

Concluding Remarks

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At the beginning of this book we asked: “How can universities educate students through net-based education and at the same time facilitate Academic Bildung?” Both from a society perspective, an institutional perspective, and a pedagogical and didactical perspective, we have discussed the question and we also here suggest some new questions.

In *Part I*, the societal reasons for why the facilitation of Academic Bildung is more important than ever are discussed. It is argued that higher education needs to be rethought. In order to develop the academic orientation of the students, we need to address both challenges and opportunities within net-based higher education. We have to remind ourselves of what functions and contributions higher education has to provide for tomorrow’s society and ask what knowledge, skills, and competences net-based courses need to offer to achieve this. In our approach, the students, teachers, universities, and society are all addressed. It is important to take into account that all are dynamic entities.

Furthermore, at the institutional level the changes and processes do not seem to have affected the potential space for Academic Bildung in a substantial way. Yet, the trends in higher education are moving in a direction where this might be threatened by the massification of education and more managed and production oriented institutions. In that sense, there might be some dark clouds in the foreseeable future.

From a pedagogical and didactical perspective it is vital for net-based education that also net-based courses are run by faculty with a close connection to research who are motivated and qualified for meeting the specific opportunities and challenges of net-based teaching and learning environments. Educational technology carries values, and the complexities of net-based communication gives varied conditions for learning and Academic Bildung.

In *Part II*, the empirical studies show the variety of approaches to the overall question, and we learn about the opportunities, constraints, barriers, and pitfalls for facilitation of Academic Bildung. The case studies come from pharmacy, IT educational design, business administration, and healthcare, thus disciplines from different faculties are represented.

The discussions in *Part III* are based on the findings and perspectives presented in Part II. We have found 13 different, and to some extent overlapping, interpretations of Academic Bildung in the case studies. We take this as an expression of the empirical existence of Academic Bildung in these Scandinavian net-based courses. The case studies have found Academic Bildung to consist of: (i) professional proficiency, (ii) professional identity, (iii) autonomy in terms of being able to free oneself from didactical design, (iv) ability for perspective expansion, (v) being exploratory so as to achieve deep learning, (vi) being able to take an active part in a democratic society, (vii) being a whole person, (viii) having acquired academic skills, (ix) having acquired academic values, (x) having acquired academic identity and behaviour, (xi) ability to critical thinking, (xii) ability to personal growth and maintenance, and (xiii) having aims of a better society. These different traits cover both the autonomy and the

authenticity side of Academic Bildung, and are all important features in the development of the students in the respective courses and programmes.

We have thus found that different content will influence and shape the kind of Academic Bildung that potentially can and should be developed. This means that there are no privileged content to be found, all academic disciplines have a Bildung potential. In this way, the different disciplines and the individual teachers will have to reflect on their specific ways into facilitation of development of Academic Bildung in their specific course or programme. The teaching and learning environment offered is pivotal for facilitation of Academic Bildung.

In conclusion, what can we say about facilitation of Academic Bildung in net-based higher education? What is the Scandinavian approach? Since our focus has been quite general, in terms of not making divisions between different forms of teaching and learning environments, our emphasis has been on the pedagogical and didactic aspects, and not on the different technological solutions and mediations. In general, our empirical findings show us that facilitation of Academic Bildung is far from straight forward. The conditions for development of Academic Bildung vary depending on the concrete contexts. However, we have found that in terms of institutional conditions, net-based education is so far, to a large extent, a “bottom-up” movement, where the initiative still is in the hands of the academic staff. We have also found that teachers of Scandinavian universities have similar philosophical orientations of teaching and technology, where “the progressive orientation” dominates, “accompanied by comments revolving around their student’s personal growth, and the connection to social systems”. Moreover, they relate to technology

due to “the uses determinism technological orientation”. We further suggest that the Scandinavian approach is to discuss theoretical, empirical, and normative premises for education, without giving definite answers, having the courage to remain in the open. When we use the empirical material (the case studies) to discuss Academic Bildung, we have a double aim: showing both *how* we discuss and *what* we discuss. Thus, the discussion in the case studies and in Part III could be seen as an opportunity to gain insight into Scandinavian ways of discursively constructing pedagogical and didactical perspectives.

We would like to invite you to take part in further investigation and discussion concerning both conceptual issues and empirical investigations. For instance, is the concept Academic Bildung something immanent in persons, institutions and society or is it something that has to be constructed? If the approach to Academic Bildung has an ontological character, in the sense that Bildung is always already present, what conditions will have to be present to allow it to grow? And if we take a constructivistic approach to Academic Bildung, how can we facilitate development of Academic Bildung in specific teaching and learning environments? When we focus on the condition for maintaining communication and offer fruitful teaching and learning environments, how can net-based and campus-based environments enrich each other?

We hope we have inspired you to reflect on the student’s possibilities in your own disciplines and courses, and motivated new research projects that can expound the field.