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## Postgraduate training – a possibility for collaboration between research and practice

Hasle, Peter; Jensen, Per Langaa

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Abstract for

First Euroma Workshop on Practice-Oriented Research in Operations Management

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### **Postgraduate training – a possibility for collaboration between research and practice**

Peter Hasle, Professor

Center for Industrial Production, Department of Business and Management, Aalborg University

[hasle@business.aau.dk](mailto:hasle@business.aau.dk)

Per Langaa Jensen, Professor

Department of Management Engineering, Technical University of Denmark

[plaj@dtu.dk](mailto:plaj@dtu.dk)

Postgraduate university education of managers employed in industry offers a unique possibility of developing collaboration between researchers and practice. However, it depends on the content and organisation of the education. Traditional teaching based on lecturing and reading may provide important knowledge for the student but will not be a strong facilitator of valuable collaboration between research and practice. In Denmark postgraduate training of managers already in employment has expanded tremendously during the last decade. Most of this training consists of a combination of theory taught in traditional manners and an assignment of a case study, typically carried out in the student's workplace. The students are supervised by experienced researchers, and they get thereby access to feed back on their workplace practice, and the researchers get access to a wide array of workplace practices.

One example of such education is the postgraduate master programme in environmental and occupational health and safety (OHS) management at the Technical University of Denmark. It is a two year programme, estimated to half time (60 etc). Most students make agreements with their employer about using partly free time and partly working time for the study. Target group is environmental/OHS/QES managers or officers with a bachelor or perhaps a master degree in another fields. In each semester the students have to make a case study in groups of normally 4-5 persons where one of students is hosting the case study. It is aimed at a priority problem in the workplace identified by the host. A researcher from the university supervises the group and normally visits the workplace. Thereby the students work with integration of the theory introduced at lectures and the workplace practice. The whole last semester is used for a dissertation which is again aimed at a real life problems at the students' workplaces. The dissertation is prepared by most often pairs of students. Especially the dissertation gives the university researcher a good insight in workplace practice which can be used for later research activities. Most often the work of the student is also used in practical changes at the workplaces. One recent example was a study of organisational social capital in a large Danish manufacturer of medical equipment. The study took place a site which was changing into a primarily ramp up production, and where the OHS manager proved that lack of collaboration between blue collar workers, first line managers and technical departments both created a barrier for improving production processes and impaired employees' well-being. Thereby the host company also gets important insights into problems in the present organisation and management of production.