

The Founding of the Estonian Educational Innovations Centre

The base of a democratic country is the educational system that is based on lifelong studying and research-based development. When getting round from the agrarian and industrial society to the information era based on electronic media, the school network and the teaching methodology must also be improved and changed accordingly. One of the great changes is the transition from the so-called reproductive pedagogy to the heuristic or research study which ensures the optimal development of the creative abilities of the personality and systematic thinking. The key people of the educational system are the teachers of schools of both general and vocational education and the lecturers of universities. Therefore, more and more attention must be paid to the development of pedagogical science and to the training of teachers.

In Estonia the improvement of the educational system has so far been done relatively spontaneously, on the so-called trial and error principle. The training of teachers is fragmented between competing private firms with questionable levels that do not bear a particular responsibility to the State. The Tartu University and Tallinn University establish didactics centres since 2011, but this takes place relatively spontaneously and without adequate coordination.

Therefore, an urgent need to establish a multifunctional Estonian Educational Innovations Centre (EEIC) has arisen, the tasks of which would be:

- 1) The development of pedagogical science and the inculcation of research results both foreign and domestic;
- 2) The modernisation of the educational system, the implementation of innovative specialities and learning methods, the creation of high-tech laboratories and technological centres;
- 3) The coordinated and controlled implementation and compilation of new books and teaching material;
- 4) The training of teachers and lecturers, and elaboration of a remuneration system;
- 5) The ensuring of working conditions to teachers and the guidance and coordination of their work.
- 6) The creation of an experimental base for educational and innovative endeavours.

The EEIC should belong to the area of administration and financing in the Ministry of Education and Science and act on the basis of an appropriate statute. A council is needed to be built to the new centre, in the staff of which would be members of the Ministry of Education and Science, university managers, prominent teachers and successful students. Aforesaid initiative group should become familiar with the creation of the Tartu University and Tallinn University didactics centre as well as the Tartu University teacher education development plan. To this development plan should be added the contemporary concept of research study and its implementation plan.

The location of the EEIC could be a building especially designed to be a schoolhouse located at Salme street 1a, Tartu which belongs to the Tartu University since 2001.

Currently, the Tartu University social and educational faculty's educational institute operates in the building, but due to financial problems, the university has decided to sell it. The creation of the EEIC by the Ministry of Education and Science and its locating to the Salme 1a building would allow the building to be maintained by the Ministry and the institute to remain in the same building as a base institution. Moreover, as such base institutions there could be also the Pedagogicum and Tartu University research school which according to current plans is supposed to be located at the less appropriate Theatrum Anatomicum, preventing the establishment of new science lessons by the Tartu University History Museum.

In the Salme 1a building there would also probably be room for the EEIC training school, which could be a part of the Tartu Tamme Gymnasium where the first 5 classes have already been opened. Due to the current lack of space, the Tartu city council has decided to separate the gymnasium part of the school and transfer it to the currently Tartu University owned building at Nooruse street 9. The TTG graduates have considered the decision incorrect by public appeal.

Hopefully, the Salme 1a building will also offer accommodation for the Teacher's House, Estonian Academic Union and Tartu Intellectuals Union. The cooperation partners of the EEIC could be the Archimedes foundation, Tartu University Technology Institute, Tallinn Technology University Tartu College, the Karl Ernst von Baer Fund and research parks.

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