Sustainable Development in Tourism Education
A Comparative Study of Tourism Education in Upper Secondary Technical and Vocational Education and Training in Finland and Sweden

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Abstract

According to the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO), tourism has become one of the fastest growing industries in the world. The grandeur of the hospitality and tourism industry, along with globalization, advancements in technology and climate change has impacted on needs to travel, live and work in sustainable ways. This places an increasing demand on the tourism industry to act accountably in the practice of social, economic and environmental sustainability. With the adoption of the United Nations Agenda 2030 for sustainable development, sustainability has become a primary global focus with 17 sustainable development goals and associated targets (SDGs). This shift has also impacted on tourism education. There is little research, however, in secondary tourism education and the presence of sustainability in the curriculum. Previous research has established that teachers, students, and other stakeholders consider sustainable development (SD) in tourism education as important. Nonetheless, there is a gap and a lack of research on the presence of SD in tourism and technical and vocational education and training (TVET) across national borders and at upper secondary tourism education levels. This calls for current research of an international and comparative kind, in order to deepen the knowledge in the field. In this thesis, the three dimensions of sustainability in the SDGs are used as a frame to explore the presence of SD in the upper secondary tourism curricula in Finland and Sweden. A comparative study was employed using content analysis. The study discovered that although the Finnish and Swedish tourism curricula generally align well to the SDGs dimensions of sustainability, the presence of SD is fragmented and unclear. There is a need for a more holistic approach to SD in the tourism curricula.

Keywords: Sustainable Development, Technical Vocational Education and Training, Tourism Education, Comparative Study
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<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DESD</td>
<td>Decade of Education for Sustainable Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>EFA</td>
<td>Education for All</td>
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<td>GERM</td>
<td>Global Education Monitoring Report</td>
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<td>ILO</td>
<td>International Labour Organization</td>
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<td>ISCED</td>
<td>International Standard of Classification of Education</td>
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<td>MDGs</td>
<td>Millennium Development Goals</td>
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<td>NAE</td>
<td>Swedish National Agency for Education (Skolverket)</td>
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<td>SD</td>
<td>Sustainable Development</td>
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<td>SDGs</td>
<td>Sustainable Development Goals</td>
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<td>TVET</td>
<td>Technical and Vocational Education and Training</td>
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<td>UNCED</td>
<td>United Nations Conference on Environment and Development</td>
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<td>UNWTO</td>
<td>United World Tourism Organization</td>
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<td>WCED</td>
<td>World Commission on the Environment and Development</td>
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Acknowledgements

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Chapter 1: Introduction and the Frame of the Study

1.1 Background

According to United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO), tourism is not only one of the largest global industries, but it has become one of the fastest growing industries in the world (UNWTO, 2016). The grandeur of the tourism industry, along with globalization, immense rapid technological progress and climate change have impacted needs to travel, live and work in a sustainable way. This impact place an increasing demand on the hospitality and tourism industry to act responsibly in the practice of social, economic and environmental sustainability.

Sustainable development (SD) was first introduced to the international community in 1987 by the World Commission on the Environment and Development (WCED) and in 1992 by the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCE). The alignment of sustainable development and education gained further attention when the United Nations declared 2005 - 2014 as the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD). Most recently, in 2015, the United Nations adopted the Agenda 2030 for sustainable development with 17 sustainable development goals and associated targets (SDGs)(UN, 2015). Goal number four is centered on education (UN, 2015).

Additionally, there has been a growing interest in the linkage between Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) and SD in the last decades. The two concepts were first interspersed at the Second International Congress held in Soul 1999 (UNESCO, 1999). In addition, the potential of TVET has been recognized by various stakeholders to develop human capabilities and individual empowerment along with socio-economic growth (Pavlova, 2009; Tikly, 2013; UNESCO, 1999). The SDGs not only include primary education but also have a specific target focusing on TVET (UN, 2015, 4.4). As a result, TVET has finally been placed in the forefront of the international political agenda.

In 2016, 1 of 11 jobs was provided directly, indirectly or induced by the tourism industry. That industry employs 12 million people in Europe alone (Eurostat, 2015; UNWTO, 2016). Furthermore, the tourism industry attracts a young labor force with limited educational experiences (Eurostat, 2015). The disciplinary field of TVET can, therefore, become a potential provider of skills and relevant training in sustainable development to serve the global tourism industry with competent future professionals.
Previous research has established that teachers, students, and other stakeholders consider SD in hospitality and tourism education to be important (Barber, Deale & Goodman, 2011; Boley, 2011; Deale, Nichols & Jacques, 2009). Nonetheless, there is a gap in knowledge and a lack of research on the presence of sustainable development and the extent to which it is explicitly stated in TVET across national borders and at upper secondary tourism education levels. This calls for current research of an international and comparative kind, to deepen the knowledge in the field of TVET.

For this study, a content analysis of the tourism curriculum was conducted to compare the presence of sustainability in Sweden and Finland and the connectedness to the SDGs. The intention is to provide multiple perspectives with micro, meso and macro levels of SD in TVET and tourism education. This thesis intends to complement earlier studies in the field and sets out to expand the knowledge of TVET and sustainability. It is the intention of this study that it will benefit multiple stakeholders such as policy makers, educators, educational planners and ultimately TVET students and industry professionals.

1.2 Aims and Objectives

The overall aim of this thesis is to critically compare and explore the curricula of the upper secondary vocational education tourism program with specific focus on core aspects of the concept of sustainable development in Finland and Sweden. More precisely, the tourism curricula in both countries are compared and analyzed using UN’s Agenda 2030 for sustainable development as a framework to gain a further understanding of how the national adoption of sustainability aligns with the international agenda of SD. This overall aim is further developed into the following objectives.

1. To explore and identify the presence of sustainable development in the initial TVET tourism curricula of Finland and Sweden.
2. To examine the tourism curricula of Finland and Sweden in order to identify similarities and differences of the presence of sustainability and how it matches the SDGs and Agenda 2030.
3. To contribute knowledge in the field of SD, TVET, and tourism curricula.
1.3 Research Questions

Three research questions have been formulated with the purpose of further specifying the focus of the research. The key research questions underlying this analysis pertain to the concept of SD in the tourism curricula and may be formulated as follows:

1. How and to what extent are the three dimensions of SD dispersed in the upper secondary (ISCED3) tourism curricula in Finland and Sweden?
2. What are the similarities and discrepancies in the findings between Finland and Sweden pertaining to SD in their tourism curricula?
3. How is the distribution of the three dimensions of sustainable development in the tourism curricula of Finland and Sweden aligned to UN’s Agenda 2030 for sustainable development?

1.4 Outline of the Study

In the first chapter, the background of the study, the aims, objectives and research questions are introduced along with previous research in the field. The second chapter outlines the conceptual and theoretical framework for the research. The third chapter presents the two contexts of the study. The methodology of the research is presented in chapter four together with the rationale of the approach implemented in the study and the data collection. The analysis is explained in chapter five. This is succeeded by a discussion of the findings along with reflections on methodological and theoretical decisions in chapter six. Finally, a conclusion will synthesize the main ideas and findings of the study along with recommendations for further research are presented in chapter seven.

1.5 Limitations of the Study

In this study, there were three main limitations. First, the identity of TVET is complex and its format varies in different contexts which can make comparisons challenging (Heikkinen, 2000). To narrow the focus and enhance the comparability of this study, the formal upper secondary level of TVET (ISCED3) was selected in Finland and Sweden. Similarly, the terminology of tourism and tourism education can be ambiguous. For instance, upper secondary tourism education in Finland is offered within the field of tourism, catering and domestic services (Finnish National Board of Education, 2011). In Sweden, the program is
named ‘hotel and tourism programme’ (NAE, 2012). Therefore, to keep the study sharpened, only the specific core tourism courses in these clusters were selected for this study.

Second, the documents selected for data collection and analysis were the curricula in tourism provided by the respective ministries of education that were available to the public. No other national policy documents were used in the comparison because the curricula themselves were of specific interest in this study. While the researcher is aware of the limitation of this approach, it was deemed appropriate because the defined focus will enhance the study and the contribution to tourism curriculum research. Hence, a conscious decision was made not to extend beyond the text of the study. Also, the meaning in curricula is more complex and the investigation could also have included assessment and implementation through interviews and surveys. However, much of this understanding is already presented in previous research, therefore outside the scope of this study.

Third, sustainability is multifaceted. For the purpose of this study, the three dimensions of sustainability used are economic, social and environment elements. Although there are other frameworks available. The dimensions were employed because they have been dominant in previous research in tourism education (Boley, 2011; Flohr, 2001). Similarly, Korösi used the framework in the SDGs which as a consequence will further sharpen the findings and ease the discussion (2014).

1.6 Significance of the Study

In 2015, technical, vocational education and training rose to the forefront of the international and political debate with the adoption of UN’s Sustainable development knowledge platform and the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable development with its 17 sustainable development goals (UN, 2015). Goal 4 and target 4 in the SDGs proposes that, “by 2030, substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship“ (UN, 2015, 4.4). In addition, 4 out of 7 targets are directly or indirectly linked to TVET (UN, 2015). This shows the commitment to SD and the recognition of TVET as a significant instrument in the pursuit of individual and global sustainability. It further confirms that TVET can be a powerful, unprecedented global agent potential to change. Consequently, this requires more research that aligns TVET, sustainable development and Agenda 2030. This research intends to expand previous knowledge in these areas.
In addition, 2017 was declared the UNWTO year of tourism. Hence, the potential of tourism and sustainable development was recognized by the United Nations. The message was clear by, at the time, Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon’s address at the World Tourism Day 2015:

With more than one billion international tourists now traveling the world each year, tourism has become a powerful and transformative force that is making a genuine difference in the lives of millions of people. The potential of tourism for sustainable development is considerable. As one of the world’s leading employment sectors, tourism provides important livelihood opportunities, helping to alleviate poverty and drive inclusive development. (UNWTO, 2016).

With increased tourism, it is imperative that the tourism industry practice sustainability. This could start with educating future tourism professionals in the relevant competencies and skills in sustainable tourism in a TVET setting. Also, Pavlova and Huang argue that sustainable knowledge will be an essential skill required by future employers (2013). A study of tourism curricula can have an important role for educational planners to investigate if the presence of sustainability in the curriculum and if it is aligned with the SD framework (UNESCO, 2016). Furthermore, the Education 2030 Incheon Declaration and Framework for Action for the implementation of Sustainable development states that, “curricula are the main way in which knowledge and skills to promote sustainable development and global citizenship are typically conveyed to students” (UNESCO, 2016 p. 161). Moreover, the Incheon Declaration states “further researching to subject curricula would aid in understanding progress on target 4.7” (UNESCO, 2016, p. 293). This clearly indicates the important role of the curriculum in SD education.

Tourism is highly recognized to be indispensable for human, environmental, and economic development (UNWTO, 2015). However, previous research shows a gap in comparative studies and initial TVET and tourism education (see section 1.7). This calls for more studies of an international and comparative kind. Hence, the present study is significant and highly relevant in numerous ways in its aim to attempt to fill the gap by extending previous research and critically exploring and comparing SD and upper secondary TVET tourism education.
1.7 Previous Research

The research process began with a review of relevant literature and previous research. This is essential in scholarly work to reveal and identify shortcomings, developments, and gaps in previous research (Bryman 2012). Likewise, it allows the study to be placed within previous studies in the field of education, TVET, sustainable development and tourism education.

The first step was a relatively wide and comprehensive review of the field with the purpose of surveying what was already known in the area, along with important previous contributions and significant researchers. Second, a more systematic approach was conducted to identify and explore keywords and to answer the research questions. Numerous research databases were used such as EBSCO, SCOPUS and Stockholm University’s library. In addition, relevant documents from international organizations such as United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) and Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) were reviewed. Theories and key concepts deemed significant for the research will be further discussed in chapter 2.

In TVET, tourism education and sustainable development research, three main issues emerged. First, there is a focus on the pedagogical discussion and the implementation of SD in tourism education. These studies have established that there is a general agreement among various stakeholders that SD is important in tourism education (Barber et al., 2011; Boley, 2013; Deale et al., 2009; Millar & Park, 2013; Pavlova, 2009). Second, previous studies in the field have generally been dominated by tertiary education and there are a limited number of studies in initial upper secondary TVET (Moscardo & Benckendorff 2015; Dredge, Airey & Gross, 2015; Fien, Maclean, & Park, 2009). Thirdly, the definition and identity of TVET varies depending on the context. This could possibly explain the limited number of comparative studies in TVET. In addition, there are various examinations of TVET depending on the provider, ranging from a diploma, to a certificate, to a professional degree. Unsurprisingly, this makes TVET research complex. It also raises the question of comparison and indicators, which can be the reason for the scarce number of comparative studies in upper secondary TVET (Lauterbach & Sellin, 2000; Zhao, 2014). However, previous international comparative studies are available. One relevant study is a comparison of initial TVET between the Nordic countries, German and the UK (Virolainen & Stenström, 2014). It focused on Finnish vocational education and its strength and weaknesses and the outcome of
TVET. Another study compared how SD was implemented in the curricula and teaching in Finnish educational institutions (Rajakorpi & Rajakopi, 2001). It was discovered that SD was more present in TVET than in general education.

The SDGs illuminate the importance of sustainable development on an international scale. Adopted in 2015 by the global community, the SDGs are the guiding frame for the world as part of a new sustainable development agenda with goals and target that should be achieved by 2030 (UN, 2015). “The Sustainable Development Goals and targets are integrated and indivisible, global in nature and universally applicable, taking into account different national realities, capacities and levels of development and respecting national policies and priorities” (UN, 2015, p.13). In other words, they recognize that the goals and targets must be interpreted and adapted to national circumstances. They also focus on monitoring before implementing the goals and targets to fit the needs of meso and micro contexts specific to a nation. However, that entails an initial assessment to verify the current status as a reference point. Hence, more studies are needed in the area of SD.

In sum, although previous research is dominated by case studies and tertiary education, there is a consensus on the importance of SD in tourism and for more curriculum studies (Boley 2011; Fidgeon, 2010, UNESCO, 2016). Although there is a considerable body of research on these topics, this study has no intention to map the entire field. Consequently, this study focuses on upper secondary TVET and SD in tourism curricula, intending to fill the previous gap of knowledge and contribute to the field of international and comparative education. Several key concepts and theories were recurrent in the literature review. Relatedly, some of these frameworks will serve as guiding lenses in this study as well.
Chapter 2: Key Concepts and Theoretical Framework

This chapter presents the relevant key concepts and theoretical frameworks employed in the research to answer the research questions. The purpose is to provide a backdrop and frame in which this study is situated in order to illustrate and depict the various discourses and positions to facilitate the discussion.

First, the overall perspectives of sustainability are introduced. Namely, sustainable development and education for sustainable development. This is followed by a description of technical and vocational education and training, and tourism. Finally, the theoretical framework is introduced and the relationships of the theories are discussed.

2.1 Key Concepts

The concepts used as a foundation for the study, thus requiring explanations and background information include sustainable development (SD), education for sustainable development (ESD), technical and vocational education and training (TVET), ESD in TVET, and sustainability and tourism education.

2.1.1 Sustainable Development (SD)

“Sustainable development is the overarching paradigm of the United Nations” (UNESCO, 2012a, p. 1). However, sustainable development and sustainability are not always easily and clearly defined in the literature. For instance, what is the difference between sustainability and sustainable development? UNESCO explains, “Sustainability is often thought of as a long-term goal (i.e. a more sustainable world), while sustainable development refers to the many processes and pathways to achieve it (e.g. sustainable agriculture and forestry, sustainable production and consumption, good government, research and technology transfer, education and training, etc.)” (UNESCO, 2012a, p.1). Similarly, Thomas describes, “sustainability refers to the capacity of people to adapt and cope with their environments as individuals and as a part of social organizations” (2009, p. 77). “Sustainable development is a more dynamic notion, emphasizing the need for individuals and organizations to actively learn and develop” (Thomas, 2009, p. 77). In this study, both descriptions of sustainable development and sustainability will be used and are sometimes used interchangeably to ease the discussion.

Before proceeding with the discussion of SD and TVET in tourism, it is important to review the concept and its development. SD evolved from the many global economic, environmental
and social problems in the 1970’s and 1980’s which spurred the international community to adopt a different approach to development (Boley, 2011). Hence, linking to environment and development, the Brundtland Report was adopted and the concept SD was popularized by former Norwegian Prime Minister Gro Harlem Brundtland (UN, 1987). In the 1987 World Commission on Environment and Development: Our Common Future, SD is defined as, “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (UN, 1987). Furthermore, at the 1992 United Nations conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro or the Rio Summit, world leaders recognized a shared focus on environmental economic and social SD (UN, 1992). At the World Summit in New York in 2005, the three dimensions of sustainable development were presented: the economic, social and environmental (UN, 2005). Clearly, the global understanding of sustainable development has developed over the past decades and most recently in 2015, with the adoption of UN’s Sustainable development goals (SDGs) and the 2030 agenda for sustainable development (UN, 2015).

The SDG’s is an expansion of the Millennium Development goals. The MDGs had 8 goals with a focus on the world’s poorest (UN, n.d.). The 2030 Agenda unites the global development goals into one framework. The SDGs have 17 goals and 169 associated targets with the ambition of reaching them in 2030, including goal 4 with its focus on education (UN, 2015). In addition, the SDGs have embraced a holistic approach to sustainable development with five interlinked themes of people, planet prosperity, peace and prosperity (UN, 2015). It is also more universal and comprehensive than the MDGs which main educational focus was on primary education in developing countries. The SDGs recognize the global responsibility of combined efforts and the value of all forms of education (UN, 2015). Furthermore, it links to global citizenship, human rights and intergenerational equity. The expectation is that global justice is extended to include not only this generation but also future generations. Its core value is sustainability, which is embedded in the goals and targets and unites it into one framework (UN, 2015). Education is deeply rooted in the SDGs and encapsulated in goal 4.

This study is mainly linked to educational goals 4.3, 4.4 access and participation, 4.4 and TVET, 4.7 and SD (UN, 2015). There is also a link to goal 8 with its focus on decent work and economic growth (UN, 2015). UNESCO defines decent work as an adequate number of working hours per week and that employees are provided with a written contract to protect the right to guaranteed social benefits (UNESCO, 2016). However, education is interlinked with many of the other goals and targets in the SDG’s as well (UNESCO, 2016). The SDGs draw on the holistic vision of Education for All (EFA) (UNESCO, 2012b; UNESCO, 2016). The
SDGs recognize and understand the importance of different levels of education and that education cannot be addressed in isolation from one another (UNESCO, 2016). EFA focused on equal access and basic education, while the SDGs also include higher education, TVET, and adult education. This gives the SDGs a broader content, including global citizenship, skills, and education for sustainable development. Also, the SDGs are more oriented towards outcomes and the quality of education and are more closely aligned with lifelong learning. However, the goals are very ambitious. Similarly, the global education monitoring landscape is rapidly changing which results in an extended scope of the sustainability development agenda (UNESCO, 2016). This thesis will hopefully facilitate the monitoring of the SDG in education.

This study uses the three pillars or dimensions of sustainability as a frame for the tourism curriculum (UN, 2005). It can be described as “sustainability is a paradigm for thinking about a future in which environmental, social and economic considerations are balanced in the pursuit of development and an improved quality of life. These three spheres – society, environment and economy – are intertwined” (UNESCO, 2012a, p. 1).

![Figure 1. Visualizing the three dimensions of sustainability](image)

(Source: adopted from Koppelman, 2013)

All three of these dimensions of sustainability should be reflected in education and sustainable development. Since this is very context specific, the dimensions can be shaped differently in different global contexts (UNESCO, 2012a). The three dimensions can also be referred to the triple bottom line of economic growth and development, environmental conservation and protection and social justice and equity (Boley, 2011). The three dimensions
The sustainability discourse includes some ambiguity and does not have a set definition. SD can be interpreted in numerous ways, depending on the stakeholder and context (Pavlova, 2009; Goldney, Murphy, Fien & Kent, 2007). In addition, the unclear character of Sustainable Development is a barrier in TVET since the understanding or interpretations of the more exact meaning of SD is not always shared (Goldney et al., 2007; Dubois, et al., 2010). In addition, the Global Education Monitoring Report (GERM) recognized the difficulty in monitoring SD in education. For instance, the focus on skills in target 4.4 is not suitable for large-scale monitoring according to GERM. Instead, it is the knowledge of ICT that is measured and monitored (UNESCO, 2016). However, SD is more manageable to assess in small scale studies such as this one.

2.1.2 Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)

Education is identified as one of the key agents to achieve sustainability (Pavlova, 2009; UNESCO, 2005; UNESCO, 2014a). This was firmly established in 2002 when the United Nations declared 2005-2014 as the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD) to support the role of education towards sustainable development (UNESCO n.d.). Its goals included, “to integrate the values inherent in the sustainable development into all aspects of learning to encourage changes in behavior that allow for a more sustainable and just society for all” (UNESCO, 2005, p. 5). This quote implies the holistic and inclusive aspect of ESD that continues to characterizes the global agenda on education today (Tilbury, 1995, Moscardo, 2015). Most recently ESD moved from the DESD to the Aichi-Nagoya Declaration on Education for Sustainable Development in 2014 to update and reinforce ESD (UNESCO, 2014b). In addition, the declaration uses economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainability as a framework. This further strengthens its use as a valid framework also today. Noteworthy, ESD is sometimes referred to as sustainability education (SE). However, in this study, only the term ESD is used.

The holistic approach to education and SD that was introduced in the DESD, has come full circle with the SDGs. There is a revised vision of education within sustainable development instead of education for sustainable development (UNESCO, 2016).
developing empowered critical, mindful and competent citizens. Such education can contribute to that realization of new forms of citizenship, entrepreneurship, and governance that centre on the current and future well-being of people and the planet. (UNESCO, 2016, p. 11).

In other words, it is not enough to teach about sustainability issues: sustainability should be embedded in all aspects of education. In fact, it is suggested that SD is not a separate subject but that it offers school-wide and integrated into many subjects (UNESCO, 2016). Also, the three pillars of economic social environmental sustainability need to be institutional and systemically integrated to be successful.

Critiques of ESD include a vague definition and that the imprecise character of ESD trickles down to accountability and the responsibility of ESD (Tikly, 2013). It is supposed to include everyone and all contexts. This makes it difficult to evaluate and monitor (Tikly, 2013). Although the international agreement of the ESD and the importance of it is clear, who is doing what to accomplish the goals in various contexts, is often blurred. (Airey, Dredge & Gross, 2015).

2.1.3 Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET)

Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) has struggled with its terminology but, “at the second International Congress on Technical and Vocational Education, held in the Republic of Korea in 1999, UNESCO and ILO (in consultation with their respective Member States and partner agencies) jointly agreed on using the term technical and vocational education and training (TVET)” (Maclean & Wilson., 2009, p. lxxviii). This was an attempt to unite the field, but other terminology is still used today depending on the context. Also, the definition of TVET adopted at the Korean Congress was:

Those aspects of the educational process involving, in addition to general education, the study of technologies and related sciences, and the acquisition of practical skills, attitudes, understanding and knowledge relating to occupants in various sectors of economic and social life (UNESCO, 1999).

With the adoption of Education for All (EFA), TVET was somewhat covered with EFA goal 3 that states “ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life-skills programmes”. (UNESCO, 2000, p. 16). Also, the EFA global monitoring report focused on youth and skills (UNESCO, 2012b). Hence, TVET has gradually seen an increase in priority. This culminated in the SDGs and
specifically in goal 4.4 that states that: “by 2030, substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship” (UN, 2015, 4.4). Finally, TVET has risen to the foreground of the educational discourse.

The field of technical and vocational education and training (TVET) has changed throughout history. These transformations relating to occupation requirements have usually been in response to globalization and technological changes and the demands made upon them by the societies they serve (Goldney et al., 2007; Maclean et al., 2009). In addition, “Young people in developed nations are expected to change careers up to five times and work for 12 to 15 different organizations in their lifetime” (Goldney et al., 2007, p. 26). This illustrated the need for education to evolve and adapt constantly due to global changes and the constant shift in focus and character of the job market. (Goldney et al., 2007). Furthermore, there is an increased global mobility that requires education and skills to be easily transferable and adaptable to new contexts.

Education is expensive. However, TVET often with smaller classes and special equipment, can cost three times more than general education. Some countries, including Sweden, have significantly increased their spending on TVET in recent years (Maclean et al., 2009; OECD, 2016c). Nonetheless, for many students and parents, it remains a ‘second-class’ education with low status (Fidgeon, 2010; Fien et al., 2009). In fact, in the past decades, TVET almost disappeared from the international aid agenda when the World Bank began investing heavily in primary education at the expense of TVET, which at times accounted for just 8–9% of educational spending (Maclean et al., 2009). Today, TVET has risen to the forefront with the SDGs and its focus on vocational skills and decent jobs. Furthermore, there is a growing interest in the connection of TVET to life-long learning and its many dimensions and formats are reflected in the SDGs (UN, 2015). It remains to be seen if TVET can manifest itself on the global arena and claim its position and remain at the top of the political agenda.

2.1.4 TVET and Sustainable Development

The first effort to integrate ESD and TVET was at the 1999 Second International Congress held in Seoul, South Korea (UNESCO, 1999). In addition, UNESCO echoed this and states in its recommendations for TVET for the twenty-first century that it should “empower people to contribute to environmentally sound sustainable development through their occupation and other areas of their lives” (UNESCO, 2001, p. 9). The Bonn declaration in 2004 further
agreed that “since education is considered the key to effective development strategies, technical and vocational education and training (TVET) must be the master key that can alleviate poverty, promote peace, conserve the environment improve the quality of life for all and help achieve sustainable development” (UNESCO-UNEVOC, 2004, p.1).

Correspondingly, in UNESCO’s strategies for TVET from post-2015, the potential of TVET and SD was reaffirmed, stating that, “every individual should have the possibility to acquire skills and knowledge necessary to form a sustainable future” (UNESCO, 2015, p. 56).

Finally, at the end of the EFA and MDG era, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were adopted in September 2015 (UN, 2015). With its broad focus, it recognizes the central role of TVET to achieve SD convincingly, thus cementing the position of SD and TVET.

The increased attention to TVET partly emerged from high global youth unemployment. Most of these youth are not uneducated, but they also include educated individuals whose knowledge and skill do not match the labor market (Tikly, 2013). This is recognized by UNESCO in promoting future focus areas by stating:

TVET should integrate skills for life (including peace and green skills) and skills for work, including transversal skills and through this, provide perspectives for life and work. In rapidly changing labour markets and societies, transversal skills play an important role in keeping people employable. In line with UNESCO’s mandate, sustainable development and green skills should continue to be emphasized and mainstreamed throughout a new Strategy (UNESCO, 2015, p 56).

This shows the commitment to sustainability and the importance of transparency and a broader view of TVET. Not only as a provider of skills but also a long-term holistic view including lifelong learning. It also sends a strong message about the potential of SD and TVET to empower individuals. The focus is shifting to not only include economic but also social and environmental practice (Fien et al., 2009). However, many programs with a strong vocational focus, struggle with including SD in an already crowded curriculum (Dredge, et al., 2012; Goldney et al., 2007).

Examples of concepts associated with three pillars in TVET include: “TVET and Economic sustainability: economic literacy, sustainable production sustainable consumption small enterprise management. TVET and environmental: ecological footprint eco-efficiency biodiversity the 5 R’s reduce review renew recycle and rethink. TVET and social sustainability: respect for a cultural diversity, gender equality, citizenship workplace relations” (Fien et al., 2009, p. xxv-xxvi). The role of the MDGs was alleviating poverty, and
the focus on education was on access (UN, 2000). Agenda 2030 focuses more on quality education and on primary and informal education as well as adult education and TVET.

However, to implement SD and TVET is challenging. A 2010 study in Southern and Eastern Africa identified one of the barriers of integrating SD in TVET as limited knowledge of the concept of SD among educators (Dubois et al., 2010). It is imperative that educators are ‘sustainability literate’ in order to communicate its message. A cohesiveness and systemic commitment are essential. This is not necessarily unique to TVET, but can probably be applied to general education as well. Despite the efforts and recognitions of SD in TVET by the international community, there is a further need to share best practices on the integration of SD in TVET (Fien et al., 2009). Although there is no universal model, this study can shed light on the issue in a specific context.

2.1.5 SD and Tourism Education

Tourism is a complex and highly interrelated industry that usually includes sub-sectors relating to accommodation, transportation, food and beverage, recreation and travel services (UNWTO, 2016). Tourism has more than one definition; henceforth, United Nations World Tourism Organization’s (UNWTO) definition will be used in this study. According to UNWTO, tourism is comprised of, “the activities of persons travelling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes” (ILO, UNWTO, 2008, p. 4).

Underpinned by an increase in available income and leisure time, tourism in the world is increasing and has manifested itself as a significant economic contributor, especially in developing countries (OECD, 2016c; UNWTO, 2016). Its direct, indirect and induced contribution to the world’s GDP is 10 percent (UNWTO, 2016). Additionally, it provides a wide range of employment opportunities, both skilled and unskilled, with a high participation rate of women (UNWTO, 2016). In fact, it provides one in eleven jobs globally (UNWTO, 2016). It is also providing opportunities for small business owners, including minorities and the support of local culture (OECD, 2016c). The global impact of tourism can be demonstrated by the fact that tourism is closely interlinked to the SDGs and can contribute to all 17 SDGs (UNWTO, n.d.).

The exponential growth of tourism puts exceptional demands on tourism to act sustainably responsible (Boley, 2011). Meanwhile, tourism can both have positive impact in creating job opportunities and a negative impact on, for instance, the environment (Boley,
2011). In the tourism narrative, there has been a shift in focus on not only economic profit but also to include environmental issues underpinned by the rapid depletion of natural resources (Boley, 2011). In other words, sustainability is nothing new to the tourism industry which was fast to embrace SD to reduce its ecological footprint (Boley, 2011; Chawla, 2015). However, tourism educators need to follow the lead of the tourism industry. The awareness and commitment to SD need also to be transferred and applied to tourism education.

Tourism education as at times tampered with its acceptance as a prestigious degree, but due to its interdisciplinary character and a flourishing tourism industry with ample opportunity for employment, it has gained in popularity and status (Fidgeon, 2010). As the tourism industry grows, so does the need for educated industry professionals. Despite the wide global discussion of SD and tourism, generally, the topic just recently entered the tourism curriculum (Telfer & Hashimoto, 2001). TVET tourism courses are available in almost every country, particularly in higher education. TVET can be provided as a tourism program or within programs or courses such as business or geography (Boley, 2011; Fidgeon, 2010). While the providers of tourism education vary depending on the context, it is available in many parts of the world because tourism is an important part of development in many countries (Boley, 2011; Fidgeon, 2010). It is recommended to infuse sustainable development into the tourism courses, including articulation with other subjects to achieve SD being embedded across the tourism curriculum (Boley, 2011; Deale et al., 2009).

In the sustainable tourism education discourse, while there is an agreement of the importance of SD in tourism education, there is no consensus on how and to what extent it should be present in the curriculum (Barber et al., 2011; Boley, 2011; Deale et al. 2009; Dredge et al, 2012; Millar et al., 2013). Similarly, what is the correct way to integrate and implement SD in the tourism curriculum? There is no agreed method. Generally, TVET has a very high vocational focus and struggle with a crowded curriculum (Boyle, Wilson & Dimmock, 2015). Tourism education is no exception. This adds to the complexity of SD in TVET. The three dimensions of SD vary in importance and priority depending on the stakeholder or the context (Dwyer, 2005). However, it is imperative that tourism students and future tourism industry professionals do not only know about sustainability but that they also can practice SD. This includes applying the three dimensions of sustainability and understanding their interconnectedness to promote economic, social and environmental progress.

Lastly, as previous research has demonstrated there is a limited understanding of SD among educators, teacher education about sustainable development (Dubois et al., 2010).
Therefore, an explicit description of SD in the curriculum is important to avoid misconceptions and one-sided interpretations.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

During the literature review, two theories relevant to TVET, tourism, and SD clearly emerged. Namely the human capital theory and the capability approach. This section explores their strengths weaknesses and how these theories complement each other, with the purpose of orienting the paper and providing further insight into the concepts, findings, and discussions in this thesis. The human capital theory is used because the research explores the significance of relevant vocational skills, employment in tourism and economic growth. However, the capability approach is used as the foundation for the study and is more valued because its holistic vision is also shared with sustainability, tourism, and education.

2.2.1 Human Capital Theory

One of the dominant theories in education including TVET has been the human capital Theory (Anderson, 2009; Tikly, 2013). It is centered around the idea that investment in education and people are essential for economic growth (Sweetland, 1996). In other words, education and training will make people more productive and prosperous and is, therefore, a good investment. This feeds into TVET and that an individual with appropriate and relevant vocational skills is essential to a nation’s economic growth. This view of an individual’s knowledge and skills started back in the 18th century (Anderson, 2009). Moreover, Anderson describes how TVET evolved during the industrial revolution as a provider of skilled workers to industry (2009). Thus, the view of human development was as human capital. Consequently, like other forms of investment, the economic return is important, and various stakeholders’ perceptions should be considered. This includes keeping an international perspective. The focus on the economic value of knowledge has served TVET well. However, providing competence and knowledge merely to promote productivity and economic growth, is neglecting social and environmental development, growth and preservation (Anderson, 2009). Similarly, underpinned by the rapidly changing labor market, it is not enough to provide education relevant only to existing industry; more long-term strategies should be developed and included in the discussion on education as well (Anderson, 2009). With globalization and an escalating international economic interdependency and competitiveness, there has been a shift from a micro to a macro level view on the role of
education, including a more holistic perspective. In other words, individual actions and decisions have ripple effects on a global scale. Natural disasters also get economic and social implications. Not only do environmental decisions and their consequences affect the local community, but they also create environmental implications in other parts of the world. When linked to economic consequences this resonates in ways that we do not yet understand (Rockström et al., 2009). Also, there has been a general shift in society from a production economy to a service economy in many developed countries (Fidgeon, 2010). Correspondingly, there has been a move towards a more holistic approach to education and TVET (Tikly, 2013). Hence with the adoption, a more holistic view on education and a stronger focus on TVET, the human capital theory can seem a bit outdated.

There has been a shift in the pedagogical discussion from a focus on access and quantity of education in mainly primary education towards quality and relevant education with the holistic view as promoted by the SDGs. It does not matter if a large portion of the population is educated if they do not have relevant and updated skills to match the labor market. Hence, the quantity of education is less important than the quality and relevance of education to economic growth. (Hanushek & Wössman, 2007). Although economic growth is important, it is not the only aspect of prosperity and success. In the past, much of the educational debate about TVET has evidently circled around the discussion that the purpose of vocational education has been purely economic. However, TVET is more multi-faceted than other educational practices which should be kept in mind and reflected in a theoretical discussion.

Although, it still a valid theory to TVET, in the last decades, the human capital theory has been thought of as being too constricted and needing to be expanded to consider human development in various contexts (Tikly, 2013, p. 32). Despite the criticism, the human capital theory is still compatible in the discussion of TVET and tourism. It can help in supporting arguments for or against certain aspects of tourism education depending on the stakeholder’s perspective. This will be further explained in chapter 6. The insufficient application of the human capital theory to human development has been complemented by other theories such as the Capability Approach.

2.2.2 Capability Approach
Historically, economic productivity and growth have been the principal factor to measure a nation’s prosperity (Tikly, 2013). However, Sen contends for another way of assessing the
success of a country. That is through the well-being of its citizens. (Sen, 1999; Tikly, 2013). Amartya Sen developed the capability approach in the 1980’s, and it was further developed by intellectuals such as Martha Nussbaum (Nussbaum, 2000; Sen, 1999). It has since served as an influential framework for developmental change in society and among scholars and policy makers. It was, for instance, instrumental in the creation and development of the United Nations Human Development Index (Tikly, 2013). As opposed to the human capital theory, it has a more holistic approach in line with Agenda 2030 for sustainable development. Central to the idea of the capability approach is the individual set of capabilities and functions (Sen, 1999; Tikly, 2013), “The difference between a capability and functioning is like one between an opportunity to achieve and the actual achievement, between potential and outcome” (Tikly, 2013, p. 18). For example, if there is not a school in the community providing relevant tourism education, the school represents capability. The relevant education to get a job to improve the well-being of the individual, represents a function. However, the capabilities or circumstances available and the functions to promote individual wants and needs are not enough (Tikly, 2013). Sen argues that an individual should also have the freedom to control and the ability to use and develop their capability sets (1999). This is further illuminated by Robeyns who explains the capability approach as an “interdisciplinary framework for the evaluation and assessment of well-being and social arrangements. Focus on plural or multidimensional aspects of well-being. The approach highlights the difference between means and ends, and between substantive freedoms (capabilities) and outcomes (achieved functionings)” (2005, p. 93). She elaborated further by stating that, “the core characteristic of the capability approach is its focus on what people are effectively able to do and to be; that is, on their capabilities” (Robeyns, 2005, p. 94).

For example, to put it in terms of tourism, the possibility of travel assumes that an individual has a choice to travel and is allowed to travel. But there exists also, for instance, a need for an infrastructure, leisure time, physical health and money to make it possible. Likewise, in terms of education, it is not enough that there is a local school, but individuals must have capabilities such as the freedom to go to school, and it must be accessible with a social and political context that allow education. Also, people usually need to go to school to get a job or to renew a skill to keep a job (functions). Hence, governments must support and provide opportunities for choice and development. In other words, it is not enough to have a set of capabilities; one must be able to have the freedom to use them. This is further clarified by Robeyns who states that, “according to the capability approach, the ends of well-being, justice and development should be conceptualized in terms of people's capabilities to
function; that is, their effective opportunities to undertake the actions and activities that they want to engage in, and be whom they want to be” (Robeyns, 2005, p. 95). This quote implies that TVET has the potential to provide both capabilities and functions with the aim to improve oneself and to have a life one values. To empower individuals is essential not only in developing countries but in developed countries as well.

Global youth unemployment is high, with 72 million of the world’s 15-24-year-olds currently unemployed (ILO, 2016). Significantly, the tourism industry is a major employer of youth, including minority groups and migrants, many with limited qualifications (ILO, 2016). In the European Union, 20 percent of all tourism workers have lower secondary education as their highest education level, and 15 percent are foreign citizens (Eurostat, 2015). Therefore, TVET and tourism education can function as possible capacity builders and sustain and develop an individual’s capacity (Fien et al., 2009; Tikly, 2013). With the rapid global and technological advancements, education and knowledge need updating. TVET can provide this continuous education. Ultimately, it may empower individuals with relevant skills including sustainable development and reduce unemployment. This is resonated in UNESCO’s recommendations for TVET for the twenty-first century that states that TVET can, “empower people to contribute to environmentally sound sustainable development through their occupation and other areas of their lives” (UNESCO, 2001, p. 9).

Tourism is closely connected to the empowerment of both individuals and societies. The adoption of the 2030 Agenda to increase global awareness and consequences within the sustainable development narrative is thoroughly related to tourism (UN, 2015). In fact, tourism links to all 17 SDGs (UNWTO, 2015).

There are issues of the theory being critiqued in the capability literature. One main issue is that the capability approach is too vague (Nussbaum, 2003). While the capability approach is holistic in nature it is too individualist and should focus even more on how all life on Earth is interdependent (Nussbaum, 2003; Robeyns, 2005). It requires a debate on social structures, including the synergy of all living creatures. Similarly, there is an inadequate discussion on what capabilities are to be prioritized and who should determine what capabilities are relevant (Nussbaum, 2003; Robeyns, 2005).
Chapter 3: National Contexts of the Study

In comparative studies, it is important to be attentive to any similarities and disparities in the national contexts as well as, “the relationship of those contextual factors to the different educational phenomena observed” (Manzon, 2007, p 97). Hence in this chapter, the central figures and descriptions pertaining to the economic, social and environment contexts of the cases of Finland and Sweden are presented with special focus on TVET and tourism relevant to this study. According to Heikkinen, “as a research method, comparison implies adoption and acceptance of trans-cultural, trans-national criteria (variables) and assumptions” (2000, p. 154). Therefore, the national meso-perspectives described in brief are intended to provide a relevant background and overview for this study. This will allow for a better understanding within a wider macro framework such as the SDGs.

Globalization and technological advancements have changed the conditions for education and TVET all over the world. Finland and Sweden have not escaped these facts. These countries are neighboring Nordic countries located in the most Northern part of Europe. Geographical parallels aside, this chapter will present similarities of the economic and social context and the welfare of its population with high rankings in the human development index along with their commitment to sustainability issues and ambitious goals for the tourism industry. Like many other European countries, they have also seen demographic changes, such as an increase in the aging population and a recent wave of migrating individuals, many having the appropriate age for upper secondary education (World Bank, 2017.). The hope is to contribute to the Nordic cooperation of TVET and a cross-country comparison has the potential to provide meaningful knowledge about educational phenomena. A more detailed rationale for the selection of these cases will be provided in section 4.3.3.

3.1 Brief Overview of the Socio- Economic Background in Finland and Sweden

Finland and Sweden are two developed countries in the Northern part of Europe. In 2015, Finland had a GDP of 232 billion USD and an unemployment rate of 8.6 percent (World Bank, 2017). In 2016, Finland ranked number 24 on the human development ranking (UNDP, 2015). Correspondingly, in 2015, Sweden had a GDP of 496 billion USD (World Bank, 2017). Additionally, Sweden was top rated among OECD countries with an unemployment of

In 2015, Finland had a population of 5.4 million individuals and Sweden 9.8 individuals (World Bank, 2017). Both countries are experiencing growth in the aging population ages 65 and above (World Bank, 2017). In Finland, youth unemployment, 15-24-year olds, is 22 percent (OECD, 2017). In Sweden, 20 percent were unemployed. Evidently, despite relatively low unemployment rates and high standards of living, both countries have high youth unemployment rates compared to the OECD average of just under 15 percent (OECD, 2017).

3.2 Environment and Tourism in Finland and Sweden

The World Bank uses the Co2 emission to indicate how much a nation contributes to global warming and climate change from energy use (World Bank, 2017). Although limited and merely an indicator, it functions well in this study as a comparison. In 2013, Finland’s Co2 emissions was 8.5 metric tons per capita (World Bank, 2017). This is below the OECD average of 9.7 but above the EU average of 6.7 (World Bank, 2017). However, Finland’s pledge to sustainable development is evident in the policies in the Finnish National Commission on Sustainable Development that states, “Sustainable development is an ongoing and structured process where society undergoes changes with the aim of securing desirable living conditions for the current and future generations” (Finnish Ministry of the Environment as cited by OECD, 2009, p. 26).

Tourism has grown more than other sectors in Finland and between 2007 and 2011, tourism grew nearly four times faster than the rest of the Finnish economy (Finnish Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment, 2017a). In 2013, tourism contributed 2.5 percent of the GDP (OECD, 2016c). In addition, the tourism cluster, including indirect jobs, employed 136,700 individuals in 2013 (OECD, 2016c). That is 5.8 percent of all employed people in Finland (OECD, 2016c). Notably, “The aim is to make Finland the number-one tourist destination in Northern Europe by 2025.” (Finnish Ministry of Economic affairs and employment, 2017b). In 2012, 4,226,000 tourists arrived in Finland (World Bank, 2017). Additionally, the number of international tourists has doubled during the past 15 years (Finnish Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment, 2017a). These impressive numbers relating to tourism show the potential for TVET and tourism education to have great impact on the Finnish society.
Similarly, Sweden had a Co2 emission 4.6 metric tons per capita in 2013 (World Bank, 2017). This is half of Finland’s emission and below both the EU and the OECD average. However, Sweden continues to improve and work to lower its emission (OECD, 2014). Sweden has high sustainable development goals and is showing its commitment to the environment with a record-large budget in 2017, “The Government is strengthening efforts towards a toxin-free everyday environment, a fossil-free welfare society and renewable energy” (Swedish Ministry of the Environment and Energy, 2016).

In 2014, the number of people employed in tourism in Sweden was 159,000 (OECD, 2016c). This is a 22 percent increase since 2000 compared to a 10 percent total growth in other industries, signifying the increased importance to employment in Sweden (OECD, 2016c). This can possibly be explained by a general global trend from a production economy to a service economy (Fidgeon, 2010; OECD, 2016c). Also, in 2014, the tourism cluster’s contribution to the GDP was 2.8 percent and continues to grow (OECD, 2016c). Similarly, with a steady increase, the number of tourism arrivals was 5,660,000 individuals in the same year (World Bank, 2017). In other words, these numbers show the importance to the economy and how Sweden is significantly benefitting from the tourism industry.

3.3 Upper Secondary TVET in Finland and Sweden

In 2014, the enrollment in the upper secondary cluster (15-19-year-old) in Finland was 30 percent in TVET and 70 percent in general programs (OECD, 2016b). That is, the enrollment in upper secondary TVET is lower than the OECD average (OECD, 2016b). It is noteworthy that among 20-24-year-olds, 15 percent are enrolled in TVET which is significantly higher than any other OECD country (OECD, 2016b). In 2013, Finland spent 9,172 USD per student in TVET, and 7,788 per student enrolled in general upper secondary (OECD, 2016a).

Nine-year basic education is compulsory and free to all Finnish citizens (Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture, 2017a). Moreover, completion of basic education leads to eligibility for upper secondary education which is divided into general education or vocation education as displayed in Figure 2 (Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture, 2017a).
The upper secondary TVET in Finland includes 119 vocational programs and 53 vocational qualifications (Virolainen & Stenström, 2014). Students enrolled in upper secondary TVET have access to university studies (Virolainen et al., 2014). Finland and Sweden are the only two Nordic countries where TVET (ISCED3) can provide both preparations for both the labor market and tertiary education (Virolainen et al., 2014).

In 2018, Finland will reform vocational upper secondary education partly in response to rapid transformations in the job market. The restructuring will include a decrease in the number of qualifications provided. (Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture, 2017a). In Finland, the tourism courses are in the cluster of Tourism Catering and Domestic Services.

Correspondingly, the distribution of enrollment in Swedish upper secondary education was 56 percent in general education and 44 percent in TVET, which was close to the OECD

Figure 2. Upper secondary TVET in Finland
(Source: UNESCO-UNEVOC, 2013a)
average in 2014 (OECD, 2016d). TVET generally involves larger expenditures than general programs, but in Sweden, there is a pronounced difference (OECD, 2016d). In 2013, the annual expenditure per student in upper secondary education was 8,949 USD for a student attending a general program, which is close to the OECD average (OECD, 2016a). However, Sweden spent 14,126 USD per student enrolled in TVET, which is significantly more than the OECD average of 9,869 USD (OECD, 2016a).

In Sweden, compulsory school is mandatory and applies for years 1-9, but most students continue to upper secondary education (NAE, 2012). Upper secondary education offers a total of 18 national programs, 12 vocational programs, and 6 higher education preparatory programs (NAE, 2012). Moreover, upper secondary TVET in Sweden qualifies students for both the job market and higher education similar to the Finnish TVET. The educational system in Sweden is presented in Figure 3.

![Figure 3. Upper secondary TVET in Sweden](Source: UNESCO-UNEVOC, 2013b)

Additionally, similarities between Swedish and Finnish upper secondary TVET systems include that TVET education is predominantly school-based, three years in length,
and offers apprenticeship (Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture, 2017a; NAE, 2012). (Virolainen et al., 2014). The upper secondary education system including TVET was last reformed in 2011 (NAE, 2012).

Chapter 4: Methodology of the Research

The purpose of this chapter is to present the research methodology considered most appropriate based on ontological and epistemological perspectives along with a description of the rationale behind the approach and therefore adopted for this study. First, it will explain the comparative research design and qualitative research strategy used. This is followed by a
discussion of content analysis and why this method was considered the most appropriate research method. This chapter also includes a description of the data analysis. Thereafter, the rationale for the selection of the various contexts of the study are explained and a discussion of validity and reliability is included. Finally, the analytical framework and ethical considerations will be discussed.

4.1 Research Design

This study’s research design is a comparative study comparing two cases of the tourism curriculum in upper secondary TVET. As stated by Bryman, “a research design provides a framework for the collection and analysis of data” (2012, P. 46). There are several reasons why a comparative design was selected. First, a comparative study is applied since the researcher is interested in exploring differences, similarities, and overlaps between the two curricula using the same method. This allows for an improved multilayered understanding of theories or occurrence when two or more cases are compared (Bryman, 2012). Second, the literature review revealed that a delinquent number of comparative studies of TVET are available (Heikkinen, 2000). Therefore, in this study, aspects of the tourism curriculum of Finland and Sweden are compared. The rationale for the selection of these countries will be further explained in section 4.2.1. Third, since the intention is to explore multiple perspectives of the comparison, a three-dimensional approach to comparative research is used. The Bray and Thomas cube and framework for comparative education analysis are employed since it allows exploration of several perspectives as well as a three-dimensional approach to comparative research that permits an in-depth and holistic analysis as illustrated in Figure 4 (Bray, Adamson & Mason, 2007, p. 9). The research will utilize three aspects of the Bray and Thomas cube: geographic/locational (Finland and Sweden), non-locational demographic groups (tourism TVET), and aspects of education and of society (sustainable development) (Bray et al., 2007, p. 9).
Naturally, the comparative design will influence the entire methodology despite the unit of analysis (Manzon, 2007; Heikkinen, 2000). However, caution needs to be taken when deciding on the units of analysis and the basis for comparison to gather meaningful results (Manzon, 2007; Heikkinen, 2000). It is imperative to define what is compared and what we compare it with. With the complex nature of TVET, including the many unclear forms of TVET, establishing criteria and indicators that are comparable is of utmost importance (Lauterbach et al., 2007). With the purpose of narrowing the focus and increasing comparability and validity, the cases are clearly defined. In this study, the cases compared are identified as the upper secondary (ISCED3) tourism curricula of Sweden and Finland along with the Agenda 2030 for sustainable development. Hence, Heikkinen’s advice to reflect on the research design to ensure that it is based on the research questions and linked to methodology choices is adopted (2000).

4.2 Research Strategy and Analytical Framework

A qualitative content analysis with quantitative elements was deemed best to answer the research questions. One strategy does not have to exclude the other. According to Bryman, “quantitative and qualitative research represent different strategies and that each carries with it striking differences in terms of the role of the theory, epistemological issues, and ontological concerns. However, the distinction is not a hard-and-fast one” (2012, p. 37). In this research, however, features such as ontology and epistemology will predominantly be from the qualitative perception. Bryman describes constructivism as a, “position that asserts
that social phenomena and their meanings are continually being accomplished by social actors” (2012, p. 33). Interpretivism is, “a position that requires the social scientist to grasp the subjective meaning of social action” (Bryman, 2012, p. 712). In this study, the constructivist ontology perspective is used because the researcher’s intention is to explore how sustainability is constructed and interpreted in the curricula in various contexts. Also, when conducting research with both qualitative and quantitative aspects, Bryman suggests considering the purpose and role of the components of the strategy (2012), for instance, the precedence and the succession of the strategies (Bryman, 2012). In this research, quantitative aspects will initially be used as the tool for collecting data and have the most weight in answering the first research question. However, the qualitative aspects will follow in the analysis to gain a deeper understanding by evaluating patterns and phenomena relating to the second and third research questions. Because one builds on the other both quantitative and qualitative traits are of equal weight at the later stages of the analysis.

The findings from the contexts of the two countries will then be compared using Bereday’s model for comparative analysis which involves using description, interpretation, juxtaposition and simultaneous comparison (Manzon, 2007). This entailed two steps. The first was comparing the findings from Finland and Sweden in order to answer the second research question. The second was to gain a deeper knowledge and with the purpose of answering the third research question, compare the findings from Finland and Sweden to the findings of the SDGs. This allowed for an investigation of how the national (micro) and the international (macro) understanding of sustainability aligns using multiple perspectives.

4.3 Research Method

An aim of the study was to gain an understanding of the presence of SD and sustainability in the tourism curriculum. With the purpose of accomplishing that aim, a content analysis was deemed most suitable to answer the research questions. The focus of this study is to analyze the tourism curricula of Finland and Sweden to determine the character of their sustainability orientation.

4.3.1 Content analysis

Curriculum content analysis has been used successfully in previous studies, for instance in an Australian study of SD in university tourism programs (Boyle et al., 2015), “Through this
method, key themes and messages can be counted, elucidated and discussed, using the curriculum as text” (Boyle et al., 2015, p. 522). A similar approach was conducted in this study. However, this study will further explore the data by comparing national context to an international agenda, specifically, to the SDGs. Furthermore, content analysis is common in comparative TVET research to gain understanding in various social, economic and political contexts and the correlation between education and vocation (Fischer, Jungman & Schreiber, 2014).

Bryman describes content analysis as “an approach to the analysis of documents and texts that seek to quantify content in terms of the predetermined categories and in a systematic and replicable manner. “(Bryman 2012, p. 710). In this study, the predetermined themes are the three dimensions of economic, social and environmental sustainability. Hsieh and Shannon further elaborate content analysis by stating that it should, “start with identifying and quantifying certain words or content in a text with the purpose of understanding the contextual use of the words or content.” (2005, p. 1283). On the other hand, content analysis has been criticized for merely counting words (Krippendorff, 2004). However, this study wanted to expand beyond the word count and investigate the nature and context of those words using various perspectives of sustainability in the curriculum. Hence, this would quantify the words to strengthen the qualitative data. One method or strategy does not have to exclude the other (Bryman, 2012). Mayring, one of the top researchers in the field, explains the main idea of qualitative content analysis, “to preserve the advantages of quantitative content analysis as developed within communication science and to transfer and further develop them to qualitative-interpretative steps to analysis.” (2000, p.1). Additionally, a qualitative content analysis was selected because a constructivist’s ontology was adopted in this thesis. This is further elaborated by Bryman who states that, “qualitative content analysis is an approach to document that emphasizes the role of the investigator in a construction of the meaning of and in texts. There is an emphasis on allowing categories to emerge out of the data and on recognizing the significance for understanding the meaning of the context in which an item being analyzed (and the categories derived from it) appeared. “(Bryman, 2012, p. 714). Consequently, a qualitative approach has been implemented; it allows for a deeper investigation and analysis.

However, “A content analysis can only be as good as the documents on which the practitioner works” (Bryman, 2012, p 306). Hence, the documents were carefully chosen to keep the study reliable and valid which will be further discussed in section 4.6. Moreover, in comparative studies, it is essential to identify what you compare (Bray et al., 2007). The
relevant documents used for the content analysis were the curricula of the upper secondary (ISCED3) tourism programs in Sweden and Finland (Finnish National Board of Education, 2011; NAE, 2011). They are official documents available to the public, but more importantly, they are the documents provided to teachers that steer the educational content.

In sum, research methodology should be selected based on how well it fits in answering the research questions, but it also involves reflexivity to evaluate its effectiveness through the research process (Bryman, 2012). Therefore, the methodology and the method were carefully considered to best answer the research questions and constantly reflected upon with the aim of generating quality research.

4.3.2. Sampling and Participants
The elements needed for sampling are provided by the research questions. Namely, they are a sampling of context and a sampling of participants, which is the usual approach in qualitative research (Bryman, 2012; Manzon, 2007). Since this is a comparative case study aiming to understand the international concept of sustainability in two national cases, relevance sampling was used to select Finland and Sweden as context (Krippendorff, 2004). These countries were selected because they both have the potential to shed light on interesting perspectives relevant to this research. This is further explained in section 4….

For this study, the ‘participants’ are documents. Documents were selected based on how the text can answer the research questions (Bryman, 2012; Krippendorff, 2004). Therefore, relevance or purposive sampling was used in selecting the ‘participants’ in this study. According to Bryman, purposive sampling involves, “to sample cases/participants in a strategic way, so that those sampled are relevant to the research questions that are being posed” (2012, p. 418). Specifically, the documents are the digital version of the upper secondary tourism curricula of Finland and Sweden. They were chosen because they can provide relevant and reliable data (NAE, 2011, Finnish National Board of Education, 2011). The documents are published by the Ministry of Education in the respective country. The English version was used to avoid translations that could possibly interfere with the study and to ease comparison. Additionally, UN’s document Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was purposively sampled for the comparison (UN, 2015).
4.3.3 Rationale for Selecting Finland and Sweden
Before a comparison, the parameters and indicators or contexts for comparison must be established (Bryman, 2012, p 417; Mazon, 2017). In this study, Manzon’s description of a country, “synonym for the territorial and political state”, is used (2007, p. 96). The relevant contextual background has been described in chapter 3 while this section will explain the rationale for selecting Finland and Sweden for this thesis.

Purposive sampling was adopted in selecting the countries in this comparative study. There were four reasons for the rationale for selecting Finland and Sweden. First, they have similar societal contexts. For example, they are Nordic countries and members of the European Union. Hence, they are being influenced by comparable international, educational policies and perspectives. Likewise, tourism is an increasingly important contributor to employment and the economy in both countries, as indicated in chapter 3. Second, although, the TVET systems are more alike than other Nordic countries, the TVET system varies in structure and spending (see chapter 3) which makes a comparison interesting. Third, Finland has experienced the greatest increase in participation in upper secondary TVET than any other Nordic country (Virolainen et al., 2014). Similarly, graduates from upper secondary vocational programs in Finland have a significantly higher employment rate than their counterparts from general upper secondary programs (OECD, 2016b). Fourth, various Nordic projects such as Nord-VET (2013-2016) funded by NordForsk encourage more research on TVET in Nordic countries (Nord-VET, n.d.). This makes Finland and Sweden relevant and significant as cases in this research. They are both comparative and illuminative and have the potential to facilitate the contribution of new knowledge to continue the Nordic cooperation in TVET.

4.3.4 Rationale for Selecting Tourism Curriculum
A steady increase in tourist destinations and travelers worldwide have made the tourism industry a significant contributor to the world economic progress by providing jobs and developing infrastructure (UNTWO, 2016). Likewise, Finland and Sweden have realized the benefits of a prosperous tourism industry with a surging number of visitors each year (see chapter 3). An expansion of the tourism industry echoes in the demands of quality tourism education (Fidgeon, 2010). Thus, many variations of education in tourism and hospitality are available in most countries, to supply the tourism industry with qualified personnel.
In Finland, the upper secondary tourism courses are within the cluster of Tourism, Catering, and Domestic Services (Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture, 2017a). In Sweden, the tourism courses are found in the Hotel and Tourism program (NAE, 2012). To ease the comparison and to sharpen the study, only tourism courses in these sections were included in this study. To include other courses related to hospitality or customer service would not make this study as comparable and focused because the course contents and numbers of courses vary over a large spectrum (see section 4.6). In addition to being an expanding industry, tourism has a large impact on societies because it is a multifaceted industry with ties to many industries (Fidgeon, 2010). Despite this fact, there is little research in upper secondary tourism (Boley, 2011). This thesis, therefore, intends to contribute knowledge to this area of research.

4.4 Data Collection

4.4.1 Overview of the Data Collection
Data was purposively collected from the Finnish and Swedish tourism curriculum for the upper secondary program because they correspondingly can answer the first two research questions about how and to what extent sustainability is present in the tourism curriculum (Finnish National Board of Education, 2011; NAE, 2011). The data would also allow for a comparison between the countries. The second set of data was collected from the 17 goals of the SDGs and the categorization of the three dimensions of sustainable development by Korösi (2014). To increase the validity and reliability, the data were collected from public official documents and were carefully selected based on the following criteria recommended by Scott, “authenticity (that the document is what it purports to be); credibility (whether there are grounds for thinking that the contents of the document have been or are distorted in some way); and representativeness (whether the documents examined are representative of all possible relevant documents, as, if certain kinds of documents are unavailable or no longer exist…” (as cited in Bryman, 2012, p. 306).

4.4.2 The Curriculum and Data Collection
The curricula were selected as documents for the content analysis because it is the text on which the teacher base their lessons. Hence, it communicates what the students are supposed to learn (Zhao, 2014). In addition, UNESCO further confirms its significance by stating “curricula are the main way in which knowledge and skills to promote sustainable
development and global citizenship are typically conveyed to students” (2016, p. 289). However, the various contextual perspectives and circumstances should not be overlooked. Tribe explains that “the curriculum can be filled with different knowledge, skills and attitudes. Students embarking on tourism courses take different educational journeys according to the way in which their curriculum has been framed. Different framing means that students will exit tourism courses with a variety of perspectives, attitudes and competencies” (2002, p. 340). It is with this understanding that educational planners should develop relevant curricula to meet knowledge and skills requirements depending on the contextual needs.

In comparative studies of curricula, extra caution should be taken because terminology and contexts can be diverse and complex (Adamson & Morris, 2007; Heikkinen, 2000, p. 157). It is, therefore, important to identify what you are comparing to determine if the indicators are comparable. Additionally, the concept of curriculum is complex in itself with many explanations and definitions (Zhao, 2014). In this research, the rather broad description of the curriculum will be used as explained by Decker F. Walker. That is, “a curriculum is a particular way of ordering content and purposes for teaching and learning in schools” (Walker, 2003, p. 4). For this study, that means the content of the courses and the subjects included in tourism program.

4.4.3 Data Collection Process

The collection of data was a process that included a number of steps. First, the upper secondary tourism courses and the tourism curriculum were identified in Finland and Sweden with the purpose to answer the first two research questions (Finnish National Board of Education, 2011; NAE, 2011) With the issue of reliability in mind, the latest English version published by the governments of the respective department of education was used to avoid possible language barriers and translations.

Second, the texts were read several times in their original structure, which was necessary in order to go beyond simply identifying the words but also to place the words in its context as recommended by Bryman (2012).

The third step included identifying sustainability content with words such as sustainable, sustainable development and sustainability. These words were not used extensively or explained in enough depth so the search was expanded. Thus, the data collection moved to a more inductive approach and extended to include elements and perspectives of sustainable development and sustainability including words, expressions, and
terminology to assess the presence of SD and the level of attention to the three dimensions of sustainability.

Before continuing and describing the next step in the collection process, a few noteworthy mentions are necessary. The curricula of Finland in Sweden are comprehensive documents detailing not only knowledge objectives and competency outcomes, but also goals and assessments. For instance, the Finnish curriculum first lists the vocational skills requirements which are also followed by the assessments. This section states that “the table comprises the assessment criteria for three levels of competence together with targets of assessment. In vocational upper secondary education, the targets of assessment also constitute the core contents of the module.” (Finnish National Board of Education, 2011, p. 24). Hence, the assessment section of the Finnish curricula had an important role in the data collection. In Sweden, the curriculum merely mentions that teachings should cover certain core content (NAE, 2011). However, the assessment criteria were included in the data collection for both curricula. All text in the assessment was not used; only the text relating to the assessment for the highest achievable grade was included in the data collection. Since the grade systems are different in Finland and Sweden, this was done to enhance comparability. In Finland, grade 3 was used for excellence and in Sweden grade A (Finnish National Board of Education, 2011; NAE, 2011). Also, related text such as the knowledge outcome and the description of assessment was helpful and at times even necessary when attempting to understand the terminology used in the document. According to Bryman, “it becomes necessary to probe beneath the surface in order to ask deeper questions about what is happening” (2012, p. 297). Hence, the content was investigated in detail and studied in depth. This was done manually to better allow for interpretations and to place the words in their context and framework. The data collection and the analysis of the documents were directed by pre-determined themes. These were the three dimensions of sustainability (economic, social and environmental).

The fourth and final step in the data collection process included the identification and adoption of the categorization of the three dimensions of sustainability developed by Korösi (2014). However, this research developed the model further and tallied the dimensions of sustainability to determine the distribution of the concepts of sustainability in the SDGs to allow it to work as a comparable frame. This is something that has been sought after by international agencies such as UNESCO which states that, “the Inter-agency and Expert Group on SDG Indicators proposed a broad global indicator to capture the wide scope of target 4.7: ‘the extent to which global citizenship education and education for sustainable development are mainstreamed in national education policies, curricula content, teacher
education and student assessment’. This measure embraces indicators relating to inputs and processes, but sidesteps the target’s aspirational intent of ensuring that all learners, young and old, acquire knowledge and skills aligned with the transformative 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.” (UNESCO, 2016, p. 288). The hope and intention are that this frame can contribute new knowledge to the field of SD. Finally, pie charts were developed which allowed for a comparison to measure the alignment of the global level and the national levels of the dimensions of SD, which was required to answer the third research question.

4.5 Ethical Considerations

When conducting social research, ethical integrity must be conducted (Bryman, 2012). Bryman explains the ethical principles as “harm to participants, lack of informed consent, and invasion of privacy and deception” (2012, p. 135) The researcher will observe this and in every way attempt to avoid political, social biases or harmful consequences (Larsson, 1998). As a result, all documents were handled with great care in a consistent and ethical manner to ensure that these risks would be unlikely. Furthermore, since the research for the thesis and the supervision is taking place in Sweden, the study also complies with the guidelines by the Swedish Research Council’s ethics code for Good Research Practice (Gustafsson, Hermerén & Persson, 2011). This is the ethics principles used by Stockholm University.

4.6 Reliability and Validity

To ensure quality research, reliability and validity are essential. Although developed in quantitative research initially, the qualitative research proposes reliability and validity issues from two approaches (Bryman, 2012). One is aspects of trustworthiness to gauge the quality of the study (Bryman, 2012, p. 49). Trustworthiness includes four criteria: “credibility, transferability dependability and confirmability” (Bryman, 2012, p. 390).

The second approach is described by Bryman as “the most prominent criteria for evaluation of social research are reliability, replication and validity” (Bryman, 2012, p. 46). The quality of this study will be assessed using these criteria. Reliability focuses on “the degree to which a measure of concept is stable” (Bryman 2012, p. 715). This can be broken down further. Krippendorff explains that, “the three types of reliability include stability, reproducibility and accuracy” (2004, p. 214). He further elaborates that, “in content analysis, reproducibility is arguably the most important interpretation of reliability” (Krippendorff,
As evidence of reliability, this study relies on reproducibility and stability. The researcher has made efforts to conduct the intended research based on the methodology. This includes using only official public documents that will remain ‘stable’ to secure high stability and reproducibility. Similarly, the documents analyzed are non-reactive. That is the research process does not change the content of the text being studied to ensure stability and reproducibility. Consequently, the study has a high reliability.

In addition, concepts, theories, documents, and methodology are clearly described in detail to allow for the research to be repeated with consistent results. The data were methodically collected in a reliable and ethical manner, striving for objectivity and acting in good faith not to imply the researcher’s own biases. Also, research data was printed on January 27, 2017, and saved to have a permanent record. This was done to avoid updates or changes to the data that could impact the study. Hence, the replicability is high in this study (Bryman, 2012).

Bryman describes validity as, “a concern with the integrity of the conclusions that are generated from a piece of research” (2012, p. 717). This study uses well-established concepts and theories to contribute to the validity. In addition, ecological validity in this study is strong. Bryman explains ecological validity as, “concerned with the question of whether social scientific findings are applicable to people’s everyday, natural social settings” (2012, p. 48). Because the study involves sustainability issues that concern more than just educators, the findings will hopefully reach other stakeholders as well.
Chapter 5: Analysis and Research Findings

This chapter presents the analysis process and the findings entailing three phases, each linking to the three research questions. The content analysis of the curriculum used the three pillars or dimensions of sustainability – economic, social and environmental – as predetermined themes to investigate the presence of sustainability in the tourism curricula of Finland and Sweden (see section 2.1.1.).

5.1 Analysis and Findings of the Presence of Sustainability in the Tourism Curriculum

Linking to the first research question, content analysis was used to reveal the presence and the extent of SD in the curricula of Finland and Sweden. A quantification of words and expressions guided by the predetermined themes previously outlined was conducted with the purpose of answering the first research question about how and to what extent SD is present in the tourism curriculum (Bryman, 2012). Initially, a search for words such as SD and sustainability were employed, but there were only a few mentions. Consequently, a broader analysis of the documents was implemented directed by the three dimension of sustainability (Boyle et al., 2015). This next step involved elements of a discourse analysis (Krippendorff, 2004). Hence, it involved a more qualitative element of the analysis and research, “For example, critical discourse analysts offer accounts of the roles of language, language use, and (in)coherences and of the communicative uses of texts in the (re)production of dominance and inequalities in society” (Krippendorff, 2004, p. 65). In other words, a critical analysis was applied to the presence of sustainability in the text with the aim of possibly revealing the role of sustainability and the commitment to sustainable development in the tourism curriculum. This will be further discussed in chapter 6. The analysis revealed the distribution and presence of the dimensions of SD across the tourism curricula of Finland and Sweden.

Table 1 depicts the tourism courses and the presence of the three dimensions of SD across the curriculum in Finland. The numbers indicate the number of mentions in the various courses. As illustrated, 11 tourism courses were analyzed. Unexpectedly, in four of the courses, SD was not mentioned at all, besides an unclear note on vocational ethics and sustainable praxis.
Table 1. *Tourism Courses and Dimensions of SD in Finland*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Finland Courses in the tourism curriculum</th>
<th>Environmental</th>
<th>Economic</th>
<th>Social</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Customer service in the tourism industry</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implementation of tourism services</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tourism sales and information services</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accommodation service</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tourism and environmental management</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marketing communications in tourism services</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Productisation of tourism</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tourist office and agency service</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of reservation system at tourist offices</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guide service</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building and maintaining constructions in tourism service</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>6</strong></td>
<td><strong>8</strong></td>
<td><strong>8</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 5 serves as a visual aid demonstrating the findings in a graph that even more clearly shows the distribution of sustainability. Each bar represents a course, and the colors indicate the economic (blue), social (red) and environmental (green) dimensions of SD. The overall distribution of SD is rather even, and there is a slight dominance of the social dimensions.
Correspondingly, the analysis of the nine tourism courses in the Swedish curriculum uncovered the following distribution of the three dimensions of SD across the curriculum, as illustrated in Table 2. The social dimension is slightly dominant here as well, and it is followed by environmental and economic dimensions.

### Table 2. Tourism Courses and Dimensions of SD in Sweden

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Courses in the Tourism Curriculum</th>
<th>Environmental</th>
<th>Economic</th>
<th>Social</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Travel agency service</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustainable tourism</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guide and tour leader</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel hosting and destination</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hospitality industry</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity and experiences</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Destinations and itineraries</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel production and sales</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marketing and sales</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>15</strong></td>
<td><strong>11</strong></td>
<td><strong>19</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 6 shows the findings in a graph which illustrates that Sweden has a more uniform distribution of SD across the curriculum than Finland. Additionally, the mentions of SD were more frequent in Sweden than in Finland, also depicted in Figure 6. This will be further discussed in chapter 6.

5.2 Comparison of the Dimensions of SD in the Finnish and Swedish Tourism Curricula

This study further aimed to compare which links to the second research question about similarities and differences. This was intended to complement the initial analysis, go beyond the quantitative element of counting words, and to further deepen our understanding (Bryman, 2012). Bereday’s model for comparison was used as an analytical framework to compare the Finnish and Swedish curriculum (Manzon, 2007). It entails four steps: description of data, interpretation of data, juxtaposition establishing similarities and differences, and comparison and interpretation linking to theories and concepts. Based on the description and interpretation of data described in section 6.1, similarities and differences could be uncovered. Since the number of courses included in the tourism program varied between Finland and Sweden, it was decided that pie charts would best reveal the percentages of the distribution of the dimension of SD. The pie charts in Figure 7 and 8 provide a visual aid to depict the similarities and differences within and across the tourism curriculum in Finland and Sweden. The findings demonstrate that both countries have a similarly even distribution of SD and with the small difference that in Sweden, the social dimension is more dominant than in Finland. Similarly, the economic dimension in Sweden is the least dominant, but in Finland, it
is, by a small margin, the environmental dimension of SD that is least dominant. These similarities and differences will be discussed further in chapter 6.

Figure 7. Pie chart illustrating dimensions of SD in Finland

Figure 8. Pie chart illustrating dimensions of SD in Sweden

5.3 Alignment of the SD Content in the Curricula to the SDGs and Agenda 2030

The third research question seeks to explore how the integrated nature of SD in the tourism curricula of Finland and Sweden aligns with both the SDGs and Agenda 2030. This moves the perspective from micro (national) to macro (international) with the purpose of expanding and deepening the understanding of the SD presence in the curricula. In other words, the purpose is to deconstruct the findings and analyze them from another perspective to possibly reveal new findings as recommended by Bryman (2012).

The former ambassador of Hungary to the United Nations Casaba Körösi, who co-chaired the drafting of the SDGs, identified the three dimensions of SD in the SDG (Korösi, 2014). This allows for an additional frame to explore the alignment of the dimensions of SD
in the SDGs as understood by Korösi and to compare the tourism curriculum in Finland and Sweden. Figure 9 illustrates the integrated nature of the dimension of sustainable development of the 17 goals of the SDG and its 169 targets. The goals are horizontally at the top of the figure with the targets below. The different colors show the environmental, social and economic dimensions.

Figure 9. Dimensions of SD in the SDGs

(Source: OECD, 2015; adapted from the presentation by Amb. Csaba Korosi, PR of Hungary to the UN: “From SDGs to Post-2015 Agenda” at the OECD in Paris 10/7/2014)

The analysis in this study, however, took it a step further by quantifying the dimensions of sustainable development in each of the 169 targets (method of implementation was not counted for the purpose to ease the comparison).
Thereafter, a pie chart was created of the findings to illustrate the dimension of SD in SDGs. Using the pie chart allowed for the data from the SDGs to be analyzed and compared with the results from Sweden and Finland as portrayed in figure 10. The findings demonstrate that Finland, although with a small difference, is most aligned to the SDGs. However, overall, the dimensions of SD in the tourism curricula of Finland and Sweden generally align well to the dimensions in the SDGs.

Additionally, the percentages displayed in figure 10 were used further to uncover the alignment of the dimensions of SD to the SDGs in more detail. An analysis was conducted by calculating the percentage of the alignment or match of each dimension of SD in the Finnish and Swedish tourism curriculum to the SDGs for each dimension of social, economic and environmental SD. The calculations were conducted by using the percentages from SDGs as a reference. For example, 43 percent is the percentage of the pie for the social dimension in the SDGs as displayed in figure 10. This number was then used to calculate how well the Finnish and Swedish curricula match the social dimension of the SDGs. For instance, the tourism curriculum in Sweden demonstrated that 42 percent of the three dimensions of SD was dominated by the social dimension. Forty-two out of forty-three equals 98 percent; therefore, the social dimension of the Swedish tourism curriculum aligns to the social dimension of the SDGs with 98 percent.

The first calculations indicated the match of the social dimension of SD in the tourism curriculum to the SDGs. Sweden matched the SDGs to 98 percent and Finland to 84 percent. The second calculations showed the match of the economic dimension of SD in the tourism curriculum to the SDGs. Sweden matched the SDGs economic dimension to 65 percent and Finland to 97 percent. The final calculations indicated the match of the environmental
dimension of SD in the tourism curriculum to the SDGs. Sweden had 33 percent more environmental focus than the SDGs, and Finland had 22 percent more. This uncovered that the Finnish and Swedish tourism curricula and the distribution of the dimensions of sustainable development aligns well overall to Agenda 2030 for sustainable development.
Chapter 6: Discussion

This chapter will discuss the findings of the analysis and answer the three research questions posed in the introduction. Finally, reflections on the research method and the theoretical framework will be discussed.

6.1 Discussion of Findings

6.1.1 The Presence of Sustainability in the Tourism Curriculum

The content analysis revealed that at least one of the three concepts of sustainability (economic, social and environment) is distributed in the courses described in the tourism curricula of Finland and Sweden. This answers the first part of the first research question about how SD is present in the tourism curriculum. Encouraging, sustainable literacy has been given a prominent place in the tourism curricula of Finland and Sweden. The trend to embrace sustainability is also supported in previous literature (Barber et al. 2011; Boley, 2011; Deale et al. 2009).

In addition, the findings uncovered that the three dimensions are distributed fairly evenly across the curriculum. This was somewhat unexpected because many previous studies within the tourism narrative have traditionally had an environmental focus of sustainability (Barber et al., 2001; Telfer & Hashimoto, 2001). Similarly, other studies have found environmental sustainability to be the dominant domain of SD in higher tourism education (Chawla, 2015, Flohr, 2001). A possible explanation for the result is the trend towards a more holistic worldview of SD with an emphasis on the interlinkages of the three dimensions of sustainability supported and recommended by the SDGs. There is a realization that what we do will have effects beyond economic and environmental impacts. Hence, a shift from a human capital view of individuals toward a more holistic view of the capability approach is apparent in the adoption of the SDGs. In addition, tourism education must meet the demands of the labor market and society in each context. The embedded nature of SD revealed by the findings can also be an indicator of the importance of the triple bottom line of sustainable tourism. As advocated by Dwyer, tourism should ultimately benefit the population and societies of tourism destinations (2005). Hence, not only economic benefits but also a focus on individuals’ needs, opportunities, and well-being is essential for sustainable tourism. This is also promoted in the SDGs (UN, 2015). Moreover, to the tourism industry, it is important that students learn about tourism and SD holistically. It is central that tourism and SD are
applicable not only to one aspect of sustainability, such as the environment, but that that they are realistically applicable to all aspects of tourism (Millar et al., 2009). Although SD is present in the tourism curriculum, the extent of its presence is moderate. Likewise, the concepts are unclear and fragmented. Other studies of tourism curricula have also come to this conclusion. For instance, in a study of universities in the U.S. and Britain, similar findings were uncovered (Deale et al., 2009; Chawla, 2015). The curriculum should clearly explain and describe the concept of SD in specific contexts. As a teacher, the curriculum is the main guideline for the teachings in the course, therefore the explicitness of SD in that document is crucial. However, in the case of Finland and Sweden, the concept of SD is blurred (see chapter 6). The complexity of SD and its contexts make clarity even more important. The unclear character of SD and the difficulty interpreting and applying its meaning by educators is supported by other studies (Dubois et al., 2010; Majumdar, 2010). This difficulty characterizing, interpreting, and implying the meaning of SD addresses the second part of the first research question intended to investigate to what extent the three dimensions of sustainability are present in the upper secondary tourism curriculum. However, one must keep in mind that SD in the curriculum is not just indicated by the words in the curriculum. How and to what degree the teachers implement SD is also an indicator; although, what is truly being taught can be difficult to monitor and measure. The autonomy of the teachers varies, but it clearly influences the depth and breadth of SD in the courses. In addition, the number of courses offered, how many hours spent on each subject and how infused SD is in the entire school system are also markers of how SD is prioritized in tourism education. Though answers to these questions do not fit within the scope of this study, the present findings are good indicators of the themes and presence of SD in Finland and Sweden. It should be noted, however, that at times words and expressions encountered had to be read in their specific contexts in order to understand their connotations. For instance, the curricula/syllabi varied somewhat in format, which slightly influenced the analysis. However, throughout the research process, care was taken not to be subjective in order to maintain validity and reliability. For example, work environment should not be confused with a sustainable environment. “The various task and working environments of guides and tour leader” (NAE, 2011), does not refer to a sustainable environment as opposed to, “Choice of means of transport and itinerary with due regard to the environment” (NAE, 2011) which does indicate sustainable reflection and practice. Hence, it was necessary at times to probe
beneath the surface and place a word in context in order to understand its intention. (Bryman 2012).

6.1.2 Similarities and Discrepancies Between the Cases: Finland and Sweden

The strength of a comparison is that it provides additional information and deeper insight to research (Bryman, 2012). In this study, the comparison revealed understandings of similarities and differences between Finland and Sweden and the presence of the concepts of sustainability in the tourism curricula. However, before explaining further, it is necessary to mention that the curricula were different in that they varied in structure and context. Variations and emphasis within the curricula are not uncommon, something that has also been found in other comparative studies (Pilz & Li, 2012). For instance, a study comparing environmental education in China and Germany, uncovered interesting findings, despite numerous differences in both educational system and curriculum (Pilz & Li, 2012). Regardless of the differences, the cases are still comparative and the research illuminating.

The first similarity is that the three concepts of SD (economic, social and environmental) were uniformly distributed in both tourism curricula. However, the extent of the presence of sustainability was moderated and not as prevalent as expected or advisable by scholars and the international community (Fien et al., 2009; UNESCO, 2016). There were a number of courses in which SD was mentioned very little or not at all. Similarly, the words sustainability and SD were only mentioned a few times. Similar discoveries have also been made in previous studies using comparable methodology (Boyle et al., 2015). A partial explanation may be an already crowded curriculum and a heavy focus on vocational skills, factors that were also confirmed by other researchers in the field (Dredge et al., 2015; Lasonen, 2010). It seems that the human capital theory and the attention to skills are more present in the curricula than the holistic, broader view of TVET and SD supported by the capability approach.

The second similarity is that the concept of SD including its meaning and significance to tourism in Finland and Sweden is blurred. The disintegrated and fragmented presence of sustainable development is confirmed by other studies (Chawla, 2015; Boley, 2011). In Finland for instance, every course has an objective of performing vocational skill while exercising sustainable praxis, but there is no clear explanation of what that means in the various courses (Finnish National Board of Education, 2011). Similarly, there is no pronounced mention or explanation of the interlinkage of SD and its implication to Finland.
and Sweden. It is advisable to have courses explaining the interconnectedness of the three pillars of SD and the impact and the empowering potential of sustainable tourism in various settings. For example, the Swedish curriculum states that, “it should highlight issues concerning social, economic and cultural conditions, ethical views, and also sustainable development in the tourist industry” (NAE, 2011). Likewise, in Sweden, a course in Sustainable Tourism is available. While sustainable development is highly present in the course, how the various dimensions of the concept are interwoven is indistinct. Although the intent is good, the presence of sustainability in the tourism curriculum is too vague and can “lend itself to subjective interpretations” (Boley, 2011, p. 27).

In contrast, this study uncovered differences. The first difference discovered, although small, was a disparity in the distribution of the three dimensions of SD in the Finnish and Swedish curricula. In Sweden, the social dimension of SD is slightly more dominant than in Finland. Similarly, the economic dimension in Sweden is the least dominant, but in Finland, it is, by a small margin, the environmental dimension of SD that is least dominant. However, the differences are too small to generalize to social and political contexts of the cases.

The second and more significant difference is that Finland had a more fragmented distribution of SD in the curriculum. Besides a blurred mention of sustainable praxis, a number of courses had no mention of SD at all. In Sweden on the other hand, all courses, although they were only a few, had mentions of SD. In addition, a couple of courses had a specific focus on sustainability, such as the Sustainable Tourism course. A partial explanation for the difference could be that the Finnish curriculum had a more detailed emphasis on demonstrating vocational practice and skills than the Swedish curriculum. However, it is recommended that education for sustainable development be infused and embedded throughout the curriculum and not presented in separate courses (Fien 2009; UNESCO 2016). Subsequently, these findings answer the second research question that asks what similarities and differences relating to SD are present in the tourism curriculum in Finland and Sweden.

Returning to the national context of Sweden and Finland, ultimately, education should meet the needs of society along with the demands of the labor market; although, the priority of education varies depending on the context. As previously mentioned, Sweden spends significantly more on TVET than Finland, but is the quality of the education better? Does it better match the labor market? Which tourism program produces the best industry professionals? Employability is central to TVET, but the tension between core aspects of the human capital view of education and the capability approach appears to be debatable to educational planners when developing tourism curricula. Finding answers to these questions
is challenging and does not fit within this study. On the other hand, this study can provide valuable data and contribute to the field of TVET research and benefit policy makers in their quest to find answers to questions about quality education. Similarly, the tension between economic rationale and the quality of education can be the cause for new educational reforms (Breakspear, 2012). However, reforms are often costly and time-consuming. Consequently, research and reliable data are essential on which to base decisions for educational reform. This can prevent reactive reforms based on political changes and instead provide a basis for proactive reforms that go in tandem with educational needs. Sweden enacted a new reform in 2011 revising its upper vocational educational system, including TVET. Finland will reform TVET in 2018 (Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture, 2017b). One reason for the reform in Finland is to decrease the number of programs available with the further intention of better reflecting the knowledge and skill requirements of the labor market (Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture, 2017b).

In sum, what motivates the similarities and differences are challenging to identify. There is a potential risk of overanalyzing, based on the exploratory nature and the small scope of the study. Although a comparison is not a completion, contrasting the cases uncovered findings that were illuminating in themselves. To know the reason why is difficult to discover using content analysis (Bryman, 2012). This would require a different methodology which was not the intent of this study. The reasons will be discussed further in section 6.4.1.

6.1.3 The International Agenda of Sustainability in Relation to the National Context of the Tourism Curricula

This study intends to contribute knowledge to the field of research by using the dimensions of sustainable development in the SDGs as a frame. It provides a useful additional perspective and an expansion of the knowledge of SD and upper secondary tourism. Also, including the SDGs as a complementary framework provides an opportunity to explore the national micro and meso levels and the alignment to the global macro level. This study revealed that the national curricula largely align well with the global SDGs and their dimension of sustainability. This alignment directly addresses the third and final research question of how the integrated nature of SD in the tourism curricula in Finland and Sweden are matching Agenda 2030 and the sustainable development goals.

The SDGs urge local adaptation, monitoring, and implementation of the global agenda to the various national contexts (UNESCO, 2016). Therefore, an alignment to the SDGs is
desirable. However, first, an initial assessment is necessary in order to monitor progress. The intention is that this study can provide that assessment. Furthermore, the SDGs can signal to educators and students, the significance and importance of the interlinkages of the dimensions of SD, even though emphasis can vary depending on the political, societal and economic context. Likewise, the SDGs signify the balance between the global and the local and the need for cooperation when implementing SD. An example of this is the application and the contribution to the empowerment of students by highlighting the global importance of transversal skills to improve employability and meet job market demands as supported by the capability approach (Goldney at al., 2007; Tribe, 2002; UN, 2015). With a large migrating population, validation and recognition of previous competence is important, as is the updating of relevant skills. TVET has the potential to function as an instrument in the process of the empowerment and transformation of these individuals.

Similarly, in a fast-changing job market, what you learn today, will likely not be enough to meet future skill requirements. Jobs will disappear and newly emerge. Also, because of the general change in society from a production economy to a service economy in many developed countries, more jobs will be in the service sector, including tourism (Fidgeon, 2010; UNWTO, 2016). It is also more common to work in more than one country (Goldney at al., 2007). Therefore, competencies and skills need to be highly adaptive in order to be able to respond to changes in the job market. TVET can be a provider of continued learning, including transversal skill, to update skills in order to transform knowledge. Similarly, the SDGs have the possibility to shape and improve the relevance of the tourism courses to meet these needs within the context of sustainability and globalization. A holistic school-wide integration of sustainable development is recommended as the best approach (UNESCO, 2016). Although the distribution of the dimensions of SD in Finland and Sweden aligns well with SDGs, it is fragmented and not holistically infused as advocated by the SDGs.

6.1.4 Reflecting on the Research Methodology and Theoretical Framework
Driven by the research questions, the methodology used for this study was a comparison and a content analysis. One reason for this is the complex nature of the concepts in this study, which can be particularly challenging in comparative studies. TVET, tourism, and SD have more than one definition, including having various meanings depending on the stakeholder (Dubois, 2010; Fischer et al., 2014). Therefore, to keep the variables in this study as constant
as possible, a content analysis of the curriculum was considered the best choice and functioned well in this study. One of many advantages of using documents in a study is that they are “unobtrusive and non-reactive” in nature (Bowen, 2009). Hence, the documents are not affected by the research process. The non-reactive factor was an attractive element to the researcher and the method helped to keep the study focused. Moreover, the method was well suited to answer the research questions. This is explained by Bowen (2009), “Researchers should not simply lift words and passages from available documents to be thrown into their research report. Rather, they should establish the meaning of the document and its contribution to the issues being explored” (p. 33).

Conversely, limitations of content analysis include that the documents are theoretical and not originally created for the purpose of research as pointed out by Bowen (2009). Therefore, it can be challenging to get enough specified data. Similarly, the nature of the study and the research questions presented a restricted context with few variations in the data collection. Nonetheless, in this study, the tourism curricula used as documents in the content analysis provided enough details to answer the research questions, and the advantages of stability outweighed the disadvantages.

However, the researcher is aware that the voice and input of others, such as educators and industry professionals are not heard. In retrospect, including a survey or interviews of other stakeholders could have widened the scope of the study and merit an interesting expansion of the study and the pedagogical discussion. Though, for two main reasons, the decision not to do this was made consciously. The first is the reduction of constants and the possible reactive factors by the participants. This was deemed particularly important based on the limited scope of this study. For instance, there is a potential risk that the interviewee answers a question because they think it is the ‘correct’ answer or expected answer, but not the actuality being researched (Bryman, 2012). Correspondingly, in an observation setting teachers and students can behave atypically because they are being observed (Bryman, 2012). Furthermore, in Finland and Sweden, teachers have great autonomy over what is being taught. Hence, what they are saying they are teaching and what they are actually teaching, might not agree with what the students are learning, which makes it difficult to measure. Relatedly, other national and international policy documents could have been used to possibly allow deeper insight. However, the specific interest in this study based on the research questions lies in the presence of SD in the tourism curriculum and was therefore deemed most interesting from a comparative aspect and as a contribution to the research field.
Secondly, based on the literature review, research about the implementation and significance of SD, TVET, and tourism including the perception of its stakeholders is well documented and a considerable body of research is available (see section 1.7). Therefore, this study focused on filling the identified gap in existing literature by expanding the knowledge in comparative education, curriculum, TVET and upper secondary tourism. Moreover, the study is intended to provide an initial assessment of the current status of the presence of SD in the tourism curricula in Finland and Sweden. Therefore, using the dimensions of SD in the SDGs was valuable as a frame and comparative tool because it can function as a marker of which concepts or values of SD are promoted at a global level. For instance, it can indicate to what extent and in which direction the global community are supporting SD. By applying the frame of SD in the SDGs, the study contributes new knowledge to sustainability in tourism education and to the field of research.

As explained by Fischer et al., “the adequateness of the method still is revealed by the quality of findings that have been obtained about the object of knowledge” (2014, p. 254). Hence, reflecting on the methodology and the quality of the findings, it is deemed that the methods used are suitable for this study. Consequently, the methodological decisions were driven by their effectiveness in answering the research questions and in evaluating the presence of sustainability throughout and within the tourism curriculum. Subsequently, the hope is to stimulate the discussion towards the Agenda 2030 and the sustainable development goals.

The theoretical framework used as a reference in this study, namely the human capital theory and the capability approach, functioned well as they linked on many levels both to the concepts and in the literature. In many countries including Finland and Sweden, the notion in the human capital discourse that skills are necessary to generate capital in the future, is closely linked to TVET and the job market. Although social rationale such as the right to education, public investing, quality, and equity is part of the debate here as well. International testing such as PISA (Programme for International Students Assessment), can fuel the reform discussion and the competitive race to have a topped ranked successful educational system (Breakspear, 2012). But it is debatable how to measure the success of an educational system (Breakspear, 2012). One way to evaluate the quality of TVET can be to measure employment rates and how well the vocational skills and training match the labor market. However, there has also been a gradual shift in the view of education to purely provide knowledge and skill with an economic focus to also foster global citizens and individual development promoted by other theories, such as the capability approach. Nussbaum argues further that we must have
the ‘capability’ for compassion to all things living to truly have global justice and human development (2003). Similarly, the SDGs encourage global responsibility and a holistic approach to quality education and sustainability as they state that, “SDG4 and its targets advance a model where learning, in all shapes and forms, has the power to influence people’s choices to create more just, inclusive and sustainable societies” (UNESCO, 2015, p. 7). This study discovered that the tourism curricula in Finland and Sweden has much focus on tangible vocational skills and the concept of sustainability but the link to other capabilities is unclear.

Similarly, the SDGs focus on the measurement of outcome and quality of education. As previously noted, to measure and define quality education and relevant skills can be complex and can vary depending on contexts. There is tension between market value and education. Clearly, the numbers of years or the number of students attending school was not enough as promoted in the MDGs. Rather, the quality of education was also important. But there should also be a balance between national and global learning and knowledge. With globalization, there is a constant need for new and updated skills. The labor market changes more quickly than the school. At the same time, we are more interconnected than ever before which requires schools to provide education with transferable knowledge and skills that are easily convertible in order to ease mobility. It is advisable that more attention is given to these aspects in the Finnish and Swedish tourism curricula.

Although both Finland and Sweden rank high in the human development index, the capability approach applies here as well. All individual have the right to enhance their capabilities and the ability to tap into available resources such as education. Also, everyone should have the right and be able to use one’s rights as promoted by the capability theory. Notably, “The Ministry of Education and Culture has decided to subsidise vocational education and training for immigrants by EUR 20 million” (Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture, 2017b). Unmistakably, the Finnish government recognizes the potential of TVET and supports the idea that it can be an important capacity builder as supported by the capability approach.

As a final reflection, the capability approach allowed for an expansion rather than a replacement of the human capital approach. In other words, the capability approach is human-centered but also more holistic and functioned as a complement to the human capital theory. Also, the capability theory is more aligned to Agenda 2030 and the sustainable development goals with its focus on global citizenship and partnership and that SD concerns all (UN, 2015). It had, therefore, the most value in this study.

Generally, the human capital theory and the capability approach functioned well in
this study. However, the theories can be too narrow to fully explain all features of TVET, competencies, and skills. It would have been useful to also include aspects of neoliberalism, global citizenship, cosmopolitanism and lifelong learning to further illustrate and disentangle the various concepts associated with sustainable development, tourism, and TVET.
Chapter 7: Conclusion

In this final chapter of the thesis, reflections and conclusions are presented. Finally, suggestions for further research are proposed.

7.1 Concluding Remarks

This thesis aimed to explore the presence of sustainability in the tourism curricula of Finland and Sweden and how it matches the UN’s Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development. Thus, it investigates how sustainability is professed within and across various contexts from a national school program level perspective to an international perspective. The study used a comparative research design and employed a qualitative content analysis of the tourism curricula in Sweden and Finland. The SDGs and the three dimensions of sustainability (economic, social and environmental) were used as a framework. While the findings cannot be generalized due to the limited scope of the study, it uncovered some valuable insights of the presence of SD in the tourism curriculum in Finland and Sweden.

The findings of the research imply that both countries are committed to sustainable development and the concepts are present in the tourism curriculum. Similarly, the distribution of the three dimensions of SD across the tourism curriculum in both countries matches the distribution in the 17 sustainable development goals adopted by the UN. Also, the comparison of the tourism curriculum revealed that the Swedish curriculum had a more uniform distribution of SD across courses than did the Finnish curriculum.

On the other hand, even though SD is present in the curriculum, the mentions and occurrences of SD are unexpectedly low, and it was discovered that the concepts of SD were indistinct and fragmented in both curriculums. More importantly, there is limited mention of the significance of the interconnectedness of the dimension of SD. The holistic view of SD is imperative in education and TVET. Likewise, due to the highly interrelated nature of the tourism industry, an understanding of how the three dimensions of SD are interlaced is of utmost importance.

The interlinkage of all three dimension of SD is emphasized by the global community and reflected in the SDGs. Moreover, the tourism industry continues to grow rapidly, including in Finland and Sweden, which puts significant responsibility on the tourism industry to holistically practice sustainable development. However, as discovered by this study, the concept of SD is inexplicit in both curricula with little mention of the holistic perception of SD. It is therefore recommended that the curricula become more specific when
including SD in course content. This is a necessity to promote relevant, responsible and accountable sustainable practice in tourism education to sustain and preserve communities and individuals. Although vocational skills are important, skill in SD is too critical to leave up to the autonomy of schools and teachers and should clearly and specifically be integrated in the curriculum. The concept of SD is complex and if not specific and pronounced in the teaching, the inclusion of the concepts risk being too vague.

This study contributes to the literature of TVET, SD, and tourism in a number of ways. First, it provides an analysis of the presence of SD in tourism TVET in Finland and Sweden. Second, the thesis addresses the gap in previous studies of upper secondary education, TVET tourism. Third, the study contributes to international and comparative education by providing knowledge about two Nordic countries to promote further understating of various educational systems. Fourth, the thesis offered a new insight by using the three dimensions identified in the SDGs as a frame for the research.

The study discovered that the presence of sustainable development in the tourism curricula of Finland and Sweden is fragmented and unclear. It is recommended that a more holistic approach to SD is adopted in the curriculum.

7.2 Suggestions for Further Research

This study was intentionally limited to the investigation of SD and the tourism curriculum in Finland and Sweden. Hence, it cannot be generalized to all tourism courses and programs. Despite the exploratory nature and the relatively narrow scope of the research, the thesis expanded previous knowledge in international and comparative education. However, further research is recommended to position the study in a larger context and other perspectives to advance and substantiate the findings and better understand the conclusions. Building on this study, three suggestions for further research are proposed.

First, a study that focuses more closely on TVET and the demands of the job market is recommended. A comparison of SD in tourism education and SD among tourism providers can bring to light the applicability of sustainable practice. Investigating how well the concept of SD in the tourism curriculum matches the need and perceptions of tourism industry professionals can be an important indicator of the relevance of SD in tourism education.

Second, for this study, content analysis was purposefully used. However, to deepen and widen the study, additional qualitative methods such as observations, interviews, and questionnaires could be used to triangulate the findings which could potentially be revealing
with a large group of participants. For instance, investigating how educators and other stakeholders implement SD could be illuminating and merit an interesting expansion of this thesis.

Third, it is recommended that research is undertaken by placing the framework of this research in a larger context, using multiple countries and levels of comparison. Similarly, this could include a longitudinal study and expansion underpinned by this study to better understand trends, progression, and long-term developments. This might uncover and map the scope of the integration of SD in tourism education on a larger scale and broaden the findings.


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