

The American Professor of Management Peter Drucker has compared the management of an expert organisation to herding cats. As all of us cat owners know, cats are curious, playful creatures keen to try new things. They are also independent: herding and managing them is difficult, though not impossible, and cats can grow attached to people, but only with good reason.

Peter Drucker realised that experts and cats share some characteristics in common:

- Experts often have in-depth knowledge of only a few things.
- Experts are interested in their work for its own sake, not necessarily because it benefits society, the organisation in which they work or even the experts themselves.
- Experts like to do things their own way, which may not be the best or the organisation's way of doing things.
- Experts feel comfortable in the company of other experts and in a familiar environment.
- Experts do not like being told what to do, which is why a manager's status cannot be based solely on an organisational chart.

Ladies and gentlemen, the University of Helsinki is an organisation of cats, has been one for the past 371 years and will hopefully remain so in future. The success of a cat organisation's members depends on three factors: education, experience and motivation. The success of the organisation rests not only on the success of its members, but also on sound leadership, which takes into account the special characteristics of an expert organisation. The University's research and education policy guidelines must be determined together with the University's researchers and teachers; otherwise the University risks losing its most important asset: the motivation of its researchers and teachers. The interests of external parties cannot play a major role in defining the University's operations. This does not mean that the University is an island, separate from society. On the contrary, the University is a central part of our information society, and the members of the University contribute to public life in various ways, such as by interacting with business and commerce. But to view this cat university as a cash cow of the national economy would be a grave mistake.

Finnish research policy has been pursuing a new direction in recent years. Perhaps our success in PISA has lulled us into complacency, a success we have interpreted as an indication that we also possess superior skills in academic education and research. Unfortunately, Finnish basic research is not faring as well as it could. During the five-year term from 2005 to 2009, for example, the ratio of science articles authored by Finnish researchers to all such articles decreased by as much as 11% from the previous five-year period. Has our eagerness in recent years to develop "innovation policy" as part of our industrial policy sapped our decision-makers' interest in science and research policy? The key mission of the University, apart from education, is the production, interpretation and

dissemination of research-based knowledge. Basic research is part of the nation's living capital, which we can ill afford to squander. It is especially important to understand that although research-based knowledge is available to all, making the most use of it usually requires research groups and traditions, which are like perennials that need watering. If they dry out, they will wither and die, and growing new plants from seed, which may not even be available, will take time and energy. High-standard basic research on the one hand and enthusiastic and talented students and junior researchers on the other are like the proverbial chicken and egg: without one there is no other. For this reason, the concept of a university of innovation is problematic.

As the spring parliamentary elections approach, more than one commentator has proposed that a science minister be appointed to the next government. This is an excellent idea, which can be implemented in two ways. A sound alternative would be to appoint a minister of science and research, while a poor alternative would be to appoint a minister of research and innovation. Innovation policy, which intersects with both science policy and industrial policy, already enjoys a strong status in the Ministry of Employment and the Economy. What we now need is a minister of science and research with a strong, broad perspective on science policy and the ability to promote the distribution of research-based knowledge to all in public administration and decision-making positions. The research policy guidelines of our current government adhere to some questionable assertions. I agree with Dr Thomas Wallgren who has asked why the government allocates funding to universities in proportion to the donations they receive. While it is commendable that private businesses support academic education and research, what is the government's logic behind providing such rewards, unless it specifically seeks to direct universities into areas which can win support from private companies? Why does the government not reward universities when, say, the European Research Council awards grants to their researchers through open, Europe-wide competition? After all, such success is a true mark of scientific excellence. We can be proud that researchers at the University of Helsinki won 15 million euros in ERC grants last year.

Ladies and gentlemen, my experience as a student, teacher and researcher at the University of Helsinki stretches back nearly four decades. Over the years, the University has become not only more familiar to me, but also much more interesting as a community. Research opportunities have improved vastly during the past 40 years, thanks to both the University itself and external research funders, particularly the Academy of Finland in the area of basic research. For me personally, the greater mobility between disciplines has proved a fundamental change for the better. Here I will share with you a list of the educational fields of the ten postdoctoral researchers most recently chosen for my centre of excellence, half of whom come from abroad, and half from Finland: forestry research, theoretical ecology, population biology, computer science, bioinformatics, bioinformatics, molecular evolutionary biology, molecular evolutionary biology, evolutionary biology and computer science. Such a diversity of fields would have been inconceivable in the 1970s when I remember arguing about whether an applicant with no undergraduate degree in ecology could be accepted as a postgraduate student in the field.

Ladies and gentlemen, as distinguished a history as the University of Helsinki has, its future is even more important. Once the initial upheaval of the university reform has passed, the University of Helsinki has great things to contribute to Finnish society and to current and future generations in Finland.