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Welcome to our latest newsletter – which we are sending to an extended circle of researchers, academics and others interested in Virtual Campuses. To subscribe to this monthly newsletter, please contact nikki.cortoots@atit.be.

Project News

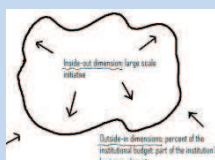
Final Report Submitted

After a lot of work in November, the final project report and set of associated documents were submitted to the European Commission. In this report we provided a summary of what the European Commission describes as ‘products’ i.e. the main outcomes of the Re.ViCa project and information about where each specific product or output is available.

Main Re.ViCa Outputs

1. The [Re.ViCa wiki](#) on Virtual Campuses is probably one of the largest repositories on the topic of virtual campus available today and contains information about interesting programmes, initiatives, projects and leading institutions as well as a rapidly growing series of country reports describing countries’ education systems, e-learning activities and specifically virtual campuses around the world.

2. Definition of Virtual Campus: this theoretical [framework to define virtual campus](#) is combined with a collection of intercultural meanings and interpretations of the term virtual campus.



3. An Historical Overview of Virtual Campuses This [historical overview](#) is based on desktop research and 16 in-depth interviews with international experts (interviews made at the ICDE/EADTU World conference in June 2009).

4. 29 country reports Each [report](#) describes the country in a nutshell, the education policy and system, the higher education institutions, but also issues such as the higher education reform in the country, administration and finance, quality assurance and last but not least of course virtual initiatives in higher education. Within Europe the project has produced country reports on Higher Education e-learning in the following countries: [Austria](#), [Belgium](#), [Czech Republic](#), [Denmark](#), [Estonia](#), [Finland](#), [France](#), [Germany](#), [Greece](#), [Hungary](#), [Ireland](#), [Italy](#), [Luxembourg](#), [Netherlands](#), [Norway](#), [Poland](#), [Portugal](#), [Russia](#), [Spain](#), [Sweden](#), [Switzerland](#), and [United Kingdom](#). Outside Europe the countries covered in detail are [Australia](#), [Brazil](#), [Canada](#), [China](#), [Kenya](#), [Mexico](#), [New Zealand](#), [South Africa](#) and [United States](#). Furthermore, there are also about 30 country reports where the team aims to have a reasonably complete description from a member of the team, but the report has not been reviewed or

refereed.

5. Nine In-Depth Case Studies [Case studies](#) were made of the [University of Eastern Finland](#), [University of Nancy 2](#), [University of Derby](#), [Technical University of Madrid](#), [Open University of the Netherlands](#), [Swiss Virtual Campus](#), [Hibernia College](#), [UNINETTUNO](#), and [Association K.U.Leuven](#). Each case study was based on a survey including a broad range of parameters.



6. Inventory of Virtual Campuses The Re.ViCa team identified around 170 Programmes in Europe with some 20 more existing as EU-funded projects past or present. In the “Rest of the World” there are 360 entries. The wiki now includes over [500 programmes](#) across the world.

7. Categorisation of Virtual Campuses The [categorisation](#) gives insight into the complex global Higher Education landscape and identifies different types of e-learning providers worldwide.

8. A modern set of Critical Success Factors This [document](#) provides policymakers with a practical tool to identify the factors that are critical to attaining a successful and sustainable virtual campus. Acting on feedback and intense debate, we came in the end to a list of 17 Critical Success Factors which are relevant to the success of e-learning in all types of virtual campuses, as well as a list of 14 Key Success Factors relevant to the success of e-learning in one or more subsets of virtual campuses.

9. Newsletter Series These [newsletters](#) include articles on the virtual campus phenomenon in general and the activities of the Re.ViCa project in particular. They are sent out to a community of about 470 people.

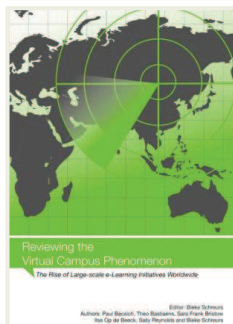
Key Outcome Published and Available - The Virtual Campus Handbook

The project handbook “Reviewing the Virtual Campus Phenomenon: The Rise of Large-scale e-Learning Initiatives Worldwide” which provides a comprehensive and useful appraisal of Virtual Campuses worldwide has been published and



is available either as a [free download](#) or in print form by contacting the Re.ViCa secretariat at revica@europace.be.

This handbook begins with a brief history of the term 'Virtual Campus' and then goes on to describe the approach taken to the categorisation of Virtual Campuses by the team. It then provides a summary of key initiatives, market leaders and large-scale providers in the different regions of the world and reviews many of the factors and issues that can influence Virtual Campuses particularly those in Europe.



The handbook also deals with benchmarking and critical success factors and provides a detailed description of the work undertaken by the research team in arriving at the final set of 17 Critical Success Factors relevant to success of e-learning in all types of Virtual Campus along with a list of 14 Key Success Factors - these are Critical Success Factors relevant to success of e-learning in one or more subsets (categories) of Virtual Campus - such as private for-profit providers, consortia, etc.

Reviewing the Virtual Campus Phenomenon *The Rise of Large-scale e-Learning Initiatives Worldwide*

The handbook also contains a series of annexes with, for example, links to key initiatives worldwide, further reading and other materials that the reader will find useful.

Departure of our dedicated Project Manager, Bieke Schreurs

On a sad note, we have to report the departure of our hard-working project manager Bieke Schreurs who left EuroPACE at the end of 2009 in order to further develop her academic and other interests. Bieke has been a terrific project manager for the Re.ViCa project and has managed to steer the team not only towards a very successful series of project outcomes but has also been highly instrumental in ensuring the sustainability of the project through the creation of a real community of people interested in the further investigation and support of Virtual Campuses.



Bieke Schreurs

We are grateful to Bieke for her dedication, skill and the strength of purpose she brought to the work we have done together and wish her the very best of luck in whatever she chooses to do in the coming years.

News and Recent Developments

U21 "downsized"

Recent reports have announced that Universitas 21 Global has decided to downsize and refocus its operation. This follows earlier critical reports on its progress and the withdrawal of a

number of its members from the operation. The news broke in December 2009 (in [Inside Higher Education](#)) under the title "Another One Bites the Dust". So far this story has had very little analysis. We asked Re.ViCa senior researcher Paul Bacsich to provide us with some background to this collapse and what it could indicate.



Prof. Paul Bacsich

To recap the history, [Universitas 21](#) is an association of high-profile research-led universities. It currently has 21 member universities in 14 different countries/territories. In Europe, there are five members: the Universities of Birmingham, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Nottingham, and Lund, and last but not least University College Dublin. Together, there are 500,000 students and 40,000 academics and researchers associated with these universities, which have over 2 million alumni. The universities collaborate on many levels, undergraduate and postgraduate research, sharing best practice. Several hundred students a year participate in the student exchange programmes, the U21 Student Mobility Programme. This general collaboration still seems very active and substantial.



In 2001, Universitas 21, in a collaborative effort with Thomson Learning, formed an online university called Universitas 21 Global ([U21Global](#)), with its headquarters in Singapore. Thomson Learning became Cengage Learning, then in 2007 sold its entire 50% share in U21Global to Manipal Universal Learning International for an undisclosed sum. More recently, Universitas 21 Global has broken even, but the returns to the partner universities are reported (in a THE article "Finances of e-school are not making the grade") as rather small. The total number of students is said to be around 5,000. Now Manipal will gain a controlling interest in the operation. The University of Melbourne has said that it will stop putting money into the programme, and it is also said that Manipal will refocus Universitas 21 Global from Masters degrees to corporate education. Yet, the wider Universitas 21 network remains in good shape.

Manipal has been variously described as a "Mauritius-based organisation" and as "an Indian firm that deals in education as well as health care, manufacturing and financial services". These statements seem to undersell not only Manipal, but also Mauritius, which has been a target of a number of e-learning initiatives over the last few years. [Manipal](#) is in fact a large Indian group operating universities and campuses in India (most prominently in Manipal but also Sikkim), Nepal, Dubai, Malaysia and Antigua. Manipal University in particular is very active in distance learning with [Manipal Universal Learning](#) set up to service this and related activities. Some idea of the extent of their operations can be gleaned from a recent press release from [IndiaPRwire](#).

This is not the only potential misconception. The move from "Masters degrees to corporate education" may seem radical in some countries and was a well-known "weak move" signifier in some former institutions in trouble but now in the US, UK, Australia



and some others, this could be little more than a reorienting of the Masters curriculum more in the direction of an Executive masters and more careful modularisation of the Masters programme.

Certainly it is true that consortia are not as fashionable or as easy a solution for e-learning as they once were, and this is true both in the EU as reported in Re.ViCa - and in the US as reported as long ago as 2003 in the WCET study on "Virtual University and College Consortia" (PDF) by Epper and Garn, with work continuing on this topic. And it probably did not help that the Universitas 21 Global situation occurred soon after the phasing out of the [University of Illinois Global Campus](#).

This observation suggests that a fruitful way forward is to check the Universitas 21 Global operation against the Re.ViCa [Critical Success Factors](#) and [Key Success Factors](#). In this context it is very useful that the CEO of Universitas 21 Global wrote a very thorough analysis "Building a High Quality Global e-Learning Network: Lessons, Pitfalls and Opportunities from U21Global" (PDF) of the operation in 2006, after it had already been through a number of troubles.

I would suggest a focus on the following Critical Success Factors and Key Success Factors:

1 Definition

In the Re.ViCa project a *critical success factor* is defined as follows:

A critical success factor is a factor whose presence is necessary for an organisation to fulfil its mission - in other words, if it is not present then its absence will cause organisational and/or mission failure.

R29 Management Style: The overall institutional management style is appropriate to manage its mix of educational and business activities. How effectively did the senior university culture blend with that of the senior executives from Thompson and then a very different company, Manipal?

R58 Market Research: Market research done centrally and in or on behalf of all departments, and aware of e-learning aspects; updated annually or prior to major programme planning. While 5,000 students is a very respectable number for an online programme from one university, it pales into insignificance by comparison with the large private US providers.

R36 Pricing: The institution has effective processes which ensure that the price of its courses is competitive yet sustainable. This has been particularly tricky as over the last few years the early theories that high price for e-learning implies high reputation for e-learning have been turned on their head. There is a possibly additional complication that universities in some countries represented in Universitas 21 have a strong tradition of free courses even at Masters level and even internationally.

R25 Brand Management: The institution has a reasoned approach to managing its brand. With some exceptions, few of the universities had a strong reputation for or operational track record in e-learning (though some are gaining it now). So there was a

reputational mismatch with their stellar reputations for research.

R41 Consortia No-Compete The consortium has taken steps to ensure that issues of competing with its members are resolved. This is always a big problem with consortia. (There are several other consortial factors to consider also.)

R59 Competitor Research: The institution has processes to carefully analyse the relationship of each proposed e-learning offering to existing providers and stakeholders. Even a cursory analysis of the marketplace makes it clear, as it has been over many years, that the online MBA market is heavily contested. More generally, the [Re.ViCa handbook](#) demonstrates that almost every reasonably developed country now has strong in-country suppliers of distance learning and there is a rapid growth of international distance learning supplied from countries formerly not active – in particular [India](#), with its plethora of capabilities.

At which point the wheel comes full circle back to Manipal. Maybe instead of being seen as a "weak move", perhaps handing control to Manipal is in fact a very shrewd decision?

Evolve or Dissolve: A Look at the Health of Consortia in the U.S. and Canada

In our research work in Re.ViCa we discovered large numbers of virtual campuses utilising some form of consortia model, indeed in some parts of the world being involved in a consortia is almost a pre-requisite if an organisation wishes to call itself a 'Virtual Campus'. Consortia models tend to attract a great deal of attention, not only at their launch but also upon their demise, as witnessed recently with the implosion of Universitas 21 Global. We invited Russell Poulin, Associate Director at [WCET](#) in the US to take a look for us at the position of consortia in the US and Canada.



Russell Poulin

How are consortia faring in the U.S. and Canada? It depends on who you ask.

In 2008, I co-authored a [survey](#) of financing models and revenue streams for eLearning consortia. We found that appropriations were not growing, grants were few, and that consortia concentrating on one funding stream or diversifying into several funding sources.

Noting that many consortia were about a decade old and were reaching an organizational crossroads, one finding was "evolve or dissolve." Consortia that evolved their services and funding models to meet the changing needs of their clientele were more successful than those that did not.

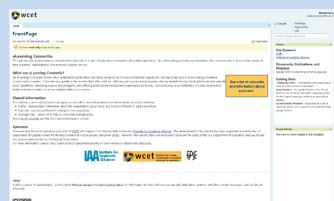
The "evolve or dissolve" theme was picked up as the first line in a May 2009 [article](#) about faltering consortia in the Chronicle of



Higher Education, which covers higher education issues in the United States. The article covered bad news for consortia, including the closing of the [Utah eLearning Connection](#) and the announcement that the [University of Texas TeleCampus](#) would lose its state subsidy by 2012. The TeleCampus remains one of the best examples of what a consortium can achieve and has since worked hard on a new funding plan.

What is rarely reported is the great success of most consortia. [WashingtonOnline](#) experienced 100% growth in enrollments from summer to summer. The [Institute for Academic Alliance](#) created an interstate consortium to share nuclear engineering courses and programs. [BCcampus](#) promoted innovation by hosting the [Open Education Conference](#).

To share information about consortia in the U.S. and Canada, WCET and the Institute for Academic Alliances created a [wiki](#) to collect basic information about as many consortia as possible. Although we are still building the site, it had almost 900 visitors in the last



month. Beyond organizational information, the site will include examples of how consortia market themselves and “Best Practices for eLearning Consortia.”

How are consortia faring in the U.S. and Canada? We are doing fine. We will see a few casualties in the coming year. Sometimes this is more a result of politics than poor service. I expect to see new consortia and many existing ones will continue to grow.

Project Activities In January

The Re.ViCa consortium, in association with Sero, is holding a workshop entitled “Critical success scheme for step-change in e-learning” at LATWF in the second Innovation Exchange session on Tuesday January 12. Around 40 delegates from all sectors of education have signed up for this, coming from 18 countries covering Europe, Asia, Africa and the Americas.



The aim is to use input from the delegates to help with extending the Re.ViCa scheme of Critical and Key Success Factors from its current focus on universities to a wider focus on colleges (further education) and schools. For more details [see the current scheme](#).

There are several other interesting workshops at LATWF for a higher education audience. A general one is being given by the UK Higher Education Academy on “How can technology enhance student learning experiences in the higher education sector?” This session provides participants with an opportunity to learn how change is being driven in UK universities and look at ways that technology can be exploited in their own countries, to

enhance student learning experiences. A more specific session on “What is the place of technology in research-led teaching?” includes a contribution from Professor Gilly Salmon, a key member of the Re.ViCa International Advisory Committee.

Find out more about the Learning and Technology World Forum programme [here](#).

New People in the Re.ViCa Network

Expert for USA: Russell Poulin, Associate Director, WCET, USA

Russ is Associate Director of [WCET](#), a cooperative network of institutions and organizations advancing access and excellence in higher education through the innovative use of technology. Based in Boulder, Colorado, WCET’s membership represents 46 U.S. states and 8 countries. Russ helps members answer their e-learning questions and works on projects including: directing the Transparency by Design project and its [CollegeChoicesforAdults.org](#) website, which provides consumer information for adult learners; coordinating WCET’s efforts in sharing information about the management, financing, and services of e-learning consortia; coordinating with the Campus Computing Project on the new Managing Online Programs survey; and consulting on [WICHE’s Non-Traditional No More](#) project. Previously, Russ coordinated distance education activities for the [North Dakota University System](#). He holds a Bachelor’s degree in Mathematics and Economics and a Master’s in Statistics and Research Methodology.



Russell Poulin

Expert for Sweden: Andreas Hedrén, Gotland University, Sweden

Andreas is the Head of the Department of Computer Communication and Software Engineering and acting Head of the Department of Industrial Design at [Gotland University](#), Sweden. He has been teaching a number of distance and blended learning courses in Software Engineering starting in 2004. He has now been appointed to head a project in 2010 aimed at developing distance learning at Gotland University. The project scope is wide and broad and the main issues to be covered are: technology (LMS, applications etc), methodology and organisation (supporting functions in the post project phase). The project will also address the more specific issues of increasing the percentage of students succeeding and passing distance courses and also legal issues in relation to the assessment and examination of distance students.



Andreas Hedrén

Announcements

Call for Submissions to University of Wisconsin Distance Education Conference, 2010


The deadline for receipt of proposals to the 26th Annual





Conference on Distance Teaching & Learning being held in Madison, USA from 4-6 August is January 20th. Each year, this conference provides an exchange of current resources, research, and best practices from around the world that are relevant to the design and delivery of distance education/training. More information about making a submission is available from the conference [web site](#).

Call for Submissions to EDEN annual Conference

 The annual EDEN conference is being held this year in Valencia, Spain from 9-12 June. This year the theme of the conference is Media Inspirations for Learning: What Makes the Impact? The deadline for receipt of proposals is January 29th 2010. More information about making a submission is available from the conference [web site](#).



OECD Publish Second Volume on Higher Education to 2030

This recently published book is the second volume in the series and is entitled "Higher Education to 2030, Volume 2: Globalisation". It explores questions related to the future of higher education looked at on a global level as well as investigating ways in which countries and institutions can best cope with and benefit from future changes. It is available for purchase from the [OECD bookshop](#).



Bits and Pieces

Moves in Australia to Strengthen Tertiary Level Links with Industry

A recent communiqué reported in the excellent [60 Seconds of Network News from Education.au](#) from the Australian Ministerial Council for Tertiary Education and Employment ([MCTEE](#)) Meeting announced an agreement on the part of the MCTEE to strengthen the tertiary education sector and its capacity to meet Australia's future demands for a highly skilled workforce. Ministers agreed on key reforms and structures to improve the quality and integrity of Australia's tertiary education sector and agreed to steps to mitigate the current economic climate. Moves announced included the development of a new foundation for quality in higher education through the establishment of the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) and its location in Melbourne. The full text of the communiqué is available [here](#).

University of Colorado Publishes Useful Handbook

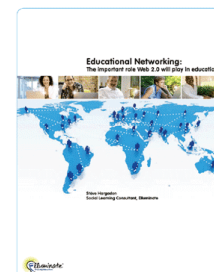
As reported recently in [GetEducated.com](#), the [University of Colorado Denver](#) in the US has published a useful e-book which explores trends and issues to do with online learning. Called the [CU Online Handbook](#) it includes articles such as: how teachers can



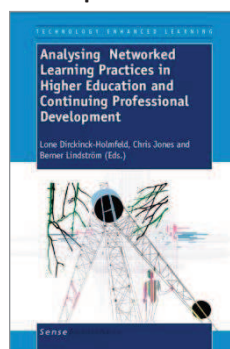
transition from face-to-face to distance education, how to use e-College, how to use web 2.0 and informal learning techniques, using blogs for educational purposes and instructional uses of Twitter.

White Paper on Web 2.0 in Education

This white paper written by Steve Hargadon, Social Learning Consultant with Elluminate, provides an interesting overview of the way Web 2.0 could and probably should bring about dramatic changes in the way education at all levels is organised. It is available as a [free download](#).



New Publication entitled "Analysing Networked Learning Practices in Higher Education and Continuing Professional Development"



This book edited by Lone Dirckinck-Holmfeld, Aalborg University, Denmark, Chris Jones, The Open University, Milton Keynes, UK and Berner Lindström from the University of Göteborg, Sweden provides a useful resource for researchers and practitioners in the area of networked learning. Networked learning is defined by these leading researchers as being learning in which information and communication technology is used to promote

connections: between one learner and other learners; between learners and tutors and between a learning community and its learning resources. Informed by theory this book provides insights into the growing area of educational practice that is networked learning. A substantial [free preview](#) is available while the full book is available for sale from Amazon.

Reminders

We look forward to receiving input from you for our next newsletter which will be published in February. This input can be news items, new RSS feeds, relevant papers or publications by you or others.

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