



Specialisterne, changing the standards

- A case study of a Danish social entrepreneurial company

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Executive summary

Einstein's famous quote '*No problem can be solved from the same level of consciousness that created it*', can in the framework created for this thesis be translated to how the (social) challenges of the 21'st century cannot be facilitated from a 20'th century mentality. New ways of thinking are important for companies to become stronger and better in doing business today.

The purpose of this thesis is to show another side of the social entrepreneurial field; a sector where the boundaries between for-profit and not-for-profit have become blurred and the companies with a social aim are becoming more focused on the business part. This thesis presents a case that shows a social entrepreneurial company that has managed to survive and even expand in spite of the continuing financial crisis.

My research question is: *How is it possible for Specialisterne to be innovative, sustainable, and social entrepreneurial when employing people diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder as a new resource in the workforce?* This research question is investigated by four analysis questions.

The thesis is based on a single case study of a social entrepreneurial company called Specialisterne, which is a pioneer within their field. This is the first company in the world to educate and hire people diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder to perform IT-consultancy services. The data has been collected through interviews and observations at an international conference in May 2011, hosted by Specialisterne. The theoretical analysis primarily draw from an article written by Dacin et al. (2010), which captures the different characteristics of a social entrepreneurial company and provides very useful framework for analysing Specialisterne and their surroundings.

My findings revealed that Specialisterne manage to be innovative, sustainable, and social entrepreneurial. The most important thing in their business model is that they have achieved to turn (what most people regard as) a disability into ability and create an entirely new way of doing business by taking in these specialist people and letting them be *the inspired peculiarities* who can create innovation just by thinking differently. Something conventional businesses could learn from in a future perspective of management.

Keywords: Social entrepreneurship, innovation, sustainability, business model

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Abbreviations

DAA	Danish Autism Association
AEA	Assessment and training unit (ArbejdsEvne Afklaring)
ASD	Autism Spectrum Disorder
BHAG	Big Hairy Audacious Goal
BIZ	Business (the business-consulting unit at Specialisterne)
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
SPF	Specialist People Foundation
SROI	Social Return on Investment
STU	Specialisternes education unit (Særligt Tilrettelagt Ungdomsuddannelse)
TBL	Triple Button Line

Preface

Writing this thesis can undoubtedly be compared with that experience of being on a journey. Sometimes it has felt like a five-star hotel stay in a breath-taking city, while it at other times has felt like a backpacker trip through a rough jungle hard to pass. Thus, either way, it has brought knowledge and experience alongside in the process. This made me realize that even though something seem as the best and most giving suggestion, it, later on, turns out to be another solution which is the most suitable for the setting.

It started out as a project in collaboration with another student colleague, but after six months where the pressure of making a good paper rose, we realized that our ways of working with a thesis was so different that it unfortunately could not be united. This was in many ways an unexpected situation, which none of us had anticipated, in the beginning of this project. Finding my own path from there was an experience that by first glance seemed like a big puzzle, where I had to find and use those pieces which I found relevant, and then skip the rest even though it had taken much time to put them together in the first place.

During the process of writing this thesis I have learned much about business models and social entrepreneurship, but also about my own way of looking upon things, which I find necessary if I had to be creative and challenge my conventional perspectives on practice.

However, this process and the final product could not have been created if it was not for the following people, who have helped me during the different stages, and to whom I am very grateful; first of all I wish to thank my supervisor Karin Strzeletz Ivertsen, who throughout the process has delivered the necessary safety for me to be creative and to challenge my perspectives. I would also like to thank Specialisterne for their trust and readiness to take part in interviews and for letting us participate in their Specialist People Conference in May 2011. I also extend my thanks to neurologist Ole Sylvester Jørgensen, who through interview provided us with another perspective on people with autism spectrum disorder.

Moreover, a deep thank to my family for bearing with me always talking about my project. Finally, I would like to thank Michael for his creative inputs, and at times critical questions and for his continuous and untiring support and devoted love.

Chapter 1

Introduction

“The reasonable man adapts himself to the world; the unreasonable man persists in trying to adapt the world to himself. Therefore all progress depends on the unreasonable man”

- George Bernard Shaw

This very quote describes perfectly what this thesis' case study is concentrated around; how a small Danish social entrepreneurial company becomes successful by hiring people diagnosed with a condition most people associate with disabilities and incapacities. The condition does that the employees of this company do not find it easy fitting into 'normal' job descriptions, nor do they have the ability to make themselves attractive for the job market on their own. Fortunately, the demand from digitalization and attention to details renders the technological skills and know-how these people possess, very useful. This thesis focus on how society, companies, and people value human differences, and value people who are different from the 'norm', as these people bring different perspectives into daily business. And from this we can learn for specific business purposes and learn to think in multiple patterns, which broadens our minds in general.

This introduction part is followed by a justification on why this topic is important and significant enough to be the subject for a thesis of this size. This will be followed by a presentation of the research question that will guide the analysis and a clarification of which contributions this thesis aims to develop. Afterwards, definitions will be given on important concepts in this thesis and finally the structure of the thesis will be presented to get an overview of what to expect in the rest of the thesis.

1.1 Justification of thesis

Einstein's famous quote *‘No problem can be solved from the same level of consciousness that created it’*, can in the framework created for this thesis be translated to how the (social) challenges of the 21'st century cannot be facilitated from a 20'th century mentality. This justifies why it is important to continuously strive to think in new ways and challenge what

we already know, and how we do things. If people, and therefore also companies, continue to think in the same patterns, and do what they always have been doing, there is a risk that innovation and the creation of new revolutionary models, designs or technologies will not appear. At the Specialist People Congress in 2011, Professor Robert Austin (Austin) states the importance of innovation:

“...So it takes differences from being a problem to being a gift... you see, differences are actually the key, I think, to managing the future... in the 20st century, the challenge was, how can I manage my people so that they fit into the overall efficient system? Value creation was proportional to the degree to which we could get the system to operate efficiently to the degree we could coordinate things carefully and so on. In the 21st century the challenge is; how can I create the conditions in which my people can leverage special characteristics, let's call them inspired peculiarities, to produce valuable differences otherwise known as innovation.” (Robert Austin, 2011)

With these words, Austin stresses how abnormalities are becoming more interesting for companies and how deviations are the root to innovation. In addition, he notes that the western part of the world cannot compete on labour cost, but has to compete on know-how and innovation, which is why companies have to embrace this change in management-style¹.

In other words, innovation is an important factor for companies in the western world, and to make innovation happen, companies should aim to have people on board who are especially skilled at doing, and thinking differently, and thereby moving away from the ‘normal’ job descriptions targeting ‘regular’ people. This has created a new way of thinking; today it is not about fitting people into an overall efficient system, it is about getting the system to fit the employees’ needs and requirements². This new way of thinking demands new ways of looking upon and doing business. Thus, the leaders of innovative niche companies’ strive after new business models to satisfy their needs

¹ Austin, conference speech

² Austin, conference speech

1.2 Research question

The above introduction provides an open framework, with the aim of setting the stage for why this thesis is relevant. In this paragraph the framework will be narrowed down by a presentation of the research question and the analysis questions.

How is it possible for Specialisterne to be innovative, sustainable, and social entrepreneurial when employing people diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder as a new resource in the workforce?

In order to give the most fulfilling answer to the research question, the following analysis questions will be investigated through the analysis and answered in the discussion chapter:

1. *In what way is it possible for social entrepreneurial companies to become part of conventional business?*
2. *In which way does Specialisterne differ from a classical business model, and do these differences create value?*
3. *How can the employment of people diagnosed with ASD create value for society?*
4. *How can Specialisterne play a role in sustainable business development?*

1.3 Contribution to research

This thesis will aim at contributing to a field, which many see as a philanthropic area that hardly can be combined with the classic business elements of profit and loss calculations. Social entrepreneurial companies are by many seen as a CSR project and, unfortunately, not so much more. As Kanter argues (2002:125) “*A great deal of business participation in social sector problems derives from the classic model of arm’s length charity – writing a check and leaving everything else to government and non-profit agencies*”. The motive of this case study is to show another side of the social entrepreneurial field; a sector where the boundaries between for and not-for profit has been blurred and the companies are becoming stronger and more focused on the business part.

1.4 Definitions of key concepts

The following paragraph presents the key definitions of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), social entrepreneurship, triple bottom line, and corporate social responsibility. All relevant for understanding the arguments made throughout the thesis:

Autism Spectrum Disorder

As Specialisterne hires people diagnosed with ASD and concentrate on the special abilities these people possess, it is therefore important to understand the basics of this condition. In this relation, there will be drawn on perspectives from neurologist Ole Sylvester Jørgensen (Jørgensen) both from the interview and from his lecture on DR Academy.

Jørgensen states that it is biological parameters that cause autism, which means that it is inborn factors, but the symptoms do not appear before the early preschool age. He describes that ASD consist of three forms: *Classical autism*, *Asperger syndrome*, and *Atypical autism*. *Classical autism*, also called infantile autism, was the first discovered and is the most widespread diagnose. The diagnose occurs four till five times more often among boys than girls, and approximately 75% of the diagnosed children are considered mentally retarded with an IQ below 70³. Furthermore, many of the children diagnosed with Classical autism have in some degree disturbance of their senses (hearing loss and visual disturbances), which makes it difficult to communicate with the child. The classical autism was described by Leo Kanner in 1943 and is still the most diagnosed form within the autism spectrum⁴.

Asperger syndrome (Asperger) was described by Hans Asperger in 1944 and the diagnosed has the same patterns as the classical autism but differs by having a normal to high intelligence. The Atypical autism is diagnosed when none of the above conditions are met.

Specialisterne only hires people diagnosed with Asperger, as it is people with this diagnose who has the special abilities valuable for Specialisterne's services, thus, this thesis focus on people diagnosed with Asperger. Asperger is by Jørgensen characterized by four main symptoms as showed in figure 1.1⁵.

³<http://www.auhrisskov.dk/afdelinger/psykiatrisk+videncenter/psykinfo/om+psykiske+lidelser/fakta+om+psykiske+lidelser/autisme>

⁴<http://www.auhrisskov.dk/afdelinger/psykiatrisk+videncenter/psykinfo/om+psykiske+lidelser/fakta+om+psykiske+lidelser/autisme>

⁵ Lecture on DR academy by Jørgensen

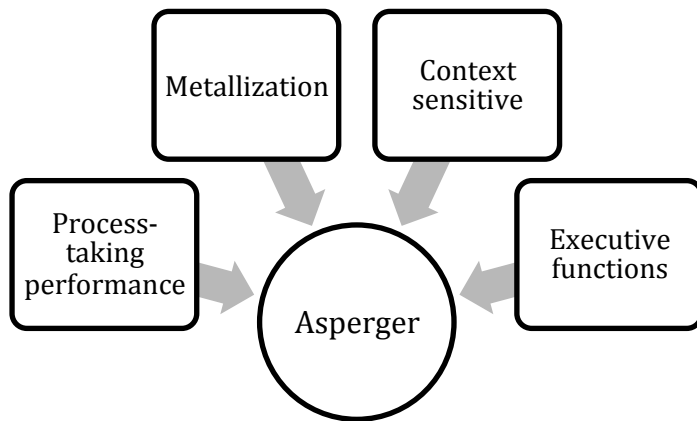


Figure 1.1: *Asperger symptoms*

Source: Author

First, *Process-taking performances*, which means that the person has difficulties to imagine an entire process and only focuses on one piece at the time. Second, *Metallization*, is the theory of mind, and means that the person is having difficulties to imagine the underlying field in a persons psyche, difficulty interpreting mentally and underlying intentions. Third, *Context sensitive*, meaning people diagnosed with Asperger are having a hard time trying to understand that a response may be appropriate in one context but not another. Finally, *Executive functions* is a symptom reflecting that people with Asperger have difficulties with planning as they go ahead while at the same time taking various things into account.

It is these four symptoms of Asperger that Specialisterne are paying great attention to and thereby giving their employees the most optimal work conditions, which renders it possible for the employees to perform their best.

Social entrepreneurship

In this thesis a social entrepreneur will be identified as a person who recognizes a social problem and uses entrepreneurial principles to organize, create and manage a venture to achieve social change (a social venture). To Bornstein a social entrepreneur is “*a path-breaker with a powerful new idea [...] who has a strong ethical fibre [...] Social entrepreneurship is thus indeed characterized by the charismatic entrepreneur who believes that he, or she, possess the ability to transform society*” (Bornstein 1998:37). This way, Bornstein stresses how a social entrepreneur is a charismatic person with a strong ethical backbone and a deep believe in that he or she can make a difference in society.

Triple bottom line

The term *triple bottom line* (TBL) was coined by John Elkington⁶ in 1994 (Elkington 2004). He wanted to expand the traditional framework for how companies were reporting to include sustainability factors. In addition to the traditional way of just concentrating on reporting the economic value of a company, TBL also focus on the environmental and social value the company add – or destroy (Elkington 2004). Elkington later developed it further to the formulation ‘3P’ referring to People, Planet and Profit. This is related to Specialisterne, as their company is build upon holding, and promoting, a sustainable business and at the same time helping other companies gain this advantage.

Social return on investment

Social return on investment (SROI) is a term originating from *return on investment* (ROI) used by traditional financial investors to consider profits in relation to capital invested. It is important to consider that ROI in a closed context will not be a useful indicator of a company’s value or its potential future success; rather, it is a benchmark that quickly gives a sense of the company’s financial situation in a relative context. Which is why SROI also should be compared to other alternatives to be a constructive measurement. SROI describes the social impact of a business or non-profit organization’s operations in monetary terms, relative to the investment required to create that impact and exclusive of its financial return to investors (Lingane & Olsen 2004). In this thesis SROI is used to gain legitimacy about why a social economic business can create value, and furthermore how to measure the impact of social interactions.

⁶Co-founder of SustanAbility in 1987

Corporate social responsibility

The European commission defines corporate social responsibility (CSR) as: *"a concept whereby companies integrate social and environmental concerns in their business operations and in their interaction with their stakeholders on a voluntary basis"*.⁷ Specialisterne takes this further and state: *"CSR is not just about doing things right; it's also about doing the right things"*⁸. By this, Specialisterne stress that companies have a choice in how they will contribute to the world around them, but the choice can be difficult to take, as there are many different options out there and the companies have to choose between them.

⁷ http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/policies/sustainable-business/corporate-social-responsibility/index_en.htm

⁸ <http://specialistpeople.com/contribute/corporate-social-responsibility/>

1.5 Structure of thesis

This outline provides an overview for the reader of what to expect from the following chapters in the thesis. The chapters have been divided into three main sections:

The opening (chapter 1-4)

This section aims at providing a thorough understanding of all underlying information used in this thesis, it consists of: preface, introduction, case description, theoretical framework, and the methodology.

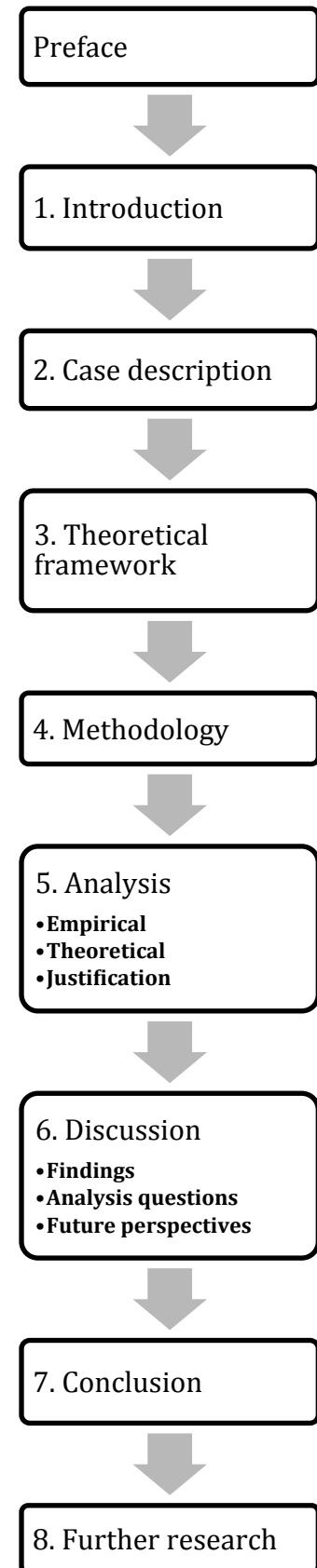
The analysis (chapter 5)

This section presents the analysis chapter that will answer the research question. The analysis consists of three parts: an empirical analysis, a theoretical analysis, and finally a part titled justification. The empirical analysis is an exploration of the case study, Specialisterne. The theoretical analysis is an exploration of Specialisterne's business model compared with a theoretical explanation of the concept business model. Finally, the justification seeks to understand why Specialisterne manage to differentiate themselves and how they succeed in creating a lucrative business.

The completion (chapter 6-8)

This section covers the discussion of the findings, a discussion of the analysis questions, containing a pragmatic view on actions Specialisterne could take to continuously enhance their business, chapter 7 is the conclusion, and finally the thesis ends with suggestions for future academic research.

Figure 1.2: *Structure of thesis*



Source: Author

Chapter 2

Case description: Specialisterne

In this chapter, the case study of Specialisterne will be presented. Firstly, a short company presentation followed by a review of the history of Specialisterne.

Specialisterne is in many ways an unusual company. This in spite of that they are also, in many ways, similar to most IT service consulting companies. What renders Specialisterne so rare is the fact that they are the first company in the world to understand, and furthermore manage to explore resources of people diagnosed with ASD. Basically, Specialisterne offer a variety of IT consulting services for leading Danish and international companies like TDC, NOKIA, KMD and Nordea⁹. More specific, Specialisterne engage in testing of business IT systems, data logistics, record keeping, programming, and data recording¹⁰. Furthermore they have established a special education program for people with ASD, equal to a regular Danish High School diploma. Specialisterne describes their employees as specialist people, and demonstrates how the special abilities, which comes along with ASD, should not be viewed as a handicap but rather as an advantage in a job that requires a high degree of attention to detail, string logical and analytical thinking, diligence, and perseverance.

All the consultants working at Specialisterne are diagnosed with ASD and approximately 75 % of all the employees are diagnosed. Specialisterne are pioneers because they harness the special characteristics these people possess in a positive way and provide valuable services for the corporate sector on market terms¹¹. Prior, people diagnosed with ASD was considered outside the workforce, and consequently this innovative company which has managed to turn this norm upside down, has received much media coverage with articles in many Danish as well as international papers, examples include: Jyllandsposten, Politikken, New York times, The independent and BBC news¹². Furthermore they have been interviewed for the radio and

⁹For a more fulfilling costumer list go to: <http://specialisterne.com/dk/kunder/kundeliste>

¹⁰www.specialisterne.dk

¹¹<http://specialistpeople.com/specialisterne/denmark/>

¹²<http://specialistpeople.com/media/in-the-news/>

television¹³, and a case study has been published by Harvard Business School¹⁴. Last, but not at least, the organization has won several prizes and awards¹⁵. Specialisterne are a social economic company with the aim to “*change the worldview of people with ASD and to create a greater inclusion to the community*”¹⁶. Since Specialisterne was established they have assisted more than 200 people diagnosed with ASD by creating job profiles and provide assessment and training¹⁷. This is what makes their history interesting.

2.1 The history of Specialisterne

The story of Specialisterne initiates as the story of a father, Thorkil Sonne (Sonne), concerned for his young son who got diagnosed with ASD in 1999 (source). Sonne risked financial security – his career at TDC, his home – to found a company in 2003 with the goal to give his son and other people diagnosed with ASD a respectable future. A future with a greater chance of having a permanent job, a future where they can contribute to society instead of just receiving founding, and more important, a future with greater possibilities to chose what they want to do in life. Returning to the story of Sonne’s third child, Lars, born in 1996. The first couple of years nothing about Lars seemed different compared to his two older siblings, but at the age of three Lars got diagnosed with ASD and the family was told that they had to make radical changes in their lives. After Lars got diagnosed, Sonne chose to become active in the Danish Autism Association (DAA) and became president of the organization for three years. The engagement as president made him gain excessive knowledge of how the Danish welfare system is structured. One of his findings was that in the case of an invisible handicap, like autism, the system has no clear guidance or service-offers for providing care for this person beyond the age of 18. This has meant retirement pension by the age of 18 was a common strategy.

Sonne started to search the market for organisations and institutions that specialised in helping people with ASD getting a job, but he found nothing. This seemed bizarre to Sonne, as he had noticed how some people diagnosed with ASD possessed special skills compared to non-diagnosed people. He noted some people diagnosed with Asperger had high IQ, they

¹³<http://specialistpeople.com/media/download-center/videos/>

¹⁴<http://hbr.org/product/specialisterne-sense-and-details/an/608109-PDF-ENG>

¹⁵<http://specialistpeople.com/media/download-center/awards/>

¹⁶<http://specialisterne.com/dk/om>

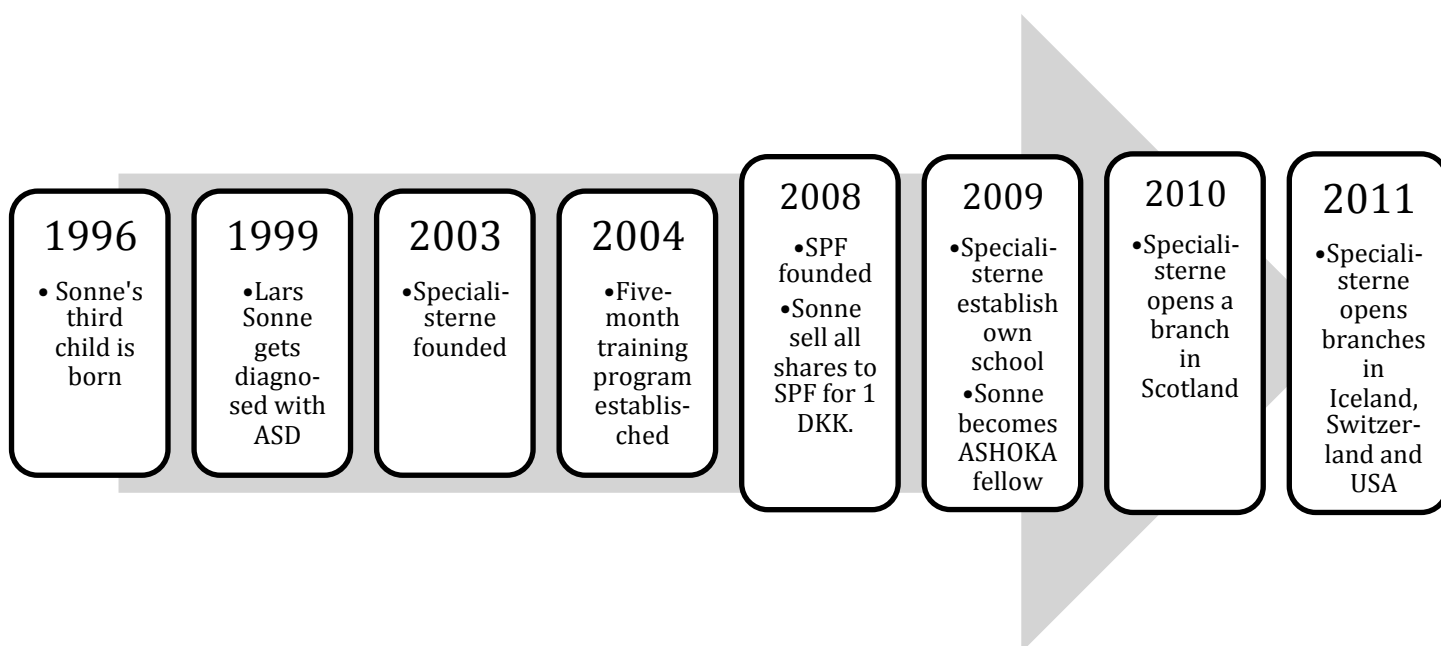
¹⁷<http://specialistpeople.com/specialisterne/denmark/>

worked extremely concentrated, they had a remarkable memory, and they never lost focus even though working with the same monotonous assignment for several days.

So in contrast to most people, who noticed all the disabilities people with ASD had, Sonne, in his post as president for ADD, noticed all the abilities people diagnosed with ASD possess. These observations, coupled with Sonne's previous work experience as an IT-programmer at a large Danish company, made him realise how these special abilities, people with ASD possess, could be turned into a powerful labour force within areas such as IT testing and journalizing.

With Sonne's knowledge of the Danish welfare system, and relying on his vast network, Sonne and his wife, Annette, decided to take out a mortgage on their home, so he could found Specialisterne. Thereby giving their son and other people with ASD a better chance for entering the labour market in a work environment tailored to their specific individual need. The timeline for Specialisterne in figure 2.1 captures the main events up to date.

Figure 2.1: *Timeline for Specialisterne*



Source: Author

In 2003 Specialisterne became a reality with Sonne in front and already less than a year after they were ready with a five-month training program for people with ASD: the assessment and training unit. The training program is designed for the managers to gain knowledge about the strength and weaknesses of each individual in order to give them the right work conditions

when they later would be employed as IT consultants either in-house or externally at other companies.

Later, in 2008 Sonne established the Specialist People Foundation (SPF). This foundation was established as a non-profit organization with the goal “*to enable one million jobs for people with autism and similar challenges*”¹⁸. Sonne sells all his shares in Specialisterne to SPF for the amount of 1 DKK thus letting all surpluses from Specialisterne go into the SPF and thereby help the dissemination of knowledge of the foundation and its deeds.

In 2009 Specialisterne established an educational program, for people between 16-25 years of age diagnosed with ASD. The program was equal to that of a Danish high school and had the goal to develop personal, social and professional skills, for people diagnosed with ASD, so they would be better equipped later to participate actively in the job market. Today, this education program has around 40 students enrolled.

In 2009, Sonne also gets appointed ASHOKA¹⁹ fellow as the first person in Denmark. Today, he still holds this position as the only person in Denmark.

In 2010, the first licensed branch of Specialisterne opened outside Denmark. Specialisterne Scotland has now been a reality for about a year with help from investments, grants and loans from different institutions e.g. the Scottish Investment Fund, The Big Lottery and the Glasgow City Council.

More recently in 2011, Specialisterne signed contract and opened offices on Iceland, in Switzerland²⁰, and two offices in the United States of America²¹, and Austria was announced on November 4th to have a licensed office in the spring 2012. Furthermore, they have plans for opening licensed offices in four other countries: Germany, Spain, Poland and the United Kingdom.

2.2 Logo and the dandelion metaphor

The logo is highly important for Specialisterne as the symbolic behind it represents something valuable for Sonne and the entire story of Specialisterne, which is why it also covers the front-page of this thesis. Sonne selected the dandelion as the logo for Specialisterne because he wanted a symbol that embodied both a positive and a negative character. The dandelion

¹⁸<http://specialistpeople.com/about/>

¹⁹ A more detailed description of the ASHOKA network will be given later in part 5.1.2.5

²⁰<http://specialistpeople.com/other/specialisterne-launches-in-switzerland/>

²¹<http://specialistpeople.com/specialisterne-news/specialisterne-now-in-the-usa-2/#more-1008>

most people see as a weed, but if one truly knows its possessions, it can also be a useful herb; ultimately, it depends on the eye that looks upon it. Sonne presented his thoughts behind the dandelion metaphor at the conference as follows:

“My understanding of how autism is seen in a society like Denmark is very often bad branding in the newspapers. We are talking about challenges and special schools, budgets, and all mostly negative stories - the weed perspective. What we will like to do is to tell other stories, to tell the herb stories, the good examples, to demonstrate what can be done in Specialisterne. If you create a work environment where it is the people who have autism who are the normal one, because they are the majority, and we have to live with their terms. We call our way of thinking, the Dandelion Model.”²²

This statement demonstrates how Sonne consciously choose to brand Specialisterne as specialist people who just need the right location and conditions to perform, and when this is met they can work just as good as a person not diagnosed.



Figure 2.2: The logo of Specialisterne
Source: www.specialisterne.dk

Figure 2.2 represents the logo of Specialisterne, where the blue background in the logo symbolises a sky of opportunities and the reason for making the upper right corner rounded, is to indicate there is room for the individual person in the organisation. The two yellow I's in the name Specialisterne indicates a mature dandelion linking the name to the logo. The name Specialisterne also has an important meaning as it is opposite to being a generalist. Thus, dares to stand out from the mainstream population and be special.

This presentation of the case study was to give a review of the fundamental information of Specialisterne. The next chapter will be a presentation of the theoretical framework that is going to be implemented later on in this thesis in the theoretical analysis.

²²<http://specialistpeople.com/the-dandelion-model/>

Chapter 3

Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework in this thesis is concentrating on two main theories, one taken from the social entrepreneurial field, the other taken from within the business model field. The purpose of the first theory is to create a framework where the data gathered can be presented suitably and analysed accurately. The other theory is selected to give an analysis of the business model of Specialisterne. An important characteristic of the theoretical framework in this thesis is to unite and present the data from Specialisterne in the most contributing way and to bring meaning into it in relation to this thesis.

3.1 Social entrepreneurial theory

This paragraph will primarily draw on information given in the social entrepreneurial article by Dacin et al., 2010. The article creates a very useful framework for analysing Specialisterne as it presents four characteristics of a social entrepreneurial company. Firstly however, it will be introduced why Specialisterne possess the attributes of a social entrepreneurial company.

3.1.1 Descriptions and relevance of theory

In their article Dacin et al. (Dacin et al, 2010:44) sums up four different types of entrepreneurship; *conventional entrepreneurship*, *institutional entrepreneurship*, *cultural entrepreneurship*, and finally *social entrepreneurship*. The different entrepreneurship types are differentiated by how they distribute their wealth (to shareholder/stakeholder), their organisational form (for-profit/ non-profit), their goal and motive for founding the company, the product/service they provide, and finally the possible internal tensions.

The *conventional entrepreneurship* is characterized as the classical study of entrepreneurs, of people who improve the industry by bringing innovations into market. Their primary motive is economic, and their goal is to create profit for the shareholders. The product is often a consumer product or service, and the internal tensions consist of growth versus survival.

The second type of entrepreneurship mentioned is *institutional entrepreneurship*. DiMaggio and Powell (1983) characterize this type of entrepreneur as: “*an agent who can mobilize resources to influence or change institutional rules, in order to support or destroy an existing institution, or to establish a new one.*” (Dacin et al, 2010:44). Their primary motive is to create an institutional reform or development and to create profit for their shareholders and/or stakeholders. The product is often to establish legitimacy, and the internal tensions involve resistance to change (isomorphism²³ versus competitive advantage).

The third type of entrepreneurship is *cultural entrepreneurship*, which is characterised by an individual who act upon opportunities in order to create social, cultural, or economic value. The motive for a cultural entrepreneur is to create cultural diffusion / enlightenment through either a non-profit or profit organisational form. The wealth distribution goes to shareholders ad/or stakeholders and the product is often to establish new norms and values. Finally the internal tensions consist of commercialization versus culture (authenticity).

Lastly, the fourth type of entrepreneurship is *social entrepreneurship*, which is defined as “*an actor who applies business principles to solving social problems*” (Dacin et al. 2010:44). Their primary motive is to create social change/well-being either as a non-profit or as a for-profit organization. The wealth distribution goes to shareholders or stakeholders. Their product is often to promote ideology and social change, and the internal tensions can spring from economic sustainability versus social change.

When comparing these descriptions with Specialisterne it is clear that they are best compatible with social entrepreneurship, as they ‘*apply business principles (Specialisterne) to solve a social problem (integrate people diagnosed with ASD in the workforce)*’. It can also be argued that Specialisterne contains elements from institutional entrepreneurship, as Sonne has tried to establish a new institutional rule by changing the standards of what is considered the norm within business. Furthermore it can be argued that Specialisterne contain elements from cultural entrepreneurship, as Specialisterne’s goal is to create enlightenment through both a for-profit and non-profit organisation in order to create social value. However is it hard to find associations between Specialisterne and conventional entrepreneurship. Consequently, Specialisterne will in this thesis be analysed as a social entrepreneurial company, but one

²³ Isomorphism is associated to homogenization among organizations and the term is by DiMaggio & Power (1983:149) described as: *a con-straining process that forces one unit in a population to resemble other units that face the same set of environmental conditions.*

should have in mind that they are close related to other types of entrepreneurship. Dacin et al. further stresses that social entrepreneurship should be studied by using the already existing theories known from entrepreneurship, applied in a social entrepreneurship context. Thus, in the analysis I will additionally draw on existing entrepreneurial literature, to support my findings. This also means that conventional entrepreneurship is not rejected on an absolute basis, but rather that its theories is likely to have limitations or be extended though the social dimension.

3.1.2 Relation to thesis

The article outlines four key factors of what defines social entrepreneurship and present what these factors consist of; the *characteristics of individual social entrepreneurs*, their *operating sector*, the *processes and resources used by social entrepreneurs*, and finally *primary mission and outcomes associated with the social entrepreneur* (Dacin et al 2010: 38). These four key factors will be applied when analysing Specialisterne in the theoretical analysis later in part 5.3, as these factors will try and emphasise what renders Specialisterne a social entrepreneurial company. The four key factors will shortly be presented in the following paragraphs.

The characteristics of individual social entrepreneurs

Dacin et al (2010) outline the first factor as: qualities, behaviours of the individual, motivation, ability to recognize opportunities, enact change through inspirational leadership skills, and finally the ability to garner necessary resources. Thus, this factor will be used to analyse founder of Specialisterne and chairman of SPF, Sonne, as a social entrepreneur, his personal traits, and his ability to recognise opportunities.

Their operating sector

The operating sector is by Dacin et al (2010) described as the surrounding of the company and will be based on findings from the macro analysis in paragraph 5.1.2 in terms of sectors, customers, competitors, and partnerships. The sectors, which will be investigated in comparison to Specialisterne, are the private sector, the public sector and the non-profit sector. Further it will be investigated how Specialisterne operate in each sector.

The processes and resources used by social entrepreneurs

In this paragraph Dacin et al (2010) defines the key factor as: identifying the manner in which the social enterprise is established, the primary activities undertaken by the social entrepreneur. By this Dacin et al. (2010) focus on identifying the manner in which the social enterprise is established, primary activities undertaken by social entrepreneurs, resources used to enter into a venture including for-profit/non-profit and social wealth creation/economic wealth creation. To help examine this, the framework of Magretta (2002), which is presented later in this chapter, will be applied. The framework consist of two tests and will analyse if the business model of Specialisterne is long-term sustainable. This paragraph will be based on the findings in both the macro and microanalysis in the empirical analysis.

The primary mission and outcomes associated with the social entrepreneur

Dacin et al (2010:42) define this fourth and final key factor as: “*Creating social value by proving solutions to social problems, focuses on the outcome of the efforts of the social entrepreneur*”. Thus, dividing this analysis in two parts; firstly, there will be an analysis of how Specialisterne are creating value by providing a solution to a social problem, secondly, an analysis of the outcome of the efforts of Specialisterne. To elaborate this, elements from the term *shared value* created by Porter and Kramer (2006, 2011). This paragraph will look at the mission, vision and goal of Specialisterne, based on the findings in the microanalysis in paragraph 5.1.1.

3.1.3 Critique of theory

As it is the four key factors presented above, which are used as a framework for the theoretical analysis in this thesis, some weaknesses of these factors are worth a presentation. *The characteristics of the individual entrepreneur* is mostly based on single case studies and furthermore simply based on the successful cases, hence, it somehow takes the form of idiosyncratic insights. Thus, creating a bias in the observations, making the data weak. While *the operating sector* can be criticised for not focusing on the people dimension. *The processes and resources used by social entrepreneurs* is according to Dacin et al. (2010) suffering from the same bias as the characteristics of the individual entrepreneur in form of idiosyncratic case studies. Finally *the primary mission and outcomes associated with the social entrepreneur* has by some authors been ignoring the economic outcome, and has rather just been focusing on the social outcome (Dacin et al. 2010).

3.1.4 Critique of social entrepreneurial theory in general

Even though the field of social entrepreneurship is a relatively new area of research (Robertson et al. 2006) there has already been various criticism of the field. One stream of criticism is pointed towards that we always only hear the successful stories within social entrepreneurship; which gives a skewed distribution within the field of research. Another critique is pointed towards the constitution of social entrepreneurs, this is stressed in the statement from Mair (Robertson et al, 2006:89): *“all entrepreneurs are social in different forms as they all provide social value either directly by solving a social problem, or indirectly by generating tax revenues and creating employment”*. Schramm correspondingly supports this proposition, in his article from 2010; *are all entrepreneurs social?* In the article Schramm (2010:22) argues: *“[classic] entrepreneurs capture only about 2 percent of this surplus, with the remainder passed on to society in the form of jobs, wages, and value. By creating so much value that does not accrue to themselves, regular entrepreneurs are also social entrepreneurs”*. In his article, Schramm furthermore stresses how some of the larger inventions through history all in some aspects can be argued to be social. An example is the construction of railroads in America; this could actually be seen as a social entrepreneurial accomplishment because it made it much easier to transport food and clean water to areas, which before was difficult to reach with these fundamental goods. Thus, Schramm’s central argument is; that depending on the glasses one is wearing, many products and services could be claimed to have social benefits. This will be further deliberated in the discussion chapter in the end of this paper.

3.2 Business model theory

Moving on to present the business model theory, it appears, that even though the term business model is a relatively young academic phenomenon (Osterwalder et al. 2005), it is a very useful tool when looking upon how companies operate. This usefulness, consequently, renders it interesting to apply in this thesis when analysing Specialisterne. The theory chosen for this analysis is an article by Joan Magretta (2002), which provides a good setting for bringing forward pro and cons in Specialisterne’s business model.

3.2.1 Descriptions and relevance of theory

The article stresses several features of a successful business model. Firstly, the business model is a story that explains how the company work. It should be able to answer Peter Drucker's question: "*who is the customer? And what does the costumer value?*" (Magretta 2002:4). Secondly, the business model should be able to answer the questions: "*How do we make money in this business? What is the underlying economic logic that explains how we can deliver value to customers at an appropriate cost?*" (Magretta 2002:4). Thirdly, a successful business model must represent something better than already existing alternatives on the market. It somehow has to change the rule of the game either by designing a new product for an unmet need, or by making a process innovation by finding a better way of making or selling or distributing an already proven product or service (Magretta 2002). Specialisterne has already proven the existence of their business model, as the company has managed to survive for almost a decade and has even managed to expand internationally. Consequently, it is highly relevant for this thesis to analyse how Specialisterne business model are constructed and what elements it contain.

3.2.2 Relation to thesis

To analyse the business model of Specialisterne the above mentioned features of a business model will be investigated by applying two critical tests a business model has to conquer to survive on a long-term basis according to Magretta (2002). The first test is the *narrative test* (Magretta 2002:5), this test is analysing whether or not the story of the company makes any sense. The second test is the *numbers test* (Magretta 2002:5), which is analysing if the company manage to create a surplus, basically, a profit and loss analysis.

The *narrative test* investigates if Specialisterne has "a good story", and how this story helps to legitimize the business concept. Not just what is the story behind the company, but also the story around the company as it is today, and how they present themselves to their stakeholders.

The *numbers test* investigates the financial situation of Specialisterne. It will be analysed if their profit and loss adds up, and if this surplus (deficit) is sufficient to make the company survive long-term. Magretta (2002) stresses that if the business model is accurate about who the customers of the company are, and what they value, then it will be reflected in the revenues. If the business model is accurate concerning how value is created, it will be reflected in the costs. And finally, if the business model is accurate in how the company

differs from competitors, then it will be reflected in the profit. Summing up, the important numbers are: *revenues, costs, profits, and cash flow* (Magretta 2002). But finally, these numbers are just aids to understanding, they are not fool proof as the markets are complex.

3.2.3 Critique of business model theory

It was stated earlier in this thesis by Osterwalder et al. (2005) that business model is a relatively young academic phenomenon, which is why the field has not yet been firmly grounded. Porter (2001) takes this further and argues that the concept of business models is somehow unclear, superficial and not theoretically supported, he states: “*The definition of a business model is murky at best. Most often, it seems to refer to a loose conception of how a company does business and generates revenue*” (Porter 2001:13). This has not been the issue in this thesis, as the business model theory merely has been applied to get an understanding of how Specialisternes business is constructed, and how if it can be expected to be long-term sustainable. Nevertheless, I, as a researcher, was aware of these shortfalls as I chose the theory, and considered multiple options before I chose the article by Magretta (2002).

Magretta (2002) provides a very hands-on tool for analysing whether a business model is long-term sustainable or not, by her *two-test* model. This way of analysing if a company’s business model is sustainable could, however, seem a bit simplified and just analysing the very basics, compared to e.g. Morris et al. (2005) who provides a larger test including six different factors a company business model should contain to survive long-term. The difference is that Morris et al. (2005) go more into depth and specify their test further. They also state: “*A model that ignores one or more of the specified components will suffer in terms of its comprehensiveness*” Morris et al. (2005:734). Nevertheless, I still find Magretta’s (2002) model very suitable for the aim of this thesis, as the purpose for me, the researcher, is to be able to evaluate if Specialisterne maintain a sound business, and to evaluate if their future perspectives look promising.

Chapter 4

Methodology

This following chapter describes the methodological aspects used in this thesis, namely the research philosophy, research approaches, methods used when answering the research question, and the consequences these choices have had for the results and conclusions reached. The work rests on Saunders et al. (2009:5) definition of research as “*something that people undertake in order to find out things in a systematic way, thereby increase their knowledge*”. Meaning, that the purpose with the methodological chapter is to give a reliable explanation of how the thesis was build up from the empirical data gathered, and how the data is used in the thesis to obtain knowledge and clarify information.

4.1 Research philosophy

The philosophy of science chosen for this thesis is best explained by describing the type of ‘glasses’ I have chosen to look upon the research phenomenon through. The data is analysed with a hermeneutical view, meaning that even though the argumentation is made in a specific way, I am aware that other people might have other ways of understanding the data, the theories, and the combination of them. The hermeneutical view applied in this thesis is based on the thoughts of Gadamer, who seek to explain the interpretation of texts, contexts and pre-understandings (Fredslund 2005).

A fundamental aspect of the hermeneutical tradition is the hermeneutical circle, which consists of a *sense part* and a *sense whole*, where the whole only make sense because of the parts, and the parts only make sense because of the whole (Fredslund 2005). Therefore, when all the parts fit into the whole, one becomes closer to finding a shape of reality, though the truth never can be found. Thus, to understand a text, I have considered the context of where it was captured, before I settled for an understanding. Consequently, when analysing the interviews made at Specialisterne, or the observations made at the Specialist People

Conference²⁴, I paid full attention to all details said, so I had better chance to understand the *whole*, and thereby make the best interpretation of the parts presented to me. However, I am aware that the people I have interviewed and the people I have observed all have created their own interpretations, thus giving me their view of different topics and thereby bringing me a step closer into their world. So now, when I try to put myself in the interviewee's place, a *third room* is generated as a combination of the interviewee and my own interpretations (Fredslund 2005). To heighten the validity of this *third room*, the questions given to the interviewee's were sought to be non-leading and repeated if necessary to make sure I understood it the way they intended.

Another fundamental aspect of the hermeneutical circle is that I, as a researcher, am not able to put myself outside the study and complete a neutral research (Fredslund 2005). So when I come as a researcher to meet Specialisterne, I bring my education, my prior knowledge and my own experience with me, which all have an effect on my view and interpretation of the data given to me. Consequently, making me see them in my own way and form my own impressions, from which my thesis ultimately has been written.

Hence, in this process I have created knowledge of Specialisterne through the interviews, the observations at the conference, and from the written material given to me by Specialisterne. If related to what was stated earlier in this paragraph these interviews, observations, and material, all are individual parts. These parts, when combined, construct the *whole* after having been interpreted by me, as researcher, and put in relation to the context from which they was generated.

4.2 Research approach

This paragraph will shortly describe which research approach I have chosen to use when writing this thesis.

I conducted this thesis inspired by an inductive approach, as I started the process with having a concrete case study, Specialisterne. Thus, Specialisterne was the inspiration for taking on the study rather than a theoretical problematization of a specific subject. Consequently, the analysis will use the case study to exemplify a more general societal discussion of social entrepreneurial companies. A few times I went back to change my research question, based on the findings along my way, thus, it can also be argued that a deductive approach has been

²⁴ More information of this conference later in this chapter

used as well. John Dewey (Blumberg et al. 2005:24) defines this process of combining induction and deduction in a sequential manner as *double movement of reflective thought*.

4.3 Research strategy

I chose to work with a case study and according to Eisenhardt (1989) this typically combines data collection methods such as interviews and observations. The type of study can be based on both qualitative data and quantitative data. This thesis is though based primarily on qualitative data to answer my research question because I believe that, from the hermeneutical perspective, this will give me the most rewarding answer. Saunders et al. (2009:592) argue that a case study is: *“a strategy for doing research which involves an empirical investigation of a particular contemporary phenomenon within its real life context using multiple sources of evidence”*, and Eisenhardt (1989:532) takes it further by arguing *“this research approach is especially appropriate in new topic areas”*, which is highly compatible when studying Specialisterne, as they are a relatively new company and no studies has been published except a Harvard Business School case study.

4.4 Empirical data

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the data applied in this thesis is mainly collected through interviews, observations and from written material given to me by Specialisterne.

4.4.1 Primary data

The primary data in this thesis come from two semi-structured interviews conducted at Specialisterne and one semi-structured interview conducted with neurologist Jørgensen at his medical practice in Gentofte²⁵. The three interviews were carried out in Danish, as it was the mother tongue of the interviewees. So in spite of this thesis being in another language, by conducting the interviews in Danish removes, accordingly to Saunders et al. (2009), the potential language barriers that otherwise might affect the interviewees responses. The reason why I chose the semi-structured interview form was that it is very flexible and has the form of

²⁵ See enclosed CD-ROM for transcripts

a normal conversation, but I had beforehand the possibility to choose specific topics and open questions so that some degree of control is possible (Blumberg 2005)

Yin (2009) argues that this mix of openness and control is the strength of this interview form and this approach is highly efficient when the researcher is interested in a relatively specific topic. Before conducting each interviews, I made an interview guide²⁶ to in this way to be certain that I asked all the right questions, and we got to talk about the right topics.

The other primary data was an international conference (Specialist People Conference) I participated in in May held at Nokia's locations in Copenhagen by SPF. The language at the conference, and thereby the language in the transcript speeches, was English²⁷. The conference was the first international conference SPF had ever been hosting and the participants joined from all over the world.

Transcribing interviews and conference speeches

I chose to transcribe two of the three interviews conducted, as the two interviews should be used for information about Specialisterne and therefore the details were important to the thesis, while the last served a different purpose. The two interviews I chose to transcript were conducted with CEO of Specialisterne, Thomsen, and with senior enabling manager, Anne Marie Søbye-Rapp (Rapp). The final interview conducted with Jørgensen, served the purpose to give information of people diagnosed with ASD, and these information I chose to write as notes while listening to the recording.

From the lectures held at the conference I chose to make transcripts of six speeches: Sonne, Thomsen, Austin, Thygesen, Haghshenas & Krasilnikoff, and finally Lindegaard. These six speeches were chosen as their content was thought to be very useful for the subject of this thesis. Table 4.1 outlines the main topics of the transcript speeches, to give the reader a better overview²⁸.

²⁶See appendix 1 + 2 for interview guides

²⁷ See enclosed CD-ROM for transcript

²⁸ See appendix 3 for a more fulfilling list of main topics

Table 4.1: *Main topics in the transcripts*

Speaker	Main topics
Sonne, founder and chairman of the board at SPF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The idea behind Specialisterne - The dandelion metaphor - Network effects
Thomsen, CEO Specialisterne	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Business model - Society - Customers
Austin, Author of Harvard Business Review case	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The story of Specialisterne - Social return on investment - Management in the 21'st century - Innovation
Thygesen, CEO SPF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The goal of SPF - Scaling approaches - Expanding model - Partnerships
Haghshenas, SPF & Krasilnikoff, Deloitte	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Organizational structure - Generic model - Operational model - Expansion
Lindegaard, Deloitte	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Social return on investment - MOSES and IRIS model

Source: Author

After I had made the transcripts of the conference speeches, I read them carefully and found different important topics for my thesis. After having read all the transcripts I selected the essential topics and gave them different colours (see app. 4 for list over colours), then I read the transcripts again and highlighted the topics with the selected colour. This helped me to find relations between the speeches and return to sources later in my process. Finally, I divided the speeches into sections and gave them headlines to better get an overview of the transcripts and making it easier to relate to the transcripts later.

4.4.2 Secondary data

The secondary data used in this thesis consists primary of written material given to me by Specialisterne, also the online lectures by Jørgensen and Austin²⁹, the interview with Sonne in a Danish radio show on P1³⁰, the financial statements from Specialisterne³¹, articles from different papers, and finally it is the slideshows from the conference. When analysing this secondary data, it is important to remember that it has not been produced for my research, rather it is information available for everyone to get. Consequently, I have had this in mind when going through the data and considered the possible errors rising when applying data produced for promoting my case company, Specialisterne. The written material provided to me by Specialisterne, has though mostly been used as information support, and to get an understanding of the company before writing this thesis.

4.5 Limitation of data

According to Eisenhardt (1989) building a project based on case studies is a bottom up approach, which can cause the error that the findings describes a very idiosyncratic phenomenon, or that the researcher can have difficulties in raising the level of generality from the data. This however, I do not feel have been a problem in this thesis, as the research questions has worked towards explaining a tendency in society and not generalising a tendency. Hence, the answer on the research question has not suffered from being validated by a single case study. As I have chosen to make a single case study of a Danish social entrepreneurial company, it eliminates the possibility for making comparisons between branches or industries, consequently making my findings somehow idiosyncratic. This, however, gave me the opportunity to explore Specialisterne in-depth, which was my main interest from the beginning of this process and as a consequence what I found to be most rewarding.

²⁹Lectures on DR academy, see in appendix for notes

³⁰See appendix for summary of the interview

³¹Collected from Navne og Numre (nnerhverv.dk)

4.6 Delimitations

After having interviewed neurologist Jørgensen it was clear another important aspect of hiring and working with people diagnosed with ASD, is the ethical dilemma. This thesis could very well have investigated the ethical dilemma rising when companies chose to hire people diagnosed with ASD. Some dilemmas that could have been discussed were: Who is negotiating their salary? Would it be a valuable for Specialisterne to establish a special union to assist the people diagnosed with ASD who work outside Specialisterne? Is some people's illness used to promote Specialisterne? Or is it exaggerated to get more goodwill from customers and people interested in investing? This, however, would have taken the thesis in another direction than what was the purpose.

Another topic, which could have been interesting to investigate more into depth but only is touched upon briefly in this thesis, is the funding dilemma. Funding can, if not handled with care, be a pitfall that hinders effective social change, as the company does not learn to stand on its own feet. In this thesis it is revealed that both SPF and Specialisterne benefit highly from funding, however, in different shapes. SPF receives a lot of pure donations and contributions from both private persons and private companies. Specialisterne on the other hand, is not established in a manner where they can receive donations. They, on the other hand receive 'funding' in the form of pro bono work from their partners, and expert advice from their ambassador corps, which include Jørgensen, Austin and further a combination of experts within different fields, politicians (Claus Hjort Frederiksen), and business people with good references (Jens Maibom from LEGO and Mads Øvlisen)³².

In the TBL analysis later in this thesis I have chosen to only focus on two of the three factors. My focus is on the social and economical perspective, leaving the environmental out. This is done because I did not find this aspect important for the aim of this paper.

³²Some of the people are listed here <http://specialistpeople.com/media/testimonials/endorsement/>

Chapter 5

ANALYSIS

The analysis of this thesis is divided into three parts. The first part (part 5.1) can be characterized as an empirical analysis of Specialisterne and their business model, as it origin from data gathered through observations, interviews, and industry research. The second part (part 5.2) is a theoretical analysis of Specialisterne from a social entrepreneurial perspective. Lastly, in the third part (part 5.3) is investigating how different trends have an effect on how Specialisterne are generating value by comparing the company with social entrepreneurial theories and three trends in society.

Empirical analysis

As stated above, the empirical analysis (part 5.1) serves to outline possible tensions, as well as future prospects for Specialisterne. This part of the analysis will be a thorough case study of Specialisternes business model for better to be able to understand what renders the company special and unique. The empirical analysis will strive to create a company profile for the case study of Specialisterne, which later will further be used as a base of information later in the theoretical analysis and the justification analysis.

The empirical analysis is divided into three parts: *Micro* (paragraph 5.1.1), *Macro* (paragraph 5.1.2), and *Verification of Specialisternes business model* (paragraph 5.1.3). The Micro perspective part of the analysis will involve an analysis of Specialisternes internal business model; where Specialisternes structure of business, financial situation, ownership structure and strategy will be examined.

The Macro perspective part will contain a study of Specialisterne's external business model. This part will contain an analysis of the competitive landscape of Specialisterne, consisting of their customer base, their competitors, their network and their partnerships. Finally, the Verification part will include an analysis of comments and thoughts from two external experts who, through their professional career, have worked closely together with Specialisterne. This part will seek to verify why Specialisterne have managed to build such a unique business.

5.1.1 Exploration of Specialisterne- a micro perspective

The micro perspective, as mentioned above, contains an internal analysis of Specialisterne's business model. Firstly, the business model is investigated with focus on Specialisterne's structure of business, ownership structure and Specialisterne's financial situation. Secondly, the expansion strategy of Specialisterne is investigated with focus on examine their scaling approach, how they manage to transfer the generic model internationally and lastly it is investigated how they have expanded from 2010 till today, and how they will expand in the future.

5.1.1.1 Specialisterne Denmark, understanding the showcase

Specialisterne in Denmark is considered the *showcase* for how SPF wants to promote and create branches in other countries. This is mainly because it is in Denmark Specialisterne is founded and here the company has achieved the most success. The business model of Specialisterne will be examined through an analysis of Specialisterne's *structure of business*, the *ownership structure*, the *financial situation*, and their *expansion strategy*,

Structure of Specialisterne

Specialisterne business concept consists of three elements as shown in table 5.1: the education unit called STU³³, the assessment and training unit called AEA, and lastly the business-

³³ Abbreviations are to be found at the beginning of this thesis

consulting unit called BIZ. Table 5.1 presents the three units in Specialisterne and some attributes that the individuals are holding when being in the units.

Table 5.1: *Structure of business*

	STU (Student)	AEA (Candidate)	BIZ (Consultant)
Age	16-25 yrs.	20-45 yrs.	22 + yrs.
Education	Secondary school graduation	Secondary school or short- or bachelor or master or non-finished attempt	Secondary school, or short- or bachelor or master or non-finished attempts
Experience	None	Little to average	Average to great
Experience w/ customers	None	Little to none	Little over average to great
Characteristics	Computer nerd, courageous	Workability with potential to great workability	Workability to great workability, customer oriented

Source: Thomsen conference speech

The *STU* is an education unit specially adapted for students in the age of 16-25 years who has been diagnosed with ASD. The aim of the education program is to develop the students' personal, social, and professional skills. The unit was founded in 2009 and had at that time just 4 students, in 2010 it had 27, and today it has over 40 students and is still growing rapidly³⁴. The purpose of the program, besides teaching the students regular classes, is to create a holistic approach to education which also emphasizes social and cultural understanding, health and well being, as well as social behaviours and skills³⁵.

The *AEA* is a three to five month individual assessment and training program for people with ASD. This program was founded in 2004 and Specialisterne uses it to clarify each candidate's strengths, weaknesses, special skills, competences, and interests, for ultimately being able to

³⁴ Thomsen, conference speech

³⁵ Thomsen, conference speech

map the candidate's needs for support, guidance, and environmental adjustments in order to perform optimal in a job situation³⁶.

The *BIZ* is the business-consulting unit, which identifies and solves IT-consulting tasks for Specialisterne costumers. Around 40% of the candidates who have completed the AEA have been hired in the BIZ unit, which today consists of 34 consultants. The mission of BIZ is to operate a consulting service based on specialist competences and to function as a showcase for companies interested in employing specialist people.

Ownership structure

As shown in figure 5.1 Specialisterne is 100% owned by Specialist Resources Holding ApS, which then again is 100% owned by SPF, a non-profit organization with the goal “*to enable 1 million jobs for people diagnosed with ASD*”³⁷.

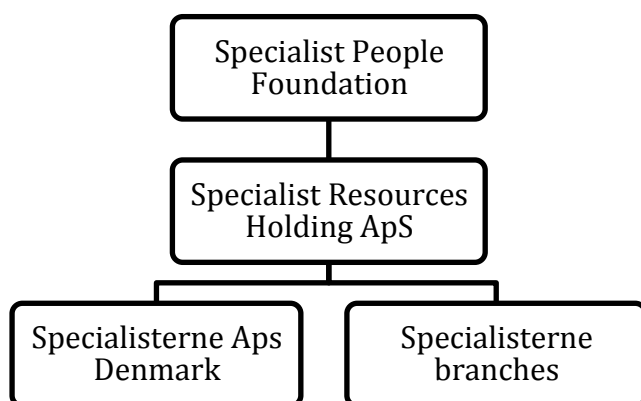


Figure 5.1: *Ownership structure*

Source: Author

There are three theoretical arguments why Specialisterne could have chosen to establish a holding company in their ownership structure; firstly, the profit from Specialisterne can be transferred directly to the foundation without paying any taxes³⁸. Secondly, if Specialisterne suffers from bad business and becomes insolvent as the result from a bankruptcy, it is not possible for creditors to claim money that already has been transferred to the foundation through the holding company. Lastly, if SPF chooses to sell Specialisterne after a three-year period, the revenue from the sale could be transferred to the foundation free of any taxes³⁹.

³⁶<http://specialistpeople.com/specialisterne/denmark/>

³⁷ <http://specialistpeople.com/about/>

³⁸ <http://www.beierholm.dk/skat-moms-og-afgifter/skat/selskabsskat/holdingselskab.html>

³⁹ <http://www.beierholm.dk/skat-moms-og-afgifter/skat/selskabsskat/holdingselskab.html>

Thus, this ownership structure of Specialisterne renders it possible for SPF to secure its future business even if Specialisterne suffers from bad business.

The reason why Specialisterne chose to establish SPF was to disseminate the concept of Specialisterne. Accordingly, the social-economic goal of SPF is to enable 1 million jobs for people diagnosed with ASD⁴⁰. It could be argued that by setting a goal of creating 1 million jobs for people normally considered outside the workforce might seem as a BHAG (Big Hairy Audacious Goal)⁴¹, but as research shows setting a high visionary goal actually encourage development and is a promoter for team-spirit (Collins & Porras 1996).

Financial situation

The financial situation for Specialisterne is a slightly ambiguous matter, which will be explained in this paragraph. During the interview with CEO Henrik Thomsen (Thomsen) he does not seem to want to talk about it, as shown in following quote:

“Interviewer: Okay. We could not avoid noticing the auditor endorsement last year, 2009, on the financial statement for the foundation

Thomsen: What was that? Ehhmm..

Interviewer: They have lost 50 % of the equity capital. It should be restored in 2010, which we got a little interested in. Thus, we would like to hear about the later growth.

Thomsen: 2010 has been a somewhat interesting year [...] We went from being twenty-one [employees] without any diagnose, to nine, fast⁴². “

From this point in the interview Thomsen continue to talk about how they had to let employees off and how it demands money to grow, but giving little information about the actual financial situation.

However, Thomsen, when asked about the impact of the financial crises, gives information of how Specialisterne have had to lower their prices as a consequence of market demand⁴³. But he stresses that they have been quiet with these news, as it is not something Specialisterne see

⁴⁰<http://specialistpeople.com/about/>

⁴¹*[...] visionary companies often use bold missions or what we prefer to call BHAGs [...] as a powerful way to stimulate progress. All companies have goals. But there is a difference between merely having a goal and becoming committed to a huge, daunting challenge - such as climbing Mount Everest. A true BHAG is clear and compelling, serves as a unifying focal point of effort, and acts as a catalyst for team spirit (Collins & Porras, 1996; 73)*

⁴² Interview with Thomsen

⁴³ Interview with Thomsen

as positive for their business reputation; they rather wants to be known for professional service and a zero-error margin. Thomsen did though stress that the financial crises did not strike as hard on Specialisterne as other consultant houses in the industry, since they have chosen not to have a luxurious glasshouse-office by the harbour front, and other expensive fixed costs⁴⁴.

Below, table 5.2 illustrate miscellaneous key figures from the financial years 2005 to 2010. From this table it is fairly easy to see that the revenue at Specialisterne has been steadily increasing each year. This demonstrates, that Specialisterne manage to have a progress in sales. Still, however, there is a great risk if one would wish to invest in the company as the profit/loss for the year has been very inconsistent over the period, and with the current profit for the year it would take approximately 15 years to maintain equity capital.

Table 5.2: *Key figures for Specialisterne*

<i>DKK '000</i>	2010	2009	2008	2007	2006	2005
Revenue	15,792	13,918	17,130	9,780	6,982	4,761
Profit/loss for the year	164	-2,983	851	-418	-618	-221
Equity capital	-2,691	-2,855	127	-724	-306	147
Number of employees	51	42	60	50	40	-

Source: Financial statements for the years 2005-2010⁴⁵

From the financial statement of Specialisterne it also appear that they only possess short-term liabilities. This, opposite to long-term liabilities, must typically be realized before one year, and with the continuously financial crisis, it renders the negotiation of new arrangements very complicated. However, Specialisterne might have an advance over other consultant houses as their business is of social-economic character. This advantage could lie in that the creditors of a social entrepreneurial company, like Specialisterne, would find it morally difficult to be responsible for the closure of such a unique company. Implicating that the creditors of Specialisterne might give them a longer leash and better terms compared to other debtors.

⁴⁴ Interview with Thomsen

⁴⁵ www.nnerhverv.dk

5.1.1.2 Expansion strategy

As mentioned previously, Specialisterne's showcase in Denmark is solely concentrated around doing business in Denmark. Thus, Sonne expands the concept of Specialisterne through SPF, which is the reason this part will be focusing on SPF and not Specialisterne.

SPF has in 2010 developed an 'Operational Model License Package'. This *license package* is marketed towards international operators of the Specialisterne-concept⁴⁶. It consists of documented knowledge and process descriptions of the concept, and several tools, which combined enables an enhanced implementation of Specialisterne's business model. The *license package* is adapted to the local environment and is fitted to meet the specific needs and wants of the country where it is implemented. In this way Specialisterne has made a generic model that can be transferred to different countries with just few changes.

Scaling approach

SPF's goal, of enabling 1 million jobs worldwide for people diagnosed with ASD, is built on a very simple model as shown in table 5.3. Firstly, they rely on the branches model, Specialisterne Denmark, where they have the direct control and the structure is central. In this way it would be possible to create a couple of hundreds job opportunities for people diagnosed with ASD⁴⁷.

Table 5.3: *Scaling model for Specialisterne*

	Branches	Licensees	Dissemination
Values	Direct control	Control via contacts	"Academy" → Little control
Structure	Central	Distributed / Network	'Epidemic'
Enabling job opportunity	Hundreds	Thousands	Millions

Source: Steen Thygesen conference speech

The next step SPF has taken is to expand to license agreements. In this way SPF will have control via contacts and the concept would be spread through network. This would render it possible to create thousands of job opportunities for the specialist people. However, to get the wished 'epidemic' structure SPF will have to disseminate the concept of Specialisterne by

⁴⁶ Noted in the management report in the SPF financial statement 2010

⁴⁷ Steen Thygesen, conference speech

their academy⁴⁸. In this way they will have little control over the different branches and licensees, but it will render it possible to reach the BHAG of enabling 1 million job opportunities for people diagnosed with ASD. At the Specialist People conference Sonne was very positive for this BHAG and estimated that this goal would be reached before his retirement, 15-20 years from now⁴⁹.

Transferring the generic model

SPF has created a generic model based on the Danish showcase Specialisterne. This model is constructed for making it easier to transfer the model internationally. SPF is though well aware that it is not possible to transfer the model directly, as Denmark has a very unique welfare system and many factors differentiate internationally. SPF mentions, some of the factors people should be aware of when opening offices in other countries, in their feasibility model⁵⁰: firstly, *market conditions and customer demands*: These factors will be different from country to country; such as salary, demands, price benchmark and sector turnover. Secondly, *financing and welfare system*: Denmark is very unique by its welfare system and extended help to people in need, this has to be considered when transferring the model to other countries. Thus, in countries with lower welfare, the local licensee will have to gain extensive financial support in form of donations, grants, and financial support from partners and network, before it is possible to open a Specialisterne branch. Thirdly, *culture*: When transferring the generic model to other countries it is moreover important to analyse the local culture. How is it common to take care of people outside the workforce, and are there specific norms and standards to expect? Finally, *the diagnose process*: How are people getting diagnosed with ASD in the specific country? Are the standards the same as Denmark or are the methods slightly different, and in this case, does it affect the standards of the specialist people getting hired?

Expansion 2010 and forward

Specialisterne Denmark was founded in 2003 and went operational in 2004. The social-economic business became such a success that Sonne chose to expand the concept to other

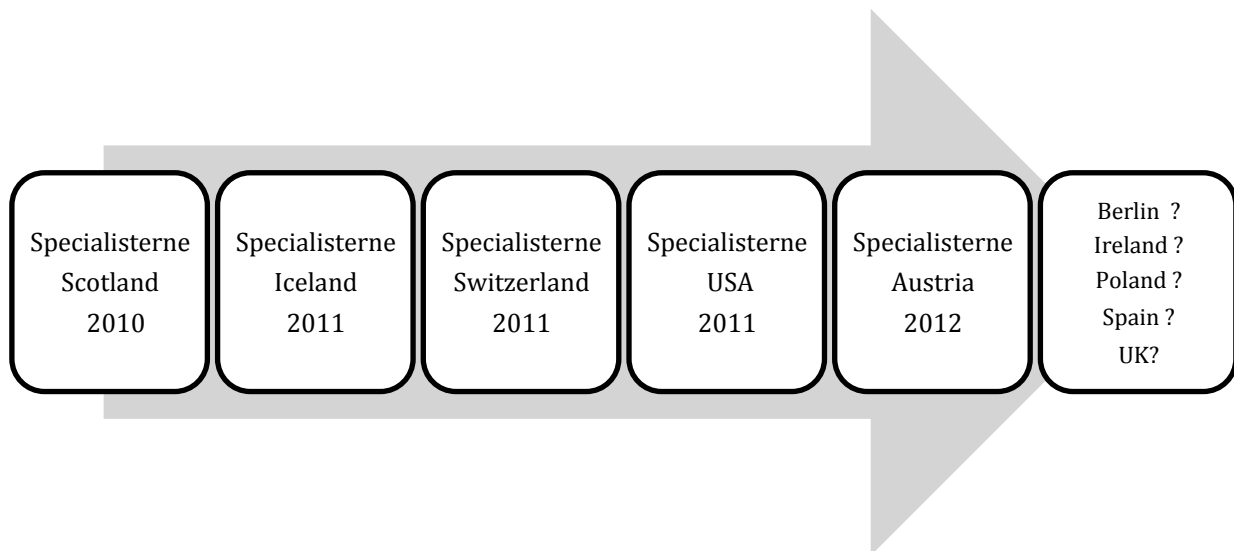
⁴⁸ The academy is an intranet providing useful information to people interested in starting a branch of Specialisterne in another country.

⁴⁹ Sonne, conference speech

⁵⁰ Hagshenas & Krasilnikoff, conference speech

countries through licensees and by the establishment of SPF in December 2008. As presented in figure 5.2 the expansion started in 2010 and is still very active.

Figure 5.2: *Expansion model for Specialisterne 2010 and forward*



Source: Author

Specialisterne Scotland was founded in August 2010 with help from investments, grants and loans from different Scottish institutions. By 2015, Specialisterne Scotland expects to employ 61 people, from where 50 will have a diagnose of ASD⁵¹. The *Icelandic* licensee office became a reality in the spring 2011 and in October 2011 the model was enhanced to fit Switzerland and lastly in November 2011 in USA. Specialisterne recently pronounced that an office will open in Austria in the spring 2012⁵².

Conflicting goals present in the findings

From the analysis in the micro perspective, Specialisterne and SPF actually seem to have two counter-goals. SPF has the goal *to enable 1 million jobs* worldwide, whereas Specialisterne ultimately has the goal *to generate a profit* as they operate for-profit on market terms. These goals are somehow not aligned, as the strategy for reaching the job creation goal of SPF is by applying a three step expansion strategy: 1) using the showcases of Danish Specialisterne to create international branches, 2) partnerships with likeminded actors to expand through

⁵¹ <http://specialistpeople.com/specialisterne/scotland/>

⁵² <http://specialistpeople.com/>

licensees' agreements and 3) The last step; to go mainstream in the corporate sector. As mentioned in the expansion strategy paragraph, the goal for SPF is to create an 'epidemic' structure to enable one million job opportunities worldwide. To facilitate this, spreading knowledge is essential and anyone interested in copying the Specialist model is in fact helping the foundation to reach its ultimate goal.

On the other hand, the Danish branch of Specialisterne and the international branches are based on a for-profit model. This indicates, that some barriers to imitate are present in order to be profitable. This creates a dilemma: to which degree should information be set free to benefit the goal of SPF, and to which degree should knowledge be kept internal in Specialisterne, as a competitive advantage for the Specialisterne business units?

The expansion strategy indicates that SPF is not focused on barriers to imitate, but on spreading the concept as much as possible, consequently, working with other companies who is hiring people with ASD would not be a problem. However, as Specialisterne are a market driven company they need to generate a profit and cannot just give their knowledge away for free. So by applying the first two steps in the expansion strategy of SPF (controlled and structured) it would correspond with Specialisterne, but the last step of going mainstream by dissimilation would not be an option.

This presents two highly conflicting goals; should focus be on the more ideological goal at SPF or on generating profit, as is the goal of Specialisterne. This, having conflicting goals, must be something many social economic companies experience.

5.1.2 Exploration of Specialisterne – a macro perspective

The following paragraph will investigate how Specialisterne are collaborating with their surroundings, including customers in the private and public sector, competitors and network.

5.1.2.1 The environment around Specialisterne

Specialisterne has different relations to the nearest business environment. The different relations of Specialisterne have been listed in figure 5.3 that helps to draw the landscape of Specialisterne. The public and private sector, to which they provide service to, are essential in order to generate profit for Specialisterne. The institutions, such as ASHOKA and the European Union, serves both as a way to legitimize the action of SPF, but are also important relations in the global expansion strategy of the Specialisterne concept. Partnerships are important both to Specialisterne and SPF, in order to expand, but also as a way to increase the knowledge base. The media serves primarily as a marketing tool.

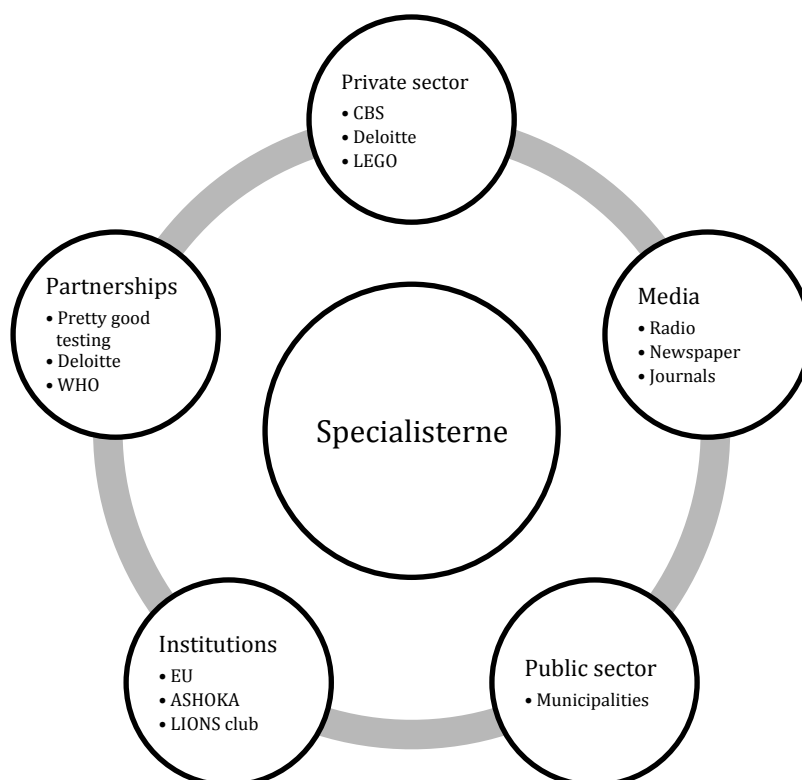


Figure 5.3: *Specialisternes business environment*

Source: Author

The media are used as a marketing tool, for PR and as documentation. The public sector are used to create profit and for obtaining legitimacy. The institutions are for creating network

and obtaining legitimacy. Through the partnerships Specialisterne create knowledge sharing. Finally through the private sector, Specialisterne receive founding, create profit and get documentation through persons like professor Austin.

In this macro perspective of Specialisterne it will be analysed how the different agencies affect Specialisterne in their business and their expansion.

5.1.2.3 Customer base

Specialisterne have a diverse customer base, ranging from private to public organizations, and from small local companies to large international organizations. A selection of important customers is: Microsoft, Oticon, KMD, Nokia, and TDC⁵³. A mixture of large Danish and international organizations, which seem to have the same purpose of cooperating with Specialisterne; they are 'best in class'. This paragraph will illustrate some of the reasons for these customers to engage in the business of Specialisterne.

Analysing the webpage of Specialisterne's customer's I found that there is a difference in whether the customers choose to mention their connection to Specialisterne or not. Most organizations choose not to inform visitors on their webpages about their cooperation with Specialisterne, indicating that they have chosen their service from a 'best in class' perspective. However, it could also be of other reason, e.g. the fear of being accused of green washing in the media.

Some of the exceptions to this tendency are the IT-company KMD and the communication company TDC. KMD has mentioned the cooperation with Specialisterne in their annual report in both 2008 and 2009.⁵⁴ In 2008 they mention the cooperation with Specialisterne under the headline *Social Responsibility*. In 2009 the headline is still *Social Responsibility* but Specialisterne is mentioned in the section *Special Collaborators*. In the annual report from 2009 KMD correspondingly chooses to display how they have made a one-time donation to the SPF to support the good cause. TDC have chosen to both mention Specialisterne in their annual report from 2010 and on their website under *Corporate Responsibility* in an article where they point out how important diversity in an organization is for its future survival.⁵⁵

⁵³ <http://specialisterne.com/dk/>

⁵⁴ http://www.kmd.dk/da/om_kmd/Documents/Årsrapporter/Annualreport.kmd.2008.pdf and http://www.kmd.dk/da/om_kmd/Documents/Årsrapporter/Annualreport.kmd.2009.pdf

⁵⁵ http://aarsrapport2010.tdc.dk/Materiale/Files/AR2010_DK.pdf and http://om.tdc.dk/publish.php?dogtag=o_profil_cr_medarb_div

This could indicate that both KMD and TDC perceive their interactions with Specialisterne as an important part of their image, or as part of a contribution to a more social sustainable society, by making Specialisterne more visible through their websites.

Another example of customers approach to Specialisterne could be presented by the case of multinational technology and consulting firm, IBM. The company have chosen to hire the Specialisternes IT consultants to work directly for the company, as IBM employees⁵⁶. This was a strategic decision IBM management took when the financial crisis stroke, and it was decided that external consultancy were no longer permitted. This action demonstrates that IBM appreciated the work of Specialisterne enough to integrate them into their own business. Another successful partnership has been with consulting and IT company, CSC, who earlier this year simple proclaimed: "*Specialisterne makes good business sense*"⁵⁷. In the next paragraph different scenarios for choosing to be a customer at Specialisterne is analysed.

Hiring Specialisterne

The above paragraph was merely meant as an outline of some of the most important customers of Specialisterne and their motive for engaging in doing business with Specialisterne, where this paragraph will present a theoretical reflection of why companies chooses to hire Specialisterne.

It can be argued that two of the most important tasks for any company are to produce and sell products, or provide services in a way that is long-term financially sustainable. It is important to maximize profit while having a strong brand that attracts customers to legitimate their action in relation to stakeholders (image). In today's business, a third task has become just as important: to execute your business in a social responsible way. In Denmark, the increased attention for sustainable business behaviour has had great influence on the leading organizations, as CSR-reporting now has been required by law⁵⁸. For small to medium sized companies it is still optional to engage in CSR reporting. However, they are likewise starting to find ways in which to engage in this.

The growing focus on CSR can be argued to have had a beneficial effect on the business of Specialisterne. Nevertheless, as Specialisterne are describing themselves as: "*A social*

⁵⁶ Interview with Thomsen

⁵⁷ Thomsen, conference speech

⁵⁸ <http://www.csrgov.dk/>

enterprise, creating jobs for autistic people"⁵⁹, they are communicating a message for their customers, that they are not a 'regular' IT consultant company. The final part of this paragraph will outline to which extent this is to be considered a competitive advantage or disadvantage.

Three plausible scenarios can be laid out in order to investigate the motive for customers to choose the service of Specialisterne over other IT companies.

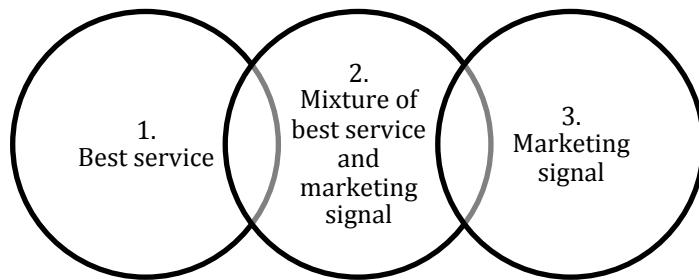


Figure 5.4: *Customer preferences for choosing Specialisterne*

Source: Author

Scenario 1: A customer chooses to use the service of Specialisterne purely because of the service the company provides, as this is considered the best service available at the market. The customer has no/little motive to use Specialisterne just based on the marketing value the unique work force (people diagnosed with ASD) could potentially have on their corporate image.

Scenario 2: A customer chooses to buy the service of Specialisterne because they regard it as a great opportunity to engage in a good cause, as well as recognising the service of Specialisterne to be one of the best IT services available in the industry.

Scenario 3: A customer chooses to buy the service of Specialisterne, as they perceive it to be a great marketing signal, consequently a CSR related project. The service is considered to be at the level of other services in the industry.

It is probably naive to believe that most companies will choose the first scenario, as most companies would spot the obvious marketing opportunity of doing business with a social company. Even though scenario two also has its challenges, as few companies can afford to engage in purely philanthropically activities in the times of economic recession, the second scenario is argued to be the most likely in the context of this thesis. As it would be too great a

⁵⁹ specialisterne.com, 2011

risk to hire Specialisterne, if the customers did not have faith in the professionalism of them, as they provide a very important service of either testing or journalizing.

5.1.2.4 Competitors

Correspondingly, the financial situation for Specialisterne, the competitive landscape has been somewhat hard to draw, as Specialisterne does not really seem to want to talk about this subject.

Thomsen, when asked, has a hard time to come up with whom Specialisterne regard as their competitors. When asked for the second time:

“Interviewer: ... You have a unique company and that is what your business is built on. Who are your competitors? Okay, you have no competitors if you are unique, but still there must be some who does the same types of tasks...”

Thomsen: Yes, but it is the standard competition model which is effective. There are many things within a competition model. Some of them being: Do you have any relations, do you have a track record in this organization? Have you previous done assignments for them? In this case you have an advantage. ...”⁶⁰

After this Thomsen explains what can be a competitive advantage, but gives us no specific competitors to Specialisterne. When asked third and fourth time he replies:

“Interviewer: But you haven’t come across other companies around the world where they practice some of the same? Who uses the same business concept?”

Thomsen: Yeah, in Glasgow where we got Specialisterne (laughter)

Interviewer: I’m thinking there must be others who can use it now it [the idea] is out?”⁶¹

Lastly he mentions a company in Sweden, similar to Specialisterne, who also used autistic people as labour force called Left is Right, but *“They got 10 millions to found the company. Then they bought some nice cars and a fancy address, but they are gone now, right?”*

Thomsen also explains how the test-houses have more a function as partners and how they work in another way than Specialisterne’s IT consultants. Leaving the question: *who are your competitors?* to be asked multiple times during the interview since no clear answer are given.

⁶⁰ Interview Thomsen, p 16

⁶¹ Interview Thomsen, p 17

Further research confirms that Left is Right went bankruptcy in 2009, but was established again in 2010⁶² and besides them are there two other companies like Specialisterne, who hires people with ASD and uses them to software testing, in Europe; *Aspergers Informatik* in Switzerland⁶³ and *Autest* in the Netherlands⁶⁴. As a competitor to the education program of Specialisterne could be a Danish company AspIT⁶⁵ who educates young people diagnosed with Asperger to perform and work in IT companies. AspIT has like Specialisterne a program with both pedagogical training and internships in IT companies. Consequently, Thomsen does not want to share this information, or he is not aware of the comeback from *Left is Right* in 2010 or the start-ups of the other companies. Further, these statements could indicate two setups: firstly, Specialisterne are so convinced of their uniqueness and special abilities, that they truly do not consider themselves to have any real competition. One could here question if having a unique workforce equals having a significant unique product? Secondly, Specialisterne are still establishing their business in the industry, and are very focused on their global goal and resources might not have been spent on a full analysis of their competitive environment, thus they are actually not aware whom they are competing with.

As Specialisterne do not consider their business to have any competitors, due to their uniqueness, and the special abilities of their workforce, I have outlined two possible types of competitors from a theoretical perspective. Firstly, a possible competitor could be found amongst other IT companies with a non-diagnosed workforce. Secondly, whether or not Specialisterne consider their services to be CSR-related their social economic goal has placed them in a *marketing* group by some of their customers as documented above. Moreover, Specialisterne proclaims at their website that they will assist in any way possible for organisations to meet this CSR-demand from the government⁶⁶, which is likely to make them compete with other social projects.

In an ever-changing world, not having made a strong competitor analysis could be a weakness and a risk of losing out on important market information. As formulated by Magretta (2002:6): “*Business models describe, as a system, how the pieces of a business fit together.*

⁶² <http://www.leftisright.se/>

⁶³ <http://www.asperger-informatik.ch/>

⁶⁴ <http://www.autest.nl/>

⁶⁵ <http://www.aspit.dk/index.php?id=1>

⁶⁶ <http://specialisterne.com/dk/ydelser/business/csr>

But they don't factor in one critical dimension of performance: competition. Sooner or later – and it is usually sooner – every enterprise runs into competitors. Dealing with that reality is strategy's job". The fact that CEO Thomsen argues that Specialisterne has no competitors can partly be true in relation to SPF, as their goal is to enable 1 million jobs worldwide for people with ASD. Nevertheless, the questions asked were aimed at Specialisterne and their branches where the focus is somehow different since they work for-profit and as mentioned previous, consequently, must have some competitors.

This supports the case made in the micro part of the analysis, where it was stressed that SPF and Specialisterne have different goals. Nevertheless, Magretta (2002) argues that non-profit companies compete with other non-profit companies for funding and/or civil involvement. Indicating a thin line between how a non-profit foundation like SPF should regard its competitors, as it is not only the direct competitors that should be included. Dees et al (2002:20) consistently stress: *"it is impossible to have a conversation about business - for profit or not profit- without recognizing and accounting for competition"*.

5.1.2.5 Network and partnerships

One of the components helping Specialisterne getting well established is Sonne's natural talent to create and nurture his extensive network. Sonne has been characterized as a typical social entrepreneurial type who is very open-minded and easy to talk to from several people who has been in contact with him either as a colleague (Thomsen⁶⁷), as a business partner (Deloitte⁶⁸) or as a part of a network (ASHOKA)⁶⁹. Sonne was appointed ASHOKA-fellow in 2009, which gave Specialisterne a global network to benefit from. Two of the organizations that have chosen to build a long-term partnership with Specialisterne are LEGO and Deloitte.

Partnerships

As mentioned above, one of the most fascinating characters of Sonne, and thereby Specialisterne, is the ability to build long-term partnerships with large organizations and the inspiring skill to gain knowledge and assistance from partners when needed. In this part, two

⁶⁷ Interview Thomsen

⁶⁸ Interview Lindegaard

⁶⁹ The ASHOKA network will be presented in the network part

of the most important partners for Specialisterne will be analysed and finally it will be suggested which results the partnerships has created for Specialisterne.

LEGO has assisted Specialisterne in several ways, but the two most significant contributions are; a donation on 750,000 DKK to get the Specialist People Foundation established in 2008 and LEGO-Mindstorm products to Specialisterne's assessment training program. In AEA Specialisterne uses LEGO-Mindstorm to evaluate and to develop the autistic student skills within social and analytical abilities and to improve their expertise in systematics and problem solving.⁷⁰ This is a partnership between Specialisterne and LEGO Education on one side assisting Specialisterne to evaluate the students' strengths and weaknesses and on the other side helping LEGO Education to be better to understand how existing concepts can be used in new ways and thereby to discover new potential segments for their products⁷¹.

Deloitte is another example of how Specialisterne manage to explore an opportunity for a great partnership. Deloitte have assisted Specialisterne with substantial pro bono work, for instance to professionalise their business model and making the annual reports both for Specialisterne and SPF. The reason why Specialisterne saw it as a benefit to collaborate with Deloitte is that it is an international organisation and thereby can be the favourite partner when Specialisterne are expanding and opening branches in other countries⁷².

Network

ASHOKA is a global association and a network for social entrepreneurs all over the world. Their purpose is to create a global network where social entrepreneurs have access to other social entrepreneurs and through them grow and learn. ASHOKA also provides the social entrepreneurs with living stipends if needed and professional support.⁷³ Sonne was chosen as the first Danish ASHOKA-fellow in 2009 and is still the only person from Denmark who has been elected to join the fellowship of social entrepreneurs. In 2010 Sonne was further elected as a part of ASHOKA Globalizer⁷⁴, which is a list over those persons ASHOKA thinks are ready to expand globally. In 2010 this list consisted of only 23 persons and in 2011 the list consists of 15 persons, so the people elected are only those most suited for global expansion.

⁷⁰ <http://www.specialisterne.dkmnet.dk/fileadmin/files/Pdf-filer/interesseskema/LEGOSpecialisterneDK.pdf>

⁷¹ <http://www.specialisterne.dkmnet.dk/fileadmin/files/Pdf-filer/interesseskema/LEGOSpecialisterneDK.pdf>

⁷² Interview Thomsen

⁷³ <http://www.ashoka.org/>

⁷⁴ http://www.ashokaglobalizer.org/fellows_2010?page=1

Network benefits

An old phrase within mathematical finance states: *'there's no such thing as a free lunch'*, meaning no one gives anything away for free when doing business. Thus, the partners who assist Specialisterne with donations or services for 'free' must somehow benefit from this. This paragraph will aim at analysing both sides of the donations given to Specialisterne.

Besides the ASHOKA network, Specialisterne has achieved a great advantage from connections and prior work collaborations. Some of the connections Specialisterne has managed to profit from are TDC, Nokia, and LEGO.

Sonne worked for TDC for many years before he founded Specialisterne, and today it is their single most important customer⁷⁵. Thus, Specialisterne profit economically from having consultants at TDC. TDC, on the other side benefits, as they are able to show stakeholders they believe in diversity, and stands out as a respectable company (CSR). On their website, where they write about their corporation with Specialisterne *"A company started by a former TDC employee who helps people with autism spectrum disorders to function at a normal job with their special skills"*⁷⁶. Furthermore, TDC benefits from having a partnership with Specialisterne, as they perform the routine task in TDC without losing motivation. In a reference on Specialisterne's website it is stated: *"Where we, with other employee groups, experience a decrease in motivation for routine tasks, the opposite is the case with Specialisterne - and mind you, virtually without error."*⁷⁷ This indicates, that both partners benefit from this partnership.

Specialisterne also have close connection to Nokia. This partnership was established through Steen Thygesen, CEO at SPF, as he worked at Nokia before getting involved at Specialisterne. By this partnership Specialisterne, beside the employment of consultants, got the opportunity to hold their international conference in May in Nokia's locations in Copenhagen for free. The benefit for Nokia was simply the publicity connected to the conference. Also Nokia have chosen to hire consultants from Specialisterne several times for testing new cell-phones before going into the market.

The last partnership that will be analysed is Specialisterne's connection to LEGO. When asking Thomsen about the partnership with LEGO and especially the large donation used to establish the Specialist People Foundation, he claims: *"I can not remember how the*

⁷⁵ Interview with Thomsen

⁷⁶ http://om.tdc.dk/publish.php?dogtag=o_profil_cr_medarb_div

⁷⁷ <http://specialisterne.com/dk/kunder/cases/tdc-mobil>

cooperation with LEGO arose, but there are a good relation between Sonne and some of the people in the foundation, about taking this out in the world.” This indicates that LEGO uses Specialisterne for marketing purpose. LEGO-Mindstorm is correspondingly a part of the package people buy when they want to become a licensee for Specialisterne. So this is likewise a win-win partnership.

5.1.3 Verification of Specialisterne's business concept

This part will present thoughts and comments from two leading experts within their fields. A *social-economic perspective* from Mette Lindegaard (Lindegaard), who is partner in Deloitte, an *innovation perspective* by Professor Austin, Dean at the faculty of Business Administration at the University of New Brunswick at Fredericton, Canada. Austin is former associate dean at the MBA programs at Copenhagen Business School and has been teaching professor at Harvard Business School⁷⁸. Their reflections will be used to explain the case study from two different perspectives and aim at verifying the business model of Specialisterne.

5.1.3.1 Partner Mette Lindegaard from Deloitte

Lindegaard will contribute with her opinion on the case from a social-economic perspective. She is through her work responsible for evaluating some of the welfare sector services in Denmark⁷⁹. Her daily focus is on how SROI can be a tool for presenting the net value of a social program. Simply explained, SROI can demonstrate for e.g. governments why it is profitable to invest in a social program as Specialisterne and why these investments should not be considered an expense or a donation but rather a profitable long-term investment.

Each year the Danish government spends more than six billion euros on vulnerable children and adults⁸⁰, and so far the outcome of this spending has been hard to measure. Because, how can one measure a social benefit? It is not simply *how many people? How often? Or who is affected?* Lindegaard explains SROI as follows: “*What it does, basically, is to define both the inputs, the outputs, but also, and specifically, the outcomes of a given program, which*

⁷⁸ <http://www.cutter.com/meet-our-experts/austinr.html>

⁷⁹ Lindegaard, conference speech

⁸⁰ Lindegaard, conference speech

enabling us over time to sort of predict the possible impacts, but what is also does is that it links the relevant value indicators to predictions over time [...] it enables us to know how various alternative programs will yield, varies or specific net values to society, to association, to a company⁸¹”. In this calculation the most challenging mechanism to measure is the outcome because of its, sometimes, long-term prospects. The outcome can be; higher self-esteem, extended social network, and the ability to being able to learn⁸². Thus, for a social program for children, the results does often not appear until the children enter into adulthood, which makes the programs difficult for politicians to invest in, as their timespan as politicians rarely exceeds four to eight years in Denmark, and the chances for a outcome within this period is slim to none - leaving the politicians with only the expenses and no outcome, consequently, a negative bottom-line effect.

The example below presents the first year of how a young person diagnosed with Asperger has two, very different, scenarios given⁸³.

Table 5.4: *Two different scenarios for a person diagnosed with ASD measured in DKK*

Scenario 1		Scenario 2	
- Medical treatment	?	- Medical treatment	?
- Sheltered housing with social and practical support	550,000	- Sheltered housing	400,000
- Sheltered employment	144,000	- Education (3 years)	240,000
- Incapacity benefit	153,000	- Clarification of eligibility (isolated incident)	35,000
Total cost p.a.	847,000	Total cost p.a.	675,000

Source: Mette Lindegaard conference speech

What happens after a five-year period? *Scenario 1*: Nothing is done and the person receives aids for the amount of 4,235,000 DKK in a five-year period. Whereas in *Scenario 2*: The person is offered assistance together with an education and in this way end up receiving aids for the amount of 2,755,000 DKK in a five-year period. This gives a total saving of 1,480,000 DKK for the first five year and moreover if the person gets a job after the five-year period, he start paying taxes and contributes to society in other ways. The off budget value of this

⁸¹ Lindegaard, conference speech

⁸² Lindegaard, conference speech

⁸³ Lindegaard, conference speech

calculation is that the person gets an education, he extends his social network, his quality of life gets better (as he feels he contributes to society) and he might get a job in the end of the program.

5.1.3.2 Professor Robert Austin, dean at University of New Brunswick, Canada

Austin will contribute with his opinion on the case from a business innovation perspective. Firstly Austin stresses the importance to differentiate between two different types of value: *joy-value* and *societal value*⁸⁴. Where the societal value can be closely linked to the SROI, presented by Lindegaard above, which is what society can gain by educating a person diagnosed with ASD (paid taxes, saved expenses). The joy-value can be linked to the off-budget outcome of the program (higher self-esteem). Relating this to Specialisterne, they manage in their program to embrace both these values and give them equally attention, almost uniting them to a joint value. Consequently, Specialisterne achieve space in their business model for letting in these specialist people as Austin refers to as *inspired peculiarities*⁸⁵. Austin stresses how important it is for companies in the future to give room to these inspired peculiarities in ‘regular’ companies. It is those who will generate the new thinking, the different ways of being, and ultimately bring innovation into the companies⁸⁶. As mentioned in the introduction in this thesis, Austin points out what has become important not to fit in anymore. In the 20th century the value generation in companies came from similarities and how the managers were able to make the employees to fit in, whereas in the 21st century Austin emphasise the management challenge will be to get maximum out of special people. By this, Austin embraces the business model of Specialisterne and their ability to nurture and comfort people diagnosed with ASD that otherwise would have difficulties fitting into a ‘regular’ company. Austin relates the business model of Specialisterne to other contexts and state why other companies could learn from their way of doing business in this following quote: *“the company's challenge here is to take the things that are special about this group of people and to turn them into strengths, and that is the skill, and it is important in a lot of other contexts”*⁸⁷.

⁸⁴ Austin, conference speech

⁸⁵ Austin, conference speech

⁸⁶ Austin, conference speech

⁸⁷ Austin, conference speech

5.2 Summing up the empirical analysis

The microanalysis has been examining different internal perspectives of Specialisterne in two areas: firstly, an analysis of *Specialisterne Denmark, understanding the showcase*, and secondly, *the expansion strategy* of Specialisterne.

Exploring the Danish showcase it was found that Specialisterne holds a sound business by analysing the structure of business, the ownership structure, and the financial situation. The ownership structure of Specialisterne is created in a way so that if Specialisterne one day should suffer from bad business and in worst-case scenario go bankruptcy, then SPF and the other branches will not get affected from this. The financial situation for Specialisterne has been somehow fluctuating through the years and they now experience a large deficit in equity capital, which will take many years to recover with the existing surplus.

After having analysed Specialisterne's expansion strategy in four different areas: *Scaling approach*, *transferring the generic model*, *expansion 2010 and forward*, and the *conflicting goals*, the findings are as follows: The scaling approach of SPF are focusing on creating an epidemic effect by starting an academy and letting people interested in the concept buy access to this forum and thereby disseminate Specialisterne throughout the world. This connects closely to how they will transfer the generic model of Specialisterne where they have thought of different factors people should be aware of when transferring the concept to another country. So far, Specialisterne has extended to four countries outside Denmark, Austria starting up in the spring and have plans for other launches in near future. This makes it look like they are well on their way towards their goal. The last part did however show that Specialisterne and SPF have goals that could be regarded as conflicting, indicates that they have to be aware of how they will make the two businesses collaborate in the future.

Summing up the macro analysis, it explored four different aspects of Specialisterne. Firstly, the *environment around Specialisterne*, secondly the *customer base*, thirdly the *competitors*, and lastly the *network and partnerships* of Specialisterne. The environment around Specialisterne presented which actors are involved with Specialisterne and what influences these actors has on Specialisterne.

Some of these actors were further analysed, firstly, the *customers* of Specialisterne, which presented the different kind of organizations that hire Specialisterne and displayed their incitements for doing so. Next, the paragraph *hiring Specialisterne* offered three different scenarios for choosing to hire Specialisterne. The scenario preferred was a combination of choosing the best service available on the market and choosing a company that could give the customer a marketing advantage or a positive CSR signal.

The *competitor* analysis revealed that even though Specialisterne claim to have no competitors, they do have competitors as they operate on market terms. These competitors appears in different shapes; either as *direct competitors*, in form of other companies offering the same service as Specialisterne, or as *equivalent education programs* provided by other institutions, or finally *other social programs* which can provide the earmark as a social responsible company to their clients and thereby make the company meet the law requirements.

Finally the *network and partnerships* of Specialisterne revealed how they have managed to build an extensive web of companies and individuals willing to help and work together with Specialisterne on their path towards their BHAG. It is suggested that the different partners that has chosen to work with Specialisterne are inspired by different motives. One motive being to support the social cause while another motive is when they can see the partnership with Specialisterne as beneficial for their own business.

Summing up the verification part, it contained thoughts and comments from Lindegaard, Partner at Deloitte, and Professor Austin. Their reflections were used to form a picture of the strengths and weaknesses of Specialisterne, seen from an expert view.

Lindegaard presented SROI and different models for estimating it and came to the conclusion that it was highly applicable for Specialisterne to convince the world of how they create value to society through their work, and how it makes a difference to support their cause.

Austin stresses how it is to be innovative and find the dissimilarities that make a difference, which Specialisterne has done perfectly by creating a company based on specialist people. Austin further stresses how important it is to give room to these specialist people, these *inspired peculiarities*, in the companies in the future so that innovation can grow.

Theoretical analysis

Where the above analysis was an empirical analysis, the following part is a theoretical analysis of Specialisterne shaped around the framework presented in chapter 3. In which, I argue that Specialisterne are closest associated with social entrepreneurship. Consequently, I will analyse Specialisterne as a social entrepreneurial company; keeping in mind it should be seen closely related to other types of entrepreneurship. Consequently, the following analysis has been structured around all four key factors; the *characteristics of individual social entrepreneurs*, their *operating sector*, the *processes and resources used by social entrepreneurs*, and finally *primary mission and outcomes associated with the social entrepreneur* (Dacin et al. 2010: 38), as it aims to highlight the most essential aspects of the case study from a social entrepreneurial perspective. The purpose with this theoretical framework is to create a base from where different theories can be coupled on Specialisterne.

5.3.1 The characteristics of individual social entrepreneurs

This paragraph will focus on Sonne as a social entrepreneur. Dacin et al. (2010:38) describes the characteristics of the individual social entrepreneur as: *“qualities and behavior of individuals centred around issues of motivation, the ability to recognize opportunity and enact change through inspirational leadership skills and/or the ability to garner necessary resources”*.

Firstly, an analysis will be made of the qualities and behaviours of Sonne by analysing his personal characteristics together with his leadership style and then compare them to the characteristics of the social entrepreneur. Secondly there will be an analysis of Sonne's ability to recognise opportunities.

Weber (1974:358-359) defines a charismatic leader as: *“set apart from ordinary men and treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman, or at least [...] exceptional powers and qualities [...] which are not accessible to the ordinary person, ... and on the basis of which the individual concerned is treated as a leader [...] What is alone important is how the individual is actually regarded by those subject to charismatic authority, by his ‘followers’ or ‘disciples’*. Based on this quote, Sonne is analysed as a charismatic leader, as his followers

regard him as a man who has managed to do something, which they have not believed was possible, by founding Specialisterne⁸⁸. As found in the empirical analysis, Sonne, possess a great ability to create an extensive network, which could indicate that people wants to be in his network because he is charismatic.

Steyrer (1998) present four different types of charismatic leadership styles: *The hero, the father, the savior, and the king*. Based on the characteristics of the four, Sonne will be a *Savior* as he is a “*Charismatic innovator, the great and magic transformer of the existing to the better*” (Steyrer 1998:820). Sonne has managed to create a business and a foundation, which render the world a better place for people diagnosed with autism. Further it can be argued in combination with the empirical analysis that Sonne has managed to found a company that also contributes to society, consequently making the world a better place. As Steyrer (1998:823) also stresses “*The savior makes it clear that there are still large-scale perspectives worth supporting, and that there are solutions for urgent problems.*” This is just what Sonne did when realising the future perspectives was very limited work-wise for his son. This is very compatible with the characteristics of a true social entrepreneur, which ASHOKA defines as: *Social entrepreneurs are individuals with innovative solutions to society’s most pressing social problems. They are ambitious and persistent, tackling major social issues and offering new ideas for wide-scale change*⁸⁹.

This leads on to Sonne’s ability to recognize opportunities; which for many entrepreneurs, and also social entrepreneurs, origins in their earlier experiences. Sonne was, up until he founded Specialisterne, working at TDC as an IT developer, which was the key reason to why he discovered the connection between the abilities of a person diagnosed with autism, possessed and the requirements needed when e.g. testing computer programs. Venkataraman (1997) examine what causes some people to search for, and exploit, opportunities whereas others do not and one of his findings is that knowledge is not a ‘given’ and people see things differently depending on their past experiences. As he writes in his article: *It is one thing for opportunities to exist, but an entirely different matter for them to be discovered and exploited* (Venkataraman 1997:123). The opportunity for hiring and working with people diagnosed with ASD has been present ever since ASD became an official diagnoses, nevertheless Sonne was the first to connect the two areas; ASD and IT-consultancy sector, this because he had

⁸⁸ Interview with Thomsen and interview with Rapp

⁸⁹ http://www.ashoka.org/social_entrepreneur

great experience within the IT-sector when his son got diagnosed with ASD. Shane (2000) also stresses the connection between prior knowledge and the discovery of entrepreneurial opportunities. In his article he argues: “*individuals who have developed particular knowledge through education and work experience will be more likely than other people to discover particular entrepreneurial opportunities*” (Shane 2000:465). This indicates that even though the possibility for recognising this opportunity has been present for several years, it is not sure that one with the right background has been in a position where the two areas could be connected. Moreover it demands even more to realize the idea when discovering the opportunity. So maybe some people has connected the two areas before Sonne, but no one have had the entrepreneurial spirit and the power to carry it out and establish a company.

5.3.2 The operating sector of Specialisterne

Turning to the second key factor for a social entrepreneurial company: their operating sector. According to Dees et al. (2002:20) three types of sectors exists; *the private sector*, *the public sector*, and *the not-for-profit sector*. If considering Specialisterne and SPF as being this hybrid for/not-for profit company, they do business in all three sectors, which is why all three sectors will be explored.

Firstly the private sector, which is here Specialisterne does their business. In the empirical analysis it was found that Specialisterne called this part BIZ and that it is here the for-profit business occurs as Specialisterne operate on market terms. In the private sector it is important to include the costumers of Specialisterne, as it is with those the business is done. However, as Specialisterne has been defined as a social entrepreneurial company, the motive for doing business with them is not been pure for-profit. In the empirical analysis it was found that the customers of Specialisterne consist of large Danish and international companies and the purpose for making business with Specialisterne could be twofold. Having the company mission of creating social change, as well as having the unique workforce, can give them a competitive advantage compared to a ‘regular’ IT-consulting company. Still, Specialisterne give different explanations on how they operate in relation to CSR. The CEO, Thomsen, stresses that they do not use CSR as a marketing tool for getting costumers⁹⁰, whereas the senior enabling manager, Rapp, in her interview mentions how they sometimes uses CSR to channel their way into staff meetings at large companies, to get a chance to talk about what

⁹⁰ Interview Thomsen

renders Specialisterne so unique⁹¹, and as a result might get them as customers. The motive for *not* choosing to use CSR as a marketing tool could be to introduce Specialisterne with a more ‘professional’ business image, as they could risk losing some professionalism if their stakeholders began to see them as a charity case and not as best in class. Correspondingly, in times of the financial crisis few companies can afford pure charity hence demanding quality products and services.

Secondly, Specialisterne interacts with the public sector through their education centre and their assessment and training unit, which was presented in the empirical analysis as the STU and the AEA. This cooperation between Specialisterne and the government is a beneficial partnership for both parties; Specialisterne provides education for people diagnosed with ASD and additionally teaches them to succeed in society, and on the other side the government support the education of the children financially. The government, Dees (2002:20) argues: *"is specifically designed to include provisions to account for the well-being of society. Government has the ability to contract with either the for-profit sector or not for profit sector to achieve outcome"*. So by supporting Specialisterne in educating young people or helping adults to succeed better in society, the government is doing the right thing, as they later will contribute from this as explained in the empirical analysis (taxes, SROI e.g.). Kanter (1999) likewise stresses the importance of this emerging kind of partnerships, in her article she argues: *"A new paradigm for innovation is emerging: a partnership between private enterprises and public interest that produces profitable and sustainable change for both sides"* (Kanter 1999:124).

Lastly, the not-for-profit sector, which Dees et al. (2002:20) also refers to as the *independent sector*. In this sector SPF and the investors of Specialisterne operate. The investors involve both those companies and private persons who give money donations, but also those companies providing pro bono work to Specialisterne. Hence, this consists of both LEGO and Deloitte; LEGO having assisted with knowledge and donated 705,000 DKK to the establishing of SPF and also provide LEGO-Mindstorm products to Specialisterne's business, where Deloitte are providing pro bono work when making the auditing for Specialisterne and furthermore assists them in the preparation of a new business plan⁹². Kanter (2002:125) argues: *"Traditional charity can't reach the root of the problems; it just treats the*

⁹¹ Interview Rapp

⁹² Interview with Thomsen

symptoms”, this is why LEGO and Deloitte’s way of assisting Specialisterne are of much higher value, than if they just had donated money to support the cause. Thus, now both companies help Specialisterne to build a long-term sustainable business.

To sum up Specialisterne are operating within three sectors; the private, the public and the not-for-profit sector. Specialisterne have BIZ in the private sector, the AEA and STU are in the public sector, while SPF are operating in the not-for-profit sector.

5.3.3 The processes and resources used by Specialisterne

Dacin et al (2010:41) defines this key factor as: *“Identifying the manner in which the social enterprise is established, the primary activities undertaken by the social entrepreneur.”* By helping examine this, the framework of Magretta (2002) presented in chapter 3 is applied. The framework consist of two tests, the first test is the *narrative test* (Magretta 2002:5), which examine the story behind Specialisterne; which they at several occasions refer to as ‘*Thorkil’s good story*’⁹³. Does this story contain the elements of a good story, or does it have some weak points. The second test is the *numbers test* (Magretta 2002:5), which briefly will touch upon the financial situation at Specialisterne. This however will be examined into depth in the final analysis chapter 5.5, *Justification*. The good story contains elements as; *Precisely delineated characters, plausible motivations, and a plot that turns an insight about value* (Magretta 2002:4).

The main character of this story is the founder of Specialisterne, Sonne, who puts his financial situation at risk for establishing a company to improve the career prospects for his son and other people diagnosed with ASD. The motivation for establishing Specialisterne arose a while after Sonne’s son Lars got diagnosed with ASD, when Sonne realized the prospects for a future work career for his son was very limited. The plot in the story of Specialisternes is to be profitable so they can continue to work towards their mission to render people diagnosed with ASD getting accepted and contribute to society. Magretta (2002:8) argues how a good story *“can be used to get everyone in the organization aligned around the kind of value the company wants to create. Stories are easy to grasp and easy to remember. They help individuals to see their jobs within the larger context of what the company is trying to do and tailor their behaviour accordingly.”* At Specialisterne it has been a great motivation factor for

⁹³ Interview with Thomsen and at conference speech

the employees that the company is founded on a *good story*⁹⁴. Specialisterne has, and are still using, Sonne's *good story* to promote Specialisterne⁹⁵.

The good story also contains a twist; a new way of doing things. In the case of Specialisterne the twist is that they have managed to successfully hire people who, for a long period, have been considered to be outside the workforce, and by turning a disability into ability. This has changed the way companies regard people outside the workforce in general and not just people diagnosed with ASD⁹⁶, now they have started to see possibilities and opportunities, instead of a 'lost' workforce.

The *numbers test* will in this part of the analysis aim at gently unfold the financial situation at Specialisterne for later, in the final analysis to be able to fully explain this matter. Summing up from chapter 3, the important numbers according to Magretta (2002) are: *revenues, costs, profits, and cash flow*. However, she reveals these numbers are just aids to understanding a company, they are not fool proof as the markets are complex.

In the microanalysis it was found that Specialisterne have had increasing revenue since they were established. On the other hand, it was found with the current profit it would take approximately 15 years to re-establish equity capital. This render Specialisterne a risky business to invest in, never the less, many companies and private persons choose to invest in them as they have trust in that the good of the cause will last. This, Sonne has secured by founding SPF and in-between the Specialist Resources Holding company, which was discovered in the microanalysis.

5.3.4 The primary mission and outcomes associated with the social entrepreneur

Dacin et al. (2010:42) define this fourth and final key factor as: "*Creating social value by proving solutions to social problems, focuses on the outcome of the efforts of the social entrepreneur*". Thus, this analysis is divided in two parts; first, an analysis of how Specialisterne are creating value by providing a solution to a social problem, second, an analysis of the outcome of the efforts of Specialisterne.

In relation to the case of Specialisterne, the social problem has been identified as the difficulties of integrating autistic people in society; hence, being able to include them in the

⁹⁴ Interview with Rapp

⁹⁵ Interview with Rapp

⁹⁶ Austin, conference speech

workforce creates value⁹⁷. To elaborate this, elements from the term *shared value* created by Porter and Kramer (2006 2011) is applied. Porter and Kramer (2011:64) define shared value as “*creating economic value in a way that also creates value for society by addressing its needs and challenges*”. This is exactly what Specialisterne do by creating partnerships with other companies and especially with the public sector. As argued by Lindegaard in the verification part in the empirical analysis, SROI is inevitable when discussing the outcome of Specialisterne's work. If even just a few candidates, students or workers at Specialisterne make it through and get a job in a ‘regular’ company, their contribution to society in form of saved transfer income, paid taxes and higher consumption will be enough to make the net value positive for the government.

The outcome can be perceived in different ways, Dacin et al. (2010:42) argue that two types of outcome exists; *economic outcome* and *social change outcome*, and depending on what kind of company is analysed, different answers will be right when discussing which outcome is most suitable for analysing the particular company. In this case, however, both outcomes will be considered, as Specialisterne needs economic outcome in order to achieve the social change. One of the main drivers for Specialisterne is: “*To make societies globally respect and accommodate specialist people as worthy and valuable citizens*”⁹⁸. Thus the focus area for Specialisterne is to integrate people diagnosed with autism into society, but to be able to do this they must create a surplus. This will be further analysed in the last analysis, *Justification*.

⁹⁷ SROI as first mentioned in the empirical analysis. This term will be further exploited in the final analysis ‘Justification’

⁹⁸ Specialisterne.dk, 2011

5.4 Summing up the theoretical analysis

This theoretical analysis investigated four key factors characterising a social entrepreneurial company possess according to Dacin et al. (2010). The first factor was the characteristics of the individual social entrepreneur, which characterised Sonne as a charismatic leader and was further characterised as the *saviour* according to Steyrer (1998). It was also found that Sonne recognised the opportunity for founding Specialisterne because of his previous experience as an IT-developer at TDC. According to Venkataraman (1997) it was as a consequence of this recognition Sonne saw the link between the IT service sector and the special abilities people diagnosed with ASD possessed.

The second factor analysed was the operating sector of Specialisterne. Here Dees et al. (2002) pointed out three different sectors; *the private sector*, *the public sector*, and *the not-for-profit sector*. In the private sector Specialisterne's BIZ unit was placed as it operates for-profit on market terms. However, it was discussed whether Specialisterne was related to being a CSR-company or not. By using the CSR-factor Specialisterne could open doors to companies where it otherwise not would have been possible to enter. On the other side, *not* using the CSR-factor, Specialisterne could promote themselves as a professional business in times where few can afford charity. It was further found that Specialisterne interacts in the public sector through STU and AEA. This kind of partnerships was by Kanter (1999) argued to be the new paradigm in the field of innovation because it supported sustainable change for both parties. Lastly, in the not-for-profit sector SPF, and the investors of Specialisterne were placed. Of investors were mentioned LEGO and Deloitte. LEGO as they donated 750,000 DKK to establishing SPF, and further provide AEA with LEGO-Mindstorm products. Deloitte provide pro bono assistance to both Specialisterne and SPF by auditing and assist in the preparation of a new business plan.

The third factor analysed was the processes and resources used by Specialisterne. Here, Magretta's (2002) model consisting of the *narrative test* and the *number's test* was applied. In the *narrative test* it was found that Specialisterne possessed all the attributes of a *good story* as they have an accurately described character (Sonne), believable motivations (a father concerned for the future of his son), and a plot that turns an insight about value (the establishment of a social entrepreneurial company generating value through SROI). The twist in the story is that Specialisterne have managed to turn a norm upside-down by training and hiring people who before was regarded outside the workforce. In the *numbers test* it was found that Specialisterne is a risky business to invest in, but as they have such a good cause, people and companies will continue to invest in them.

Finally, the last factor was the primary mission and outcomes associated with the social entrepreneur. This was divided in two parts; firstly, an analysis of how Specialisterne are creating value by providing a solution to a social problem this was coupled to the term *shared value* by Porter and Kramer (2006, 2011). Where it was concluded that Specialisterne generated *shared value* by creating partnerships with the government. Secondly, an analysis of the outcome of the efforts of Specialisterne was conducted and here it was found that there were two forms of outcome *economic outcome* and *social change outcome*. Specialisterne needs the economic outcome to generate a surplus, but their main target in to create social change outcome, which their goal displays in the sentence “*to make societies globally respect and accommodate specialist people as worthy and valuable citizens*”⁹⁹.

⁹⁹ www.specialisterne.dk

Justification

This final part of the analysis aims at connecting the empirical and the theoretical analysis with three differences discovered between the classical business model and the business model of Specialisterne. These differences have focus on social entrepreneurship theory and three trends in society: the development within innovation in relation to Specialisterne, a financial perspective on Specialisterne, and finally the roots of sustainable business.

5.5.1 Innovation

This thesis opened with a discussion on why innovation is important in a western country, like Denmark, where knowhow is a significant factor for a company to survive long-term. This discussion is taken a step further in this paragraph where different theoretical terms are matched to Specialisterne to see whether their way of innovating is sustainable or not. Firstly, *hyper specialization* (Malone et al. 2011) is analysed in relation to Specialisterne, secondly, an analysis whether Specialisterne are innovative based on Kanter's (1999) perspective, lastly, a relation between Specialisterne and Magretta's (2002) view on business models is made.

Malone et al. (2011) stress that *hyper specialization* has become more widespread within knowhow companies, which is those who primarily support Specialisterne's business core. The definition on *hyper specialization* made by Malone et al (2011:59) is: "*breaking work previously done by one person into more-specialized pieces done by several people*" and further argues "*Whether or not those pieces are outsourced or distributed, their separation often leads to improvements in quality, speed, and costs*". By this, Malone et al. (2011) stress how the demand for specialists is growing and what earlier was the job of a single employee, now is spread out to several employees. This is related to Specialisterne as they in BIZ handle very specialized tasks for other companies and thereby aiming at breaking down the jobs done in the companies. Furthermore, Specialisterne state they are better and more accurate in the specific solutions they offer than if the customers kept the tasks internally, and the primary task descriptions of Specialisterne are very narrow and concentrated around one element. Malone et al. (2011) highlights some promises and perils of *hyper specialization*, such as

quality, speed, and costs being advantages by this formation. One disadvantage they discuss is the risk of creating dull and meaningless job tasks when splitting assignments up into smaller more specific tasks; this however, is merely an advantage for Specialisterne as their unique workforce basically favours trivial job tasks. As stated by the CEO of Specialisterne, Thomsen, in his interview¹⁰⁰

“Interviewer: So you really have to have a good ability to concentrate for a long period?”

Thomsen: You will fall asleep. I’ve trained this task because I wanted to know it. And simply, you’ll fall asleep.

Interviewer: It sounds tough!

Thomsen: Absolutely it’s tough. But then it’s nice the team we have here run it through with undiminished concentration.”

Another aspect of innovation is discussed by Kanter (1999:124) *“a new paradigm for innovation is emerging: a partnership between private enterprise and public interest that produces profitable and sustainable change for both sides”*. This surrounds the business model of Specialisterne, as they have managed to embrace the collaboration with the government to solve a public ‘problem’. Specialisterne have created a business that produces a sustainable change and is beneficial for themselves but also the government. Kanter (1999:124) additionally argues how companies earlier used to handle CSR *“companies often just throw money at the problem, then walk away”*. Now, however, more companies have realised they can not reach the root of the problems in doing what they have always done, they have to take an active part in this transformation of society. This change in mentality can be beneficial for Specialisterne, as their business relay on selling high quality services with a twist of CSR, as discovered in the empirical analysis. Porter & Kramer (2011:70) argues how *“real social entrepreneurship should be measured by its ability to create shared value, not just social benefit”*, so when Specialisterne manage to create value for themselves, but also for the government, then they have achieved to become a sustainable social economic company.

Lastly, this paragraph contain a discussion in relation to Magretta (2002), she argues from a business model’s perspective that it is important to come up with something new to have a competitive advantage. She stresses how the product or service provided by the company must: *“represents a better way than the existing alternatives [...] Or it may completely*

¹⁰⁰ Interview with Thomsen p 14

replace the old way of doing things and become standard for the next generation of entrepreneurs to beat” (Magretta 2002:4) before it can be a competitive advantage. However, it can be a strong competitive advantage, if they manage this task, as it will be hard for other companies to imitate. This is what Specialisterne have done by creating a company with a unique workforce and at the same time selling services never seen before in the private sector.

5.5.2 Financial perspective –behind the scene in Specialisterne

This paragraph starts with a discussion on how it maybe is easier to establish a social economic company like Specialisterne in a Danish context compared to other countries. It has come forward in both the empirical and the theoretical analysis that Sonne when founding Specialisterne was willing to bear a comprehensive personal financial risk, even though there was great uncertainty combined with the investment. One of the motives for this willingness is that Sonne saw an, so far, unnoticed opportunity and wanted to explore it. Another motive could be argued to be that Denmark as a country has a strong social safety net, whereas foreign social entrepreneurs risk losing literally everything if their companies go bankrupt. This willingness to tolerate uncertainty is discussed by McMullan and Shepard (2006), they argue that three elements of actions must be present for an entrepreneur to be willing to tolerate great uncertainty; *knowledge*, *motivation* and a *stimulus*. Knowledge about the industry, as it helps the entrepreneur to have a concrete idea of the amount of uncertainty he is about to take upon himself. Motivation, as an entrepreneur must have a goal for take on the uncertainty. Finally, a stimulus must be present for the entrepreneur to take action. In this specific case, it was found in the theoretical analysis that Sonne had great knowledge of the IT-industry before establishing Specialisterne. He already knew a match existed between people diagnosed with ASD and the abilities needed for working with e.g. testing of software. This, compared to Shanes (2000) view upon the connection between prior knowledge and the discovery of entrepreneurial opportunities, was in the theoretical analysis found to that Sonne was most likely to have discovered the opportunity for establishing Specialisterne, as he already possessed great knowledge of the industry. Sonne’s stimulus is that his son, Lars, got diagnosed with ASD. Later, Sonne’s motivation came when he started to search for future job possibilities for Lars and realized nothing suitable for his sons needs was available on the market. Venkataraman (1997:124) argues “*By definition entrepreneurship requires making investments (time, effort, and money) today without knowing what the distribution of the*

returns will be tomorrow”, by this all entrepreneurs face uncertainty and where some profit from it, some also fall and loose.

As stated earlier, Denmark has a strong social safety net, which helps these fallen entrepreneurs to not end up living on the street. This could be argued to create an incitement for potential future entrepreneurs to take a greater risk of uncertainty upon them than what they otherwise would have taken without his safety net; this is within economic terms referred to as moral hazard¹⁰¹. Consequently, in the same manner as the social safety net encourage potential entrepreneurs to tolerate uncertainty; it can be dangerous for society since there is a risk of people not having thought their entrepreneurial idea through and, ultimately, ends up as a cost for the society.

5.5.3 Specialisterne – a sustainable business

Throughout this thesis it has been argued that Specialisterne is a sustainable business due to SROI, CSR, and most important due to the fact that they have taken a burden of the public sector. Consequently, the business of Specialisterne is helping to fulfil the overall goal of sustainable development, which is formulated as: *“to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”*¹⁰². This paragraph is aiming at making this argument stand out stronger and it will be analysed why this is relevant, it will moreover bring in the TBL perspective in the analyse.

It has been argued in this thesis that Specialisterne are helping the public sector by focusing on a social problem, which otherwise, would have been the governments responsibility. In the empirical analysis calculations based on SROI was presented and has made the argument of Specialisterne being a sustainable business stronger. Though, it is important to state: *“SROI cannot and should not be used as the sole indicator of social performance, in the same way that ROI is not used as a sole indicator of financial performance. Instead, as with financial metrics, having both additional quantified outcome measures and a qualitative, narrative description (as in a standard annual report) is the only way to gain a more complete understanding of a business’ social impact”* (Lingane & Olsen 2004:129). Accordingly, this thesis have been investigated other areas simultaneously with SROI to discover if

¹⁰¹ Callahan & Kaza (2004) defines moral hazard as: *“Once people expect that someone else will pick up some of the cost of their speculative failures; they are more likely to undertake risky actions, than they would if they had to bear the cost themselves.”*

¹⁰² World Commission on Environment and Development; *Our Common Future* (1987:43)

Specialisterne are a sustainable business. Another term that has shortly been mentioned in this thesis is the TBL, which is going to be explored further in this part, because as Senge & Carstedt (2001:26) argues: *“The challenge today is to develop sustainable business that are compatible with the current economic reality. Innovative business models and products must work financially, or it won’t matter how good they are ecologically and socially”*. TBL is, as described in paragraph 1.4, an extension of the financial bottom line perspective to also include environmental and social value the company either create or destroy. This is a resulting effect derived by the growing demand for transparency within business accounting and performance management (Senge & Carstedt 2001). Specialisterne are now presented in relation to the three sustainable goals outlined by the TBL perspective: *Economically sustainability, social sustainability, and environmentally sustainability*.

There are two ways in which to look at *Economically sustainability*: from a societal perspective, or from a company perspective. From the societal perspective it is discussed whether the services of Specialisterne is economically sustainable in relation to society. It has been emphasised throughout this thesis that Specialisterne help the government by focusing on a social burden. Further, by working closely together with the municipalities in Specialisternes educational program, STU, Specialisterne creates sustainability as people diagnosed with autism are going from being considered *outside* the workforce to be *included* in the workforce, saving early retirement pensions and instead providing taxpayers. From a company perspective it was discovered in the paragraph of innovation just above, that no company can survive long-term if they do not manage to have surplus on the bottom line, no matter how good a cause they support. When comparing this statement with the financial statement presented in the empirical analysis it was found, that Specialisterne do generate a profit, though, it has been neither very steady nor very improving. An official UK government report about sustainability published in 2001 likewise conducted that: *“No amount of excellent social and environmental performance will prolong the life of a company that is economically unsustainable”*¹⁰³.

The next goal in the TBL perspective is *social sustainability*. It is argued in this thesis that Specialisternes goal is to integrate people diagnosed with ASD in the workforce and break down the walls between autistic people and society. This, ultimately, brings higher life quality to the people diagnosed with ASD, as stated by an employee of Specialisterne; *“I like*

¹⁰³ R&D report: *Economic sustainability – the business of staying in business* (2001:0.4), The Sigma Project

working here. I don't have to try to be anything other than myself. At times, I can become obsessed with my work and that's fine. In another company I might be expected to make small talk and be flexible. Here I can just concentrate on my work without being considered antisocial" (Austin 2008:1). This quote demonstrates how life quality of an employee at Specialisterne has increased after he began working at Specialisterne.

The final goal is to create *environmental sustainability*; this, however, can neither be confirmed nor rejected on basis of the data collected for this thesis as stated in paragraph 4.6.

Summing up the TBL perspective, Specialisterne are positioned as sustainable when looking at the economical and social factors. However, to make a full conclusion the environmental perspective should have been investigated.

5.6 Summing up the clarification part

The first part in this analysis was focusing on innovation, and began by demonstrating how *hyper specialization*, presented by Malone et al. (2011), was related to Specialisterne and their BIZ. This new innovation trend, by splitting a job into smaller pieces, was highly compatible to Specialisterne and might even give them a competitive advantage as their unique workforce has the advantage of favouring very specific, and sometimes dull, tasks. Further, it is argued that Specialisterne has a competitive advantage as their service is new on the market and they are pioneers within their field.

In the financial perspective it was argued that Sonne, by living in Denmark, had better chances for starting a company like Specialisterne as a result of the strong social safety net present. This probably made the decision for him to take the great financial risk he did, when mortgage his family's home, to start up Specialisterne. McMullen and Shepard (2006) argue for three elements of action must be present for an entrepreneur to be willing to tolerate great uncertainty; *knowledge*, *motivation*, and a *stimulus*. It was argued that Sonne possessed the knowledge from his prior work, also as demonstrated in the theoretical analysis. The stimulus was when Lars got diagnosed with ASD, and the motivation came when Sonne discovered that the future work prospects for his son were limited to none.

In the last paragraph Specialisterne were discussed in relation to sustainability. It was argued that because of Specialisterne are helping the government by taking hand on a social problem; they generated value for the society. Further it was argued, based on SROI, that Specialisterne were sustainable, but it had to be compared to other measures before it was valid. Then Specialisterne were taking into a TBL perspective and it was argued that they were

economically sustainable, however, their profit for the years have been somehow fluctuating through the years, and to be sustainable a company have to be able to generate a profit long-term. It was argued that Specialisterne are social sustainable as they have managed to break down walls between autistic people and society. It was not concluded whether Specialisterne were environmental sustainable or not due to the data collected and the scope of this thesis.

Chapter 6

Discussion

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the findings made in the analyses in the previous chapter. This will be carried out in four ways. First, there will be a discussion of the analysis questions, with the objective to evaluate the findings in the analyses. This will lead to an answer to the overall research question of this thesis. Secondly, a discussion with the aim to highlight implications and challenges related to applying the chosen theories to Specialisterne. Thirdly, a discussion will be carried out of the affect the chosen methodology has had on this thesis and its findings. Finally, the relevance of findings will be discussed from a social entrepreneurial perspective in order to highlight implications. The discussion will end with two closing paragraphs; one containing a discussion on future perspectives for Specialisterne, secondly, a paragraph containing further research.

6.1 Discussion on analysis questions through findings

By the help from four different analysis question outlined in the beginning of this thesis, the findings in this thesis had the aim to answer the overall research question. In this paragraph the analysis questions will be answered from the findings made in the analysis.

1. *In what way is it possible for social entrepreneurial companies to become part of conventional business?*

The first analysis question will mainly draw on findings from the theoretical analysis. Based on the characteristics Sonne possess as a social entrepreneur he was argued to have a charismatic saviour leadership style, which has rendered him able to make people follow him and support his idea. Further, he stands out as a strong leader who has a great eye for recognising opportunities and has the courage to exploit them. Sonne truthfully believes in his goal and is willing to tolerate great uncertainty to reach it. This can undoubtedly be

transferred to conventional business as a charismatic leadership style and the ability to recognise an opportunity do not have to be in a social economic perspective. Basically, Sonne has managed to combine a specific trait hold by a unique group of people and combined it with a very specific kind of tasks. This can also very likely be transferred to conventional business.

Another perspective of how Specialisterne can help social entrepreneurial companies to become part of conventional business is by breaking down the boundaries between the two types of businesses. It has been demonstrated in this thesis that Specialisterne have managed to operate in three different sectors and expanded the common thought of a social entrepreneurial company as 'just being non-profit', giving the 'regular' companies competition by e.g. when they proclaim they are best-in-class. So if social entrepreneurial companies should learn from Specialisterne one important take-away from this case is to break down the boundaries to conventional business and aim to become best in class.

2. In which way does Specialisterne differ from a classical business model, and do these differences create value?

The discussion of this analysis question is mainly focused on the findings from the empirical analysis in combination with the theoretical analysis.

It was found in the analysis that Specialisterne differ from classical business model by having a unique workforce from which they can generate a very unique service product. Another important factor of Specialisterne's business model is that it contains three different units all with the same ambition, to give people diagnosed with ASD a higher joy-value. STU aims at educating young people and develop their professional, personal, and social skills. AEA aims to clarify the candidates' special skills so they can map the candidates' skills and needs to perform optimal in a job situation. Finally, BIZ hire people diagnosed with ASD as consultants. These three units combined give a very strong business model hard for others to imitate. A third aspect where Specialisterne differs from a classical business model is that they manage to operate in three different sectors and get the best from all of them. The sectors analysed in this thesis was; the private sector, the public sector, and the non-profit sector. From the private sector it was found that Specialisterne gained favourable agreements (good terms on their short-term liabilities), it was also found that Specialisterne managed to use CSR in a way to gain access to companies but at the same time were able to take a distance to

CSR so they could maintain their professional business image for people not only interested in supporting a charity case but wants a best-in-class product. In the public sector Specialisterne gained *shared value* by integrating with the government in a way that is beneficial for both parties. Finally in the non-profit sector Specialisterne gets pro bono assistance from Deloitte and free LEGO-Mindstorm products to AEA. Also Specialisterne differentiates themselves from a classical business model is the extensive network Sonne has managed to build on his *good story*. By this story he has gained a lot of support and has become member of a global social entrepreneurial network, ASHOKA.

This gives Specialisterne a competitive advantage over other IT-consultancy companies, as the barriers to imitate are higher, consequently, this creates value since Specialisterne is in a better position towards potential new competitors. All these differences are creating value for Specialisterne in different ways.

3. How can the employment of people diagnosed with ASD create value for society?

This analysis question will mainly draw in findings from the empirical analysis in combination with the justification analysis. Throughout this thesis it has been found that different types of value exist; *social, business, shared, economic, customer, marketing, budget, off-budget, joy*, and finally *joint value*. All these different types of value are all equally important when analysing a social entrepreneurial company as Specialisterne, since they all have to be studied when evaluating the outcome. However, some of them can, without losing the perspective of this thesis, be linked together as they roughly represents the same elements.

When people diagnosed with ASD are employed it has been argued in this thesis that it creates a value for society in form of SROI. SROI is a measurement tool to demonstrate the outcome of a social program. This outcome of a social program often has long-term prospects and is, consequently, hard to measure otherwise. The calculation presented and analysed in the empirical analysis revealed a saving for the government of approximately 1.5 million DKK over a five-year period for one person diagnosed with ASD. Lingane & Olsen (2004) did though stress, in the Justification part, how SROI is a measure of helping to understand the social impact of a business but not it should be applied as the solitary measurement. The off budget values, such as joy value (e.g. higher self-esteem) has likewise been found to increase, as the people who get an education or a job at Specialisterne begin to feel better

about themselves and starts to own their own money, as a consequence begin to pay taxes and gets a higher consumption. Thus creating value for society. The employment of people diagnosed with ASD has proven to be quite beneficial for society since it not only save the government money but also creates value through tax payments and increased consumption.

4. How can Specialisterne play a role in sustainable business development?

This last analysis question will mainly take point of departure from the findings in the last part of the analysis; Justification. Throughout this thesis it has been argued that Specialisterne possess many of the attributes of a sustainable company, mainly based on their social entrepreneurial characteristics. The elements it is discussed in relation to are SROI, CSR and TBL, all which clearly demonstrated that Specialisterne are considered a sustainable company. To answer this question and discuss how Specialisterne can play a role in sustainable business development, I draw in comments from professor Austin. As stated in the beginning of this paper, he believe Specialisterne contribute to the 21'st century management by creating this simple, but still relatively new, thought of leading employees based on their needs and not what is most suitable for the company. This is done at Specialisterne without any exception, as if they try and make the employees fit into the organisation, instead of the other way around, their employees simply would not be able to perform their best and in worst case; the employees would not be able to work at all. One of the most important things in business today is to develop knowhow and be innovative and this has Specialisterne done very well in their business model. Austin also states that other companies can learn a lot from how Specialisterne make room for employees who in some way differs from the 'regular' employee because it is those who create long-term value. Specialisterne has proven to be a company where a new way of thinking about business has risen; adjust the company to the employees and not the other way around which is why their business model can be regarded as both inspirational and innovative.

6.2 Discussion on theories

This paragraph will discuss how applicable the chosen theories have been for a social entrepreneurial company. As some of the theories chosen for this thesis basically are aimed at traditionally entrepreneurial companies one of the main challenges in this thesis has been to

select theories that are relevant both for social entrepreneurship, business models, and also serve the purpose of this thesis.

The theoretical framework offered by Dacin et al. (2010) provided a solid tool for analysing different aspects of Specialisterne. This, combined with other literature from the fields of entrepreneurship and social entrepreneurship, made the findings stand strong throughout the thesis. However, the theory on social entrepreneurship had some limitations, these will be discussed in a later paragraph.

Magretta's (2002) theory for analysing a business model is not as strong analytical framework as it only provides two overall measurements for analysing Specialisterne, which is why it is applied in this thesis with another purpose; to give an insight in the construction of Specialisterne. This theory was used to pull out two important factors of the business model of Specialisterne, if their story made sense and if their profit and loss added up.

Other important theories in the thesis was primarily taken from the conventional entrepreneurial field, as it sometimes were difficult to find theories within the social entrepreneurial field to cover my research. Nevertheless, I do not feel it has weakened my findings that I had to draw on material from conventional entrepreneurship, but one should have in mind that it can have had an effect on the findings. Some of the important theories were Venkataraman (1997) which assisted to get a theoretical understanding of why and how Sonne recognised the opportunity to establish Specialisterne. Dees et al. (2002) provided a framework to analyse the three different sectors that Specialisterne operates in. Finally Kanter (1999) and Porter and Kramer (2006, 2011) provided tools for analyse the joint-value, which arise when Specialisterne collaborates with the government.

6.3 Discussion on methodology

I have chosen to write this thesis based on a single case study. I got interested in Specialisterne after I heard of their business and wanted to explore what made them this unique social entrepreneurial company. In analysing this uniqueness a thorough investigation is needed, this is possible when a single case-study approach is chosen. This single case study allowed many inquiring analytical perspectives to appear. With the aim to investigate this special phenomenon, the methodology chosen, offered valuable findings that are based in a real life context and can be somehow applicable to other social entrepreneurial companies in the start-up phase looking for inspiration. Still, this should be done with consideration to the

context. However, two challenges occurred in the process; firstly, since this has been a study of a unique case company, it could be difficult to generalise from the findings.

Nevertheless, the qualitative study has provided detailed information about a Danish social entrepreneurial company's business model, how they have turned it into a sustainable business, and also important how they have managed to expand internationally. These findings could be beneficial for other social entrepreneurial companies, but companies should make sure to consider where they differ from Specialisterne so that the findings are adapted to the unique situation and context this company operate in. Secondly, with the information provided it was difficult to set the limit for the depth of the analysis, as many other areas could be investigated, these areas will be presented later in the paragraph of future research. However, I leave them for others to exploit and feel I explored the things important to answer my research question in the best way

6.4 Discussion on social entrepreneurship

It was found in the theoretical analysis that social entrepreneurial companies differ from conventional companies primarily in terms of their social mission. Dees (1998) further stresses that wealth is just a means to reach social ends for social entrepreneurs. This is also why social entrepreneurial companies have adopted many of the strategies for-profit companies have used through the years, to help them to become profitable so they can reach their social goals.

Some claims that by focus on generating both social value and business value is somewhat counterintuitive goals (Hockerts 2006). However, this discussion has not been the focus of this thesis. What has been interesting is to discover whether it is sustainable for a company to strive at both generating social value and obtain business value.

Another discussion started in chapter 3 was: where is the line between social entrepreneurship and conventional entrepreneurship? As mentioned in the very beginning of this thesis, the aim of Specialisterne is to: *“change the worldview of people with ASD and to create a greater inclusion to the community”*¹⁰⁴, and as they reach more and more customers, this aim is somehow not that far away. If Specialisterne, and SPF, continue to grow and expand in the same pace as the last year, then many companies will soon get to know them and perhaps many more will chose to hire specialist people as part of their own staff, just as IBM chose to

¹⁰⁴<http://specialisterne.com/dk/om>

do. This could seem like Specialisterne are getting closer to being considered a ‘regular’ company and thereby obtaining the greatest status *to become mainstream*. Hockerts (2006:23-24) argues how both The Body Shop and Ben and Jerry’s have reached their ultimate goal of going mainstream in this quote: “*The Body Shop and Ben & Jerry’s once were archetypical social enterprises but now many people would consider them respectively ‘mere’ soap and ice cream manufactures [...] today recyclable packing and corporate social reporting have become standard elements of any large multinational [...] What more can a social entrepreneur aspire to?*” This relates to Schramm’s (2010) central argument that depending on the glasses one is wearing, many products and services could be claimed to have social benefits. So when people (customers) get used to a social entrepreneurial product in such a manner that the *special* thing about this product becomes a norm and a standard, then the line between the two fields get blurred and somehow disappear.

6.5 Future perspective

This paragraph outlines possible prospects and tensions Specialisterne can meet in the future based on the data collected for this thesis. This is somewhat a practical view and is regarded towards Specialisterne. A prospect for Specialisterne is to go into other industries; Sonne in his conference speech¹⁰⁵ states how he believes Specialisterne’s future look like:

“Question from audience: What are the future prospects for Specialisterne?”

Sonne: Well, we started out in the IT sector because that is where I had my background, if I had been a banker, or if I had been working in a hospital, I would have been standing here, telling you how good people are working in that field. I think there are no limitations. I think that in maybe 5 % of all business areas, you will find tasks that require a good memory and where details have to be of very high standard. Where others see the devil in the details, we have people that see passion. I think the corporate sector really needs specialist people. I think it is a matter of imagination, but my claim is that these 5 % of all tasks in any business will do just as well with our specialist people, and if that is the case, then it is not a problem at all [...] We are just at the starting point - we will develop many business areas over the next ten years I think.” This I will agree upon, based on the findings in this thesis Specialisterne could expand their business model to other areas or other industries. However,

¹⁰⁵ Sonne, conference speech

if they chose to do so they have to be aware of the context of the new business and adjust their findings and experience from Specialisterne to the new industry.

A future tension for Specialisterne could be the conflicting goals with SPF. So far the business has proven to be successful for both Specialisterne and SPF, however if both parts should be just as successful in the future, they have to somehow align their conflicting goals. Now it seems kind of harmless, as SPF are expanding through their licensees branches, but if SPF reach their goal and reach an 'epidemic'-effect through their academy, it would be difficult to control the knowledge as it would go mainstream, and the knowledge will be available for everyone. This could harm the business of Specialisterne, as they operate on market terms and has to generate a profit to survive. A solution for this could be if SPF maintained the 'licensee' level, but then it would be harder for them to reach the goal of 1 million jobs for people diagnosed with ASD. So basically it is a cost-benefit whether SPF wants to reach their goal fast, or if they want to make sure their branches can remain profitable.

Chapter 7

Conclusion

Based on my analysis questions, my analysis and findings it has been shown how it will be possible for social entrepreneurial companies to become part of conventional business by having a strong charismatic leader who can tolerate uncertainty and risks to reach his (social) goal. Specialisterne have also rendered it easier for other social entrepreneurial companies to become part of mainstream business by breaking down some of the boundaries between social entrepreneurial business and conventional business.

I further found that Specialisterne on some aspects differs from a classical business model, and that these differences create value. Specialisterne's main difference compared to a conventional business model is their unique workforce from which they can generate a unique product and brand. Another difference is that they manage to operate in three different sectors and thereby expanding the conventional belief in that a social entrepreneurial company only operate as non-profit organisation. This is creating value for Specialisterne as they in the private sector operate for-profit on market terms but still have the advantage to use CSR to reach companies which they otherwise could not have reached and therefore have the possibility to get favourable agreements with financial institutions. In the public sector Specialisterne manage to create *shared value* as they integrate with the government in a way that is beneficial for both parties. In the non-profit sector Specialisterne have the advantage to receive pro-bono assistance from different partners, as they are eager to help Specialisterne with their cause. This creates higher barriers to imitate, consequently, a competitive advantage.

Additionally, I discovered that the employment of people diagnosed with ASD creates value for society in several ways. One of my main findings was that by measuring the SROI a great financial saving for the society of a social program like Specialisterne was shown. Moreover I found that the off-budget values such as joy-value (e.g. higher self-esteem) also increased for the people who were employed at Specialisterne. Consequently, to employ people diagnosed

with ASD has proven to be quite beneficial for society as the government saves money and at the same time start to collect money through taxes and increased consumption.

Lastly, I investigated how Specialisterne can play a role in sustainable business development. This was answered by analysing Professor Austin's comments on innovation and the 21'st century new management style. Here I found that Specialisterne get employees who perform better by making space for their employees and allowing them to be who they are, this could very well play a role in sustainable business development. Specialisterne has proven to be a company where a new way of thinking about business has risen; adjust the company to the employees and not the other way around which is why their business model can be regarded as both inspirational and innovative.

Summing up the answers to my analysis questions leads up to finally answer my research question:

How is it possible for Specialisterne to be innovative, sustainable, and social entrepreneurial when employing people diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder as a new resource in the workforce?

I will start by argue that Specialisterne is a social entrepreneurial company as founder, Sonne, saw a social problem and was willing to bear great uncertainty to solve this problem. Sonne recognised an opportunity for raising the joy-value for people diagnosed with ASD and at the same time create a business and a foundation expanding throughout the world. By employing people diagnosed with ASD Specialisterne are innovative as they manage to turn people considered outside the workforce around to be the single most important part of their workforce. This creates a completely new way of thinking about how to view employees and management in the future, and not just in social entrepreneurial companies, but also in conventional business. Lastly, Specialisterne is sustainable as they create value to society and at the same time generate value for their own business. In this way Specialisterne contribute to a sustainable society by create *shared value*.

To sum up, Specialisterne has managed to capture innovation, sustainability, and social entrepreneurship in their business and turn it into a company people worldwide see as something worth to invest in. This must be considered to be a success factor beyond what most entrepreneurs reach.

Chapter 8

Further research

This chapter has a more academic view and outline some of the fields I have come across when writing this thesis that could be interesting for future research. I believe the field of social entrepreneurship has great relevance in future research as it is important to understand what makes this field so unique e.g. to make future investors trust in funding companies that have a social goal. Through Specialisterne's existence, funding has been a strong factor for their success. How are they funded, and what makes companies and private persons willing to donate money to them? These questions could be interesting to investigate further.

Another field that could be interesting to investigate is the network-effect in social entrepreneurial companies. In this thesis it has been found that Sonne has a great network and has managed to use this as an advantage by establishing an ambassador corps from which he can gain knowledge and experience from; experts within business, networks, and autism. It could be interesting to investigate if the characteristics of networks in social entrepreneurial companies are different than networks in 'regular' companies, and if so what this difference means for the social entrepreneur.

The last field I will mention is the ethical perspective present when dealing with a social entrepreneurial company. In the beginning of this thesis it was mentioned that the aim here was not to discuss the ethical dilemma of hiring people diagnosed with ASD. Later I argued that Specialisterne might have an advantage compared to a 'regular' IT consultancy company as financial institutions might give them a little slack as few institutions will be responsible for the closure of a social entrepreneurial company with such a good cause. Further I will argue that few companies in general will take advantage of Specialisterne when doing business with them, because the interaction with a social entrepreneurial company is highly based on ethical relations. This could also be very interesting to investigate.

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<http://www.kmd.dk/da/Pages/default.aspx>

Specialisterne

<http://specialisterne.com/dk/>

Specialist People Foundation

<http://specialistpeople.com/>

TDC

<http://tdc.dk/>

Lectures

Robert Austin about Specialisterne and visionary leadership at DR.dk/Danskernes Akademi (danish academy)

http://www.dr.dk/DR2/Danskernes+akademi/Oekonomi_Ledelse/Specialisterne_og_fremsynet_ledelse.htm

Ole Sylvester Jørgensen about Aspergers Syndrome as a special development profile at DR.dk/Danskernes Akademi (Danish academy)

http://www.dr.dk/DR2/Danskernes+akademi/Sundhed_Sygdom/Aspergers_syndrom_som_en_saerlig_udviklingsprofil.htm

Appendices

The following will be in appendix:

1. Interview guide – Thomsen
2. Interview guide – Jørgensen
3. Overview over transcript – conference speeches
4. Theme colours

The following will be on enclosed CD-ROM

Transcripts of interview conducted in the spring 2011 and transcripts of different speeches held at the Specialist People Foundation Congress in May 2011.

Interview – Thomsen

Interview – Jørgensen

Conference speech – Sonne

Conference speech - Thomsen

Conference speech - Thygesen

Conference speech - Austin

Conference speech – Lindegaard

Conference speech - Haghshenas & Krasilnikoff

Slideshow from conference – Sonne

Slideshow from conference – Thomsen

Slideshow from conference – Thygesen

Slideshow from conference – Austin

Slideshow from conference – Lindegaard

Slideshow from conference - Haghshenas & Krasilnikoff

App. 1. Interview guide – Henrik Thomsen

Idegrundlag for interview

Vi ønsker at få mere konkret viden om Specialisterne og deres forretningsmodel.

Vores hypotese

Vi forventer, at det er en virksomhed med en humanitær kultur, der bygger på at udbrede viden om ASD og inkorporerer personer med ASD i samfundet ved at lade dem indgå i arbejdsstyrken.

Struktur

Semi structured interview (approx. 30 min)

Spørgsmål

Navn på interview person og titel: Henrik Thomsen, CEO.

Område til besvarelse: Strategi, kontrolsystemer, økonomi, kunder og forretningsmodel

Introduktion

- Hvad er din baggrund i firmaet?
- Hvad er dine daglige arbejdsopgaver og ansvarsområder i firmaet?

Forretningsmodel og koncept

Jeres forretningsmodel er unik ved at være den først til at anvende autisters særlige evner og bygger derfor meget på jeres medarbejdere.

Medarbejdere

- Hvad lægger I vægt på når I rekrutterer? Attitude? Evner?
- Arbejder I med forskellige kategorier af ansatte? (Hvilke specialiserings områder er der?)
- Hvilke typer af karriereveje stiller virksomheden til rådighed? Hvilken type af efteruddannelse?

Forretningsmodel

Barrier til at imitere.

- Hvor nemt kan man kopier jeres forretningsmodel? Er der eksempler på dette?

Specialisterne har som virksomhed fra starten klaret sig på markedsmæssige vilkår, dog er det fremhævet at Specialisterne indgår i partnerskab med store virksomheder, der har en høj social ansvarlighed.

- Hvordan skal dette forstås? Hvis I ønsker at fremstå som en "best in class" og ikke et velgørenhedsprojekt. Eller er begge dele muligt samtidigt?
- Der står i ledelsesberetningen at de vil arbejde på markedsvilkår, bliver denne strategi ved med at holde selvom der ikke har været et stabilt overskud alle år?

Samarbejdspartnere

- Har det resulteret i særlig støtte fra private eller offentlige institutioner? (LEGO, Deloitte, kommuner?)
- Legofonden lagde 750.000 i egenkapital i oprettelsen af fonden, har de nogen andel i fonden?
- LEGO er en samarbejdspartner til jeres firma. Hvordan er den aftale kommet i stand?

Udvikling

Specialisterne er grundlagt af Thorkil Sonne.

- I hvilken grad er Thorkil Sonne stadig en del af firmaet? Hvad er hans rolle?
- I hvilken grad bygger værdierne i firmaet stadig på hans tanker og visioner?
- Hvilke erfaringer har I gjort jer undervejs? Er det noget der har forandret sig ved ansættelsesprocessen siden Specialisterne startede?

Strategi

- Hvilke udfordringer står virksomheden overfor i henholdsvis et ét-årigt og et femårigt perspektiv? (profit, markedsvilkår?)
- Hvordan holder I jer opdateret med de ændringer der sker i markedet? (for eksempel netværk og brugere)

Struktur i organisation

- Governance structure?
- Tredelt organisation, hvordan fungerer kommunikationen?
- Vidensdeling – over lande grænser (Skotland). Central styringen fra DK?
- Ekspanderes der via lokale kontorer og eller cross-boarder service ydelser?

Ungdomsuddannelsen

I dag er der 25 unge på skolen og I forventer det stiger til 40 i løbet af 2011.

- Hvad er jeres visioner for uddannelsen på lang sigt?

Udvidelsen

- Hvilke lande har I planer om at ekspandere til? (fem større byer i Europa inden 2011, tidshorisont?)
- Hvorfor lige de lande? Geografi (cluster), kultur, markedsvilkår?
- Ekspedering: samme strategi i forskellige markeder? Vs. Forskellige fremgangsmåder.

Konkurrenter og IT marked

- Hvem anser I som de største konkurrenter? Hvorfor?
- Anses billigere firmaer som større konkurrenter efter den finansielle krise? Eller kan de billigere (= dårligere kvalitets) produkt ikke sammenlignelig med Specialisternes produkt?

Kunder

- Hvem er de typiske kunder? På jeres hjemmeside fremgår der hovedsageligt større organisationer som kunder. Er der også mindre firmaer der vælger at samarbejde med jer?
- Hvilke af virksomhedens leverancer oplever du, at kunderne betragter som de mest værdifulde?

- I hvilket omfang og hvordan indgår kundernes viden i virksomheden leverancer? Lytter I til kundernes behov? (push vs. Pull).

Økonomi

- I har også været ramt af den finansielle krise. Kan I her i 2010-2011 begynde at mærke en forbedring i forhold til opgaver?
- Hvad ligger til grund for at ekspandere til udlandet? Efterspørgsel? Jagt på markedsandele?
- Har der været mange udgifter i forbindelse med ekspanderingen?

Revisorpåtegningen med at fonden i 2009 har tabt mere end 50 % af egenkapitalen.

- Tror I indtjeningen fra driften kan dække det, (eftersom egenkapitalen har været negativ de fleste år).

Fremtidige mål

- Målet er at skabe mindst 100 job for mennesker med ASF i Danmark samt 1.000 job på internationalt plan.
- Fondens mål: At skabe 1 mil jobs for specialistpersonligheder på verdensplan
- Delmål /milestones?
- Status i dag?

Generelle spørgsmål

Lige for at runde af og høre Henriks mening og interviewet og om han har uddybende kommentarer til ting vi måske har overset.

- Er der nogle spørgsmål du undrer jer over at vi ikke har spurgt om?
- Fra dit perspektiv hvad er så de vigtigste tematikker vi har berørt?

Tak for hjælpen!

App. 2. Interview guide - Ole Sylvester Jørgensen

Medicinsk ekspertudtagelse om Specialisternes forretningsmodel

Formål med interview

Vores formål med dette interview er at få en forklaring på hvad autisme er, hvordan det påvirker menneskers handlinger og for at klarlægge hvorvidt autister ikke er i stand til et 37 timers job.

Vores hypotese

At autisme er en 'usynlig' sygdom som i større eller mindre grad nedsætter de sociale kompetencer, gør personen mere detaljeorienteret og kan give enten større eller mindre IQ, kan gøre personen i stand til at koncentrere sig 100 % i længere perioder.

Struktur

Semi structured interview (approx. 30 min)

Interview emne

Ole Sylvester Jørgensen, f. 1943, dansk speciallæge i børnepsykiatri, pensioneret overlæge ved Bispebjerg Hospital i København og klinisk lektor i børne- og ungdomspsykiatri ved Københavns universitet.

Ole Sylvester Jørgensen er forsker i børneneuropsykiatri og har særligt interesseret sig for grænsetilstande mellem autismspektret og andre psykiatriske diagnoser som fx skizofreni.

Spørgsmål

Om ham

I din professionelle karriere som speciallæge har du har beskæftiget dig en del med autister.

- Har der efter din mening været en stigning af autisme-diagnoserede indenfor de sidste 10 år? Hvis ja, kunne det skyldes en bedre og hurtigere diagnosticering?
- Vil du sige at det er muligt at definere nogle generelle styrker og svagheder hos autisme-diagnoserede? (F.eks.: Strengths: High level of concentration, pattern

recognition /Vulnerability: Missing overview and communicative misunderstandings (source: Specialisterne).

- Er det nogle af de svagheder der gør at det ikke er muligt for mange at have en 37 timers arbejdsuge?

Om Specialisterne

- Hvornår hørte du første gang om Specialisterne?
- På hvilken måde har du været involveret i et samarbejde med Specialisterne?
(Hans rolle: Legitimize concept?/dokumentere fra medicins vinkel?/ konsulent?)

Specialisterne har bygget deres forretningsmodel på at vende et ”disability” til et ”ability”

- Specialisterne bruger primært folk diagnosticeret med Asperger syndrom. Hvordan adskiller denne form af autisme sig fra de andre?
- Vil du sige det er muligt at de generelle karaktertræk hos autister er nok til at bygge en forretningsmodel på det? (Specialisterne siger alle behandles individuelt, men det er stadig inden for ”faste” rammer)
- Er det sandsynligt at de vil kunne producere hvad man vil kalde et ”unik” produkt pga. deres ansattes særlige karaktertræk?

Det fremtidigt ”marked” for at ansætte autister

Vi har flere gange hørt at det ville være muligt at overføre idéen fra Specialisterne til andre brancher.

- -Hvilke andre jobmuligheder ser du som kunne være ideelle til deres specielle kompetencer?

Set fra et etisk perspektiv

- Hvordan er dit syn på etik og det at ansætte autismer? Hvor går grænsen med at de får mere livskvalitet og risikoen ved at kunne forringe den (evt stress)?
- Griber SP der rigtig an med de tiltag de gør? (e.g. lønforhandlinger?)

Afsluttende

Er der noget som du synes vi mangler at spørge dig om, eller viden som du tror kunne være til hjælp for vores projekt?

Tak for hjælpen!

App. 3. Overview of transcript

1. Notes for: Conference speech, Thorkil Sonne

Welcome: people from many countries

Opportunity discovery: *The good story*: The story about Thorkil Sonne's son Lars, and how he got the idea for the business through prior knowledge with IT (from TDC) and his experience with Lars and his "special" abilities. He founded the project though a mortgage in his own house = great risk

Opportunity evaluation: *The Danish welfare system*: As funding mechanism. The Danish welfare system is made for visible disabilities. But I have also learned that if you have an invisible challenge, then you really have to depend on your peers, your supporters, in order to get the right support.

Opportunity exploitation: *Finance and organizational design*: social entrepreneurs, financing the project

The Dandelion Model: if you create a work environment where it is the people who have autism who are the normal once, because they are the majority, and we have to live with their terms. We call our way of thinking, the Dandelion Model

Vision and goal: Global expansion

Mission and values: We want to base everything we do on four values: Respect, Accommodation, Accessibility and Clarity.

Networks and media: using the media as marketing tool. ASOKA,

2. Notes for: Conference speech, Henrik Thomsen

Welcome

The business model: Business, assessment and education. The daily life and the "three legs" of SP.

The Specialist People: The identification of specialist people, work force, characteristics of specialist people, employees of SP

Society and customers: "No nonsense"-internships, customer comment, CSR, why SP makes good business sense. Customers: NOKIA, TCD, Odecon hearing aid company, STC for banking in Scandinavia. - Business associates with us, called "Pretty good testing."

3. Notes for: Conference speech, Robert Austin

Welcome: things we need to know to create value better in many businesses as we go forward into the 21st century, innovation

The Story and joy-value: the company's challenge here is to take the things that are special about this group of people and to turn them into strengths, and that is the skill, and it is important in a lot of other contexts

Social Return on Investments: societal value, cost of unemployed autistic person

Examples of other famous ‘Special People’: Examples of success “autistic” people.

21st century- a new way of manage people: “Inspired peculiarities” can become strengths,

Röntgen example: To create differentiation, to create innovation, you have to begin with differences.

21st century- a new way of manage people: Industrial value creation story

New kind of distribution: normal probability distribution, is not about averages, it is about outliers

Dandelion model and innovation: G. Shaw: *The reasonable man* - citation - an important strategic change in the world: if you are not innovative and just really good at efficiency - that means that you are competing on costs, - a big chunk of the world that has an unfair advantage in competing on costs, and its not here in Denmark, Its places where there are almost infinite labor supplies.

4. Notes for: Conference speech, Steen Thygesen

Welcome: Focus on Specialist People Foundation

Their goal and how to reach it: For profit, not for profit, business vs. foundation. The members of SPF. How to expand by going mainstream.

How will they scale: branches, licensees and this dissemination concept.--> set the concept free.

Development in 2010: Deloitte pro bono work, Glasgow

Expanding: Iceland, Berlin ect. - Every country are different - adapting the business concept in every locating demands, finding entrepreneur to drive it locally.

Partnerships: LEGO, Bikuben-fonden, AP møller, Deloitte ect.

The academy: Corporate partners is a really key for SP

Strategic planning – moving forward: We need less project specific and we need more unrestricted that help us deliver our mission

5. Notes for: Conference speech, Bahare Haghshenas (SPF) & Gitte Krasilnikoff (Deloitte)

Focus: Organization structure

Generic model: Two different areas: the first area is the assessment and training area, funding of SP – different in different countries

Operational model: training skill, use LEGO to assess peoples skills, tailor-made a training program.

Questions from the audience: Selection procedure, unique competences, local market- local costs

Expansion: Funding, the Danish show case and the different model in other countries that does not have the same welfare system, exemplified by Glasgow. Could e.g. be intuition based.

6. Notes for: Conference speech, Mette Lindegaard (Deloitte)

Welcome

Social Return on Investment (SROI): Macro trends in society. Aid analysis: if only one of five people succeeded in the program, it would be worth more than a program for 500 people.

MOSES model and IRIS model

Questions from the audience: WHO to measure improvements of life, long-term perspective in our political decisions

App. 4. Theme colours

Business model	- Red
Financial situation – Social Return on Investment	- Grey
Strategy and Global perspective	- Green
Social Entrepreneur	- Pink
CSR	- Turquoise
Innovation	- Yellow