



## The Merger of Nine Finnish Diaconal Colleges: A Model and Some Experiences

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### Creation of Polytechnics (= Universities of Applied Sciences) in Finland in the early 1990's

- Former colleges were changed into new polytechnics
- Several regional mergers, larger units
- Bachelor degrees
- Accreditation by the Ministry of Education

### Discussion about the future of the Christian colleges

- Colleges too small to get the accreditation as polytechnics
- Options:
  - To lower the level of education (vocational)
  - To merge with the local polytechnics
  - To merge with the other Christian colleges

### *The first merger in 1995-1996*

- Helsinki Deaconess Institute → Alppikatu unit
  - Helsinki Evangelical Institute → Kirstinkatu unit
  - The Church Training College → Järvenpää unit
  - The Finnish Bible Institute → Kauniainen unit
  - Diaconia Institution in Pori → Pori unit
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- Formed Diaconia Polytechnic Ltd (DAK Oy) and an educational organisation Diaconia Institution
  - Got a temporary permission to start education 1996
  - Vocational education remained in the original institutions

### *Second phase of mergers in 1997-2000*

- Society of Inner Mission of the Finnish Church 1997  
⇒ Pieksämäki unit
  - The Christian College in Turku 1998 ⇒ Turku unit
  - The Diaconia Foundation in Lahti 2000 ⇒ Lahti unit
  - Oulu Deaconess Institute 2000 ⇒ Oulu unit
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- Diaconia Polytechnic (Diak) got permanent accreditation in 2000
  - Current English name Diaconia University of Applied Sciences

## Four planning groups

### A: Ownership

- Number of shares according to the size of the unit
- Owner's agreement
- Diak uses the premises of the owners
- Divident not shared to the owners

### B: Economics

- Separate budget for each unit
- Joint costs shared according to the size of the unit
- Criterias for dividing the state funding
- Half-time unit leaders

## **C: Pedagogics**

- New phenomenon based curriculum
- One degree programme
- Network groups
- Diak's development days twice a year

## **D: Image and marketing**

- One national university with local profiles
- Joint and local marketing



## Diak in 2011

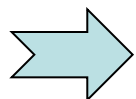
- **Diak South** (Helsinki, Järvenpää, Kauniainen - Lahti closed down in 2007)
- **Diak East** (Pieksämäki)
- **Diak North** (Oulu)
- **Diak West** (Pori, Turku)
- **Joint Services** (Helsinki)

- 5 bachelor, 4 master programmes
- Fields: Diaconia, Christian Youth work, Social Services, Nursing, Sign language interpretation, Interpretation of immigrant languages

- 3000 students
- 290 staff
- Annual budget 25 m €

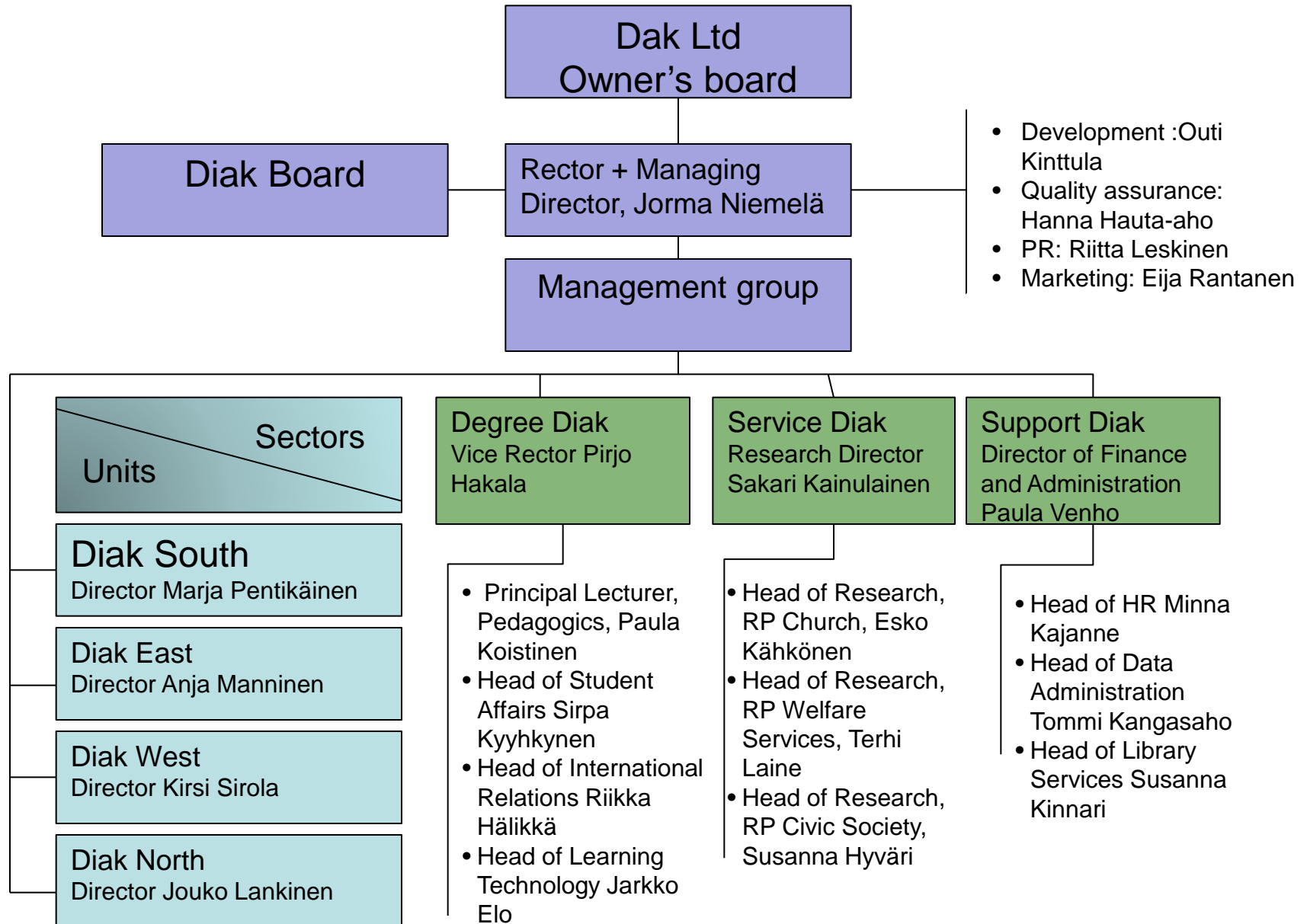
## Current Challenges

- Structural development of Finnish Higher Education:  
Decreasing the number of universities and units
- Tightening funding



### Consequences to Diak:

- Diak South into one campus
- National structure may be at risk in the long run
- Need for strategic partnerships
- Need for better cost effectiveness



# The Operational Sectors of Diak

## Degree Diak

- Degree programmes
- Student services
- International affairs
- Learning technology

## Service Diak

- Educational, research and development services targeted outside Diak
- Three r&d programmes: Church, Welfare Services, Civic Society
- Continuing and further education
- Consultations, work guidance
- Development and enterprise activities

## Support Diak

- Library Services
- IT Services
- HR services
- Financial services

## Diak - Ministry of Education and Culture

- Funding (85-90%)
- Accreditation of the Degree Programmes
- Structure

## Diak - The owners

- Owners: Budget, strategy, structure
- Diak board: Operational decisions

## Diak - Units

- Each unit and sector has its own budget
- Each unit has its own management group for local decision making
- Most of the practical solutions are made locally

- Network groups in all main areas
- Virtual meetings
- Common curricula and implementation plans
- Joint virtual courses and recorded lectures
- Common principles and practices in all main activities (e.g. pedagogics, international activities, RDI, resources , quality assurance)
- Intranet, weekly e-bulletin
- Annual Diak's development days
- Joint projects
- Common ICT-structure, systems and programmes

- Understanding and joining different cultures
- Unclarity of decision making and responsibilities of different actors (Sectors/Units)
- Not everyone can participate – Feelings of being outside the decision making
- Commitment to joint practices and decisions
- Multiple structures (Diak-level, unit-level)
- Regional development
- Balance between large and small units
- Problems of distance leadership
- Cost effectiveness
- Using expertise nation wide
- National brand vs. local brands and profiles
- Units vs. Joint services debate