

Tal av Pam Fredman vid EU-konferens om Kunskapstriangeln.

Swedish higher education has since long been characterized by a strong tradition of adult education and dissemination of research findings. When the University of Gothenburg was established as a University college in the end of the nineteenth century it was on the initiative of influential merchants who wanted to increase the education level in the society by creation of an institution of higher education in the city.

By time the politicians gave all the Swedish universities “Collaboration with the surrounding society” as a third task together with research and education.

The problem with three tasks is that it is easy to see them as different entities. Several Swedish universities, among them my own university, have built up special departments dealing with collaboration.

In this respect the Knowledge triangle is a much better concept as it describes Research, Education and Innovation as connected to each other in a continuous process.

It is of greatest interest that the different universities have full freedom to develop the knowledge triangle concept in their own way, of course in close interaction with other stakeholders as business enterprises and public institutions. The universities have all different prerequisites. The duty of the University managements is to create even better conditions for the Knowledge triangle. But we cannot decide what to do on the top level. This process must be carried out by the people responsible for research and education.

The process of the Knowledge triangle is already running. Researchers have always done it. I give you a couple of examples from Gothenburg; The development of Losec together with AstraZenca, professor Brånemarks implant which led to the establishment of Nobel Biocare and our Noble Prize laureate Arvid Carlsson work with dopamine and the foundation of the company Carlsson Research. There are lots of other examples here in Sweden and all over Europe. Never the less I think the concept of the Knowledge triangle can help us to be even better in interacting with other stakeholders outside the universities.

I think everyone is aware of positive effects of research on economic growth and welfare. But higher education is at least of equal value. It is certainly a very efficient way of disseminating knowledge into the society. We provide companies as well as public institutions with highly competent employees. I am glad that the knowledge triangle puts focus on education and its large importance in creating “a knowledge based society”.

It is of great importance that there is a close connection between research and education. Our students need teachers who pursue research and who enrich education with new findings. It develops and vitalizes education. In the same way researchers need students. They catch a glimpse of how young people think. And students certainly put other kind of questions than researchers do.

The logical consequence of this reasoning is that we need the same close contacts between researchers and students on one hand and people from companies and public institutions on the other. This is already valid in many respects concerning public entities and big companies, but academia must be better to include also smaller business. Perhaps they don't need to meet

our top researchers, but they certainly need to get in contact with our students – their future employees.

Mobility of staff and students is necessary to create interaction between sectors. But this is more of a wish than a reality and the obstacles are often due to standards and laws within a sector on national or European level. Qualifications from i.e. companies ought to be seen as merits also within universities. Wouldn't lectures at universities held by external people be more common in the future? How do we stimulate the private and public sectors to welcome students for shorter practise and to do dissertations or theses in i.e. a company?

We need a modernisation agenda for the European universities in agreement with the Lund declaration some weeks ago.

I often meet some people that have a very poor perception of higher education; still they look upon themselves as experts on education. They are all representatives for an education policy that I call the three S-policy; that is Slim, Swift and Stingy.

As you understand I am not a friend of that kind of education. I prefer the view of higher education that Dr Marcus Storch, Chairman of the Board of the Nobel Foundation, represented in his speech at the Nobel Prize Award Ceremony last year.

I quote:

“Today humanity is undoubtedly facing ever-increasing challenges, and cutting-edge research plays and will play an ever more important role globally.

This implies being able to stimulate, refine and attract the researchers of today as well as the best students, and thereby the researchers of the future. But universities must also possess such breadth that studies can be pursued relatively freely between different disciplines.

In their undergraduate education, many of our Laureates in scientific disciplines have also studied humanistic subjects. This cross-fertilisation has proved to be of great significance in achieving success.”

I am sure that Marcus Storch opinion about education is sound. I am also sure that the traditional, free research without any restrictions creates the best conditions for innovations. It is a pity that the curiosity based research often has difficulties in finding financial support. Still it is the kind of research that has the best potential to create findings leading to new enterprises.

I hope this conference will boost the interest and understanding of the knowledge triangle and that it will lead to concrete plan of actions to be taken at the European, national and institutional level. Thank you.