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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 bimonthly newsletter, please contact nikki.cortoots@atit.be.

Project News

Re.ViCa work endorsed in European Commission Review

Following the submission of the Re.ViCa final report and other materials, the partners received very positive feedback from the European Commission review team who were particularly impressed by the project's dissemination activities which have given rise to a number of publications. The project handbook "[Reviewing the Virtual Campus Phenomenon](#)" came in for specific approval when it was described as a 'good piece of work related to Virtual Campuses'.

The partners continue to collaborate, maintaining the Virtual Campus wiki and publishing this newsletter every two months while also working together to identify new opportunities for further collaborative research into virtual campuses and related topics.

Wiki enhancements

Work on the [Virtual Campus wiki](#) continues with further country classifications as well as additional information to complete [reports on each country](#). The Re.ViCa team are planning to update the [programme list](#) during the summer months, so do check the programmes in which you are involved and make all necessary changes!

News and Recent Developments

UK Online Learning Task Force publishes progress report

After its first months of work, this high-level Task Force on online learning has published a short [report](#) on its progress that makes for interesting reading. In this report, task force members report on the changing face of UK Higher Education and their work to investigate the current position of online learning in the UK. It outlines their position on learning from previous work in this area and what they are doing to understand the needs of students. Finally it outlines what the Task Force plan to do in future months and invites input to the investigations it is carrying out.



HEXTLearn Expands Community

This network, which aims to contribute to the deployment of Lifelong Learning strategies through ICT within European Higher Education Institutions, has extended its online networking activities significantly. Supported by the European Commission's Lifelong Learning Programme, HEXTLEARN has now entered its final year and made available several different mechanisms to share and discuss good practices. Visit the HEXTLEARN [website](#) to see who is involved and to find out more about the types of discussions taking place in this network.



Half of Continuous Medical Education to be online in the US by 2016

Get Educated.com [reported recently](#) that by 2016, half of the training which practicing doctors in the US are expected to undertake during their career is likely to be available online. This shift will have a significant impact on the highly lucrative continuous Medical Education (CME) sector and may well also have a significant impact on the role of universities providing outreach learning services to their medical alumni.



Move-IT – Seminars promoting virtual support for mobile students

The growing success of Erasmus and other exchange programmes has revealed a new need for students to be given more and better support. Virtual mobility and e-coaching methods, enabled by the use of educational technologies, are therefore becoming popular as a complement to the traditional mobility programmes in order to support students who go abroad physically for an exchange.

Move - IT

Seminars Promoting Virtual Support for Mobile Students

If you are using virtual mobility, web 2.0 tools, streaming video, videoconferencing or other technologies to support physically mobile students and teachers, then share your experience with others through the Move-IT [website](#) or during one of the Move-IT seminars and workshops. The first events being organised by Move-IT are two webinars: 7 May (with [Prof Gilly Salmon](#) as confirmed speaker) and 27 May. More information will be available soon on the Move-IT website.

University of Texas (UT) TeleCampus to cease operations

After 12 years of operation, the [University of Texas \(UT\) TeleCampus](#) is slated to close its electronic doors. Charged in 1998 with developing the technical and instructional support to help UT institutions develop distance education courses, the TeleCampus is considered a US e-learning pioneer.



A university spokesperson has explained that online education at the nine UT campuses has matured to the point where the services offered by the current TeleCampus [aren't necessary](#) – a rationale whose nuances are currently being debated in academic circles.

The TeleCampus will transition into a new, smaller office which serves as a central "clearinghouse" for existing UT courses, as announced in a [press release](#) on April 8.



Recent Reports

Focus on the US: country report updated; broadband and educational technology reports published

There has been quite a lot of relevant US activity recently. We asked Sara Frank Bristow to provide short reports on several interesting developments as well as the work she has been doing to update the US report in the Virtual Campus wiki.

Updated US country report

Re.ViCa is pleased to announce the publication of a revised [United States country report](#) on its wiki. As in other Re.ViCa [country reports](#), we present an overview of the country's educational system (from the primary through the postsecondary level), with particular emphasis on e-learning in higher education. In the US study we also examine topics such as states' v. national relevance; US attitudes towards the Bologna Process; the unique US accreditation system; and recent recommendations which have the potential to transform the country's broadband and educational technology uptake. The last of these are discussed in some detail below.



Sara Frank Bristow

Promoting broadband access

In early 2009, the United States Congress directed the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to develop a [National Broadband Plan](#) to ensure every American gains broadband access. In response, the FCC published a 360-page report in March 2010 which recommends sweeping improvements to US broadband governance, infrastructure, affordability, and deployment. The plan would dedicate US\$15.5 billion to broadband deployment over the next decade.



Despite early advances in the arena, for nearly 10 years the United States has lagged behind many other developed countries in the adoption of broadband technology. The country was rated a "middle-of-the-pack performer" in a [major 2009 survey](#) of broadband penetration among OECD countries (well below South Korea, Denmark, the United Kingdom and others), and nearly one third of Americans (100 million) do not have broadband access at home.

Education is among the many areas that can expect to benefit if the report's recommendations are deployed.

Embracing Educational Technology

Publication of the broadband report dovetails with the release of America's first [National Educational Technology Plan](#) (NETP), whose Executive Summary calls for a "revolutionary transformation" of the US education system.

Released in March 2010, the powerful 112-page report embraces technology as a means to provide engaging and powerful learning experiences, content, resources and assessments. Advised by countless community stakeholders, the authors hint strongly at the potential for web 2.0 tools such as wikis and blogs in a classroom context, urging readers to rethink basic assumptions such as "seat time" and to embrace "connectedness" as a key concept in the classroom. The report acknowledges that the success of the plan will rely on broadband initiatives

such as the [National Broadband Plan](#).

As discussed in the [US country report](#), American education governance is typically devolved to the state level, with little regulation from the federal government. Yet the NETP report urges national attention to developing on-demand and lifelong learning, collaborative environments, use of mobile devices, open educational resources (OER) and standards – as well as tapping technology's potential in the administrative and teacher training realms.

How the Congress and various US agencies will respond to these recommendations remains to be seen. [President Obama's 2009 pledge](#) to invest \$12 billion in community colleges and \$500 million in developing free, high-quality online courses has yet to bear fruit, and it is not clear whether the American public is ready for comprehensive federal broadband and technology-based education reform. Should these ideas go forwards, however, the long-term benefits to US education could be tremendous.

E-Learning Workshop in Guyana

Dr Ramesh C. Sharma, member of the Re.ViCa network, sent us a recent report on a workshop on e-learning he organised at the [University of Guyana](#) in South America.



Dr Ramesh C. Sharma

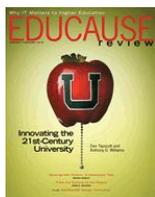
During this workshop which took place in December 2009, Prof Lawrence Carrington, Vice Chancellor of the University of Guyana, shared his vision on why e-learning is essential for the University of Guyana (UG), describing the need to reach more of Guyana's population without having to invest in bricks and mortar; the need to share intellectual resources across the campuses and centres; and the need to expand the scope of subject area offerings into academic areas where it is difficult to recruit resident staff.

The first session focussed on the role and significance of ICT for teaching and learning, the importance of a comprehensive needs' analysis and how ICT can be integrated into teaching practices. In the second session, quality in distance education was elaborated upon. The design principles for e-learning courses and integration of multimedia into e-learning courses were also taken up while the session on copyright issues in distance education generated a lot of interest among participants. Dr Sharma highlighted the advantages of e-learning for training, education and development and explained that this workshop was only the first of a series of workshops that will be run by the university's [Institute of Distance and Continuing Education](#) in order to make e-learning a reality at the University of Guyana. [Trudi Van Wyk](#), Education Specialist, E-Learning, [Commonwealth of Learning](#) (COL) was the main resource person for this workshop and participants included teachers from different faculty from University of Guyana, Cyril Potter College of Education, and Guyana Technical Institute.



Future of Higher Education?

The January/February 2010 EDUCAUSE Review provided a series of articles from several well known figures like Don Tapscott, Anthony



D. Williams, Brenda Gourley and Diana G. Oblinger on the future of higher education as they saw it. Under the title “Innovation: Rethinking the Future of Higher Education”, this [review](#) offers a timely summary of current thinking about the role of universities in our society.

We invited Theo Bastiaens of the [FernUniversität in Hagen](#) and Re.ViCa partner to examine this review and let us know his thoughts on it; here is his report.

The topic of the January/February issue of the Educause Review Magazine is to my surprise not very innovative for Educause - they have been publishing many articles on this topic. Also the authors in this issue of the magazine are well known. To begin with, [Don Tapscott](#) (with [Anthony 'Wikinomics' D. Williams](#)), the incurably positive champion of the Net Generation, tells us how to innovate in the 21st century university by focusing on collaborative learning and collaborative knowledge production. Next, [Brenda Gourley](#) gives us a cautionary tale and the message that universities do not pay enough attention to the massive trends and changes in their environment.

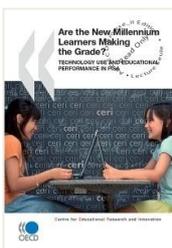


Prof Theo Bastiaens

But in my opinion the best article, which comes closest to the Re.ViCa purpose, is written by [Diana Oblinger](#) where she elaborates on the future of the campus including new business models and new structures for universities. As always, these articles are well written in a popular style. For that reason a large audience reads the magazine. However, this magazine does not stand out when it comes to underpinning its statements and messages. That is a pity. If the magazine paid more attention to research findings and ensured a more careful argumentation, it would make it harder for conservative authors and researchers to ridicule such ideas and reject innovation. One should not have to be already a believer to value the articles.

Are the New Millennium Learners Making the Grade?

The OECD Centre for Educational Research and Innovation, in cooperation with the OECD Directorate for Science, Technology and Industry and with the support of the Norwegian Ministry of Education, has just released a new [report](#) on technology use and educational performance using PISA data. Francesc Pedró provides a summary.



Prof Dr Francesc Pedró

The report “Are the New Millennium Learners Making the Grade?” analyses to what extent investments in technology enhance educational outcomes. One of the most striking findings of this study is that the digital divide in education goes beyond the issue of access to technology. A new second form of digital divide has been identified: the one existing between those who have the right competencies to benefit from computer use, and those who do not. These competencies and skills are closely linked to the

economic, cultural and social capital of the student.

This finding has important implications for policy and practice. Governments should make an effort to clearly convey the message that computer use matters for the education of young people and do their best to engage teachers and schools in raising the frequency of computer use to a level that becomes relevant. If schools and teachers are really committed to the development of 21st century competencies, such an increase will happen naturally. And only in these circumstances will clear correlations between technology use and educational performance emerge.

Association of Academic E-learning in Poland ends 4th year

Wojciech Zielinski is Secretary of [The Association of Academic E-learning](#) (AAE) in Poland and a member of the [Re.ViCa International Advisory Committee](#), we asked him to tell us more about what AAE has been up to.



STOWARZYSZENIE
e-learningu akademickiego

As the first board of Association of Academic E-learning in Poland ends its term, it is a good time to summarise the last 4 years and activities which have focused on promoting good practices. Two projects that have finished are particularly worth mentioning. AAE received grants from the Polish Ministry of Science and Higher Education for both of these projects.



Wojciech Zielinski

The first project aimed at developing quality standards for online courses. A group of AAE experts, each one having experience in a different area of e-learning implementation in HE, proposed a simple “yes-no” questionnaire with 260 quality criteria. These are grouped into four different phases of online course development and delivery: development, organisation, realisation and evaluation. In each area three aspects of the course are considered: pedagogy, technology and usability. A web application with the criteria is available free of charge and it is mainly used by users for self evaluation of online courses. These criteria are also considered by the community as quality standards and a way to evaluate good practice.

The result of the second project is a web accessible database of e-learning activities in Polish HE. The aim is to present various e-learning approaches and to facilitate research into existing solutions. The activities are divided into 8 categories: e-support, e-courses, e-studies, e-training, e-assessments, e-syllabuses, e-libraries and a “not classified” category. The first five are further divided into subcategories. Everyone who is authorised by the higher education institution or any of its units (i.e. department, chair) may add to the database and characterise their e-learning activity by indicating sufficient categories and by giving a short, structured description about the scale and organisation of each entry. Database content is fully accessible to website visitors, who may review it by category or by institution. In the near future AAE plans to develop a model of certifying the competences necessary for e-learning implementation. The application for this grant is pending.



New People in the Re.ViCa Network

Expert for Australia: Anne Forster, Independent Consultant

Anne is an independent [E-learning Consultant](#) based in Sydney, advising on eLearning, entrepreneurial education and the international education industry. Her career focus has been academic staff development and organisational change management in higher education. Anne is an adjunct Associate Professor with the [University of Maryland University College](#) teaching courses in [Systems and Business in the online Master of Distance Education](#). She is also an accredited mediator committed to the transformative role of mediation in campus development and partnerships between institutions. A past president of the Open and Distance Learning Association of Australia, Anne has worked for over twenty five years as an academic and manager developing innovative and technology enhanced education. She has directed post graduate programs in Distance Education, an Executive MBA at UNSW, and was founding director of the Innovation and Technology Unit at the University of Sydney. Her corporate experience has included work as a Senior Manager with KPMG consulting and as Vice President for NextEd Ltd. Anne is a member of the Editorial Board of the [Canadian Journal of Distance Education](#). She has consulted on education projects in North America, Europe, the South Pacific, Saudi Arabia, South Africa and South East Asia.



Anne Forster

Announcements

Spring Edition of Online Journal of Distance Learning Administration Available

This [free online journal](#) features articles related to the management of distance education programmes. The spring edition leads with an article about effective leadership strategies for faculty who are increasingly called upon to teach online and who are at the same time teaching on a part-time basis. Other topics in this edition include online enrolment mechanisms, quality and growth implications of incremental costing models and cheating in the digital age.



Launch of Middle East E-Learning Association (MEEA)

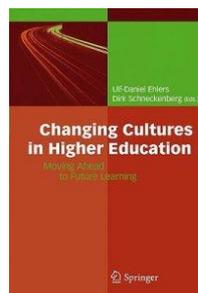
This new association describes itself as being dedicated to growing the understanding, practice and knowledge transfer of e-learning in the region. Amongst its core activities are networking and information sharing, the raising of awareness in the region and the encouragement of special interest groups on specific subjects. MEEA is actively inviting members from the Middle East and neighbouring region to become members and contribute to the development and growth of e-learning in the region. Find out more from the [MEEA website](#).

Open Education Conference to take place November in Barcelona

This key open education event is being held for the first time outside of the US when it will be organised by the [Open University of Catalunya](#), the [Open University of the Netherlands](#), and the [David O.](#)

[McKay School of Education at Brigham Young University](#). Entitled OER: Impact and Sustainability, it will be held in Barcelona, Spain on 2-4 November 2010. Keynote speakers include Gajaraj Dhanarajan, former Vice Chancellor of Wawasan Open University, Malaysia, Brenda Gourley, former Vice Chancellor of The Open University, UK, Erik Duval, Professor of Computer Science at the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, Belgium and Raquel Xalabarder, Director of Learning Resources at the Universitat Oberta de Catalunya, Spain. More information is available from the conference [website](#).

New Publication about Changing Cultures in Higher Education - Moving Ahead to Future Learning



This new publication, entitled Changing Cultures in Higher Education - Moving Ahead to Future Learning, is edited by [Ulf-Daniel Ehlers](#) and [Dirk Schneckenberg](#). It includes contributions from several Re.ViCa International Advisory Committee members and presents strategic approaches for innovation in universities. The contributions explore new models for developing and engaging faculty in technology-enhanced education, and they detail underlying reasons

for why quality assessment and evaluation in new – and often informal – learning scenarios have to change. For more information, visit the publication [site](#).

USDLA Conference to take place in Missouri in May

The United States Distance Learning Conference entitled 'Distance Learning: Diverse, Innovative, Efficient, and Sustainable' will take place in Missouri on 4-5 May. Keynote speakers include Jack Wilson from the University of Massachusetts. The conference promises an opportunity to share ideas, learn about distance learning programs and products, and gain a better understanding of the field. More information is available from the conference [website](#).



3rd Workshop on Inclusive E-Learning in London in September

This workshop is organised by [King's College London](#) for 9-10 September. Following two previous successful workshops in 2008 (Maastricht/The Netherlands) and 2009 (Rostock/Germany), the organisers intend that this 3rd workshop on Inclusive E-Learning (IEL) will go further into how we can provide inclusive systems addressing people with and without special needs and where are the limits of these demands. More information is available from the workshop [website](#).

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

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