



## In this Newsletter

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Welcome to our fourth newsletter of 2009 – 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.cortoos@atit.be](mailto:nikki.cortoos@atit.be).

## Project news

### Creating a Suitable Categorisation Model for Re.ViCa

A key piece of work for the Re.ViCa team is to come up with a practical and comprehensive mechanism which can be used to categorise Virtual Campuses, respecting the differences that we have found among the different initiatives. Part of the wiki is dedicated to this topic; see:

<http://www.virtualcampuses.eu/index.php/Categorization>.

Coming up with a comprehensive and workable system for categorisation – also called in the past taxonomy – has generated quite some discussion both with the project partners and also amongst members of the International Advisory Committee during our meeting in Lisbon.

Project Partner, Sara Frank Bristow has been leading in this work and provides this summary for the April Newsletter.



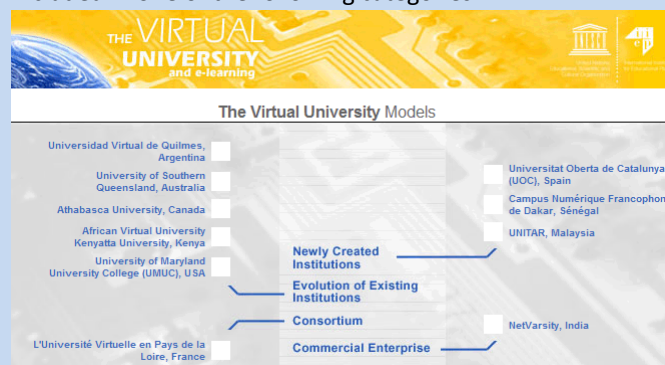
Sara Frank Bristow



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization

Our starting point was the [system used by UNESCO](#), which offers a rather straightforward typology whereby Virtual Campuses can be

included in one of the following categories:



- A newly created institution operating as a virtual university;
- An evolution of an existing institution, with a unit or arm offering virtual education;
- A consortium of partners constituted to develop and/or offer virtual education;
- A commercial enterprise offering online education.

We then investigated other ways of grouping or categorising Virtual Campuses based on aspects such as funding model, the degree to which they are 'Virtual', their organisational model, their partnership model... the list is really quite extensive and became increasingly complex as we investigated other work in this field, including that of the BENVIC project and work carried out by researchers like Robin Mason, Sabine Seufert and Re.ViCa's own lead researcher, Paul Bacsich.



### Issues that we are currently grappling with:

- The extent to which we can use regional or national criteria to sort Virtual Campuses, which is closely related to a fundamental question for the Re.ViCa team: does the region in which a Virtual campus is located have a significant impact on the way in which it operates – and linked to this, do European Virtual Campuses operate in a significantly different way from non-European Virtual Campuses?
- The extent to which a Virtual Campus can be considered commercial or not, as this is not clear even with respect to traditional universities, practically all of which operate in the commercial world these days to some extent. The legal and organisational framework in which universities (including Virtual Campuses) operate also causes difficulties when it comes to their categorisation.
- The extent to which a categorisation system should allow for overlap – i.e. should a Virtual Campus fall under multiple categories in relation to its structure and operation?

Bearing the above in mind, here is where we are at the moment.

### Institutional Categories

- *Universities* - Degree-granting institutions of higher education and research.
- *University colleges* - Institutions describing themselves as University Colleges (a term whose definition varies among countries).
- *Open universities* - Generally speaking, distance-learning universities which are open to all inhabitants of a region (with no prerequisite qualifications).
- *Colleges* - In most countries surveyed, institutions which provide tertiary education, but not at the university level.

### UNESCO Categories

- *Newly created institutions* - Abbreviation of the UNESCO classification, for entities created specifically to operate in e-Learning mode (usually after 1996).
- *Evolution of existing institutions* - Abbreviation of the UNESCO classification, for institutions which have evolved from their original format to offer courses through e-Learning.
- *Consortia* - Association of partners working towards a common goal.
- *Private providers* - Institutions which are commercial enterprises.

### Classifying e-Learning Initiatives

- *CELIs (Ceased e-learning initiatives)* - Initiatives which have ceased to operate for reasons other than failure, e.g. merging with other ventures or satisfying project requirements.
- *FELIs (Failed e-learning initiatives)* - Initiatives which are no longer active, and can be considered to have specifically 'failed' to meet their goals.
- *GELIs (Giant e-learning initiatives)* - Initiatives which are very large MELIs (see below).
- *MELIs (Major e-learning initiatives)* - Initiatives which operate on a grand scale within an institution; specific organisational criteria are identified clearly on the wiki.
- *NELIs (Notable e-learning initiatives)* - Initiatives which are interesting in a country (e.g. to other universities or analysts) and satisfy many but not all MELI criteria.

### Other Categories

- *International initiatives* - Initiatives straddling more than one country and promoted by an international agency.
- *National initiatives* - Initiatives involving institutions



nationwide, in most cases founded (and funded) by a national agency.

- *Private nonprofit providers* - Institutions set up as private entities, which are also nonprofit foundations, charities, etc.
- *VC supported by EC* - Virtual Campus projects supported (funded) by the European Commission.

As we implement this preliminary set of categories, no glaring omissions or overlaps have yet been detected – and the general feeling is a positive one, as this list seems to represent the culmination of a very thorough process of investigation and discussion. We will continue to solicit feedback from all wiki users, however, and remain open to reassessing these categories as Re.ViCa project partners and IAC members see fit.

He has co-edited books "Interactive Multimedia in Education and Training" and "Cases on Global E-Learning Practices: Successes and Pitfalls" (IGI-Global, USA). He is also an Advisory Board Member and author for the "Encyclopedia of Distance Learning" (IGI-Global, USA).

### Expert for Australia and (SE) Asia

Carmel McNaught is the Director and Chair Professor in the Centre for Learning Enhancement And Research (CLEAR) at The Chinese University of Hong Kong.



Carmel McNaught

She was formerly Head of Professional Development in Learning Technology Services at RMIT University, Australia.

She is active in several eLearning professional organizations and has worked with many universities; one current example is International Advisory Board membership at the Hamdan Bin Mohammed e-University in the UAE. Further information at <http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/clear/staff/Carmel.htm>

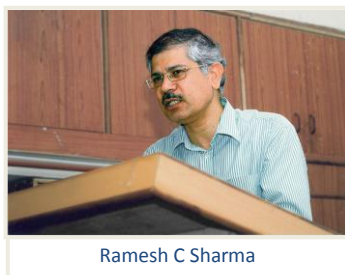
### New People in the Re.ViCa Network



The Re.ViCa March Newsletter was sent to an extended network of potentially interested people worldwide and as a result, several have contacted the project team with a view to supporting our research work in general and to contributing to the wiki in particular. This month, and in the months to come we will feature several of these people starting with Ramesh Sharma from India and Carmel McNaught from Hong Kong – who we are delighted to welcome to our network!

### Expert for India

Ramesh C Sharma, PhD (Educational Technology) specialises in Web 2.0 technologies and on-line learning. He is the co-Editor of 'Asian Journal of Distance Education' (web site: [www.ASIANJDE.org](http://www.ASIANJDE.org)).



Ramesh C Sharma

## Announcements

### Next IAC Meeting

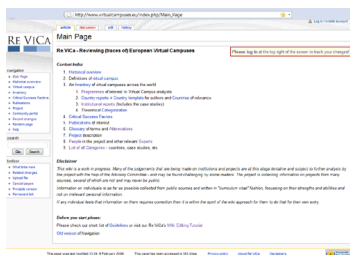
The Re.ViCa team are working on the planning for the next International Advisory Committee meeting which will take place during the M-2009 event, the 23rd ICDE World Conference on Open Learning and Distance Education including the 2009 EADTU Annual Conference, to be held on 7-10 June 2009 in Maastricht in the Netherlands.



The IAC meeting will be held from 17.00 – 20.00 on Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> June and will be followed by a dinner hosted in Maastricht. IAC members will receive their invitation to this meeting in the coming days and will also be invited to register for the M-2009 event at a specially reduced conference rate applicable only to



Re.ViCa partners and IAC members. On Monday 8 June there will be a special reception and launch event to launch the Re.ViCa wiki to the general public. If you would like to receive an invitation, contact the Re.ViCa project team.



The M-2009 conference is hosted by Open Universiteit Nederland. For more information see <http://www.ou.nl/eCache/DEF/80/137.html>

### Next Partner Meeting

The next meeting of the Re.ViCa project team will take place on Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> April in EuroPACE when the wiki will be fully reviewed and plans will be put in place for the publication of the Re.ViCa handbook.



### Bits and Pieces

#### Invitation to Join HEXTLEARN Network

HEXTLEARN is a 3 year network project co-funded by the Lifelong learning programme which began in November 2007 and which aims to contribute to the deployment of Lifelong Learning strategies through ICT within Higher Education Institutions. It is doing this by elaborating peer review methodologies, by offering a database of good practices and other useful materials and by organising seminars and events on related topics.



The project team recently announced an invitation to join their network to share experiences on the integration of ICT in teaching, learning and innovation in an academic environment. To join the HEXTLEARN network, please complete this form:

<http://www.eden-online.org/online/hextlearn/Expanding>

### E-Learning and Distance Education Resources Site



The E-Learning and Distance Education Resources site managed by IAC member Tony Bates goes from strength to strength and features not only Tony's active blog where he is currently debating the value of Networks vs Groups with Stephen Downes but also a whole plethora of resources and news articles related to the uptake of ICT in learning, see <http://www.tonybates.ca/>



Tony Bates

### Debate About Open Publication of Research Outputs Continues



This month's eCampus News <http://www.ecampusnews.com/> features a very interesting article on the move by the open-access movement to put peer-reviewed research and literature on the Internet for free and to remove most copyright restrictions. Many believe this will invigorate research across academia, encouraging more scholarship and expanding the readership for research studies. Publishers, however, view this as a threat to their business. Read more on [eCampus News](http://www.ecampusnews.com/).

### Reminders

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

#### Editorial team

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Sally Reynolds: [sally.reynolds@atit.be](mailto:sally.reynolds@atit.be)