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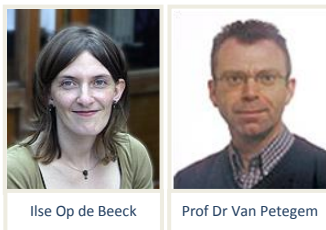
Welcome to our latest newsletter – which we are sending to an extended circle of researchers, academics and others interested in Virtual Campuses.

To subscribe to this bimonthly newsletter, please contact nikki.cortoots@atit.be.

Project News

Re.ViCa “Erasmus Success Story”

The project partners were informed by the European Commission that the Re.ViCa project has been selected by a jury of independent experts as a success story to be included in the 2010 Erasmus success stories brochure. In this regard, Ilse Op de Beeck and Wim Van Petegem were interviewed 24th June 2010 by a journalist and spoke about the aims of and experiences with the Re.ViCa project; why Erasmus has been important for the project; what the impact of the project outcomes (and virtual campuses more in general) is on the internationalization of institutions; future plans of the project, etc.. The interview will form the basis of the content for an article in the Erasmus Success Stories Brochure 2010, which is to be published for the Erasmus Mobility conference on 5-6 October 2010 in Antwerp, Belgium. The brochure will focus on some of the centralised projects finished since Erasmus became part of the Lifelong Learning Programme as well as stories of decentralised activities showing that institutions are committed to internationalisation by participating in all strands of the programme.



Ilse Op de Beeck

Prof Dr Van Petegem

to let teachers from both home and host institution jointly guide the students who go abroad physically for an exchange.

In the framework of the Move-IT project (“Seminars promoting virtual support for mobile students”), two webinars were organised, on 7 & 27 May 2010, demonstrating several aspects (opportunities and challenges) and giving practical examples of e-coaching students from a distance. Both webinars were successful with the first webinar attracting around 70 participants, the second one around 50.

Presentations were, among others, given by Re.ViCa IAC members Prof Gilly Salmon “Frameworks for success for e-moderators & learners”, Dr. Steven Verjans “E-coaching. Guidelines based on research and practice” and Ilse Op de Beeck “Experiences from the VM-BASE project”.



Recordings of these webinars are now available online on the Move-IT project website: <http://move-it.europace.org>.

Re.ViCa Project of the Month on eLearning Europa Portal

The project team are delighted to record that Re.ViCa was chosen as the [Project of the Month](#) for June 2010 by the eLearning Europa newsletter. This newsletter is published every month by the managers of the very popular eLearning Europa portal site which has been supporting the European eLearning community for several years.



News

Move-IT – Webinars on e-coaching

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 different tools and educational technologies, open up the opportunity to support the coaching process from a distance or



EDEN New President

The new president of the European Distance and E-Learning Network, EDEN, is Morten Flate Paulsen, Professor of Online Education, Director of Development, The NKI Internet College, NKI Distance Education, Norway. Morten has served as Vice-President and, since 2007, as a member of the Executive Committee and is also a member of the Re.ViCa International Advisory Committee.



Prof Dr Morten Flate Paulsen

Morten’s new position was announced during EDEN’s recent successful annual conference, held in Valencia from 10-13 June. You can read a [report](#) on the EDEN conference on the EDEN website which also includes recordings of several of the keynote presentations.



e-LERU - A European virtual campus

e-LERU is an initiative led by 6 universities, all members of the League of European Research Universities. The purpose of this initiative is to bring a European dimension to teaching and research activities in European universities by encouraging them to collaborate, notably through the construction of trans-national combined course structures and through the international virtual mobility of their students within the European Higher Education Area. The University of Strasbourg is pleased to welcome representatives of twenty two LERU universities to attend an information day in July about the e-LERU project. This meeting will be held in Strasbourg and will give an overview of the project and the possibility for each university to join the consortium. For further details concerning the project, please visit: <http://www.eleru.leru.org>



Featured Article

The Open Polytechnic of New Zealand – from drain-laying to degrees

Ormond Simpson is a distance education consultant with a particular interest in student retention and support. Last year, he spent seven months at the Open Polytechnic of New Zealand as a Visiting Professor. We asked him to tell us more about his experience in New Zealand.



Ormond Simpson

Having worked at the UKOU and visited many distance institutions I feel that they're like the Universe, 'not only complex to understand but possibly too complex to ever understand' as Bertrand Russell once said. Perhaps the only way to understand such a place is to be a student on every course they offer. That would be an interesting experience at the Open Poly as it has perhaps the widest variety and level of courses of any distance institution anywhere, ranging from Plumbing and Gas Fitting to Firearm Safety (can be taken with Wound Management) to Fundamentals of Marketing, Advanced Banking and a series of UKOU degree courses such as 'From Enlightenment to Romanticism'.

The Open Poly offers this range of courses in a small institution with only 470



full time staff and a small adjunct faculty, equivalent to 530 staff in all. Course materials are designed by expert teams, which include external experts, and instructional designers and editors. Faculty contribute to the writing of courses and teach them using a range of teaching media from phone to email to correspondence. Course materials are still largely produced in hard copy – student surveys continue to show that that is what they prefer.

The number of students at the Poly is around 25,000 (6000 full-time equivalents) which is tiny by international standards - compare with

The China Central Radio and Television University with 2.7 million students (let's hope they don't all graduate and throw their mortarboards in the air simultaneously – the resulting tornado could do a lot of damage). Yet the Open Poly actually reaches a higher proportion of its national population than the UKOU – see Table 1 – and to some better effect:

	Open Poly	UKOU
Students	25,000	220,000
Students per 1000 of national population	5.7	3.6
Staff	470	f/t 4,500 p/t 7000
Student/ft staff ratio	53	48
Retention on first course	60%	55%

(My retention figures are something of a guess – with increasing international competition there is a growing need to find a credible way of comparing different institutions' retention rates.)

Like many single mode distance education institutions the Open Poly has had its political ups and downs, with other New Zealand polytechnics arguing that they could take over distance education themselves. So far the NZ government seems persuaded of the value of maintaining a focused distance learning institution altho' there is increasing pressure for collaboration in the sector. It will be interesting to see how the Open Poly responds to the recent NZ government announcement that some funding will be linked to academic performance in future.



So what for me were the abiding characteristics of the Open Poly? I enjoyed the dedication of staff to student success and the comparative lack of the 'Darwinism' - "We're here to weed out the unfit") that still characterises too many higher educational institutions of all kinds. I liked the commitment to widening participation amongst Maori groups. I valued the pragmatic approach to e-learning, ensuring equity of access to all OP students.

I particularly liked the recognition (as I saw it) that student retention is still the Achilles heel of distance learning, and that increasing retention is about making individual proactive and motivational contact with your students – however you do that. My favourite moment indeed was in an Open Poly Academic Board meeting when one of the student representatives was asked what was the most important thing the Open Poly could do to encourage her studies. "Well", she said, "If a tutor phones me, then I love them already." If only that simple message was written into every distance institution's mission statement...



Recent Reports and Developments

Call for testers of quality in technology-enhanced learning



SEVAQ+ is a European-wide initiative for the self-evaluation of quality in technology-enhanced learning, based on an innovative combination of the Kirkpatrick evaluation model for learning and the EFQM excellence model. The idea behind SEVAQ+ is to enable institutions to engage in a 360° analysis of feedback from major stakeholders involved in technology-enhanced learning systems and pinpoint areas for improvement, track progress from one semester or year to the next, benchmark your teaching and training against other institutions. SEVAQ+ is currently looking for testers to help with their work, we asked Deborah Arnold from Videoscop in France for more information about what this entails.



Deborah Arnold

Between June and November 2010, the SEVAQ+ team are organising an extensive European-wide user survey to gather feedback in order to ensure that the tool best meets the needs of both Higher Education and Vocational Education and Training.



We will contact you to organise a SEVAQ+ initiation seminar which will provide you with the practical and theoretical background necessary to design your own self-evaluation questionnaires and launch the user survey. A SEVAQ+ representative will accompany you throughout the process. We therefore invite teachers / trainers, training managers and learners to participate in this user survey

representative will accompany you throughout the process. We therefore invite teachers / trainers, training managers and learners to participate in this user survey

- Tell us what you think of self-evaluation as a quality approach!
- Contribute to the wish list of most wanted functionalities!
- Tell us how you want to use SEVAQ+ (for benchmarking, internal quality or...)!

For more information visit the SEVAQ+ [website](#) and we look forward to welcoming you to the fast-growing group of SEVAQ+ testers!

Distance Learning Benchmarking Club

Benchmarking continues to be a core area of concern for online learning providers worldwide and several different schema already exist to support benchmarking work worldwide. It was therefore interesting to note the emergence of a Distance Learning Benchmarking Club in the UK, led by Re.ViCa's own Paul

Bacsich. We asked Paul to provide a short summary of what this club has been doing.

A Distance Learning Benchmarking Club of seven universities across the world, all active in distance online learning in a dual-mode fashion, have been benchmarking their online distance learning activity since October 2009. These universities are University of Leicester, UK (Lead), University of Liverpool, UK, University of Southern Queensland, Australia, Massey University, New Zealand, Thompson Rivers University, Canada, Lund University, Sweden and KTH (Royal Institute of Technology), Sweden.



Prof Paul Bacsich

The benchmarking system used is a new version of the Pick&Mix system (used over several years by 24 institutions in the UK for benchmarking e-learning and currently in use by two more – another UK institution and an Australian institution). It has been slightly adapted to have more focus on distance e-learning and “serious implementation” (step-change) but without going beyond the guidelines on numbers of criteria used. The basis for the new set of core criteria is the set of Critical Success Factors defined by the Re.ViCa project using extensive international input from a wide-ranging International Advisory Committee of e-learning experts – usefully, there is a substantial overlap with the current UK set of core criteria for Pick&Mix.

Support for the Distance Learning Benchmarking Club project is partly funded by the UK agency JISC under the JISC Curriculum Delivery programme via the University of Leicester and partly by the developers of Pick&Mix, Matic Media Ltd.

The Club and the Pick&Mix methodology draws on five phases of benchmarking with UK HEIs using the Pick&Mix system, and on wider experience of benchmarking in Europe and internationally (in particular, but not only, the Re.ViCa project).

There is already interest from open universities and other dual-mode institutions in this club and requests to join. The Club is now closed – but the organisers are taking steps and soundings to see how to set up another club later, perhaps using EU or international funding to assist. For that reason, the Club is more pedantically described as: “The first dual-mode distance learning benchmarking club”.

For more details, including information about joining a second round of this club, contact Paul directly at revica@matic-media.co.uk.

VIRQUAL: making connections between Virtual Mobility, EQF and E-Learning

[VIRQUAL](#) is a European network that is finding ways to help educational and training institutions

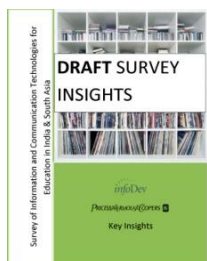




achieve Virtual Mobility and to guarantee EQF implementation through e-learning. The VIRQUAL team recently organised a highly thought-provoking workshop during the EDEN conference in Valencia where the team led a discussion into the possible linkages between eLearning methodologies and the assessment levels of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF).

Partners in the VIRQUAL network have been working in 4 different special interest groups (SIGs), each of which have published reports on their work to date which makes for interesting reading. These SIGs are 1. Virtual Mobility, ECTS and E-learning, 2. Research, 3. E-learning and evaluation of Learning Outcomes of EQF and 4. E-learning and EQF. You will find [summaries of the work](#) of each on the project website.

Survey of ICTs for Education in India and South Asia



The main objective of this recently published survey is to create a consolidated source of information on the experiences of using ICTs for Education in the South Asian region and to provide a framework of reference for policy makers. The Survey on ICTs for Education in India and South Asia was commissioned by infoDev to be undertaken by PricewaterhouseCoopers, India. The Survey is a third in the series after similar surveys for the African and Caribbean regions completed in 2008 and 2009. Find out more from [Zunia Knowledge Exchange](#).

New People in the Re.ViCa Network

Expert for UK: Ormond Simpson

Ormond Simpson is a consultant in distance education, currently working for the UK Open University, the London University External Programme where he is a visiting fellow, and Massey University New Zealand. His most recent post was at the Open Polytechnic of New Zealand where he was visiting professor. Prior to that he worked at the UK Open University in student support and institutional research, and ran workshops and seminars in China, the West Indies, Colombia, South Korea, The Gambia and Papua New Guinea.



Ormond Simpson

Ormond's distance education interests are in student support and retention, cost-benefits, ethical issues, learning motivation, e-learning and staff development. He has written two books "Supporting Students in Online Open and Distance Learning" and "Student Retention in Online Open and Distance Learning" as well as ten book chapters and more than thirty journal articles.

Find out more about Ormond and the work he does from his [website](#).

Announcements

Call for Papers for Special Edition of JCAL on Quality

The [Journal of Computer Assisted Learning](#) invites contributions to an upcoming special issue on quality in e-Learning. JCAL is an international peer-reviewed journal which covers the whole range of the uses of information and communication technology to support learning and knowledge exchange. It aims to provide a medium for communication between researchers and practitioners and to foster collaborative research. The research themes are treated in a way which will maximize their influence on developments and practice in education, vocational training and professional development. Authors are invited to submit papers for this special issue by 25 July.

Call for papers - International Conference on New Trends in Education

This conference, taking place on 11-13 November in Turkey will new, innovative and cutting edge research in education. It is being held in honour of Özcan Demirel in his 50th year in education. Visit the conference [website](#) for more information.



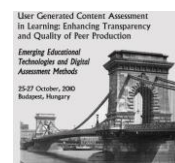
EADTU Annual Conference to take place in Switzerland

EADTU's Annual Conference will take place 27- 29 September 2010 and is being hosted by the Universitäre Fernstudien Schweiz. This year the conference theme is 'Strategies and Business Models for Lifelong Learning'. For more information, visit EADTU's [website](#).



EDEN Research Conference scheduled for Budapest

EDEN's sixth research conference will take place 25-27 October in Budapest, Hungary. The topic for this year's conference is User Generated Content Assessment in Learning: Enhancing Transparency and Quality of Peer Production. The deadline for receipt of papers is 23 August, more information from the EDEN [website](#).



NADEOSA Announces annual conference keynote speakers

The National Association of Distance Education and Open Learning in South Africa (NADEOSA) has [confirmed the keynote speakers](#) to present at its annual conference 6-8 September in Potchefstroom, North-West Province, South Africa. The theme for this conference is 'Towards sustainable open and distance learning in the development state: policy, ethics and practice'



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

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