



## Innovation – a necessity!

In an article written for University World news, Jorgensen and Estermann (2019), from the European University Association (EUA), assert, that “..Innovation is becoming increasingly important for universities, as it is for society (Jorgensen & Estermann, 2019), stating that universities are one strand of the so-called ‘triple helix’ providing the necessary research, for creating and sustaining competition within society (Jorgensen & Estermann, 2019).

So what is the Triple Helix concept? According to Standford (n.d.) it is a concept that the growing relationships between universities, government and industry have the potential to boost innovation and economic development in the context of the knowledge society. But the role of the university in the relationship should play a more prominent role (Standford, n.d.) for developing “..new institutional structures for the generation, transfer and application of knowledge (IGI Global, 2019)

Jorgensen and Estermann (2019) agree with the assumption that universities are key to innovation, describing the shift from a linear model of innovation where knowledge creation and application is progressive, to one of co-creation, “..where knowledge moves around and develops between researchers, students and partners with different applications in various fields. It is a model in which the free flow of ideas in the ecosystem of actors plays an important role, based on openness, space for cooperation and curiosity (Jorgensen & Estermann, 2019)”.

Jorgensen and Estermann (2019) further suggest that this is also a successful model for overcoming crises, as during these periods, universities work with “..their regional partners to reshape innovation” (Jorgensen & Estermann, 2019). The article cites the 2008 economic crises as an example, where, the role of big companies declined and universities created the spaces for new kinds of innovation to emerge.

However, Jorgensen and Estermann (2019) consider that necessary frameworks are required to support innovation at universities.

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The factors for this framework include:

- ☞ Institutional autonomy; and
  - allowing for external collaboration and “ necessary reforms to teaching and learning (Jorgensen & Estermann, 2019)”
  - “connecting research and teaching by developing problem-based learning (Jorgensen & Estermann, 2019)”
  - Demonstrating agility in reforming programmes and design and implement hiring policies
  - Developing “..efficient and adequate governance structure (Jorgensen & Estermann, 2019)”.
- ☞ Sufficient and sustainable core funding.
  - Financing for innovation capacity
  - Allowing for long-term projects that allow for innovative ideas to thrive

The EUA conducted a study on innovation ecosystems, and the results confirmed the need for enabling frameworks, which allow for the establishment of a culture of innovation.

The 2019 EUA Annual Conference on ‘Driving innovation in Europe’s universities’, was held in March this year, where more than 500 university leaders, policy-makers and other stakeholders took part in debating this topic (Jorgensen & Estermann, 2019), indicating a shift in thinking.

The concepts of curiosity, free flow of knowledge and co-creation, are nothing new to The Da Vinci Institute. We have been at the forefront with these ideas since the inception of organisation in 2004. One of our guiding institutional principles is curiosity. As businesses and innovation requires agility, one needs to continuously test boundaries, which means, asking questions and being curious. Free flow of knowledge is evident in our Mode 2 approach to teaching and learning which involves:

- ☞ knowledge creation in the context of application
- ☞ trans-disciplinarity
- ☞ heterogeneity, organisational diversity
- ☞ social accountability and reflexivity; and
- ☞ a diverse range of quality controls, all of which are reflected in our Business Leadership Framework.

Co-creation, which forms part of our Mission Statement (***Influence the co-creation of sustainable societies***) is evident in our Mode 2 approach.



With regards to an enabling framework as outlined by Jorgensen and Estermann (2019): The Institute must comply to all regulatory requirements with regards to all aspects of our offerings, however, as a private provider of higher education there are some aspects, such as the autonomy to invest according to strategy, which gives us a certain amount of flexibility.

As proponents for innovation, The Institute is proud to announce that we have 10 abstracts that have been accepted for presentation at the annual Triple-Helix conference, being held in Cape Town during the second week of September this year.

## Bibliography

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