



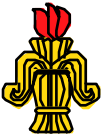
# ***The Dialogue of Higher Education Institutions with Their Partners***

***Professor Ilkka Virtanen***  
*University of Vaasa, Finland*

**Evaluering i skolor i Norden**  
**Vision och verklighet**

**Nordic Conference on Evaluation**

**Reykjavik, Iceland, 11-12 November, 1999**





## *The traditional role of universities*

- Autonomous national institutions of HE with only limited goals and accountability to their region and the society in general
- The mission of the universities is to promote free scientific research and to provide higher education based on research
- The universities' basic functions (teaching and research) have aspired to the achievement of national and international reputation and significance





## *The third role of universities*

- The universities have become more active in serving the needs of their regions and society
- The universities have opened up more than before to their partners and external stakeholders
- The increased activity (the third role of the universities) has come together with the emergence of new approaches to institutional management





## *The old model*

- **Key parameters**
  - National (government) funding to meet national labour market and RTD needs
  - Single paymaster and long term security in funding
  - Predictable cohorts of young full-time students
  - Provision of infrastructure to support the pursuit of individual academic research and scholarship
- **Management implications**
  - Limited demands on university management
  - Supports academic self management and collegiality





# *The new model*

## ● Key parameters

- Mass higher education and life-long learning
- Pursuit of efficiency gains in public funding
- New ICT based modes of knowledge production and distribution outside the universities

## ● Management implications

- Privileged relations with government undermined
- New intermediaries articulate demands of others
- New requirements for locally relevant knowledge production, gateways to global info resources, adaptable workforce, leadership in regional governance



# *Regional Dimensions of the Universities*

- Increase of the level of education
- Effects on the economic sector
- Universities as industrial dynamos
  - Technology villages, entrepreneurship, spin-off's
  - Education and consultancy, R & D
- Cultural and social benefits
- Way to internationalisation
- Putting the city on the map





## *The mission of a responsive university*

- Do the universities have a dilemma in balancing the endeavours towards
  - a national and international academic reputation and success and
  - bringing an interface with the partners and external engagement into the mainstream of teaching and research?
- In order to benefit their stakeholders best the universities have to fulfil high standard international criteria in teaching and research





## *Self assessment of stakeholder interface*

- **Synthesis:** Does the university recognise that by its very nature the processes in partnership are broadly based embracing economic, technological, environmental, social, cultural and political agendas?
- **Objectives:** Are the objectives of partnerships clear?
- **Collaboration:** Are procedures in place to support inter-university collaboration?





## *Self assessment ... (continued/2)*

- **Mapping and measuring:** Who talks to whom about what? Where do the students come from and go to?
- **Human resource development:** Is the partnership agenda incorporated into HR policies?
- **Focus:** What is the focus of the university in the partnership interface (e.g. regional, nation-wide in a sector etc.) and the distinctive contribution thereupon?





## *Self assessment ... (continued/3)*

- **Geographical identity:** What are the unique features of the region to which the university can contribute?
- **Regional policy and leadership:** What are the main drivers of regional policy? What role does the university play in regional leadership?
- **Teaching and learning:** Have labour market needs and intelligence influenced the shape and contents of teaching and learning programmes?





## *Self assessment ... (continued/4)*

- **Research:** Is the university providing its partners with intelligence for their future planning?
- **Communications:** Are the needs and priorities of the partners communicated through the university?
- **Responsiveness:** Is the university able to respond quickly to unanticipated external needs?
- **Mainstream:** Has the engagement in interface with the partners become a part of the academic mainstream of the university?





## *Recommendations for an improved dialogue (CRE, EU Comm., ERT)*

- In order for the dialogue to be coherent, it needs to be based on a strategy which respects the academic mission of the university
  - the choice of partners (some are automatic choices, stakeholders select, universities can also select)
- Institutionalisation of the dialogue with key stakeholders; long-term development plans for the university in its local, regional, national and even international environments





## *Recommendations for an improved dialogue, cont. (2)*

- representation of important stakeholders on university and research councils; representation of the university on relevant external bodies
- Dialogue needs to be conducted at different levels, depending on the partnership in question
  - a clear policy is needed to create a relevant division of labour between the different levels and assure sufficient and genuine information flows within the university





## *Recommendations for an improved dialogue, cont. (3)*

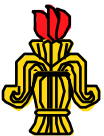
- Dialogue needs to be managed, marketed, encouraged and developed; the people within the institution must be convinced of its importance
  - a special development officer is needed to facilitate a fruitful dialogue with the stakeholders
- Universities have a responsibility to assist stakeholders to articulate expectations in terms of level, specificity and priority





## *Recommendations for an improved dialogue, cont. (4)*

- partners must become aware of the parameters of autonomy, resources and expertise within which the universities may operate
- Universities must be pro-active in the quest for dialogue with their stakeholders and not just wait for partners to knock at the door
  - universities can learn from their partners in trying to better understand their needs and to present their services





## *Recommendations for an improved dialogue, cont. (5)*

- **Universities and partners need to be sensitive to the dynamics and evolution of partnership**
  - identification of conceptual frameworks to enhance understanding and to accelerate progress in reaching objectives

