

TRIPLE HELIX CO-OPERATION

(MUNICIPALITY - UNIVERSITY - BUSINESS)

FOR WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT



RECIPE 2

Recipe two

TRIPLE HELIX CO-OPERATION

(MUNICIPALITY - UNIVERSITY - BUSINESS)

FOR WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

The occasion: Across Europe medium sized towns are coming to terms with the impact of the economic downturn. There is a tension in some regions as to the relative merits of different types of recovery initiatives. Are resources for example best deployed on short term measures such as boosting consumption with fiscal measures? How can local politicians be convinced of the benefits of longer term investments such as workforce development and skills when resources are so tight?

The triple helix is a well known feature of the innovation landscape but is less familiar when it comes to the world of skills and workforce development. However in many places the triangular relationship between government (municipality)–business–university is being put to good use within a wider economic development agenda and there is growing evidence that it works.

But what are the secret ingredients that make this three-way partnership work? Are there any special utensils that can make things easier?

Key ingredients of an effective triple helix for workforce development: Do you and your partners have the following ingredients in your food cupboard? If so, you are well on the way to cooking up a good triangular relationship to whisk your workforce into shape:

Here is a list of ingredients to blend your perfect three-way partnership for workforce development:

<i>Ingredients to add to your shopping list</i>	✓	✗
The 3 partners in the helix all benefit from collaboration		
A strong university where education and research is relevant to (and driven by) industry		
A forward thinking municipality with the ability to adopt and implement a joined up approach to education, skills, workforce development, inward investment and economic development		
A system (formal or informal) for understanding the skills needs of employers - both now and in the future		
Targeted initiatives / activities which bring the stakeholders together in a structured way		
A model which defines success of the three-way relationship for all		
A dynamic relationship structure which moves with and reacts to changing economic contexts		
Some flexibility in the education and training system so that new skills and qualifications can be introduced or embedded within existing structures		

Utensils: So now you are clear about the ingredients, what utensils do you need to blend them together effectively? What attributes do the three partners need to make this recipe work?

Perhaps not surprisingly the first on the list is an **ENTREPRENEURIAL CULTURE** – all the stakeholders need to be forward thinking, nimble and dynamic. The supply and demand of labour in any region is a fast moving feast and organisations need to be able to react quickly to new and emerging needs – for example, the university and municipality need to be ready to move quickly if an inward investor decides to locate to their region and needs 150 new specialist IT workers within a few weeks or months.

The triangular relationship also works best when there is a shared **KNOWLEDGE AND KNOWHOW** – all players need to understand the functions of the labour market and the economy and have the ability to navigate around it both independently and together. They all have their own specialisms and there is recognition that pooling these achieves more than working in isolation.

This in turn requires an **OPEN MINDED APPROACH** which takes time to develop. You have to allow time to let the dough rise. Trust and collaboration within a shared agenda are success factors too. This is a non traditional approach to workforce development and one which necessitates a new and open way of thinking. Nothing is impossible – with a bit of creative flair who knows what delicious dishes these three chefs can create together.

Takeaway menu: if you like the sound of this recipe and want to try it in your kitchen you can find lots of useful equipment to make your life easier at:

www.brainport.nl
www.triplehelixinstitute.org

Good food guide listing: The “Brainport” region in the Netherlands has recognised the importance of considering innovation and employment security together in its economic development plans. The region is among Europe’s top 20 innovative regions and is rapidly recovering from the crisis. It is home to a large number of high tech industries which share an interest in having the right amount of workers with the right skills at the right time to maintain and strengthen their competitive position. The players in the triple helix have agreed that business and employment opportunities could be lost if the quantitative and qualitative mismatches between labour supply and demand continue.

In response the stakeholders have developed a new strategy and tools to make it easier for businesses to find the right employees at short notice and for people to find jobs more quickly. The main tool is an “e-portfolio”. This is an electronic, validated file documenting peoples’ competencies and experience throughout their career. Schools and education institutes structure their curricula through competencies and companies are also encouraged to base their job descriptions and HR systems on “interchangeable skills and talent profiles”. A new labour market language has emerged and the challenge now is to ensure that everyone uses it. This involves taking all stakeholders out of their comfort zone, unravelling traditional recruitment and job search practices and creating a new way of thinking. The initial results are good and stakeholders hold a firm belief that this approach will contribute to making Brainport a world class and world scale technology region with sustainable employment security for its citizens.

Serving tip:

turn the page for an example of a successful triangular relationship between the municipality, the university and industry in Hungary.



Serving tip

AN EXAMPLE OF AN EFFECTIVE TRIPLE HELIX



Debrecen is a city about 220 km east of Budapest in Hungary with a population of 204,000 people. It is home to a large university with 35,000 students. It has also been particularly successful in attracting foreign direct investment and many of the companies which have located in the city cite the skilled workforce and the university as key factors behind their decision to move there.

Ingredients:

a) Strong municipal voice with dedicated company for inward investment

Over the last 10 years Debrecen has been successful in attracting inward investors, crucially in high value industry sectors such as pharmaceuticals, electronics and telecommunications. The municipality plays a central role in this and has appointed a specialist Investment and Development Group (XANGA) to help create a commercial and industrial environment in the city that will enable foreign companies to base subsidiaries there. Between them the municipality and Xanga make sure that investors have all the contacts they may need both now and in the future.

b) Strong links with the university, schools and with the labour force agency

The University of Debrecen is one of the biggest in Hungary with 35,000 students. It works closely with the municipality and with industry through initiatives such as:

- Clusters (Food, ICT, Pharmaceuticals)
- Internship programmes
- Industry sponsored scholarship programmes
- Consultancy links between industry and research
- Industry led lecture programmes (e.g. in LEAN processes)
- Job fairs for students and graduates
- Campus tours for businesses
- “Together for Future Engineers Association” (run by business)
- A dedicated Technology Transfer and “Economic Community Group” within university structures

The schools also have a key role to play, alongside the labour agency. The diagram below summarises how some of the specialist schools in Debrecen take account of emerging company skills needs:



c) Forward thinking employers

Employers in Debrecen are clearly keen to invest in their workforce and share a long term vision of the city's economic potential. They recognise the benefits of, and value, an open relationship with the university, schools, the labour agency and the municipality.

Some employers also have in-house training programmes – the manufacturing company FAG for example have recently opened a “Learning Factory” where they train young people. FAG also encourages workforce development amongst their suppliers, making it a compulsory criterion for some sub contracts.



Secret ingredients – herbs and spices

- Buy in at all levels – a win-win situation for all
- Existing skills and education provision which can be adapted to the needs of employers
- Raising awareness of inward investors of skilled workforce and university
- Regular informal and structured contact between all stakeholders

Cook's tip:

“Forward looking, long term thinking should involve the close cooperation between education institutes, the municipality and business partners. This partnership will help to meet the needs and requirements of the future labour force. It will create more stable workplaces while helping people improve their quality of life and employers to develop better products..”

Réka Makray, HR Manager- FAG Hungary,
Schaeffler Group

Beating out the lumps: It has been important for all stakeholders to understand and accommodate each other's working cultures and expectations. There has sometimes been a tension between the need to achieve short term results whilst working towards and not losing sight of a long term vision. Working together with the right tools has enabled these three chefs to get rid of the lumps and create a smooth batter with benefits for all.

