Abstract for the Creative University Conference 2016, 18.-19. August, Aalborg, Denmark


By Joakim Juhl and Anders Buch

Abstract:

Whether one gazes to high-level international politics, the general public opinion, or how we as individuals identify ourselves as contributors to society, the industrialized West has increasingly come to see innovation as its core obligation around which everyone is drawn together in universal appreciation. The widely held imagination of innovation is that of a process by which new developments in science and technology are transformed into new business applications. Higher education and professions are eager to impose their expertises onto, and claim authority within, the domain of innovation. In the recent two decades, universities and other engineering institutions that are typically identified with technology development have expanded their research and teaching activities toward the business end of innovation (Juhl, forthcoming 2016).

This paper investigates the new emergent trend in academic institution building where business and management competencies are incorporated to engineering curricula. By comparing experiences from early career alumni from educations that are results of moving engineering institutions into business, we analyze the consequences imposed by changing disciplinary demarcations within academic and professional engineering knowledges.

The paper draws on the theoretical frameworks of co-production (Jasanoff 2004) and sociotechnical imaginaries (Jasanoff & Kim 2009; Jasanoff et al. 2015) to analyze how academic institutions develop under changing social expectations of higher effectiveness, competition, and economic yield while new forms of expertise and governance principles, like New Public Management, place universities under pressure to reinvent themselves.

Our results indicate that the efforts to reorganize academic engineering knowledge-productions towards business operate after an accountability principle that at one and the same time improve on the academic institution’s ranking while it presents a challenge to new kinds of graduates who face a professional job market that is ill prepared to adopt their novel forms of expertise.

The paper investigates how social scientists at the Technical University of Denmark in response to new demands for business-orientation within Danish universities invented the ‘Design and Innovation’ engineering program. The upshot of this endeavor is discussed in relation to ethnographic research about the competence profiles of the program’s engineering candidates and how they fare in subsequent employment in industry. The paper contributes to contemporary discussions of transformations within the university system by supplying empirical case material as well as conceptual resources for fathoming recent developments within the institutional reconfiguration of the university.
References:


