Abstract
This paper compares job quality across sites of large offshore wind turbine component manufacturing in three different countries, Denmark, England, and Germany. It compares the three employment systems, production models, and industrial policy in order to find out how these impacted on the sites’ employment strategies and job quality. The paper argues that the institutions of the employment systems, active labour market policy and vocational education and training combined provided for adequately skilled workforce in the context of the respective production model; and that the institutions of employment protection combined with generally lax regulation of temporary work agencies provided for similar numerical flexibility of the workforce across the sites. However, the paper suggests, that the difference in access to jobs in the sector, tenure, and development opportunities across the sites and countries were the result of the quality of the industry policy that impacted on the growth of the sector.

The paper then proposes a distinction of demand and supply side industry policy, which helps to identify clear differences across the three countries. Supply side policies are defined as policies that are aimed at facilitating the market participation of domestic producers, through support of research and development, provision of skills, and support of supply chain and process optimization. Demand side policies are defined as policies that are aimed at expanding the demand for energy technology, through price subsidies for electricity from renewable sources, favourable spatial planning and approval regulations, allocation of seabed for windfarm construction, domestic and international targets for renewable deployment and reduction of carbon emissions, and support for marketing and establishment of production sites in other countries.
The Danish sites were embedded in a political setting in which supply and demand side policies were dynamically adapted over time, and policies involved a wide spectrum of stakeholders across private and public sector and the civil society (Karnøe and Garud, 2012). The German sites found themselves in an institutional setting with strong supply side support, but unresolved conflicts in the formulation of demand side policies (Pohl, 2013; Fornahl et al., 2012). The English sites developed late in the context of very little initial supply side support, but a growing demand side push because coalitions across public and private sector could be build (Kern et al., 2014) and resulted in the opening of two large component production facilities. Once the manufacturers established themselves in England, ‘post hoc’ supply side policies were developed to support these manufacturers. However, the sites, although clearly dependent on domestic policy support in their initial phase, also compete on a regional market. In the case of the presented sites the ‘Northern European Market’. This means, for the growth of the sites, demand site policy and how it structures demand of offshore wind turbine components across the region are crucial for the development of the sector and in consequence for the quality of jobs, as long as no concerted re-regulation of employment protection, agency work, and skill formation takes place across the regional market.

References


