

## Is there a Need for an Additional Dental Education Institution in Sweden Today?

**Raimo Pälvärinne\***

*Odont lic, Department of Periodontology and Community Dentistry, Faculty of Odontology, Malmö University, Sweden*

**\*Corresponding Author:** Raimo Pälvärinne, Odont lic, Department of Periodontology and Community Dentistry, Faculty of Odontology, Malmö University, Sweden.

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### Introduction

There appears to be a general perception in Sweden today, that there is a shortage of dentists. This opinion is common among politicians, leading people in dentistry (Chief Dental Office in Public Dental Care for e.g.), but also among the population. In addition, there are major regional differences within the country, both geographically and between urban and rural areas.

This has led to local initiative in the Region of Jönköping and Jönköpings högskola (Jonkoping University) to plan and start for a new undergraduate program for dentists and dental hygienists, that is different from the traditional dental educations in the way that most part of the practical training would be done in the local PDS clinics instead of a university clinic. It is argued that Jonkoping would "contribute to securing competence in Sweden" and that The Jönköping concept, like Tromsø, will keep students in the region when they graduate. Does this make sense? Is there a true need for more dentists? Is there a need to start a new dental school or could the already existing dental schools do something?

### Background

Today, there are about 10 million people living in Sweden. There are 9,000 working dentists and about 4,000 dental hygienists in clinical practice. Sweden does not then have a total lack of dental resources from an EU-perspectiv [1]. It depends on how existing resources are used. Today, there are four Dental university's, Malmö, Gothenburg, Stockholm and Umeå. Three out of four in the southern part of Sweden.

### Discussion

It seems not to be a shortage of dental staff, rather a great risk in an academic impoverishment of dental care in Sweden. I'm worried, that an establishment of another higher education institution for dental education with the conditions that exist today. Deans and head of departments at existing higher education institutions, express their concern for the future! What could happen?

Well, perhaps a depletion of educational and research skills when, academic teachers are recruited to a 5<sup>th</sup> higher education institution from the already existing ones. These resources are lacking nationally. Does this contribute to better dental education, with a "dilution" of existing national skills?

Hardly! It is well known that it takes a "critical mass" of skills on the ground level to conduct researcher at a higher level. There are no implications of the quality of education and research mentioned in the plans for this new establishment!

Other arguments from the new “Jonkoping University” are a bit contradictory. It is argued that “Jonkoping should contribute to securing competence in Sweden” and that The Jönköping concept, like Tromsø, will keep students in the region.

### Bibliography

1. Edward Sinclair, *et al.* “The healthcare systems and provision of oral healthcare in European Union member states. Part 10: comparison of systems and with the United Kingdom”. *British Dental Journal* 227.4 (2019); 305-310.

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