Developing the nationwide network institution structurally

The case of Diaconia University of Applied Sciences, Finland

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The national task of Diak is to ensure and develop the education for church diaconia and youth work.
- 86% of Finns are members of the Evangelical Lutheran Church – religiously a very homogenous nation.
- In Lutheran parishes there are 1430 deacons (Chr. Social work) and deaconesses (Chr. nursing) and 1410 in youth work.

The owners of Diak started the education of deaconesses (nurses with Christian vocation) in 1867 – later on also the education of deacons (social workers with Christian vocation).
- Ten years ago, in 1996, a common UAS was established to continue the education with long tradition and to lift it to the stage of higher education.

Lutheran clerics are educated in theological faculties of three state universities, Orthodox clerics in one University.
Other priorities

• Diak is the largest educator in the field of social work in higher education on the BA-level in Finland
  • We are largely working with different organisations of civic society, e.g. social and health organisations
  • Our special interest are in the questions of poverty and marginalisation in society; Diak is committed to social justice, solidarity and the empowerment of people and it aims to train people to influence social change, work for a multicultural society and fight social exclusion
There are four degree programmes
- Nursing
- Social Services (in Finnish and in English)
- Communication and Media
- Sign Language Interpretation

Some figures
- Diak has about 3000 students
- Diak awards over 250 Bachelor’s and Master’s degrees annually
  - Approximately 33 % of the students choose to take courses that give them dual qualification for church and society
- 270 employed
- Economy of 21 million euros
ServiceDiak (r&d)

- ServiceDiak offers research and development services
- ServiceDiak activities include also the Open University Of Applied Sciences and continuing education
  - It also offers training that helps to develop working life, organisations and working communities
  - In addition to the courses and training modulus, the training can be customised to meet the needs of the client organisations
Universities and Universities of Applied Sciences

- UAS
- University
Finland has a population of about 5,25 million
Restructuring the higher education of Finland

• The Finnish Government / Development Plan for Education and Research 2003-2008 (2004): units of UASs must be gathered to larger entities
  • “The restructuring aims at enabling each polytechnic (=uas) unit to develop into an entity which provides degree education and conducts regionally relevant R&D of a high European and international standard”

• Extensive public discussion, above all by the industry and commerce during the last two years
  • Proposals: mergers, alliances, fusions, new deals, giving up the binary system

• The big challenges
  • Cutting ten per cent from student places of young students for restructuring
  • Decreasing age groups especially in the next decade
New doctrine?

• The Finnish system of higher education has developed during last 15 years on the basis of a dual / binary idea of science universities and professional universities

• The Ministry of Education of Finland and Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD): the goal can be in diversity

  • UASs see it as a threat to the binary system
  • If we hold on to the dual / binary system, we can develop institutions of higher education towards regional and national diversity according to the different needs of those regions and the working life
Restructuring the higher education in Finland

• Other Universities of Applied sciences
  • Three mergers of UAS
  • 20 units are or will be disestablished
  • Degree programs are united, closed, changed etc.

• Diak’s response to the societal pressure
  • No realistic alliances in view
  • Diak is one of two network UASis in Finland (the other is Humak University of Applied Sciences)
  • Firm will to be independent
  • The following actions…
Restructuring Diak

**Possibilities**
- The ownership form: Private ownership / private company
- An open-minded attitude by the owners towards changes
- A strong appreciation of societal pressures
- Confidence on the analysis of operational leadership

**Weaknesses**
- The mutual solidarity between owners – must be broken in the restructuring process
- The conflict between a local interest and a nationwide view
- The position of the personnel / faculty
The new strategy of Diak – focusing and profiling

• Short and clear strategy – clarifying the goals
  1. Diak as a structure
  2. Diak as a studying environment
  3. Diak as a workplace
  4. Diak as an educator
  5. Diak as a r&d organisation
  6. Diak as a regional developer

• R&d focusing on three programs
  1. Church
  2. Welfare services
  3. Communities & civic society

• In all programs there is a strong emphasis on the questions of poverty and exclusion
• Before: Eight units
  • Names according to the location cities
• Now four units:
  One unit for every county
  • Axing one unit in South – uniting others
  • Only Diak North consists of two sparsely populated counties
Other steps

• More principal lecturers (professors) to units
• Every unit must also operate on the international level
• More co-operation with working life
  • For instance: we are developing a deeper co-operation with the social, health and diaconal work of the owners of Diak (innovative bases) – other alliances on the national and on the international level are forming
• Deeper co-operation between units in everyday interaction – not only in planning and ruling
• Focusing more clearly to our national task
• Placid quality nationwide
A challenge to changes

Network organisation, distances

Common culture of “endless” negotiating

Clarification of the quality assurance system

Different histories, different traditions of the units

Structural development

1. Firming up the organisation
2. Clarifying powers and responsibilities
The structure and the organisation of Diak

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Challenges of the network organisation

• Common basic standards (curricula, student services, libraries etc.) must be defined much more clearly – areas of possibilities to local varieties must also be defined

• Every unit must be on the other hand creative and to some extent an autonomous expert organisation but at same time a part of the network with the same standards and the same level of quality

• The unit leader is always an immediate superior, but in specified premises the superior is a nationwide person in charge

• We are just now implementing EFQM model as a quality assurance system
Common steps of the Rectors’ Conference of UASis

• More contributions to public discussions
  • Better information services
• More lobbying to the decision makers
• More direct contacts to other agents like trade unions