



The role and importance of Universities in modern societies

May 16th, 2013

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Academic Globalisation and Economic Globalisation

- Globalisation of knowledge (ideas, thoughts and theories, and perhaps visions) – Universities
- Globalisation of things and phenomena which can be bought with money - Banks



Who are we, human beings?

- We are thinking, self-conscious individuals
- We are Scandinavians, Chinese, American ...
- We are members of the human species

Problems of Life – Different Values



- To live with oneself: *What is true and right, good and beautiful?*
- To organize our common life: *What should be forbidden?*
- Economic tasks: *What is possible?*

Three Areas of Life - Problems



- Internal life: self-knowledge and self-acceptance: *Humanities, Art, and Literature*
- Social life: attitude to family, strangers, friends, sex, authority, violence: *Politics, Morality and Law*
- Physical life: satisfaction of various physiological needs, health, shelter, and protection: *Science and Technology*

Why Universities Have Survived



- We are self-conscious, thinking beings: Ideas, beliefs, reasons and views are the raw materials out of which our existence as thinking beings is made.
- *The university is the only institution that, through the centuries, has focused upon this basic fact of human existence.*



Basic Institutions

- **Universities:** Globalization of knowledge (ideas, concepts, theories)
- **Nation-states – international institutions and international associations:** Globalization of political virtues and vices
- **Banks:** Globalization of many of the things that may be bought and sold.

The responsibility of universities, nation-states and banks



- **Universities bear responsibility for ideas and knowledge**
- **Nation-states bear responsibility for the functioning of society**
- **Banks bear responsibility for money and financial assets**



The Role of Universities

- Teaching: students come with a suitable educational background and develop this in the course of their studies
- Research: teachers and students work together toward the growth of knowledge and learning
- Conservation: the preservation of knowledge and of good practices in research and scholarship – certify scientific, scholarly and professional competence



Role of Banks

- Deposits and loans: accept deposits and lend money to support the projects of individuals and businesses
- Investment: increase the wealth of customers and of the bank
- Conservation: preserve the value of financial holdings – certify currencies and financial instruments



Types of universities and banks

- **Teaching universities**
- **Research universities**
- **Commercial banks**
- **Investment banks**



Background to the financial bubble

- **Emphasis on the value of money, acquisition of money for the sake of becoming rich**
- **Investment services become the principal function of the banks**
- **Bankers gain control not only of finance but of politics and culture**



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- **Gambling with money, bonds, stocks and financial instruments that were supposedly backed by assets**
- **The banking system began to serve its own interests rather than the interests of the wider economy**
- **It later emerged that the value of the banks and their assets were fantastically overvalued**



Background to the university bubble

- **Unrestrained quest for university degrees supposedly providing entry to highly paid jobs and professions**
- **Research of whatever kind considered valuable and desirable**
- **Steady increase in unemployed university graduates**
- **Huge output of scientific and scholarly writings**

Questions concerning the university bubble



- Are science and scholarship within the university concerned more with perpetuating themselves than with producing fertile ideas that might change and improve our understanding and control of the world?
- Is the proliferation of theories, experiments, journal articles and “results” a sign of a deepened understanding of reality – or merely of “production”?
- Are universities producing graduates capable of running our societies and solving the life-problems that we face?



Questions and answers

- What can we do to deflate the university bubble?
- Universities must systematically consider their moral foundations and carry out their educational mission with those foundations in mind

Magna Charta Universitatum



- 900th anniversary of the University of Bologna 18 September 1988
- Declaration of a common policy and moral foundations of the universities
- Over 800 universities have signed this declaration



Declaration in Three Parts

- I. The principal mission of the university
- II. The principles of university operations
- III. Modes and conditions for the work of the universities



I. Roles and tasks ...

➤ Universities are called upon to serve mankind, because the future depends upon the progress of culture, science and technology, and the most important fountain of this progress is the universities



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- The contemporary university must mediate knowledge not only to the current younger generation but to society as a whole, because the cultural, social and economic future of society requires the on-going education of the public.
- The universities must educate future generations to respect nature and life itself.

Faith in knowledge



- The knowledge that universities create, preserve, and transmit secures the future welfare of society and respect for life on earth.
- Knowledge itself is viewed as a basic good that the universities are entrusted to develop and to help to apply to the welfare of all mankind.



Is such faith warranted?

- Theoretical:
 - truth, coherence, understanding
- Technical:
 - efficiency, reliability, effectiveness
- Ethical
 - justice, solidarity, freedom

Question: Which of these is the most important?



II. The Principles...

- The first principle is that universities must be morally and intellectually independent of all political authority and economic power.
- The second principle is that teaching and research in universities are inseparable.

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- The third principle: teachers and students are totally free to study, learn and pursue knowledge in the way they choose according to rules of critical thinking.
- The fourth principle: a university is the trustee of the European humanist tradition; its constant aim is to attain universal knowledge; to fulfil its vocation, it transcends geographic and political boundaries, and affirms the vital need for different cultures to know and influence each other.

III. Modes and conditions for the work of the universities



- Appropriate instruments for teaching and research must be available
- Recruitment of teachers must obey the principle that research is inseparable from teaching
- Students acquire the culture and training for which they undertake university studies
- Universities regard the mutual exchange of information and documentation, and joint projects, essential to the progress of knowledge

The Main Virtue of Universities



Academic people must work together and learn from each other

Therefore, as in the earliest years of their history, the universities encourage mobility and cooperation leading to a world-wide framework for the certification of scientific, scholarly and professional competence



The Magna Charta calls for . . .

. . . systemic instruction concerning the duties and functions of universities, their autonomy and academic freedom, the relations between teaching and research, and the humanist tradition that they are entrusted to develop and transmit to future generations.

Humanist education in three parts



The first part:

To understand those economic, political and cultural forces that are at work in our social reality and influence the development of science and scholarship.



Humanist education – part two

The second part:

Training in critical thought, not only within specific disciplines, but to analyze, interpret and evaluate information and inputs of all kinds from the larger society and from disciplines beyond one's own.

Humanist education – part three



The third part:

In all of the work of the university, attention must be paid to the ethical goals of all of the academic disciplines.



Question

Do Nordic universities work in the spirit of the Magna Charta declaration?



Thank you for your attention!!