

# Student-company fair: A fresh breath of life into AAU PBL model



By Associate Professor Romeo V. Turcan

Problem based learning (PBL) model has now been acknowledged worldwide as a powerful tool that allows students, faculty members and industry practitioners engage in multi-disciplinary, collaborative and geographically distributed activities. On May 23, a student-company fair was organized that brought together the MSc students from IVØ (International Business Economics) and MAC (Management, Accounting and Control) and companies from Northern Jutland.

The aim of the fair was to generate internship opportunities for the master students by engaging them in a direct dialogue with the entrepreneurs and local communes. Just over 20 students took part in the event; the business side was represented by 9 companies, three communes and an EU project that supports international innovation activities of 90 companies from the region.

This event is part of a larger project called "Why cannot Northern Jutland be as an incubator?" The project was initiated by IVØ and SEA (Supporting Entrepreneurship at Aalborg) in January of this year. The aim of the project is manifold; it aims to contribute to

- Foster entrepreneurship, business development and SME growth in the Northern Jutland region of Denmark
- Further the lifelong learning in the region
- Nurture wider participation of local communes in the university-business cooperation initiatives.

The project was launched in February when a student-company fair was organized with the aim to generate opportunities for semester projects for IVØ BSc students. A total number of 50 students (in groups of 5) and 8 companies from NOVI took part in the fair. The quotes below from the students who took part in the event speak for themselves:

"We should forget our personal fight during the meeting and talk as a group without problems; the company doesn't have to feel that people in the group don't like each other".

"The thing that 'we have to sell ourselves' to the company was very attractive - it gave us experience which we will need when looking for a job in a future and going to work interviews".

"Really it was a fantastic idea, not only did we enjoy the morning, but it was a great experience that enables us as a group to be spontaneous. Speed dating with companies is the way forward as it opens up many possibilities!"

When asked to reflect on their experience with the students, this is what the entrepreneurs had to say:

"It forces us (the company) to use and adapt to our case a business development method that will be used long after the student project is finished. It allowed us to test our method to find the first cash flow."

"Personally I am glad I have worked with the group and hopefully I have been able to show them something from the "real" life they can use later on in their work life."

The next step in our project is to extend its scope by developing a two year program targeting MSc students (from IVØ) and entrepreneurs not only who run young start-ups but also established businesses from Northern Jutland. As an example, the program will start in the autumn semester with a semester project during which companies and the students will have a chance to learn more about each other; in the spring semester project, the students will work on a specific problem formulated by the company; the students will then have the opportunity to have their internship in the company for up to 6 months during the autumn semester; with the possibility to write their master dissertation on the basis of the company. The intent is to implement this stage during the period of 2011-2013.

## For more information ...

- Kenneth Pedersen from SEA is the administrative project coordinator and facilitator (kep@adm.aau.dk), ([www.sea.aau.dk](http://www.sea.aau.dk))
- Romeo V. Turcan from IVØ is the academic project coordinator (rvt@business.aau.dk), ([www.ivo.aau.dk](http://www.ivo.aau.dk)).

Visit <http://personprofil.aau.dk/116727> (under projects) to learn more about the project.

*Students pitching their teams to entrepreneurs.*

