

Reflections from the Personaldag at Linnaeus University in December 2011

The personaldag started in the morning with a gathering where we all discussed the importance of skills in our education. Together we explored the meanings and implications of skill training. Hytter and Lundgren organised it and will eventually make something out of our ideas. Everyone got something, for example I realized the difference between academic skills, professional skills and practical skills. This is an example of the old university model, the collegial university where the collegium is gathered in order to discuss issues of importance for the university.

In the afternoon we were presented the new dean. He has been selected by a group, including the rector, and the rector decided to appoint him. Then we got a presentation of a project about the entrepreneurial university where it has been decided that all programmes at Linnaeus University will have elements of entrepreneurship. Nils Nilsson emphasised that the project had very strong support. The project had EU money, the region supported it, and the different municipalities supported it. The board of the university hailed it and the rector supported it. Even several departments in humanities supported it. These elements from the afternoon activities represent the new model of the university, the hierarchical university.

I support the old model. For me, the new dean is an illegitimate dean. An academic Dean has to be elected. In a professional organisation containing academics, to be presented the dean like this, is humiliating. But in accordance to the hierarchical model. Of obedience. The new dean is not a dean of the academics, but of the hierarchical boss. (Please observe that this is not an evaluation of the new dean. I have no idea of his capacity. It is an evaluation of the recruitment process).

The entrepreneurial project was even more humiliating towards the model of the collegial university. We got a list of the strong supporters. But the most important supporters, the professionals, i.e., we, the academic staff, were not on that list. So, the project is illegitimate according to the collegial model. But in this case, it is even worse. Nils Nilsson and the board have the unprecedented effrontery to claim that entrepreneurship will be part of all programs. One can discuss definitions of academic freedom, but the right to select the content of education is one of the cornerstones of academic freedom. The entrepreneurship project making a dictum for us to obey is a grave attack on academic freedom. No-one tells me and my professional academic staff what our program should contain. We are the professionals that select the courses and the contents. No-one else. Not Nils Nilsson, not the dean or the rector. Not even God. Only the professional staff. The only thing that can guide us is the scientific knowledge and the regulation made by the Swedish people in the Higher Education Act.

This is formally speaking. Should we then debate if anything should be suggested to be included in every program, entrepreneurship is maybe not the most important today. In Sweden we have the scandal of the entrepreneurial Carema and internationally we have the financial crisis that among its causes had the entrepreneurial finance corporations. If anything, I could suggest the moral side of business instead of entrepreneurship. But I would never imagine doing what Nils Nilsson did, to get on my high horses and to humiliate the academic freedom and my colleagues through suggesting that business ethics should be part of every program. Proper academic behaviour is to argue and put ones hope on der Vernunft. Not on the power of a board or rector. That belongs to the hierarchical model and it is not academic. According to my vision and view of a University.

I ended the personaldagen by writing in my note pad: Darkness. Next year I arrive with my candle, the candle of the collegial model.

But living in a dialectical world I realize that the supporters of the hierarchical model wrote Darkness after the morning activities, and that they believe that they are carrying the light of hierarchy. One characteristic with Linnaeus University that makes it so good and nice environment to work in is that the debate is open. That is a strong indicator of a university sense and atmosphere. If it survives the hierarchical model that now is established more and more.