

Introduction

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Massification, marked orientation, standardisation and digitalisation are some of the reform elements in higher education that may potentially affect the development of the individual student in a negative way. For us this has caused a concern for student development and learning in net-based education. This book is the result of two years of work in a Scandinavian research group with a common interest in net-based higher education. We started out with a sense of there being something different in the Scandinavian way of conducting net-based higher education, and at the same time with a concern for the developmental processes of the net-based students towards being citizens of academia. If we look at the possible trajectory of a student who conducts all her higher education studies net-based, from the introductory course up to the level of PhD; in the present versions of our net-based educational courses and programmes, what do we believe would be the outcome? Will the student have developed her own voice as an academic? We fear that something would be lacking. There could of course potentially be a number of different dimensions lacking in any student development, regardless of learning environment. But, when it comes to our present net-based courses and programmes, our hypothetical assumption is that the Academic Bildung of the students would be suffering.

The idea of learning, and in particular strategies for effective student learning, has for some time been at the centre of focus in university pedagogy, replacing teaching as the centre of attention. In many ways, this has been a fortunate shift of focus.

However, in order to address one of the fundamental functions of higher education,

the ability to produce new knowledge, the focus has to be not only on learning but also on development of the students' Academic Bildung. Academic Bildung is connected to becoming an academic oriented person. It is a question of being socialised into an academic culture, but it is also a question of self-Bildung, as an academic with the necessary integrity and expected creativity. Academic Bildung is in this sense addressing the normative side of the student's development, higher education citizenship, not covered in the concept of learning.

This book is thus first of all a contribution to the discussions on net-based education, where we have chosen to make the concept of Academic Bildung the lens through which we view net-based education. Our premise is that higher education, and in particular net-based higher education, will look different when seen in the light of the goal of the student's achievement of Academic Bildung. We conduct our investigations on a micro-, meso- and a macro level, in terms of net-based teaching and learning environments, institutional conditions and societal influence, respectively, on net-based higher education. At the same time, we look at the field from a multi-disciplinary lens, where philosophy, pedagogics, didactics, sociology and professional knowledge domains are involved. We provide examples of how the development of Academic Bildung can take place in different net-based educational settings, and we also provide examples showing how difficult this can be in the everyday life of net-based academia. In this way we aim at analysing the conditions for both possibilities and challenges related to the facilitation of development of Academic Bildung in net-based higher education. The point of departure is not that net-based environments are better or worse than face-to-face teaching- and learning environments. Every environment has potentials, constraints and pitfalls. In net-based

studies, however, the focus on facilitation of Academic Bildung seems even more important. A particular reason for this is that teachers have new opportunities and challenges for relating to the students. This is also the case concerning for the students' opportunities to meet each other and the teachers' involved. All are challenged by the new opportunities and constraints. Confronted with an explosive use of net-based education the main question asked is: "*How can universities educate students through net-based education and at the same time facilitate Academic Bildung?*"

The structure of the book

The book is sectioned in three parts. Each part will be given a short description below. If the theoretical framework of Part I is not of interest, the reader can choose to go directly to Part II. Part III consists of a discussion founded on the two former parts.

Part I

FRAMING THE BOOK

Part I consist of four chapters. *Chapter 1, "Net-based Higher Education –moving beyond learning"*, is written by Trine Fosslund. In this chapter she frames the book in terms of a societal perspective on net-based higher education and the current state of net-based learning. In this chapter conceptual frames are presented and core issues discussed in the book are introduced.

Chapter 2, "Net-based environments – creating conditions for communication", is written by Helle Mathiasen. The focus of this chapter is on net-based teaching environments and the prerequisites for communication in such settings.

Communication is in this chapter considered as the key to understanding the core values of net-based teaching. The concept of communication presented here is meant to serve as an eye-opener, where the focus is on the prerequisites for communication and the maintenance of communication in net-based environments.

Chapter 3, “On Academic Bildung in Higher Education – a Scandinavian Approach”, is written by Mariann Solberg and Finn T. Hansen. The chapter develops and presents a concept of Academic Bildung based on Humboldtian as well as more existentially oriented accesses to Bildung, relying in particular on Kant and Gadamer’s thinking. They turn to enlightenment traditions within Scandinavian public education and adult education in their search for the fundamental ideas of net based education in Scandinavia.

Chapter 4, “Strategies for flexible education in Scandinavian Universities”, by Frank Holen, focuses on the explicit strategies at three Scandinavian universities as examples and consequently the educational perspectives that can be elaborated from these strategies and practice. He poses the question: What are the ideals manifested in these strategies and practices, and what are the educational consequences?

Part II

CASE STUDIES

The second part of the book consists of four case studies from net based higher education courses in Norway, Sweden and Denmark, starting with a fifth study that looks at Scandinavian approaches to net-based higher education in comparison to data from USA, UK, Australia and Canada.

All case studies are carried out within higher education. The case studies describe courses, teaching environments and student activities. The studies contribute to a discussion about rethinking course design and the use of ICT in the light of Academic Bildung.

The case studies discuss different aspects, such as the role of communication, its conditions, learning environment and course design on specific educational levels. An essential focus is the discussion concerning the possibilities, limitations, barriers and pitfalls inherent in organising teaching as fully or partially net-mediated courses. The case studies vary in theoretical lenses and themes, but they all look for Academic Bildung

Chapter 5, “Philosophical Orientations of Teaching and Technology: A Scandinavian Case study”, by Heather Kanuka from University of Alberta, Canada opens Part II. She explores the question: “How do conceptions and attitudes—or the philosophies—that educational technologists within the higher education sector hold of teaching and technology affect their teaching methods and the way they use technologies?” She examines how Scandinavian academics articulate their philosophical orientations on teaching and technology.

In *Chapter 6, “Educating Pharmacists – the Perfect Prescription?”* Claire Englund and Maria Wester use a net-based Bachelor programme in Pharmacy as an example. The study focuses on the question of if and how educational technologies can

facilitate the acquisition of Academic Bildung in the sense of the professional identity necessary for the students' education and future profession.

In *Chapter 7*, with the title "*Net-based Guerrilla Didactics*" Søren S. Bengtsen, Helle Mathiasen and Christian Dalsgaard present a study of net-based communication between students and between students and teachers in the master education programme course "IT educational design". The research question posed in this chapter is: How can technologies facilitate communication and learning in different teaching/learning environments and what do the findings indicate when the focus is on pedagogic and didactic perspectives and initiatives in net-based communication in Higher Education?"

In *Chapter 8*, "*Learning, Meaning, Bildung – Reflections with Reference to a Net-based MBA-programme*", Gunnar Grepperud and Frank Holen ask to what extent does the MBA-students display learning at higher taxonomic level, and what explains their learning behaviour? The chapter reflects on how students approach learning in an experience based Master's programme and relates it to the ideas and ideals of Bildung. These reflections resides in the linkage the authors make between learning and Bildung where they discuss the divide between the ideals of Bildung and the actual learning approaches in the master program.

In *Chapter 9*, titled "*Cross-professional Net-based Health Education – a Key to Academic Bildung and Interprofessionality?*" Trine Fosslund studies a first semester net-based education involving 650 healthcare students from ten different disciplines. In this chapter she focuses on this particular net-based course design and people

involved in the programme, to identify dimensions of Academic Bildung found in different empirical sources.

Part III

RETHINKING UNIVERSITY EDUCATION

The case studies in Part II are the foundation for Part III “Rethinking University Education”, where central findings presented in the case studies are discussed on basis of the philosophical Academic Bildung framework introduced in part I. In addition to this theme, Part III presents a discussion concerning the question posed from an overall didactical perspective. The book concludes with a summary, including new research questions.

In *Chapter 10*, titled “*Pedagogical Considerations: A New Discourse Based on Academic Bildung*” Mariann Solberg, Gunnar Grepperud, and Finn T. Hansen goes into the different dimensions and conceptions of Bildung found in the case studies and discuss these in relation to the concept of Academic Bildung developed in Part I. On the basis of the case studies they ask whether and where digital media and IT can mean “value added” as concerns the Bildung dimension.

Chapter 11, “*Rethinking Net-based Higher Education- the facilitation of a four-voiced pedagogy?*” is written by Trine Fosslund. In this chapter she returns to the overall question in the book “How can universities educate students through net-based education and at the same time facilitate Academic Bildung?” She asks whether it is necessary to rethink the pedagogical dimensions of net based higher education.

In “*Concluding Remarks*”, Helle Mathiasen and Mariann Solberg make a short recapitulation and point out new perspectives and research questions.