

# Virtual universities and e-learning reconsidered.

Have the initiatives met the expectations?

Finnish Virtual University

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Joergen Bang

President

European Association of Distance Teaching

Universities (EADTU)

# EADTU mission

The mission of EADTU is to contribute to the development of a European Learning Space by supporting the enhancement of learning through the use of technology (e.g. e-learning) and by promoting state-of-the-art educational networks in the field of lifelong and flexible learning, virtual mobility, and quality assurance and accreditation.

# EADTU members

European Association of Distance  
Teaching Universities established in 1987

- 22 members in 20 countries
- Open and flexible universities (8)
- National consortia of LOF (13)
- representing app. 200 conventional universities
- National higher distance education centre
- App. 2 mill. off campus ODL students

# ‘webucation’

In 1997 Peter Drucker predicted that

“universities won’t survive ...  
as a residential institution”

They will become producers of  
learningware for for-profit enterprises

(quoted from The Guardian, April 13, 2004).

- resource-based learning with a minimum of student support
- ‘just-in-time’/’just-in-place’ learning

# US e-learning initiatives

- NYU - New York University Online
- Fathom - Columbia University + 14 others
- Cornell University formed eCornell
- Temple University formed Virtual Temple
- Harcourt Higher Education launched
- OUUK went into the US market
  
- University of Phoenix  
(IT, Business Studies, Health Studies)

# The Lisbon Strategy

March 2000 the European Council adopted a grand scale plan called:

*Europe. An Information Society for All.*

Goal by 2010:

- to become ‘the most competitive and dynamic knowledge based economy in the world’ 2010
- E-learning should play an essential role  
(*e-Learning - designing tomorrows education*)
- 50% of a youth generation into HE

# The Bologna Process

- The overall objective of the Bologna Declaration is the creation of a European Area of Higher Education by 2010.
- To be realized through collaboration among high quality higher education institutions.

# Bologna goals

- student mobility all over Europe  
(horizontal and vertical) competency
- development of the European citizen everywhere, in a context of lifelong learning
- educational co-operation between universities (joint masters, seminars, summer schools,...)
- international attractiveness and competitiveness of European higher education institutions (also in a global context)
- a broad access of all Europeans to higher education (social inclusion).

# EUA and the Bologna Aims

- a large diversity of courses and programmes must be created, responding to the diversity of needs of the European citizens and enterprises anywhere. Their supply should be based on the assets of the respective universities (niches)
- the national educational structures must be transparent, readable and therefore harmonised through a bachelor-master system. ECTS must be applied;
- the criteria for quality assurance in the national quality assurance systems must be attuned;
- international accreditation on the subject area level must be installed.

# E-learning in Europe

- United Kingdom eUniversity (UKeU)
- Dutch Digital University
- Virtuelle Hochschule Bayern
- Swiss Virtual Campus
- Finish Virtual University
- Swedish Net-University

# Virtuelle Hochschule Bayern

- An impressive increase in students numbers and course offers
- No demand for recruitment of new student groups (social inclusion) and no shown effect
- No encouragement for inter-institutional collaboration on courses and programmes

# Swedish Net-University

- An increase in student numbers enrolled in net-based courses and programmes
- A slight increase in enrolment of new student groups, although not prioritised in task description for the Net-Uni.
- No encouragement for inter-institutional collaboration on courses.

# OECD analyses 1

(...) having spent US\$ 16 billion in 1999 in OECD countries on ICT, there is little evidence that ICT meets the original promise of better education for more people at less cost.

(...) no clear evidence that ICT investments made by the public sector have resulted in improved performance of teachers and/or learners, nor that it has improved the quality and access to educational resources on the scale predicted.

# Blended learning

Modern e-learning solutions now recognise the importance of learning as a social process and offer possibilities for collaboration with other learners, for interaction with the learning content and for guidance from teachers, trainers and tutors. The learner-centric approaches have put the learner back in command, with a wealth of learning resources at their fingertips.

Teachers and trainers once more play a central role, using virtual and traditional face-to-face interaction with their students in a 'blended' approach. An approach in which they are no longer seen simply as consumers of pre-determined e-learning content, but as editors, authors and contributors to a contextualised learning scenario.

(Commissioner Reding, Feb. 2003).

# Wim Kok report, Nov. 2004

“In order to ensure future economic growth, the EU needs a comprehensive and holistic strategy to spur on the growth of the ICT sector and the diffusion of ICTs in all parts of the economy. The top priority is to implement the *eEurope* action plan, which calls for measures to promote e-commerce, e-government and e-learning”.

*Facing the Challenge. The Lisbon Strategy for Growth and Employment* (November 2004)(p. 22

# OECD analyses 2

(...) consensus that the ICT opportunity is still valid,  
and (...) part of daily life, forever changing the way  
people learn, work and play.

(...) Technology alone does not deliver educational  
success. It only becomes valuable in education if  
learners and teachers can do something useful with  
IT.

(...) educational content and e-learning services (...)  
need to be tailored to local needs and cultures.

- OECD: E-Learning. The Partnership Challenge, 2001 p. 24-5  
([www.SourceOECD.org](http://www.SourceOECD.org))

# VET-report Nov. 2004

“e-Learning clearly has the potential to stimulate learning networks and new forms of training organisation. The basic principle of good pedagogy remains that the design of the whole learning process (possible supported by e-learning) is the decisive factor for the learner’s success. Therefore, European countries’ e-learning related measures should not be limited to questions of hard- and software, but rather focus on the pedagogy and e-learning in work processes.”

*Achieving the Lisbon goal: The contribution of vocational education and training (VET), Executive Summary, November 4, 2004 (p. 17)*

# Reaching the Lisbon goals

- a substantial increase in and widening of participation in higher education
- a further extend of open and distance learning for mass education to more flexible and personalised modes
- an offering of different modes of combined work and learning

# e-Bologna

- New pedagogical models for competence development;
- Flexibility in a LLL context;
- e-assessment, individualised study support and collaborative learning;
- e-learning and blended learning in an international context;
- e-learning and blended learning to make European higher education more accessible from anywhere;
- Virtual mobility

# European Learning Space

- A European Learning Space is not a new learning management system (LMS) but an area for collaboration and exchange based on open technical standards.
- Implications are technical (e.g. interoperability), pedagogical (learning design), organizational (e.g. combining learning units to certificates), economical (re-usability issues, sharing materials and services), guidance and assessment issues, etc.
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# Goals for a ELS

- To support competence development for the European citizens, virtual mobility of students, staff and courses leading to borderless co-operation between universities and industries or other actors.
- To drive and underpin an organic development via R&D in successive steps (roadmap), in order to meet the success requirements for serving more students in a flexible way (mass-individualization of higher education), in a lifelong learning context.
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# University collaboration

- within educational networks or alliances in order to deliver large-scale Lifelong Open and Flexible (LOF) learning for all ages in a cost-effective way.
- not only among themselves but also with the corporate sector,
- national governments should also be partners to support and create working frameworks and infrastructures for institutional collaboration
- New collaborative arrangements are needed to match the ambitions of universities regarding lifelong learning, and to improve accessibility of higher education to learners.

# Recommendations 1

- elearning has the potential to become the learning mode of the future if educational content is tailored to local needs and cultures and an appropriate elearning pedagogy is developed to accommodate different learning styles (personalisation and multimodal presentation)
- elearning is the way to increase and widen participation in higher education by offering different modes of combined work and learning in a lifelong learning perspective

## Recommendations 2

- In order to build a knowledge society national educational structure need to be transparent, but in respect of national and cultural diversities.
- Courses and programmes should be quality assured and accredited in order to promote mobility and exchange
- An open learning space for borderless exchange of learning content and learning activities should be created.

Joergen Bang  
President EADTU

Tel. 0045 8942 9228

[jbang@imv.au.dk](mailto:jbang@imv.au.dk)