they they try to integrate and tell you okay welcome we're gonna pay you as well like a weekend in a hotel, somewhere outside of uh if we are talking about Gothenburg or somewhere outside Gothenburg, so so you, so you're kind of like get the feel of the community, you're just entering. And I believe as well um there should be a good emphasis on the current employees to really integrate the person in their day to day activities. So so whenever whenever somebody is entering the cantina, you speak from english, not danish, you speak in english, you're inclusive, even though you you might not be talking directly to them, you want to be uh you know, inclusive and that as well or whatever you are doing a project uh and the communication internal should be in english if you have an international employees. Um so so really in this way I believe, you know, I really liked the IKEA idea, you know to have some kind of welcome to Denmark or welcome to Northern Jutland pass uh so like and then you and then you know, they don't need to do it alone, they can do it with colleagues, you know, the colleagues are going to show them, you know, and basically introduce them to the working area and then there is a different connection, it's not only it's not only purely colleagues, it can be even friendships forming there, which is quite quite interesting. So so in this way we believe to do it, you know, a little bit maybe down to earth way like approaching approaching this way? Uh huh.

Kimaya 46:04

And do you think that there are any loopholes in the current recruitment process at Digura or if there's something that you would like to improve on, something that you would like to be different than what other SME's are doing?

Leonardo 46:19

Yeah, so we definitely okay uh Yeah, well we would like to do different, but first of all, a lot of SME's in in in uh in our area are very reluctant to to to recruit internationals in general. They feel it's very very uh very uh for them, very scary. But what we wanna do is really, first of all recruit more internationals and then and then really highlight their stories, highlight them through social media, highlight and really uh empower them. If the interns really have to find some something in northern jutland, we have a very good network of companies we work with and introduce them uh to the community because I believe that, you know, there's not that much publicity in regards to recruit the internationals yet to the extent that it would be, so

promotion, promotion and support, support of initiatives is very important from a company perspective. So they understand that, you know, there are companies in Aalborg backing internationals and they are very proud of who uh who is working in a company like that. So I believe that's that's a that's a that's a good indication and then I would as well say I would just say that, you know,

from our perspective we want as well, whenever somebody is coming into a company, you know, there's usually these danish gifts uh you know, I could say welcome flowers and stuff like that, How I would like to include, I would like to as well, first of all, um usually danish flags on the, on the table, you know, like things, the danish things, but I was like, okay, why not include the danish flag and the flag of the country they're coming coming from, like, let's say that, you know, we know where you're coming from, we know you are bringing a lot to the table with your culture, your uh it's the small things, but I know how I was as well very happy when I saw the Croatian flag on my desk when I arrived to the work. It was so nice and it was just a small things seem like, okay, so they know where I'm coming from, you know, they did remember um it was just small, nice touch and I think these small touches, they can add up to a bigger, bigger thing in the end.

Kimaya 48:24

Mhm. That's cool. And just just a general question like uh do you think that you know when you have a culturally diverse team, do the pros outweigh the cons or the cons outweigh the pros sometimes?

Leonardo 48:40

Ummm I think I think it's, well, if it's um if the if there is not a missed uh okay so how I felt in the beginning or sometimes I would be because I just joined and and and then you know you don't they still don't know how what my expertise is and what not. And then they were like, yeah, but you don't really understand, you know the I mean they were not really saying it like that, but they were like, you know, maybe maybe maybe you were saying is not correct because you know you don't live in Denmark that much. Uh you know, so they were like like the like they were analyzing if what I said was good enough. Um so so sometimes I think in the early beginnings, when the company is just getting international employees the cons can sometimes outweigh the pros because they are like that like you know how to say uh double analyzing or thinking like is this correct. You know, he just came from croatia so what does he know I mean, what does he know from a cultural perspective, not professional. And then when you start, you

know going deeper and you know you have 2,3, 4 employees when you start to understand what they're bringing to the table it's very much very, very much pros outweighing the cons by a long shot. So and I would say this x case with where cons can outweigh the pros is not in every company, it really depends on the company culture and how people are open to it. But I believe pros are always going to outweigh the cons. Um

due to the fact that you can really, and as we said, if we are building building a tool, let's say we are a company A and company B, if the company B is only Danes and the company A is Danes and a lot of internationals, you're going to have such a diverse team of ideas and a new ideas and you might be even faster in developing, smarter in your messaging because you might be having uh somebody from England doing your, you know the marketing because he's so amazing in english then then you have these different backgrounds that complement each other and you can just excel a full danish team for example, based on the fact that different cultures can complement each other amazingly. And and if and if they are polar opposites, you can as well have a great reflection

on on on on your ideas and somebody who is not going to say yes I think it's good idea, or someone may say maybe we should think about something in a different way and then you can as well have a reflection and I think all of ideas, I think that's pros definitely above cons.

Kimaya 51:19

So just one last question Leonardo, on one hand there's a severe shortage of skilled and qualified labor in Denmark. And on the other hand, you know, the government and some of the companies, they do not see foreigners as the bonuses is that they are and immigration laws keep on changing, they become tougher and tougher so that they make sure that people do not come to Denmark. So what stops a country or a company from hiring international workforce? What is stopping them from taking people from different backgrounds?

Leonardo 51: 53

Yeah, I think for them and it's always gonna be the easiest if they were going to hire somebody who has a CPR, Danish bank account and a visa if they need one, they're going to they're going to always prefer somebody who's already in Denmark. So and that's why a lot of companies who are understanding the situation, they're always saying, oh my God, there's going to be less internationals coming, there's gonna be, you know, this paperwork and a lot of those companies

don't want to go through the paperwork of of bringing an internationals in Denmark if they need a visa or if they are from outside if and I'm saying on on on on the lower lower end of the positions like junior positions, if you're a senior CEO they're going to go beyond anything to get you in the country if they really want to, but if you are having the same competence as a Dane or as an international in Denmark, they're going to pick somebody who's already here who is going to be easier to on board rather than somebody who is overseas and who might not be having the same luxury of having an effortless transition from let's say from the US or India or china to Denmark and I believe that the immigration laws that you're saying that they are changing, it's a very big problem because you know, some companies especially the SME's they do not have the resources nor the time to um to support somebody and facilitating this change if it's going to become very uh you know buried in paperwork, regulation and then what what happens if you if you're employees who is an amazing person gets deported or you know then the people I think if I invest in this person and he has an opportunity like has a you know might be deported in two years. Like do I want to invest in the person because they feel like what Danes fear the most and I'm saying from the Danish perspective what they fear the most that if internationals have the perspective of moving away from Denmark, or moving away from the town because then they feel like I do not want to invest time and money in new if you're not going to stay with me. So that's that's as well like
what people are as well, I've seen a lot of internationals who are saying it immediately I want to stay in Denmark. So the companies know if you invest in me, I'll be there.

Kimaya 54 :08
Yeah. That's cool. I think more or less you have answered all my questions, is there anything else that you would like to mention that I have not covered in the interview or something that you have experienced or something that I must have missed asking you as an international working for a danish company?

Leonardo 54:25
I think I think I have touched all bases actually I did not know that I can talk that much but it's a very interesting topic so I talk out of out of curiosity and interest so I think I have touched as well all the base that I want. The questions were very well rounded so they covered all the bases.

Kimaya 54: 43

Yes because I mean I am myself an international with almost eight years of experience in finance and accounting. Now I'm a student, I'm going to graduate soon and it would be such a shame if I leave Denmark without a job. Yes. So that is the reason you know I worked with a company called Agri Nord I told you about it when we met the other day...

Leonardo 55:06

Yes. I do remember.

Kimaya 55: 08

And the only thing that was stopping them and I internationalised for them to India and then I asked them what are my prospects after I complete my graduation. They're like Kimaya the only thing that we need you to know is Danish. And I'm like why should language stop you from hiring an international. If skills can be learnt so can Danish be learnt, give a person a chance.

Leonardo 55:31

Exactly! And then you think like wow if language is the thing you don't want to hire me then you feel like do they really want me or it's just an excuse. Sometimes you have this feeling, I have so many colleagues and friends who have the same experience is that you are the perfect match for us, but you don't know Danish and I'm like there's no BUT then you're not a perfect match, you know, sometimes very sad, very sad.

Kimaya 56:02

Well thank you Leonardo, I'm so happy and I'm so grateful to you for giving me some time out of your busy schedules.

Leonardo 56:10

No worries. I am glad. I don't know the topic of your masters; what topic is it?

Kimaya 56:16

Yeah, it is on finding out what are the challenges that Danish SMEs face while recruiting international people.

Leonardo 56:22

Ah yes! I don't know if you're going to be distributing the masters or if it will be publicly available, but I would love to take a look at it.

Kimaya 56:28

to I would definitely pass you a copy when I finish my thesis. If it gets completed by the 25th then I'll share it with you. If not, then it goes to January 2022.

Leonardo 56:45

Awesome. Whenever it's available of course, I would be happy to read it.

Kimaya 56:51

I will give it to you. Of course, thank you so much Leonardo have a great day,

Leonardo 56:55

Have a lovely day. Good luck, you will do well, fingers crossed.

Kimaya 56:58

Thank you. See you, bye bye. Have a nice day.

Appendix 9. Interview with Marianne Betzer- HR Director,OJ Electronics A/S

Kimaya 0:03

Morning Marianne. oh my god, I'm so sorry. I don't know what's wrong. Microsoft Teams is not working for me and zoom is not working for you.

Marianne 0:15

No. So we'll just do it over the phone. Yes please.

Kimaya 0:19

Okay, so getting straight into the interview. But before that I need to thank you for taking out the time.

Marianne 0:28

You're welcome.

Kimaya 0:29

Yes, could you please introduce yourself, your position with the company and the tasks that you do on daily basis?

Marianne 0:37

Yes. Well I am the **HR director at OJ electronics.** I do everything that has to do with HR. I am the only the only resource in the department, which means that if I need assistance, I get consultants to help me but apart from that I am responsible for everything that means legal, well-being, hiring, firing everything it has to do organisational development.

Kimaya 1:12

Oh, so you're like the one-woman army?

Marianne 1:15

Yes. Yes, exactly.

Kimaya 1:19

Okay, and when did you join the company?

Marianne 1:22
I did that three and a half years ago.

Kimaya 1:25
Okay. And how many culturally diverse people are there in your in your company?

Marianne 1:33
Well, I, I haven't counted because we don't register people's nationality. But I have tried to estimate it. And I think we are about 20 different nationalities out of the strength of 160.

Kimaya 1:49
So you have an employee strength of 160 and all the 160 employees are based in Denmark? Yes. Okay. So Marianne, how important is diversity to your company? And what value does it bring?

Marianne 2:02
It's very important, and it brings the value of getting different perspectives on things. And well, we haven't really thought much about it. Because when we hire people we hire for the professional skills and competences. And we don't look at nationalities. And that's why I think we're so diverse. It's a non issue here. And that results in our skin. It's we have quite a few EU citizens, but we have even more non EU citizens. So if the people from outside the EU have the visa status already, then that's it's a non issue, then we hire the best man for the job.

Kimaya 2:55
And does your company have any official diversity recruitment policy or system in place?

Marianne 3:00
No.

Kimaya 3:01
Okay. And how diverse is your executive team?

Marianne 3:08

Oh, what sorry?

Kimaya 3:09
How diverse is your executive team? The leadership team?

Marianne 3:14
That's not diverse.

Kimaya 3:16
okay. That is totally Danish.

Marianne 3:18
If it is now yes, we have had we just had a change on the sales director position. And that was a German before now it's a Danish guy. So no, that is not diverse. No. Seven, seven Danish people.

Kimaya 3:35
Seven Danish people. Okay, and what do you think about the international hiring process in general?

Marianne 3:44
I think that is it does represent some challenges to hire internationally if the people are not currently living in Denmark. We have had people from China that we have hired solely by virtual interviews. And it's not ideal, but it's doable, especially in COVID times as well, we have had to do more of that. But the ideal situation first is that people are already in Denmark, and can come and meet us and see the company and see how we do things around here. Because we do have a quite unique culture here and we'd like people to sort of get a sense of that before they accept the job offer. So, yes, so if people are situated very far away of course, it will be a lot of travelling just to go for an interview and go back. And of course, that does represent a challenge.

Kimaya 4:47

So your company believes in meeting the person face to face rather than having a virtual interview. Yeah?

Marianne 4:53
Oh, yes. Because it works out a lot better. I mean, we've tried both and especially for the candidate, it's, it's a lot easier to shine and, you know, see your personality in a face to face interview. So we definitely prefer that. Yes.

Kimaya 5:13
That's true. And, adding to that what are what do you think are the top challenges that your company faces before, during and after hiring an international employee?

Marianne 5:29
Well, if we start with before, then the challenges are just outlined to you, if people are not living in Denmark currently, that represents a challenge. If they do live in Denmark, there'll be no challenge in that though, we'll we'll just go through the hiring process, normally, and during the hiring process, it's important to, for foreigners to have the visa status already, because sometimes when you hire people that have when they have to apply for a visa, that will give us problems and the visa process is so long, that it can take three or four months. And so business wise, it will be a challenge to have to wait for so long for the person to join. So my advice would be for everybody that wants to live in Denmark and work in Denmark, make sure that you have your visa already when you apply for the job, because it makes it so much easier and makes it a non issue. You don't have to take it into account at all. And after they start, well, it's no challenge, really, because we have an international team as it is. And we have great experience in onboarding foreign nationals. So wherever in the world you come from, we'll probably have somebody coming from your culture as well. So we haven't really had any challenges with that.

Kimaya 7:05
And I just want to understand because I am a student. And, you know, the Danish immigration system gives me the power to stay back in Denmark with the establishment card after I have graduated, so that is a bonus for me. And that is a bonus for the company as well. Yes, but what about those employees who are not students? I mean, who just want to apply from outside

Denmark, say, from India to Denmark, they don't have an open visa system like this? It's usually the company who sponsors the visa, right?

Marianne 7:42

Yes. Yes, not necessarily sponsors, but make sure that you can get it because we have the the salary hiring, or the salary based visa, that if you earn over a certain threshold, then you automatically get your visa, okay. But it will take three to four months to go through. And that is the challenge with it. So, you know, but I know if you come from, for instance, India, and you don't have the possibility to get into the country, and you can't apply for any of the other visas, then that will be the only one to apply for. And that requires you having a job before you can get it. So it's sort of like, you know, a catch 22 situation.

Kimaya 8:30

But, Marianne, as per Copenhagen business school, there was a brain drain off around 56% in 2014 up from 48% in 2011 which is too high and increasing, where Denmark is a very good destination for international students. And you know, there are so many of them, and still the companies are not able to hire them. What do you think could be the possible reasons?

Marianne 8:59

Well, I think language barrier if you're a local smaller company that only work locally and don't have the international customers or, or markets that you work on, then I think the language barrier would be a problem.

Kimaya 9:18

But how about a candidate has all the required skills, but doesn't know the language? On the other hand, a person knows the language but doesn't have the skills? Whom do you think the company should hire?

Marianne 9:33

Well, I don't think you should hire any of them. Well, we would hire the person that has the skills but not the language because the language skills you can we offer Danish courses we have. Sometimes we if we have hired say two or three or four new internationals then we offer them a Danish crash course at work, where they go once a week for four hours or something with a personal teacher and then they get to know it because what we find is people, when they

start working at the Danish company are really eager to get to know the language as well, you know, just as a matter of integration and and wanting to get to know the culture properly, that includes language as well so but but I can see the challenge if the company is small and you don't speak any other language than Danish, you know, at meetings or have any materials in English or so it will be a great challenge to start hiring internationals because you have to translate everything even even something as basic as the hiring contract you know, if you don't have that in English, that will be a barrier, that will be a challenge.

Kimaya 10:47
Yes. But how about Marianne if do you also agree that if the leadership team or if the executive team has an international perspective, if they are open to internationals, if the company decides that, okay, we want to grow, we want to internationalise, let's break the language barrier, and start recruiting internationals, because then if you see in the long run, they might have all the advantages that the other companies have so then language should not be one of the biggest barriers then right?

Marianne 11:25
I do agree.

Kimaya 11:27
And Marianne, how do you make sure that the pipeline of candidates is diverse at OJ Electronics?

Marianne 11:38
I don't. It is just a coincidence that it is, I think, the way where we situated in Sønderborg we have a SDU, Southern Denmark university that has a branch in Sønderborg and at that branch for the mechatronics and electronics that we take candidates from, they have a great international community. So obviously there are a lot of internationals in in the area in the region, who would like to stay in so it just comes naturally whenever we post a job description, and we sometimes do it in Danish, and sometimes do it in English then they apply naturally, we don't have a special intention of attracting internationals, we just, you know, want to attract candidates, whether they're Danish or internationals. We go for the skills and the qualifications.

Kimaya 12:40
Okay, and what kind of social media platforms do does your company engage in?

Marianne 12:47
Primarily Facebook and LinkedIn.

Kimaya 12:49
Okay.

Kimaya 12:52
And what are the top countries that the company recruits from?

Marianne 12:58
Oh, that's difficult, because it is very diverse here. I think we have I don't think we have a top score actually.

Kimaya 13:13
The only reason why I'm asking you this is to understand that can expatriation sometimes be a deal breaker considering greater psychic distance between two countries? Say for example, a lot of companies they consider that if for example, I am from India and I am in Denmark, then the companies might think oh greater the psychic distance more the cultural differences. So sometimes the companies are not ready, they also take into consideration the psychic distance between two countries. And they would prefer to recruit somebody from a country that is nearer to Denmark, or probably in the European Union to also avoid the visa formalities and paperwork.

Marianne 13:57
Hmmm..But but the way the job market is right now, you don't have the luxury of easily choosing, when if you have one or two or three really qualified candidates, you're very lucky. And sometimes you just have the one and you go with the one no matter where they're from. Because if you get the competencies that you're looking for, you're very lucky. I mean, the job market is insane right now, but as I said to you, we do have people from Asia, from the Far East, the Near East, from Eastern Europe, from Southern Europe, from America. So, you know, we have from all cultures and I think once you hire the first one from a different culture, say

Asia, you will find that you know, the distance is not as great as we thought especially if you've been educated in Denmark because then you have been accustomed to the Danish way of living and probably choose to stay in Denmark because you like it here. So we haven't really had any challenges cultural wise or psychic distance wise.

Kimaya 15:10
And how is their way of working different from the Danish way of working? Do you see any major cultural differences?

Marianne 15:19
Well, what we do see or what people talk about when they get hired, especially here at OJ is that we have very low bureaucracy, we have a very flat organisation. And we don't pay a lot of attention to your job title. It's what you do, and the impact you have. And we're a small company, which means that it's very important that you're very good at what you do. And you can have just as much influence as, say, software hardware developer, than you do as a CEO, you know, that the sales director or something like that, because we work in projects, and all projects are formed across the organisation. So you have the right skills and the project, and you don't look at what the titles are. And does that makes sense? In fact, a lot of people point out, even Germans point out that this is very nice, because it's informal, it's flat, it lacks bureaucracy, and the speed in which you can engage in new things and do know projects is so much higher, because we just make the decision and get on with it.

Kimaya 16:41
Okay and how are conflicts at workplaces dealt with considering people from various cultures work together?

Marianne 17:07
I don't think we had any conflicts due to cultural differences or something. Okay. I think, yeah, we have a very universal mindset here I think, you know, even I know, Asians, Americans, Africans, even, you know, whatever culture you come from, when you choose to work for OJ, and go through the hiring process, and find that interesting, and come here and see how we interact, and want to be a part of that. And I think that means you have the mindset to join us. Because you have to like the informality you have to like it the non bureaucracy, and how a free company we are.

Kimaya 17:51
And so, which means that the company is flexible to new suggestions and agile ways of working?

Marianne 18:03
Oh, yes. Oh, yes.

Kimaya 18:04
And Marianne it takes a lot of time for any foreign national to integrate into the Danish culture. So how does your company take care of the integration process, and help the candidates to deal with the initial culture shock? What are the steps that the company takes?

Marianne 18:27
Well, we, we have the onboarding programme here at OJ, and we we assign a mentor, we assign a professional in your department, you know, so you're, you're divided, the mentor will deal with the personal stuff with the personal integration bring you to different venues or things, you know, to try and integrate you and make you meet people, whereas the professional mentor, if you, like, takes care of all the questions related to the job. And we have the onboarding programme, plus the fact because in this part of Denmark, there are per se, a lot of internationals, as I just described earlier on, which means that the council has taken a great responsibility for this and they have a specific place where they help integrating, you know, whenever foreigners come, they have they bring all foreigners together and do things and bring them together with Danish people and help them you know, this is how you get your child into kindergarten, this is the schools this is how we do this. So basically, there is a whole setup of different things, both socially but also, you know, trying to get your everyday living going.

Kimaya 19:50
That's nice. And does your company offer any diversity, inclusion and cultural competence training to all the employees?

Marianne 19:51
No.

Kimaya 19:52
Okay.

Marianne 20:00
Isn't it's not really an issue here, if, you know, when it's just, it just is there, it's no problem. It's a non issue for something. So it hasn't been necessary. We haven't had any resistance in the organisation or amongst some of the employees say anything. It's just a natural thing.

Kimaya 20:23
okay. And what are some of the pros and cons of having a culturally diverse team? Do you think the pros outweigh the cons, or sometimes it's the opposite.

Marianne 20:36
I haven't experienced the situation where there are cons. I mean, if there are cons, it will be that you might not chance hiring for a candidate in the same way, sometimes you're in doubt, because there are some pros and cons about the candidate professionally about, you know, the skills for the job. And if it's a local guy who lives two minutes away, you can better chance it because you know, there's not as much at stake. Whereas hiring somebody from India, you want to make sure there's going to be a success, because you can't just bring people up here and then, you know, after two weeks realise, well, those skills weren't good enough, or you know, are not the right ones. So it will probably be easier to get a job with not quite the right qualifications, if you are a local.

Kimaya 21:45
What are some of the worst experiences you have had after hiring an expat?

Marianne 21:46
No, none.

Kimaya 21:47
Okay. And moving on, what do you think are some of the top reasons for attrition? Why do people leave companies?

Marianne 22:10

Well, the young people, the young internationals that get the first job here at OJ after say, three or four years, they want to see if they want to test their market value, I think and go and have other experiences, which is a part of it. And something we don't frown upon. We encourage it so that I think that's the reason because our experiences that the more experienced guys, if they choose to work here and work at OJ, they stay here as long as the danish people do and that is for a longer time. They don't change jobs.

Kimaya 22:49

And what do you think could be some of the novel ways or strategies in which companies can retain their international employees?

Marianne 23:01

I don't know. I don't think it'd be any different retaining internationals than it would be Danish nationals, I think it's the same thing that apply, you know, you've got to keep it interesting. You got to develop and make people thrive in their jobs and make it interesting to stay, and I think that goes for Danish as well.

Kimaya 23:27

Also, considering the high cost of hiring and international, how does your company measure the success of any international assignment?

Marianne 23:41

Well, we don't differ. We don't differentiate again, it's it's the same. I mean, if hiring processes is successful, if the candidate fits the job the way we thought he was going to do and stays at the company, and we're happy and he develops and thrive in this job. It's not the same, but I don't think, I'm not sure I agree that the costs are much higher by hiring internationals because as I said to you earlier on, we hire a lot of internationals that are already here. So it's the same process. We don't have other process for for internationals and so the cost will not be higher.

Kimaya 24:30

Okay, so you are trying to say that when the students or when the employees are already here in Denmark, then it doesn't make much of a difference, right.

Marianne 24:42
Yeah. Yes.

Kimaya 24:44
And do you think there are any loopholes in your current recruitment process and where do you think the company needs to improve the most?

Marianne 24:54
I can't see any loopholes really, and I think the hiring process is the way it should be. We're trying not to compromise too much with the skills and the qualifications we require, even though it's really, really difficult to get people. So right now we've had, we have a lot of open positions, and some have been open for quite some time because we don't want to compromise on who we hire and the level of qualifications we need to have to get the job.

Kimaya 25:29
Just a general question, you know, on one hand, there is severe shortage of skilled and qualified labour in the country and on the other hand, the government and some of the companies do not see foreigners as the bonuses that they are and the immigration laws are becoming tougher and tougher by by day, so that people don't see Denmark as an attractive country. So what would stop a company or a country from hiring international workforce? Why would companies or countries do that?

Marianne 26:04
I don't know. It's difficult for me to say, because we don't feel that way. But I can see that it can be a challenge. I mean, we mainly have high qualified, highly qualified people with university degrees. So it's no challenge for us to hire internationals, because they all meet the level, the threshold of salary level that you can get a visa for. But I can see that if you have a lower level of qualification, and thereby a lower salary, you will be you will have to be eligible for another type of visa. And that is really, really difficult. So I think that's basically a great barrier. And I don't know what to do about it, because it's, it's the way things are going now, unfortunately, I think it's a disaster. But all the same, it's a reality, as you say that it's getting tougher and tougher by the day. Yeah. And it's a shame, because diversity is needed. And, you know, it has always been has just not been recognised as diversity. It's only, you know, over the last 10-20 years Denmark feels threatened by internationals, and I think it's a great shame.

Kimaya 27:28

And what is the reason for that? Why is it that they are shying away from the internationals?

Marianne 27:35

I don't know. It's a different mindset to mine. Obviously, I find it really hard to understand what's going on. But they must feel threatened in some way. I just can't seem to fathom why.

Kimaya 27:49

Well, you have answered all my questions. Is there anything else that you would like to mention that I have not covered in the interview?

Marianne 27:52

Oh, I don't think so. I don't think it's a very thorough and well built interview. So yes, well done. But best of luck with all this. I really hope that you successfully managed to bring attention to this challenge.

Kimaya 28:00

Yes, Marianne. I'll try my best. And I will also share my report with you if you would like to read it up later.

Marianne 28:08

Yes. I'd love to read it. Of course, Great. Thank you so much.

Kimaya 28:11

Thank you so much for your time. Have a nice day.

Marianne 28:15

Yeah. Thank you. Bye.

Appendix 10. Interview with Sisse Zinn- Sales & Marketing Assistent, Victor Energi- & Køleteknik A/S

Kimaya 0:06
Hello Sisse.

Sisse 0:08
Hi. Do you hear me? Yes, you do, or else you didn't answer hahaha..

Kimaya 0:11
I could not hear you well earlier. How are you?

Sisse 0:19
I'm good. I'm fine. And you?

Kimaya 0:22
I'm doing good. How was your vacation?

Sisse 0:26
Oh, we were we sold one house and bought another one had to move all our stuff. So it was a working vacation.

Kimaya 0:34
Oh, okay. Nice. Ah, shall we start with the interview?

Sisse 0:40
Yes, let's do that.

Kimaya 0:41
Yes. Okay. To begin with, could you please introduce yourself your position with the company and the tasks that you do on daily basis?

Sisse 0:51

Yes, of course. My name is Sisse Zinn. And I am sales and marketing assistant at victor energy solution and victor energy refrigeration technology. My daily tasks are a lot and different tasks. I do both sales, marketing, HR, quality tasks and administration, if you call it so, yeah. So I do a lot of talking to people and handling tasks that the that come up suddenly, all the ad hoc tasks. Yeah.

Kimaya 1:43
Okay. And when did you join Victor energy?

Sisse 1:47
I did in 2015. I've been here for six years now. Yeah.

Kimaya 1:55
And how important is diversity to your company? And what value does it bring?

Sisse 2:03
Actually, we don't talk that much about it. We are more focused on on our projects to be completed, right way. So the competence and the ability from people is the most important thing. Doesn't matter if they are Danish or Swedish, or from America or Netherlands doesn't matter. A lot of our our workers on the floor or at site is Romanian guys. And we use that because they have a little community themselves so they are never alone. When they are working for us. They know each other and some have been here for 10-12-13 years. Yeah. We just hired a girl from the Caribbean and a guy from the Netherlands. So for us, it doesn't matter the culture they're from.

Kimaya 3:28
Okay, Does your company have any official diversity recruitment policy or system in place?

Sisse 3:27
No.

Kimaya 3:39
Okay. And what is your employee strength at the moment?

Sisse 3:45
According to diversity or in general?

Kimaya Speaker 3:51
In general. How many employees do you have currently in Denmark?

Sisse 3:57
We are about 80 persons right now. Yeah. And we are doing projects turnkey projects for heat pumps in Denmark for now and soon we go abroad too.

Kimaya 4:17
Okay. And how many people are there in your recruitment department?

Sisse
At the moment? Only me.

Kimaya
Okay, so you're the only person and which nationality are you? Which country are you from?

Sisse 4:44
I'm Danish, all the way through.

Kimaya 4:47
How many people are there in your executive team?

Sisse 5:09
They are six people, I think.

Kimaya 5:12
And they are all Danish too?

Sisse 5:15
Yeah, at the moment, yes.

Kimaya 5:18

Okay, jumping straight into the international hiring process. What do you think about the international hiring process in general? And what do you think are some of the top challenges that your company faces before, during and after hiring an international employee?

Sisse 5:37

Well, of course, the language and the different cultures and well, yeah, that must be the those two main thoughts we do. But But then again, it is the competences that that has the value. So So anyhow, if we speak some kind of English, then everything is okay. It doesn't matter and we do not have any strategy or anything. It's not an issue for us for gender, sexuality or background of any. Well, except for criminal persons. We do not hire criminal persons, but we don't care if they are for many other countries, actually. So it's not something we look at as as, as a negative thing. It's very positive for us to have people from all over the world doesn't matter. Yeah.

Kimaya 6:46

And how do you make sure that the pipeline of candidates is diverse?

Sisse 6:53

Ahhh we don't do anything to make sure of that. We have a have a position and people matching it the best is the people we hire. We don’t do anything about diversities, this just pretty natural.

Kimaya 7:13

Okay. And you mentioned that your company recruits from Romania from the Netherlands and the Caribbean. So, what I need to understand is, can expatriation sometimes be a deal breaker considering huge psychic distance between two countries? Say for example, I come from India, and there's a huge psychic distance between India and Denmark. And so naturally there are huge cultural differences that would be between the two countries. So can that be a deal breaker for your company?

Sisse 7:55

Hmmmm..I don't think so.

Kimaya 7:57

So your company is basically open to any person from any around the world?

Sisse 8:04

Yes, as long as the competence is is the right one. Yeah. As soon as you can solve the project or the test that you are given it doesn't matter where you're from, it doesn't matter what colour your skin is or your eye colour or what do you believe in or your sexuality your or if you're a man or woman, we just have positions and the people who was hired for those is just matched by by a competence.

Kimaya 8:43

Okay, and what are the important things that your company conveys to the candidate, while interviewing them considering they come from such a different culture?

Sisse 8:57

I don't think we do anything different between people from other countries or Danish people. Again, we see people as equal to the position they are applying for we we do not get out and recruit somebody. We put up some positions in our network and they have to apply for it and if if, if a foreigner apply for a position here, well, it's same case as if it was a Danish guy, or girl.

Kimaya 9:41

So what are the various networking or social media platforms that your company engages with to hire different people?

Sisse 9:52

Yeah, we use here in frederikshavn we got move north. Yeah, We use their services a lot for for hiring white collar people. And to hire people on the floor that's mainly the Romanian guys. And actually, we don't use any particular company for that. It's just the their own network. Okay. Yeah, they know people in Romania and with the same skills and so on. So it'd be a network themselves.

Kimaya 10:47

Okay. The only reason why I'm asking is,since you're saying that they have a network, and basically they use word of mouth, and they will just bring people from their own country. And

so how is the Romanian way of working different from the Danish way of working? What are the major cultural differences?

Sisse 11:15

Yeah, when when they come to Denmark, and they want to work, of course, they are willing to work more than 37 hours a week, they are here to work. And they maybe like to work 10 or 12 hours a day. And not that many days off. But then they, when they go home to Romania, they will stay away for a month or two. And so, so they're working system a is quite different from the Danish people, they want to go home to the family and have the time and when they go to vacation, we go to other countries, but Romanian guys are here to work. And they're here because they want to make some money. And that's okay because they are doing their job just as they are told. Okay.

Kimaya 12:10

And I am interested to know. I mean, how are conflicts handled at workplace?

Sisse 12:22

The only conflicts we experience is language and understanding that can be quite difficult sometimes. So we do teams of Romanian guys, where at least one of them is able to talk English, he will speak English, and they are offered some Danish courses when they've been here for more than two years. So some of them are even able to understand Danish. Maybe they can talk, speak Danish, but they understand when we're telling them something in Danish, or they are reading something in Danish. So all our information will be done both in Danish and English. So that at least one person in the team is able to understand. Yeah, that's how we do it.

Kimaya 13:22

And, are the employees mentored enough, coached enough and explained clearly what is expected out of them?

Sisse 13:33

I believe so, since they've been here for 10 or 12 or 13 years. They are here on the same condition as Danish people, same salary. Same with the what is it called? And? Actually? Yeah, I don't know.

Kimaya 13:54
All the benefits that the that this person is supposed to receive?

Sisse 13:59
Yes. Yes Everything is same as Danish people here. Yeah. So when they go home, they are going home because they have worked too many hours and put it in the bank and then go home and get paid while they are home. Yeah,

Kimaya 14:19
And, how does your company help these international employees upon their arrival in Denmark?

Sissi 14:28
Appear at the municipality, what is that's the word I am never going to say. For example, we got people helping foreigners coming here and getting some some paperwork done and approvals for work and all this. So we don't do that for them.

Kimaya 15:01
Oh, are you not? Do you mean to say you have another company doing it for you?

Sissi 15:06
No. I believe that they have it in every city or community in Denmark, and then like, they have how what is it called in English?

Kimaya 15:24
Like an agent?

Sisse 15:26
No, no, no, it's it's the office from the city, the city office. The kommune? Yes, please get English. What's it called?

Kimaya 15:36
In English it is the local municipality.

Sissi 15:39

Yes, that's the word I forget it every fucking time. But put up there, they got people working with this every day and they help them getting all their approvals and contracts, and make sure that they are on the same condition as Danish people. Yeah, they help them with somewhere to live and when they are going to Danish courses they help with that, too. So they are in teams with people from same areas of the world. Yeah.

Kimaya 16:16

So they basically get take help of the local kommune to help them with the paperwork and everything?

Sissi 16:30

Yes.

Kimaya 16;32

Okay. And after the employees arrive, are they given any diversity, inclusion or any cultural competence training from the company?

Sissi 16:35

No. Not at least, if they ask for it, yes. But but they don't. The kommune is, is very helpful and do this package for them when they arrive here. Okay. So so it's going through them when we're doing anything to integrate people here. So, we just employ them.

Kimaya 17:01

Okay. So it's the responsibility of the kommune to help them integrate when they come to Denmark?

Sissi 17:15

Yeah. Yeah

Kimaya 17:17

Okay. Yeah. So what do you think are some of the pros and cons of having a culturally diverse team? Do you think the pros are more than the cons or it's the opposite?

Unknown Speaker 17:32

Ahhhhh..I like when, when we're doing diversity, but with kind of a structure, I like it when when Romanians are not alone, they got somebody with same culture to share their spare time with and here at work, they got their own kind of network and bonding here. So I like it when when we are doing the diversity and trying to find people from same areas and with same countries, cultures and religion actually, but it doesn't matter for in this situation when we want to hire but but I like it when we do this match. And, and we find people from other countries here, bonding with each other, and doing something off work. Even though it's not our responsibility, but but it gives us some positive things from from our workers, from our employees. When when when we try to match up like that.

Kimaya 18:56

okay, so you think the pros are more when you have a diverse team, it brings a lot of value to your company?

Sisse 19:03

Yes, it does. Of course it does.

Kimaya 19:07

What are some of the worst experiences that your company has had after hiring an international person? Do you remember of any experiences or stories that you can share?

Sisse 19:16

Yes. because the Danish system is very difficult when you come to Denmark, like it's very difficult to figure out what to do when to do it and where to do it, just to get ready to work or to live here. So I understand when when people arrive here, and they are at the kommune, they help them and they go to our place and they they are working and and I know it's different cultures. So we sometimes we experienced that they don't have the same sense of scheduling. Yeah, when we do a deadline, it is a deadline. It's not just pointing, it's this deadline. So sometimes we we experience people from mostly Romanian, of course, when they come to Denmark, they have to learn about deadlines. Okay. And these are meant seriously, because some of them I don't know if the culture in Romania is like that or not, but sometimes they have we experienced that they kind of do their things and, and doesn't look at deadlines.

Kimaya 20:53

Okay, and is your company flexible to new suggestions and agile ways of working?

Sisse 21:04

That's a difficult question actually. It is not very much. And, and that is because we are certified against some high quality means. So we have to do our work in a certain way. And of course, those ways can be different. But we have to, to we have to do it according to our certification and our standards.So that's why it's a difficult question. Because everything can be done better. Always.

Kimaya 21:54

Yeah, I'm only asking you this, because since you're working with people from different cultures, so they might have a different point of view to resolve or attack a problem. And, you know, it is important for companies today to be as agile as possible, so that, they come up with the best solution to a problem.

Sisse 22:16

Yeah, yeah.

Kimaya 22.18

And what do you think are some of the reasons for attrition? For example, if you can tell me what are some of the reasons why an employee would leave Victor energy, what would be the reasons?

Sisse 22:44

Well, the payment will always be an issue. If they can get better paid somewhere else, then, of course, I will do the same. Probably! Or if if, if they get some more benefits somewhere or or maybe if they get the included in more socialising maybe, because we don't do that much. Not even between the Danes. We don't do much socialising. And that could be a reason. But, but that's why I tell you, I like it when people are meeting each other. For the reason that they are not Danes. They got that in common, and then they get something out of that. I like that. Because we're not good at socialising. We are 80 employees here, and we are all over Denmark,

so so it's not possible for us to meet everybody at the same place at the same time. So yeah, so I like it when they team up. Yeah.

Kimaya 24:14
And could you also suggest some ideas and ways in which companies can retain their international employees? What are some of the strategies?

Sisse 24:30
Well, I haven't thought about that because we don't we don't think like that. We just hire people when we need people with the with the right skills. But if we had to do something, to to make people from other countries come to work for us. I don't know, I would hire somebody professional to handle that. That is an easy answer hahaha.

Kimaya 25:11
Like, for example while reading the literature on ways to retain good employees, I could understand that companies could provide more sensitivity training or encouraging employees at all levels to work in diverse groups, or even for that matter linking pay to diversity goals, is a very good idea that a company can adopt who wants to hire internationals, and then conducting an organisational audit towards continuously monitoring what is the human resource management doing around hiring to find out, okay, how quickly your company is growing into a culturally diverse company, assessing the pulse of the company? What do you think about that, being more open minded, and understanding your own cultural baggage?

Sisse 26:08
Of course, that's always something we could be better at. And we could do a lot of more in that. Yeah. Well, and Victor, if we talk about us, we are not big enough to have a direct human resource department or team actually. But if we had, I would love to go into a little more of those being open minded and suggest other possibilities to meet the diversity and the cultures and to investigate how it influence our work space and our working environment, and all that. I would love that.

Kimaya 27:16

Yeah And also, considering the high cost of hiring an international, there's so much paperwork, there are so many things that a company puts an effort into, how does your company measure the success of any international assignment?

Sisse 27:33

Yeah, so as I said, we were using the kommune and I know it takes time but but if the skills are right, for the person, it doesn't influence anything, it doesn't mean anything to us. We are willing to do a little extra if if we get the skills that we're looking for, even though it's not from a Danish person. Yeah, we just hired some, some, some more Romanian who came here because we got a job in Sweden, so we had to hire some Romanian guys to come here with the right skills and we had to do all the paperwork before going to Sweden. Okay, yeah. And then there are some rules in Sweden too that we have to, to be aware of. And it took time, and it takes time. But but now we got the guys in Sweden, and the skills arrived and the job is going very well. So so in the big picture, it doesn't, doesn't stop us. Okay.

Kimaya 28:47

So if you get the right person who has the right skills, that is how you measure the success of an international assignment?

Sisse 28:56

Yes. Yes. Actually, it is.

Kimaya 28:59

Ok. And do you think there are any loopholes in your current recruitment process? And do you think the process needs any improvement?

Sisse 29:09

Well, yes, of course, there is a lot there is only me taking care of it and I do not have any, any education towards it. So I would love to to get more educated and investigate a little more into it. Yeah. And the company could also just buy some professional people to take care of their business, actually if it's not my job. But yeah, as I said, we're going abroad soon. And hopefully, that is one of the things we need to discuss how do we do that, because we are going to employ some some people from other countries, because we are going to build in other countries.

Kimaya 30:12

And if I may ask, which countries are you internationalising to?

Sisse 30:20

Yeah, we're going to England and Netherlands and Germany, France, and there was one more country. Switzerland. Okay. It was, yeah. So that way we have we are going to hire people from other countries, cultures close to Danish culture, but, but still different. Yeah.

Kimaya 30:57

That's great. Sissy, just a general question. You know, on one hand, there is severe shortage of skilled and qualified labour in Denmark. And on the other hand, the government and some of the companies do not see foreigners as the bonuses that they are. And the immigration laws, they keep on changing. They're so confusing, so as to make sure that, you know, people do not come to Denmark. So what is it that stops a country or a company from hiring international workforce?

Sisse 31:27

Well, of course, the laws and the integration from the Danish government stops a lot. But and the paperwork, of course, but I think it's more difficult for for people from other countries to come to Denmark, and work than it is for our, for a company to hire people from another country, I think the confusion and the the paperwork and all that is, is on the person from that the country. So for example, if we hired you, and you're from India, all the problems, and the difficult stuff is on your hand, and not our hand. And I think it would be the showstopper would be a you because it's difficult for you to come to Denmark, it's so confusing. So maybe if you get an offer from from another job in another country, it wouldn't, it may be easier for you to access a job somewhere else than in Denmark. So I think the rules and the government made it very difficult for for the foreigner to integrate in Denmark.

Kimaya 33:00

Ah..And any suggestions in terms of how to better deal with cultural challenges?

Sisse 33:12

In a company or just in general?

Kimaya 33:15
In the company?

Sisse 33:21
Well, as you spoke about being a little more open minded, being a little more welcoming, and doing a little more integration, be a little more aware of the cultures that meet each other. Yeah, I think it would be something like that. That will be the answer.

Kimaya 33:47
Great. Is there anything else that you would like to mention that I have not covered in the interview?

Sisse 33:55
No, I think you're good at this interview. And I think you covered and if you got the answers, you were looking for then that's it. It's great. It's perfect.

Kimaya 34:04
Yes, that is exactly what I wanted. Because there are so many Danish SMEs in Denmark. And there are so many international students who actually want to contribute to the economy. But there's a big amount of brain drain specially because some of the companies are not ready to hire them because of language, because of paperwork and other stuff. Yeah, on one hand, there is shortage of labour. On the other hand, you have so many internationals, but the process is so difficult that, you know, they are not able to find a middle ground and it's only some of the companies that are able to break that barrier.

Sisse 34:46
Yeah, well, I think some of the companies are not aware that they can hire professionals to do all that work, actually. There are people in Denmark educated to take care of foreigners coming and want to work in Denmark, and then there are people actually doing this for a living. And so maybe the companies are just not aware that that come that the help exists, actually. Okay, I think.

Kimaya 35:21

Yeah. And of course, the municipality is always there to take care. But do you think the companies also need to do more? So that you know, instead of sending them to the kommune, maybe the company can give a personal touch to their employees?

Sisse 35:40

Yes, of course, we could always do that. If we had the human resource department here, then, of course, every company could do something, to integrate people and make them feel welcome at the company and welcome in Denmark. And I understand that it is an issue, as you say, because many students wants to go here and study here and they want to work here. And they want, some of them might want to settle here, and that would bring Denmark so much positive diversity among people. Yeah.

Kimaya 36:30

Yeah. I mean, considering your own profile, you said that you're looking into so many different areas, it's so difficult for you to, you know, concentrate on one particular area, I mean, one person handling the role of four or five departments, it's pretty tough.

Sisse 36:40

Yeah. It is.

Kimaya 36:49

So I assume that the more the company grows in size, the more and more it should get structured, right?

Sisse 36:56

You're hopefully, hopefully, okay. Yeah. Yeah. And it is actually a typical Danish failure to believe that one person is able to handle four or five different job titles. And then you can have three people with the same four or five job titles, instead of having four or five people with just one job title. It is very typical.

Kimaya 37:31

Yeah, it is. Yes, that's true. Well, that is it Sisse. Thank you so much for your time. Thank you so much for your valuable inputs.

Sisse 37:42

Thank you so much for doing this interview and doing this study. I hope I hope you come through with your agenda.

Kimaya 37:51

Yes, of course. I will try my best.

Sisse 37:53

Yes do that.

Kimaya 37:54

Yes. Thank you so much.

Sisse 37:57

You're welcome. And you're always welcome to contact me again.

Kimaya 38:00

Yes, of course. I will do that. If I come across anything that I want to ask more than the above I'll definitely put you an email or maybe ask you for another 10 minutes of your time.

Sisse 38:13

Do that. Okay.

Kimaya 38:15

Thank you and have a nice day. Take care.

Sisse 38:16

Bye. Yeah, bye