

Megatrends in e-learning provision

Preliminary project report on Sweden Finland, Denmark, Germany, and the Netherlands

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Introduction

The literature search for this country report was initially based on the researcher's book *Online Education and Learning Management Systems – Global E-learning in a Scandinavian Perspective* (Paulsen 2003). Part Three of the book *Global E-learning in a Nordic Perspective* includes several articles about e-learning in the Nordic countries (Paulsen 2003a, b, c and e), Sweden (Holmberg 2003, Paulsen 2003d) and Denmark (Nipper 2003). Another valuable source was Ranebo's (2001) report on Nordic initiatives to develop virtual universities.

The search for megaproviders started with the seven potential regional candidates identified through the two EU-funded projects CISEAR (Paulsen 2000) and WEB-EDU (Paulsen et al. 2002). The institution's contact persons were asked whether they could confirm that they were megaproviders. Only the University of Lund in Sweden and the Open Universiteit Nederland confirmed that the institutions were megaproviders.

A number of individual experts on online education were asked to suggest potential megaproviders. The experts were identified and chosen based on the researcher's personal network developed through twenty years' work with international online education.

The three important European networks for e-learning, EDEN (www.eden-online.org), EADTU (www.eadtu.nl), and EADL (www.eadl.org) were also approached. Requests for nomination was distributed to the EDEN members through the EDEN Newsflash in November 2005 and as an EDEN Request in September 2006. The participants at the EDEN conferences in Helsinki (2005) and Castelldefels (2006) were also invited to nominate potential megaproviders. An invitation to submit nomination was e-mailed to the EADTU secretariat and the preliminary project results is to be presented at the EADTU annual conference in Tallinn (2006). A request for nominations was also distributed via the EADTU newsletter in the fall of 2006.

This research has so far identified two potential Megaproviders in Germany, one in the Netherlands and one in Sweden as indicated in Table 1.

Table 1. Potential megaproviders

Institution name	URL	Number of course enrollments in 2005	Number of online courses	Average number of enrollments per course
Open Universiteit Nederland	www.ou.nl	44432	270	165
Virtuelle Hochschule Bayern	www.vhb.org	20000	150	133
Lund University	www.lu.se	10000	100	100
Oncampus, Fachhochschule Lübeck	www.oncampus.de	9386	119	79

The researcher intends to write case studies about these institutions. In addition several independent sources indicate that Markkinointi-instituutti in Finland and LOI in the Netherlands probably are megaproviders. The institutions do however decline to provide information for the research.

The research does not by any means indicate that these are the only potential megaproviders in these countries. Therefore, the researcher appreciates any feedback regarding additional institutions that may qualify as megaproviders.

Sweden

Three reports of special interest regarding e-learning in Sweden are:

On the Move Toward Online Education in Sweden (Holmberg 2003), Ett Nätuniversitet för livslångt lärande och kompetensutveckling (Hillefors et al. 2001), and E-Learning Experiences in Sweden and Possible Applications in South Africa (Odero).

The University of Lund www.lu.se was identified as a large provider of online courses in both the CISAER and the Web-edu projects. According to the CISAER project (Paulsen 2000), Lund Virtual University had 6000 online students and 80 online courses. Later, according to the Web-edu project (Paulsen 2002), the University of Lund had 6000 Luvit-users and 250 online courses. The contact person at the university has confirmed that it is a megaprovider.

The secretariats of CFL - Swedish Agency for Flexible Learning (www.cfl.se) and the Swedish Net University Agency (www.netuniversity.se) were contacted, but no potential megaproviders were provided.

There are none EADL-members in Sweden.

The Swedish member of EADTU is the Swedish Agency for Networks and Cooperation in Higher Education www.myndigheten.netuniversity.se/en. It works with broadening recruitment, pedagogical development and changes in the structure of higher education and degrees. Together with institutions of higher education in Sweden it works to deepen knowledge and to spread new experiences.

The following institutions in Sweden are members of EDEN:

- CFL - Swedish Agency for Flexible Learning www.cfl.se
- Lulea University of Technology www.ltu.se
- Lund University www.ltu.se
- Malmö University - Teacher Education www.lut.mah.se
- Örebro University www.oru.se
- The Regional Association of HE in SW Jonköping University
- SADE - Swedish Association for Distance Education www.sverd.org
- Swedish Net University Agency www.netuniversity.se
- University of Gavle www.hig.se

Finland

Two major sources about e-learning published in Finland are: *eLearning in Finland - Enhancing Knowledge-based Society Development* (Markkula 2004) and *Utbilda via Internet – Handbok i IT-pedagogik*. LearnIT (Nyberg and Strandvall, 2000).

According to University of Tampere:

The Open University system in Finland is based on the Open University in Great Britain. The first Open University in Finland started in 1970 at the University of Tampere. Before that, Open University education had been available in summer universities. The big universities (Helsinki, Turku, Jyväskylä, Tampere, and Oulu) arrange about 70% of today's Open University education. More than 80,000 students participate in Open University education every year. Open University education is available at 200 localities throughout Finland. (<http://www.avoinyliopisto.fi/en-GB/open/intro.html>)

The Finnish Virtual University (www.virtuaaliyliopisto.fi) is a partnership of all 21 Finnish universities. As described in the article Nordic Virtual Universities (Paulsen 2003), it is based on collaboration, division of labour, shared knowledge and the expertise of these member universities. It promotes online learning and teaching and develops compatible information infrastructures. It is not university in itself and does not provide university education.

The following institutions in Finland are members of EADL:

- Markkinointi-instituutti www.markinst.fi
- Institutet för Distanstudier www.svefol.net/distis

Markkinointi Instituutti (www.markinst.fi) is an independent educational establishment providing vocational and continuing training for adults. According to the institute's web pages in English, it specializes in further training and re-training. In all, it has over 50 standard examinations and training programmes. Completing one examination or diploma lasts from 3 months to 2 years. The Institute of Marketing uses an integrated teaching system, which combines innovatively various distance-teaching and face-to-face teaching forms supported by modern educational technology and media.

Several independent sources indicate that the institution probably is a megaprovider. The institution does however decline to provide information for the research. The reason for this is unknown, but obviously the institution does not want to share this information with the public, the authorities, the students, or the competitors.

The Institute for Distance Studies Distis (www.svefol.net/distis/) was founded in 1928 under the name the Swedish Correspondence Institut in Finland. The aim of the institute is to provide increased opportunities for education through distance courses for the Swedish-speaking minority in Finland. Distis is one of two distance study institutes in Finland, the other catering for the needs of the Finnish-speakers. Through current education legislation, both are attached to a folk high school.

The Finnish member of EADTU is Finnish Association for Distance Education (FADE) www.fade.fi

The following institutions in Finland are members of EDEN:

- Finnish Virtual University www.fvu.fi
- HCI Productions Oy www.hci.fi
- Helsinki University of Technology, Lifelong Learning Institute Dipoli www.dipoli.ttk.fi
- University of Helsinki - Open University www.avoin.helsinki.fi
- University of Turku www.utu.fi

One or more of the three universities may qualify as megaproviders, but so far the researcher has not been able to confirm this assumption.

Denmark

According to Nipper (2003, 219), Danish education is firmly rooted in a long-standing tradition for learning through 'the living word' as opposed to the printed word. It emphasises online education that includes face-to-face seminars and collaborative learning. So far, this may have been a wise strategy since collaborative learning is relatively swift and inexpensive to develop. But one may question if the use of face-to-face seminars make Danish online education more expensive and less flexible. One may also discuss whether collaborative learning is suitable in large-scale environments.

Two institutions were identified as a large provider of online courses both the CISAER and the Web-edu projects. Center of Distance Learning www.cfu.dk had 500 online students and 41 online courses according to the CISAER project (Paulsen 2000). Danmarks Netskole www.netskole.dk had 7000 course enrolments and 40 online courses according to the Web-edu project (Paulsen 2002). The contact people at these institutions now declined that they are megaproviders.

A request for nominations was distributed through UNEV's (www.unev.dk) network of contacts at the offices of further and continuing education at the 12 Danish universities, to IT-vest, and to Rektorkollegiet in Denmark. Similar requests were distributed to the members of the Danish Association of Flexible Learning (www.fluid.dk) via the FLUID newsletter and the e-learning newsletter Linqx (www.linqx.dk/x/index.php?searchterm=megatrends). Non of these request resulted in any nominations.

The following institution in Denmark is a member of EADL:

- Akademisk Brevskole A/S www.akademisk-brevskole.dk

The following institutions in Denmark are members of EDEN:

- Copenhagen Business School <http://cbs.dk>
- HK/Privat www.hkprivat.dk/default.asp
- The Danish Association for Flexible Learning www.fluid.dk
- Tietgen Business College www.tietgen.dk

The Danish member of EADTU is the Danish Association of Open Universities (DAOU) <http://mit.au.dk/daou/>

Germany

Virtus, Cologne had 12000 online students and 50 online courses according to the Web-edu project (Paulsen 2002). When asked whether Virtus now was a Megaprovider, the contact person e-mailed this answer:

The VIRTUS project has ended in 2001. But the name still was used for the elearning activities at the Faculty of Economics, Business Administration and Social Sciences in Cologne. Since 2005 we are running one ILIAS installation for the entire university - including the former VIRTUS activities (<http://www.ilias.uni-koeln.de/ilias>).

But I am afraid we are not reaching the benchmark of 100 online courses in 2005. This is also because we are offering learning content not only in courses but also within our repository. Therefore not every professor chooses an online course to deliver learning material. Some of them creating a learning unit - without any course functionalities like enrollment - and use it like a virtual book for supporting their lecture.

According to the Web-edu project (Paulsen 2002), LVU Hagen had 27000 online students and 270 online courses and SAP AG had 2000 online students and 500 online courses. Several contacts doubt that LVU Hagen qualifies as a megaprovider. The researcher has not been able to get any response from SAP.

The following six individual experts were contacted: Michael Lammersdorf, Burkhard Lehmann, Ulrich Bernath, Helmut Fritsch, Ervin Wagner and Bernd Schachsiek. Several of them did not believe there were any Megaproviders in Germany. Among the large providers that were mentioned as not large enough to meet the criteria were: The FernUniversitaet, the FernFachhochschule Darmstadt, the Europaeische FernFachhochschule Hamburg, the University of Kaiserslautern, and the University of Oldenburg.

The responses did however result in the following suggestions for potential Megaproviders: SAP, Tele-Akademie Furtwangen, Bavarian Virtual University and Oncampus.

The contact person at Tele-Akademie Furtwangen declined that the institution was a Megaprovider:

However, according to your criteria I'm afraid that tele-akademie is not a Megaprovider. The range of enrolments per year in the last years varied from 150 to 500 in about 10 up to 30 courses/year.

The contact persons at Bavarian Virtual University and Oncampus confirmed that their institutions were megaproviders.

The Bavarian Virtual University

The Bavarian Virtual University (Virtuelle Hochschule Bayern – VHB) www.vhb.org is an institute set up by all nine state universities and all 17 state universities of applied sciences in Bavaria. A further ten universities in Bavaria outside the jurisdiction of the Bavarian Ministry of Higher Education have also become members, e.g. the University of the Armed Forces (Universität der Bundeswehr) and the Film and Television Academy (Hochschule für Film und Fernsehen) in Munich, the Catholic University in Eichstätt and the protestant Augustana Hochschule in Neuendettelsau.

The aim of the VHB is to complement the programmes of the traditional universities, not to replace them. With the help of the VHB, students can earn credit points in individual courses. They cannot obtain degrees, as the VHB does not offer complete courses of study.

In the academic year 2005/2006, 183 different courses were available. Most courses are offered each term (semester), some courses are offered once a year. In both terms of the academic year 2005/2006 combined, 329 courses in total were conducted. In these 329 courses, there were 44,500 enrolments by 15,000 individual students.

The VHB helps its member universities to provide high quality education for growing numbers of students in times when state funding does not grow proportionally. It helps the students to organise their individual studies in a more flexible way. This is especially valuable for non-traditional students. It also helps students to complete practical courses and trainings as well as studies abroad without extending the duration of their studies. In addition, by studying through VHB-courses students develop e-learning literacy, thus enhancing their employability.

The VHB employs neither academic staff nor tutors. Teaching is offered by professors of member universities who work within the VHB either as part of their workload or in addition to it. For day-to-day course work, professors usually employ tutors. The remuneration of the tutors is provided by the VHB. Full-time employees of the VHB are administrative and technical personnel.

Until now, the VHB has been financed almost exclusively from state funds; member universities have contributed indirectly through their infrastructure. From summer 2007, member universities will contribute financially in relation to the number of students they have.

Oncampus

Oncampus is the e-learning department of Lübeck University of Applied Sciences (LUAS).

The history of online education at Lübeck University of Applied Sciences (LUAS) is prior based on large third party projects dealing with online distance education. The aim has been to gain more target groups for higher education by part-time study programmes. The close cooperation with universities is one of the main success factors.

LUAS started the activities 1997 as lead partner in the German national flagship project “Virtual University of Applied Sciences” (VFH). Within a consortium of universities the aim was to implement full online distance study programmes in engineering and computer science (Bachelor and Master level). At this stage, the oncampus methodology of 80 % online teaching and 20 % presence phases was appointed.

The development and implementation of international online distance programmes started 2002, based on the project “Baltic Sea Virtual Campus” (BSVC). The focus was again on engineering and furthermore transregional management (Master level).

The regional focus was covered in 2002 by the ESF-project “Portal to future”. The aim was to implement particular online courses in continuing education. The respective e-learning

courses were dissolved out of the already provided Bachelor and Master programmes. The credit points attained are chargeable on full programmes, leading to the respective degree.

All e-learning activities of LUAS and all activities with relation to the consortiums VFH and BSVC are today bundled under the name “oncampus”. Actually about 35 professionals are full-time employed at LUAS. They care for development, implementation, operation and marketing of programmes as well as for the project administration. Approximately 150 persons have been involved part-time as authors and teachers. oncampus actually runs 145 e-learning modules (online material). At the moment, 480 courses are being offered and 5.300 course enrolments are registered. More than 1.300 students have been enrolled since 2001.

The following institutions in Germany are members of EADL:

- Bildungswerk für therapeutische Berufe www.NatureMed.de
- DAA-Technikum www.daa-technikum.de
- Forum Distance Learning www.forum-distance-learning.de
- ILS - Institut für Lernsysteme www.ils.de
- Private FernFachhochschule Darmstadt www.privatfh-da.de
- Studiengemeinschaft Darmstadt (SGD) www.SGD.de
- DWG – Deutsche Weiterbildungsgesellschaft mbH
- Europäische Fernhochschule Hamburg (EURO-FH) www.euro-fh.de
- Schachtsiek Verwaltungs- und Beratungs GmbH & Co KG www.schachtsiek-beratung.de

The German member of EADTU is FernUniversität in Hagen www.fernuni-hagen.de

The following institutions in Germany are members of EDEN:

- Carl von Ossietzky University of Oldenburg www.uni-oldenburg.de/uni/
- EENet European Experts' Network for Education and Technology www.eenet.org
- FIM-New Learning, University of Erlangen www.fim.uni-erlangen.de
- German Association for Distance Education <http://ecampus.zfuw.uni-kl.de/Ploneindex-e.htm>
- Private Fernfachhochschule Darmstadt www.privatfh-da.de
- University of Applied Sciences, Zwickau www.fh-zwickau.de
- University of Hildesheim www.uni-hildesheim.de/de/zfw.htm
- Virtuelle Hochschule Bayern www.vhb.org

The Netherlands

One article of interest is E-Learning and International Education in The Netherlands (Frencken 2006).

According to the CISAER project (Paulsen 2000), the Open University of the Netherlands www.ou.nl had 2500 online students and 360 online courses. The contact person confirmed that the university was a megaprovider. According to the information provided at the university's website (<http://www.ou.nl/eCache/DEF/36.html>), Open Universiteit Nederland enrolled its first students in September 1984. It is an independent government-funded institute for distance learning at university level. The Dutch government's purpose in founding Open Universiteit Nederland was to make higher education accessible to anyone with the necessary aptitudes and interests, regardless of formal qualifications. A profile of the university is available at www.ou.nl/Docs/English/Corporate_brochure_2006_UK_def.pdf.

Three individual experts (Betty Collis, Peter Maassen and Dirk van der Mark) were contacted in addition to the EADL secretariat, which is located in the Netherlands, and the SURF secretariat. SURF (www.edusite.nl) is the Dutch higher education and research partnership organisation for network services and information and communications technology (ICT). The only additional institution that was suggested from these contacts was LOI.

LOI Leidse Onderwijsinstellingen (www.loi.nl) is an independent educational institution. Several independent sources indicate that the institution probably is a megaprovider. The institution does however decline to provide information for the research. The reason for this is unknown, but obviously the institution does not want to share this information with the public, the authorities, the students, or the competitors.

The researcher expected that the University of Twente could be a possible candidate, but no information was provided that indicated that this is the case.

The following institutions in the Netherlands are members of EADL:

- Dirksen Opleidingen BV www.dirksen.nl
- Hogeschool NTI www.nti.nl
- PAEPON www.paepon.nl

The Dutch member of EADTU is Open Universiteit Nederland.

The following institutions in the Netherlands are members of EDEN:

- EADL - European Association for Distance Learning www.eadl.org
- King William I College / School for the Future www.kw1c.nl/english

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