

Dear Colleague,

as you are either part of the schools and colleges innovation community and/or you have been receiving the Virtual Campus Newsletter in the past, we are sending you the first Virtual Schools and Colleges Newsletter. This is a bi-monthly newsletter published by the European Commission-funded [VISCED project](#) (a Transnational Appraisal of Virtual School and College Provision), which is extending the Re.ViCa research. If you prefer not to receive this newsletter, you can let us know by e-mailing <nikki.cortoos@atit.be> or by unsubscribing [online](#).

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The VISCED team

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VISCED



A Transnational Appraisal of
Virtual School and College Provision

About VISCED

Subscription

Virtual Schools and Colleges Newsletter - May 2011 Issue

Monday, 30 May 2011

Welcome to the Virtual Schools and Colleges Newsletter

In this newsletter you will find a series of news articles about innovation inspired by the use of ICT and applied to secondary and post-secondary education for 14-21 year olds in Europe and elsewhere. It is being sent to a network of stakeholders, policy-makers, experts and cutting-edge practitioners who are actively involved in researching, representing or supporting change in educational provision brought about by the digital agenda.

It is an outcome of the European project VISCED which is carrying out a systematic review of virtual schools and colleges at international and national levels including a study into operational examples of fully virtual schools and colleges. This review will be made public in the Virtual Schools and Colleges wiki which will be launched in September 2011.

The Virtual Schools and Colleges Newsletter will be published every 2 months and will also be used to keep you up to date with news from the VISCED partnership and to support dialogue with the wider community. So send us news about developments related to virtual schools and colleges, share this newsletter with your colleagues and join us in creating the Virtual Schools and Colleges wiki.

This month's articles

- ▶ [Over \\$20 million in grants from Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation to support game-based learning and digital tools](#)
- ▶ [Investigating the skills needed by online teachers in the US](#)
- ▶ [New school in Shetland raises questions about the value of Virtual Schools](#)
- ▶ [India opting for PPP model to overcome shortage of schools](#)
- ▶ [EU education report published which shows "good progress, but more effort needed to achieve targets"](#)
- ▶ [Figuring out the cost of online learning](#)
- ▶ [Thesis paper on learning in virtual school environments](#)
- ▶ [Ross Tensta Gymnasium in Sweden](#)
- ▶ [EDEN Schools Conference in Greece in October](#)
- ▶ [Major project on classrooms of the future: iTEC](#)
- ▶ [If you are looking for factual information about European Schools - check out Eurydice!](#)
- ▶ [VISCED workshop accepted for ALT-C 2011](#)
- ▶ [VISCED and the wiki](#)

News

[Over \\$20 million in grants from Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation to support game-based learning and digital tools](#)

The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation has [announced](#) more than \$20 million in grants to



support game-based learning and other digital tools to help schools adopt the new Common Core standards in English and math.

[Read full article](#)

Investigating the skills needed by online teachers in the US



Sara Bernard, writing in MindShift recently, investigates the requirements for virtual school teachers. In her [article](#) Sara interviews Maureen Cottrell, a science teacher at iHigh Virtual Academy, a fully-accredited virtual public high school in San Diego, California. Maureen describes her experience and the advantages and drawbacks of online learning.

[Read full article](#)

New school in Shetland raises questions about the value of Virtual Schools



The building of a new school in a remote part of the UK has led to an interesting local debate on the value of virtual schooling as a way to overcome limitations in facilities and a lack of resources.

[Read full article](#)

India opting for PPP model to overcome shortage of schools



The Indian schooling systems is one the largest education systems in the world comprising of over a million schools. However, over a hundred million children still do not have access to schools due to inadequate infrastructure. We asked Sandeep Aneja, MD of Kaizen Management Advisors Private Limited, to tell us about a relatively new phenomenon in India - public private schools. Sandeep's company manages India's first operations driven private equity fund focused on the \$100 billion education sector.

[Read full article](#)

Reports

EU education report published which shows "good progress, but more effort needed to achieve targets"



According to the recently published European Commission report "Progress towards the Lisbon objectives in education and training - Indicators and benchmarks, 2010/11" EU countries have improved their education systems in key areas over the past decade but they have achieved only one out of five benchmarks set for 2010.

[Read full article](#)

Figuring out the cost of online learning



The debate around the actual cost of online learning, its impact on and benefits for different types of educational institutions and teaching situations is as ever-present as the discussion surrounding possible existence of extraterrestrial life forms or trying to find any underlying logic behind stock market fluctuations.

[Read full article](#)

Thesis paper on learning in virtual school environments



This thesis studies designs for learning in the extended digital interface in the Social Science classroom. The aim is to describe and analyse how pupils interact, make meaning and learn while deploying digital learning resources.

[Read full article](#)

Featured Virtual School Initiative

Ross Tensta Gymnasium in Sweden

Ross Tensta Gymnasium (RTG) is a public school in Stockholm and a partner in the VISCED project. The school is located in a low social status suburb inhabited mostly by immigrants



or people with immigrant background.

[Read full article](#)

Events

EDEN Schools Conference in Greece in October



The EDEN Open Classroom Conference takes place on 27-29 October in Ellinogermaniki Agogi School in Athens, Greece. This conference will cover a wide variety of subject areas related to innovative education technologies and current best practice trends in education, transformative inclusion and teachers' professional development. More information is available from the EDEN [website](#).

[Read full article](#)

Projects

Major project on classrooms of the future: iTEC



iTEC (Innovative Technologies for an Engaging Classroom) is a four-year, pan-European project focused on the design of the future classroom.

[Read full article](#)

If you are looking for factual information about European Schools - check out Eurydice!



Eurydice is an executive agency of the European Commission that provides factual information and reports on education systems and policies in Europe.

[Read full article](#)

Project news

VISCED workshop accepted for ALT-C 2011



A workshop proposal entitled 'Investigating Innovative e-learning initiatives and Virtual Schools' has been accepted for ALT-C 2011. Organised by the Association for Learning Technology (ALT) and entitled 'Thriving in a colder and more challenging climate', this conference will take place at the University of Leeds in the UK from 6 to 8 September 2011.

[Read full article](#)

Paul's Blog

VISCED and the wiki



The VISCED project (which formally started on 1 January 2011) has now reached the stage where those following the project will notice a lot of new material appearing in the next few months on the wiki it is using. The VISCED project has decided to build on the success (both in wiki terms and more generally) of the [Re.ViCa](#) project on Virtual Campuses. Here are some details.

[Read full blog post](#)

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[Read full article](#)

Case studies on social media supporting marginalised students



The European Commission supported project Links-up has published a set of interesting case studies describing how social computing is being used to support new forms of learning and new ways of supporting inclusion. Many of these cases highlight innovative uses of ICT in different European countries targeting school going students.

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Ambitious new plan for Australian schools now underway



In the context of the Digital Education Revolution (DER) initiative of the Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, a highly ambitious new plan aims at investing \$2.4 billion to support the effective integration of ICT in Australian schools.

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Calls and Announcements

Next Edition of eLearning Papers on Social Networking



The next issue of the popular elearning papers series will be devoted to social networking and the editors are currently looking for submissions. The guest editor for this issue is Teemu Leinonen from the Learning Environments research group, Media Lab, Department of Media, Aalto University School of Art and Design.

[Read full article](#)

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The EFQUEL Innovation Forum will take place for the 6th time this year and has been growing fast over the years. The programme of the EFQUEL innovation forum is now fully available online, headliners are Paul Bacsich, Steve Wheeler, Yves Punie, Asha Kanwar and Wayne Mackintosh.

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The inside story of InterHigh School, UK's first-ever online school



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- ▶ [Guides to help Virtual and 'Hybrid' schools](#)
- ▶ [International Experiences with Technology in Education - Final Report](#)
- ▶ [Good advice available on introducing mobile devices for learning in the classroom](#)
- ▶ [Getting to grips with Distance Education Pedagogy](#)
- ▶ [Research results on distance learning in Finland](#)
- ▶ [Checking out attitudes amongst Finnish secondary level students](#)
- ▶ [Virtual School Symposium \(VSS\) taking place in the US](#)
- ▶ [Web 2.0 learning community for teachers](#)
- ▶ [First meeting of VISCED International Advisory Committee takes place in Portugal](#)
- ▶ [Hidden virtual schooling](#)

News

[Take a look at a different kind of school](#)



eLearningeuropa's TV channel contains an expanding series of videos clips highlighting all sorts of developments in education. This includes a recent report from Hellerup Skole in Denmark - a very different type of school.

[Read full article](#)

Article extols the value of online learning for gifted students in the US



Katie Ash writing in Education Week this week, describes the value and impact online learning can have for gifted students who can move ahead independently to reach their own learning goals with the help of well designed online learning opportunities.

[Read full article](#)

Resolving the practicalities of rolling out laptops for all students in US high school



Erich Tusch is the supervisor of technology for the Pascack Valley Regional High School District in the US and in a special edition of the New Jersey School Boards Association newsletter describes in detail the 10 year history of rolling out a laptop for every student in his school.

[Read full article](#)

Launch of Global Learning School Initiative in Portugal



Claudio Dondi, President of Scierer launched a major global Learning School Initiative during the EFQUEL Forum in Oeiras, Portugal on Friday 16 September. This Initiative calls for a federated, worldwide effort to make schools fit for the future.

[Read full article](#)

Seminar for distance upper secondary schools in Finland



The National Board of Education arranged a seminar for distance upper secondary schools in September. The target group included principals, distance learning teachers and developers, and other distance learning experts. Nearly 70 people were present.

[Read full article](#)

Reports

New report on Learning and Innovation through ICT at school in Europe



Eurydice has recently published a report entitled "Key Data on Learning and Innovation through ICT at School in Europe 2011 in European schools" which focuses on the evolution of ICT use in education and the changes it has brought about in national policies and practices concerning teaching methods, contents and evaluation processes.

[Read full article](#)

Guides to help Virtual and 'Hybrid' schools



The Thomas B. Fordham Institute, with the support of the Charles and Helen Schwab Foundation, has commissioned six deep-thought papers that the Institute hopes will collectively address the thorniest policy issues surrounding digital learning.

[Read full article](#)

International Experiences with Technology in Education - Final Report



This report published by the US Department of Education in August 2011 provides a summary of an extensive research project carried out by researchers over a 2 year period. The IETE project focused on primary and secondary level education and was conducted in two phases in 2009-10. During the first phase, researchers conducted literature and Internet searches for multi-national data collections.

[Read full article](#)

Good advice available on introducing mobile devices for learning in the classroom

A pilot study by Elizabeth Hartnell-Young in 2008 into personal mobile use in schools for Becta provided a number of key messages for schools about introducing mobile devices for



learning.

[Read full article](#)

Getting to grips with Distance Education Pedagogy



Terry Anderson and Jon Dron from Athabasca University in Canada have published an interesting paper which traces the pedagogy behind distance education over several generations, namely cognitive-behaviourism, social constructivism, and connectivism.

[Read full article](#)

Research results on distance learning in Finland



The University of Turku published their first results of research on the status of distance learning in Finnish basic education. Distance learning is organised in very different ways in Finland and using a variety of different tools and mechanisms. Very traditional ICT tools (email, eLearning platforms and video conferences) and traditional learning materials (books, internet) are being used within distance learning courses.

[Read full article](#)

Checking out attitudes amongst Finnish secondary level students



Recently published research in Finland entitled "Upper secondary school 2.0" was targeted at students aiming to identify the expectations and issues related to the use of distance and e-learning from the students point of view. According to the report ICT could very well be used to offer distance and video courses especially in those schools where resources make it difficult to offer wide range of courses.

[Read full article](#)

Events

Virtual School Symposium (VSS) taking place in the US



This symposium takes place on 9-11 November 2011 in Indianapolis, USA. It will bring together over 2,000 representatives from national, state, district, private and other virtual school programmes to attend the industry's leading event in K-12 online and blended learning.

[Read full article](#)

Projects

Web 2.0 learning community for teachers



Teachers planning to implement Web 2.0 elements in their classes often look for inspiration and opportunities to exchange their experience with other teachers as well as easy access to information about tools. The [Te@ch.us](#) service has been set up to address these needs.

[Read full article](#)

Project news

First meeting of VISCED International Advisory Committee takes place in Portugal



The first meeting of VISCED's International Advisory Committee (IAC) took place on Wednesday 14 September as part of the pre-conference activities related to the [EFOQUEL Innovation Forum](#) which took place 14-16 September 2011 in Oeiras, Portugal.

[Read full article](#)

Paul's Blog

Hidden virtual schooling



We have spent September collecting together the various kinds of virtual schools we have found, both in Europe and outside it. We have also from the partners begun to make visits to virtual schools when they are close to partner locations - to begin to prepare for the case studies in Work Package 3. Classification is a big topic but one where we have much experience. However one topic that is newer to us is that there seem to be examples of virtual schools which do not want to admit that there are virtual schools who do not seem to regard themselves as virtual schools or do not even want to admit that they offer distance learning to some categories of students.

This is not uncommon in some universities and some colleges in some countries - but in schools, where there is more of a need for an aspect of supervising younger children, it is perhaps more surprising.

[Read full blogpost](#)

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A Transnational Appraisal of
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Virtual Schools and Colleges Newsletter - November 2011 Issue

Wednesday, 30 November 2011

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- › [iNACOL releases National Standards for Quality Online Courses in the US](#)
- › [Boldic Award for online course on Multimedia Journalism](#)
- › [Wall St Journal Article about virtual schools in the US](#)
- › [US College online programmes face sanctions](#)
- › [UNESCO \(2011\) Transforming Education: The Power of ICT Policies](#)
- › [Enrollment in full-time virtual schools in the US rose 25 percent in 2010-11](#)
- › [The Future of Learning: Preparing for Change](#)
- › [Publication of new edition of Pedagogical Integration of ICT: Successes and Challenges from 100+ African Schools](#)
- › [Open High School Sydney](#)
- › [VISCI Virtual Intelligent Space for Collaborative Innovation](#)
- › [Focus on pedagogical use of technology](#)
- › [Meeting of Virtual Schools and Colleges International Advisory Committee in Berlin](#)

News

UNESCO Launches ICT Competency Framework for Teachers



UNESCO in partnership with industry leaders and global subject experts has elaborated the ICT Competency Framework for Teachers which sets out the competencies required to teach effectively. This current version of the ICT Competency Framework for Teachers is a 2011 update of the original version published in 2008, and is the result of the successful continued partnership between UNESCO and CISCO, INTEL, ISTE and Microsoft.

[Read full article](#)

iNACOL releases National Standards for Quality Online Courses in the US



The International Association for K-12 Online Learning (iNACOL) recently released the second version of **National Standards for Quality Online Courses**. The standards selected are based on the original standards, the results of a research review and survey of online course quality criteria. These quality standards were evaluated and assembled into an easy to use document for evaluating online courses with common benchmarks.

[Read full article](#)

Boldic Award for online course on Multimedia Journalism



International Advisory Committee (IAC) member Morten Flate Paulsen from NKI Nettstudier in Norway, together with colleagues from Berghs School of Communication in Stockholm, and the Danish School of Media and Journalism were the recent winners of the Boldic Award for their unique Scandinavian online course on Multimedia Journalism.

[Read full article](#)

Wall St Journal Article about virtual schools in the US



Stephanie Bachero and Stephanie Simon Writing recently in the Wall St Journal provide an interesting set of examples of students in the US attending virtual schools. This in-depth article highlights many of the issues faced by virtual schools not the least of which is the finding in some US states that scores of full-time virtual school students fall behind those of their traditional peers.

[Read full article](#)

US College online programmes face sanctions



In an eCampus report of Nov 17, Dennis Carter reports that colleges in the US may have to stop their online programmes. The states affected are Massachusetts, Arkansas and Minnesota who may have to withdraw their online programmes from those states in response to a much-debated set of regulations which require schools to gain approval from every state in which they have even one online student. [Read more](#) in eCampus.

[Read full article](#)

Reports

UNESCO (2011) Transforming Education: The Power of ICT Policies



This recently published UNESCO report cites examples of ICT take-up from different regions of the world - Africa, Arab region, Asia and Latin America - and provides a good illustration of the changes that ICT bring to education systems and policies.

[Read full article](#)

Enrollment in full-time virtual schools in the US rose 25 percent in 2010-11



A report by the Evergreen Education Group presented at the 2011 Virtual School Symposium hosted by the International Association for K-12 Online Learning (iNACOL) makes for interesting reading. This [report](#) "2011 Keeping Pace with Online K-12 Learning: An Annual Review of Policy and Practice" provides an overview of the latest policies, practices, and trends affecting online learning programmes across all 50 states.

[Read full article](#)

The Future of Learning: Preparing for Change



The Future of Learning: Preparing for Change is the most recent JRC report (edited by Christine Redecker and Yves Punie) which tries to identify, understand and visualise major changes to learning in the future. The overall vision is that personalisation, collaboration and informalisation (informal learning) are at the core of learning in the future. These terms are not new in education and training but will have to become the central guiding principle for organising learning and teaching in the future.

[Read full article](#)

Publication of new edition of Pedagogical Integration of ICT: Successes and Challenges from 100+ African Schools

The PanAfrican Research Agenda aimed to better understand how the pedagogical

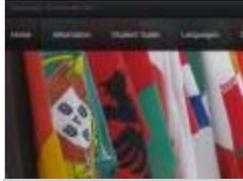


integration of ICT can improve the quality of teaching and learning in Africa. In the first project phase, national research teams gathered data on the educational use of ICT in 13 countries: Ghana, Gambia, Senegal, Central African Republic, Uganda, Mozambique, Mali, Kenya, Ivory Coast, Congo, Cameroon, and South Africa, and Zambia. The research team have now published a new edition of their [report](#) on this work.

[Read full article](#)

Featured Virtual School Initiative

Open High School Sydney



On arriving at [Open High School](#) in the Sydney suburb of Randwick (a short bus ride from central Sydney and within walking distance of Bondi Junction) Barry Phillips from Sero was welcomed by the Principal, Deputy Principal, Head Teacher E-Learning and Head Teacher for Enrolment. Open High School is a New South Wales (NSW) Department of Education and Communities (DEC) distance-education secondary school which offers courses in 13 languages to students from Years 9 to 12. Open High School is located in a former 'physical' school site.

[Read full article](#)

Projects

VISCI Virtual Intelligent Space for Collaborative Innovation



VISCI is a Finnish research project which concentrates on building digital services and tools for distributed creative work. The project began in 2009 and continues until the end of 2012. The project is multidisciplinary in its nature and combines research competence from several research fields.

[Read full article](#)

Focus on pedagogical use of technology



The Association of Finnish eLearning Centre and its 14 members have developed a training model emphasizing team work, peer learning and concrete deeds. Teachers introduce ideas from this training into practice and share them with their colleagues. This is a two year project, started in June 2011 and ends in May 2013 and is financed by the National Board of Education.

[Read full article](#)

Project news

Meeting of Virtual Schools and Colleges International Advisory Committee in Berlin



The next meeting of the International Advisory Committee and invited guests of the VISCED project will take place on Wednesday 30 November in Berlin. This whole day meeting will serve as a guide to the project's work to date and will in particular comment on questions to do with policy as the VISCED research team turn their attention to national virtual schooling strategies.

[Read full article](#)

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- ▶ [Technology, Funding Policies and Teacher Education Key Topics Discussed at Global Conference](#)
- ▶ [Future Classroom Lab opened in Brussels](#)
- ▶ [Webinar aimed at helping US policy-makers develop policy on K-12 online learning](#)
- ▶ [New York Times runs article raises questions about virtual schooling](#)
- ▶ [eSchool News reports on boom in virtual schools in the US](#)
- ▶ [Pearson explain their view on mining data from LMS and SIS](#)
- ▶ [EurODL paper on Virtual Schooling through the eyes of an at-risk student](#)
- ▶ [Finland's approach to education](#)
- ▶ [Multidisciplinary research project on learning receives million euro funding from Tekes](#)
- ▶ [Innovation in Education - a meeting with Charles Leadbeater](#)

News

[Round-the world success for Dutch teenage sailor - but what about school?](#)



It's good to see that Laura Dekkers, the 16 year old who recently sailed single-handedly around the world onboard her yacht Guppy. Her success raises some questions though about the extent to which educational authorities can enforce their decisions when it comes to compulsory education. Laura enrolled in the Wereldschool which provides teaching programmes for Dutch-speaking children who stay abroad with their parents.

[Read full article](#)

[European Qualifications Framework Newsletter issued](#)



If you are interested in the current state of affairs regarding European qualifications then the latest EQF Newsletter contains lots of interesting articles particularly in respect to the coming together of various qualifications frameworks in vocational training with higher education. Articles include a useful overview of recent developments in national qualifications frameworks in Europe, a report on collaboration efforts by EQF, EQAVET and ECVET and an insight into the implementation of qualifications frameworks on an international scale.

[Read full article](#)

Technology, Funding Policies and Teacher Education Key Topics Discussed at Global Conference



In almost every conversation on education reform these days, Finland's education system inevitably comes up. "Finlandophilia", as one reporter called it, is growing because of the country's top-ranking status on international tests, among other measures, and because this success comes through very different policies and practices than those that are the norm in the United States. A conference held at Stanford University on 17-18 January brought together academic and policy experts from the United States and Finland to identify effective policy and practice approaches to create high quality education for all learners.

[Read full article](#)

Future Classroom Lab opened in Brussels



Future teaching and learning with innovative use of ICT was the focus of discussion during the official opening of the Future Classroom Lab in Brussels this week. This lab has been created by European Schoolnet with its supporting 30 ministries and industry partners to help visualise how conventional classrooms and other learning spaces can be easily reorganised to support changing styles of teaching and learning.

[Read full article](#)

Webinar aimed at helping US policy-makers develop policy on K-12 online learning



iNACOL (International Association for K-12 Online Learning) is organising a series of Leadership webinars in 2012 related to virtual schooling. In the first which took place on 11 January, the focus was on state-level online learning policy for the US, which has been driven largely by the release of a Roadmap to Reform by the Foundation for Excellence in Education which provides input to US state policymakers wishing to implement the Digital Learning Now elements.

[Read full article](#)

New York Times runs article raises questions about virtual schooling

A recent article by Stephanie Saul in the New York Times asks a number of significant questions about the value of online schooling particularly when the management of online schools is in the hands of for-profit organisations. Describing significant revenue streams while embracing far from innovative teaching methods, several specific schools come in for significant criticism. This article paints a far from rosy picture of many virtual schools in the US although it is worth pointing out that the main bone of contention in the article seems to be with commercial organisations running these schools on a for-profit basis.

[Read full article](#)

eSchool News reports on boom in virtual schools in the US



A recent article in eSchool News highlights the importance of constant teacher/pupil communication as a key to success in virtual schooling. In the same article iNACOL CEO Susan Patrick who is also a member of the VISCED International Advisory Committee makes the point that the increase in virtual schooling is clearly in line with the overall educational context in the US where about one in three college students now take some courses online, and about 50 percent of workforce training is believed to be done online.

[Read full article](#)

Reports

Pearson explain their view on mining data from LMS and SIS



Brian Epp, writing recently on the Pearson Learning Solutions website, explains how educators can use data linked to students' online learning patterns to provide better services. Making comparisons to online retail behaviour, he makes the case for using data as a foundation for progress citing several different examples, which include mining LMS and SIS systems for information on student performance (both grades and learning outcome scores), activity by feature or by content object to come up with actionable at-risk dashboards for academic leaders.

[Read full article](#)

EurODL paper on Virtual Schooling through the eyes of an at-risk student

The latest edition of EurODL includes an interesting case study based on the experiences of an at-risk student in a rural school in the Canadian province of Newfoundland and Labrador enrolled in an online class. Although based on a single case, this study highlights a number of revealing results particularly when it comes to online collaborative and communication behaviour among students who tend to 'tune out' of virtual classroom activities. This paper is written and submitted by Michael K. Barbour and Jason P. Siko from Wayne State University, US.

[Read full article](#)

Finland's approach to education



Finland's innovative approach to special needs is summarised in a short video available now on Edutopia. Early intervention and sustained individual support for every student are keys to educating the whole child in Finnish schools. Teachers explain their approach which includes obligatory weekly meetings for all teachers, an extensive student welfare service and as early intervention as possible. Key concerns and drivers of the Finnish system are equity and quality.

[Read full article](#)

Projects

Multidisciplinary research project on learning receives million euro funding from Tekes



CICERO Learning Network, University of Helsinki and Tampere University of Technology in Pori have received generous funding from the Learning Solutions programme of Tekes (the Finnish Funding Agency for Technology and Innovation) to set up the Finnacle project. In addition to researchers, this value network project includes several companies, schools and representatives of the public sector. The project also includes extensive international cooperation, especially with Stanford University and schools in Silicon Valley. Professor Hannele Niemi (University of Helsinki) is the Scientific Leader of the project. Finnacle is coordinated by CICERO Learning Network with Director Jari Multisilta as a Principal Investigator in many of the sub-projects.

[Read full article](#)

Paul's Blog

Innovation in Education - a meeting with Charles Leadbeater



Last week I attended Learning Without Frontiers, which is rapidly occupying a similar place in the educational conference universe to the late lamented opulent Learning And Technology World Forum, held each year just before BETT at Olympia, whose 2011 event fell victim to government cuts in autumn 2010. Among the attractions, at the stand for WISE was a book signing by Charles Leadbeater, who was the research leader of the study Learning from the Extremes, conducted for Cisco Education, which was one of the key influences on the VISCED bid. His book is called Innovation in Education: Lessons from Pioneers around the World.

[Read full blogpost](#)

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- ▶ [Next Generation Learning Conference 2012 in Sweden](#)
- ▶ [10 arguments as to why digital learning benefits low-income students](#)
- ▶ [Online Learning may become a requirement in US State of Georgia](#)
- ▶ [US paper puts a price on online learning](#)
- ▶ [Research results available on learning environments - distance education in Finland](#)
- ▶ [Education report warns of growing teacher shortages](#)
- ▶ [Call for input to study on key technologies that will support educational change](#)
- ▶ [City of Turku runs project on distance learning](#)
- ▶ [VISCED publishes public report of work undertaken in year 1](#)
- ▶ [First versions of reports on good practice and teacher training produced by VISCED](#)

News

[Arguments continue in the US about the importance of regulation for Virtual Schools](#)



This month's eSchool News leads with a feature article about the worries educators have concerning the fast pace of growth of virtual schools in the US. Highlighting the fact that regulation is finding it difficult to keep up with the virtual school boom, this article tackles the age-old debate as to whether online learning is as good as face-to-face teaching. The article focuses in part on Colorado where a row has broken out provoked by the significant growth of online schools in this state.

[Read full article](#)

MITx - a sign of things to come?



There are lots of online reports today on MIT's announcement that they are beginning enrollment for their first automated online course which students around the world can take without any prior tests or assessment. Students will have a variety of channels to choose from as this course on Circuits and Electronics will use video lectures, weekly deadlines to complete homework, access to labs and discussion forums and regular exams. If successful, students will receive a MIT certificate. Everything will happen online - including the awarding of grades.

[Read full article](#)

Next Generation Learning Conference 2012 in Sweden



The Next Generation Learning Conference, a Nordic conference on the implications for learning and education of the digital revolution, is taking place this week. It is aimed at development and research projects on NGL in both educational and professional settings. One of the presentations given by Ebba Ossiannilsson from Lund University deals with benchmarking, which was co-authored with Paul Bacsich from Sero, Margareta Hellström from KTH, and Andreas Hedrén from Gotland University and included references to the VISCED project. The presentation is available online.

[Read full article](#)

10 arguments as to why digital learning benefits low-income students



Tom Vander Ark writing some time ago in the Huffington Post puts forward 10 arguments as to why digital learning will benefit low-income students in the US. These include the increasing availability of free learning content though initiatives like the Khan Academy, improvements in adaptive assessments and diagnostics which are beginning to pinpoint learning levels and gaps that must be addressed and the fact that in the US at least there is an increased variety of school options - some that blend online and onsite, and some that are purely virtual.

[Read full article](#)

Online Learning may become a requirement in US State of Georgia



Kristina Torres writing in The Atlanta Journal-Constitution last week reported on a move in the US State of Georgia to make online learning a requirement for graduation in schools, despite objections from some lawmakers who said it chipped away at local control. Starting next year this bill would require school systems to allow all students access to online instruction from kindergarten to 12th grade. Ninth-grade students starting in 2014 would have to take at least one online course before graduation, and schools would be required to give all end-of-course assessments online starting in 2015.

[Read full article](#)

Reports

US paper puts a price on online learning



This paper from the Working Paper Series published by the Thomas B. Fordham Institute in the US takes a long hard look at the cost of online learning. Although based on costs associated with the US, some of its findings and recommendations are very interesting. The authors, Tamara Butler Battaglini, Matt Haldeman, and Eleanor Laurans find that "average overall per pupil costs of both models are significantly lower than the \$10,000 national average for traditional brick-and-mortar schools-and that virtual schools are cheaper on average than blended schools. Yet there is wide variation in spending among both virtual and blended-learning schools".

[Read full article](#)

Research results available on learning environments - distance education in Finland



The goal for this research was to map Finnish general education teachers' skills and development needs in using information and communication technology within education. The main focus was on distance education. A survey was sent in November 2011 by email to all primary and secondary school principals. They were asked to forward the survey to their school's teachers. All together 2493 teachers from all over Finland replied.

[Read full article](#)

Education report warns of growing teacher shortages

According to a new report published by the European Commission entitled 'Key Data on Education in Europe 2012', several Member States may face serious teacher shortages in the future as the number of graduates specialising in education is falling at a time when many current teachers are approaching retirement age. But it also highlights encouraging signs: funding for education is stable in most Member States and it underlines that higher education remains the best insurance policy against unemployment, with graduates more



likely to find a job faster than non-graduates.

[Read full article](#)

Projects

Call for input to study on key technologies that will support educational change



The MENON Network, on behalf of the European Commission - Institute for Prospective Technological Studies (IPTS), has recently launched the study Mapping and Analysing Prospective Technologies for Learning (MATEL). One of the major aims of this study is to identify and classify the key technologies that will support educational change in five to ten years from the present. You can contribute to the research by participating in the MATEL survey, which is open until February 26.

[Read full article](#)

City of Turku runs project on distance learning



The Coordination project for distance learning aims to collect and spread good practices on distance learning (DL), to collaborate with different DL projects, developers and creators, to form new kinds of networks and create new operation models to support different distance learning needs. The project also carries out research into how different learning materials suit DL and to distribute data nationally and, to the extent appropriate, internationally.

[Read full article](#)

Project news

VISCED publishes public report of work undertaken in year 1



The VISCED team submitted the Interim Report to the EACEA, providing a good overview of the main work undertaken in the first part of the project and traces partners' activities from the initial research work into the status of the virtual school phenomenon around the world to the emergence of trends and recommendations based on the experience of specific virtual schools. Significant steps have been taken regarding taxonomy and in understanding the circumstances that give rise to virtual schools in different countries. Read the full public report.

[Read full article](#)

First versions of reports on good practice and teacher training produced by VISCED



The VISCED project has recently published reports on both teacher training and potential success factors related to virtual schooling. The report on teacher training presents and discusses the history and background of distance education. The report on potential success factors is based on the set of Re.ViCa Critical Success Factors adapted for use by the Distance Learning Benchmarking Club and then reworded for schools in terms of a virtual school within a conventional school.

[Read full article](#)

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- › [Tony Bates discusses whether education can afford the iPad](#)
- › [Traumatised and injured Belgian children given option to follow lessons online](#)
- › [Virtual schooling's popularity challenges policy makers](#)
- › [Online access to great educational video from TED-Ed?](#)
- › [UK teaching schools now supported by New Technologies Advisory Board](#)
- › [Schools in Malta adopt a common online learning platform](#)
- › [CNN Report on the growth of Virtual Schools in the US](#)
- › [Large scale impact studies raises questions about the impact of One Laptop Per Child](#)
- › [Guide to communicating research for evidence-based policymaking available from European Commission](#)
- › [Book on Advanced Learning freely available online](#)
- › [Learning in Context workshop organised in Brussels](#)
- › [Virtual School Project linking schools in Canada, China, Korea and Philippines](#)
- › [Emilia Romagna region launches the initiative Scuola@Appennino](#)
- › [European Schoolnet launches community of practice called inGenius](#)
- › [First impressions of New Zealand](#)

News

[Article in Education Week about the increased scrutiny faced by Virtual Education Companies](#)

Writing in Education Week, Ian Quillen reports on how the expansion of virtual education has been putting companies that provide e-learning services under the microscope. In his article which is largely based on experience in the US, Ian refers to recent studies



suggesting declining achievement among full-time public virtual school students which don't always distinguish between publicly and privately run schools. Read the full article.

[Read full article](#)

Virtual College reports on online opportunities for African schools



Online learning solutions have been provided to at least 5,000 students and teachers in Africa, enabling schools in the continent to use connectivity to boost their standard and performance. Eight secondary schools have been given PC as a Service - which allows them to use mobile broadband networks to access cloud computing - through the Connect to Learn initiative.

[Read full article](#)

Tony Bates discusses whether education can afford the iPad



Popular blogger Tony Bates carried out a useful exercise on his blog recently making the comparison between traditional textbooks and the iPad. Tony concludes that while we are not there yet, e-textbooks are coming, probably within 3-5 years for general use. However Tony goes on to predict that e-textbooks of themselves will disappear altogether, to be replaced with modular collections of multi-media digital material that can be searched and combined at will by both teachers and learners. Read his full blog post.

[Read full article](#)

Traumatised and injured Belgian children given option to follow lessons online



Following the horrific bus accident in Switzerland last Tuesday which claimed the lives of 22 Belgian school children, 4 teaching staff and 2 bus chauffeurs, Pascal Smet, the Flemish Minister for Education announced a number of initiatives to support the affected schools. Injured and traumatised children in the two schools, one in Heverlee nearby Leuven and the other in Lommel, will be given the option to follow their classes online via a webcam in the context of the Bednet initiative which supports the education of chronically sick children in Belgium.

[Read full article](#)

Virtual schooling's popularity challenges policy makers



Virtual schooling is in the headlines again this week in the US. Writing in eSchool News, Nora Carr argues that articulating clear online learning policies and communicating these to stakeholders will help garner support. Whether blended with more traditional instructional methods as a dual enrollment opportunity, or offered via an online-only school. She goes on to say that the key for school officials is to think through how to manage this transformative new opportunity wisely and well. Having smart policies in place that articulate the school board's position or philosophy about online learning and provide guidance to students, staff, and parents represents a good starting point.

[Read full article](#)

Online access to great educational video from TED-Ed?



The launch of TED-Ed this week is creating a lot of interest. Inspired by the Khan Academy, this initiative aims to capture and amplify the voices of great educators around the world. Based on the relatively simple idea of offering tools to teachers to capture and distribute their best lessons on video and teaming up these teachers with animators - this initiative could provide terrific learning material to those interested in virtual schooling. As always - the devil is going to be in the detail as the initiators get to grips with the specifications and requirements of real learners, can they move beyond the superficial to provide really effective learning resources? start the journey here on the brand new TED-Ed YouTube channel.

[Read full article](#)

UK teaching schools now supported by New Technologies Advisory Board

UK teaching schools, a key element in government education policy, now have their own support organisation for ICT, the New Technologies Advisory Board (NTAB). The NTAB's inaugural meeting has just been hosted by one of the first teaching schools, Sheffield's Notre Dame High, one of the three schools which will take part in the VISCED pilot project.

[Read full article](#)

Schools in Malta adopt a common online learning platform

The Malta Independent reported online recently that all Maltese state schools will start



launching a new eLearning platform from April onwards. This new platform, called iLearn, will provide students with a range of opportunities to learn in their own time and at their own pace. Essentially, iLearn provides a virtual school building where teachers can easily upload any material they may need to share with their students. It also serves as a place where students can communicate in a safe environment. This launch is in line with the country's Smart Learning Strategy which was launched in 2008.

[Read full article](#)

CNN Report on the growth of Virtual Schools in the US



This short video clip begins with a report on the experiences of an virtual school student and then moves on to raise different opinions as to the overall value and worth of virtual schooling. While for some students, virtual schooling offers an important alternative, there are some negative voices, like the National Education Association, a teachers union in the US, which questions whether learning online full time is the best approach. Watch the full report by Athena Jones from CNN online.

[Read full article](#)

Reports

Large scale impact studies raises questions about the impact of One Laptop Per Child



In 2007, Peru announced it would distribute tens of thousands of XO laptops from One Laptop Per Child to children in rural schools across the country, and expanded the program every year since. Almost 1 million laptops later, the program is now the largest XO deployment in the world. Large impact studies of this initiative have shown that effective implementation of the One Laptop per Child program was not enough to overcome the difficulties of a design that places its trust in the role of technologies themselves. Visit the Educational Technology Debate website to read more about these studies and the questions raised by their findings.

[Read full article](#)

Guide to communicating research for evidence-based policymaking available from European Commission



This practical guide is aimed at researchers in socio-economic sciences and humanities and identifies the most important stages in the development of a dynamic communication strategy and which will ensure that projects funded by the European Commission make a real difference in enabling policymakers to respond to the significant challenges we face. Divided into three parts - Concept, Policy Briefs and Practical Means - this guide is intended to help exploit research concepts into genuine policy action.

[Read full article](#)

Book on Advanced Learning freely available online



Mats Öström from Ross Tensta school recommends the book "Advanced Learning" edited by Raquel Hijón-Neira at Universidad Rey Juan Carlos. In this book, different authors study and discuss a variety of tools related to Web 2.0. The aim with the book is to help the educational community use the web effectively in their teaching and learning activities. It covers a variety of different topics from games in education to semantic web.

[Read full article](#)

Events

Learning in Context workshop organised in Brussels



The Stellar Network of Excellence is organising the learning in Context workshop on 26-27 March. It will examine current innovative practices on the use of mobile learning and research from the domain of Technology Enhanced Learning. Contextualized learning will be addressed from different angles, including: 'Case-studies from industry, Higher Education and Secondary Education', 'Current and future Research issues' and 'Visions for the future of applying mobile learning in education and training'.

[Read full article](#)

Featured Virtual School Initiative

Virtual School Project linking schools in Canada, China, Korea and Philippines

The KFIT International School Project (KISP) was initiated to provide teachers and students with an opportunity to expand their local boundaries and collaborate with other groups internationally in developing inter-cultural projects. The project connects schools from four countries (Canada, China, Korea, Philippines) to engage in project-based learning locally and internationally. The project was formally launched on 5 March 2012



at UNESCO Bangkok through an online meeting and video conference of all collaborating Teacher Education Institutions (TEIs) and schools (teachers and students who will take part in KISP), held via Skype.

[Read full article](#)

Emilia Romagna region launches the initiative Scuola@Appennino



The project addresses schools located in the mountain areas of the region and adopts innovative learning technologies to improve the educational offer in the mountain areas. Practical reasons often hinder kids from reaching a suitable school, leading to a situation in which kids of different ages have to stay in the same classroom. Funded by the Emilia Romagna region (300 k euros), Scuola@Appennino is coordinated by an interinstitutional committee grouping policy makers and providers. The project will last two years and address 156 primary schools, 86 lower secondary schools and 35 upper secondary school. During the first pilot year (2012/2013) 14 schools will be involved.

[Read full article](#)

Projects

European Schoolnet launches community of practice called inGenius



inGenius, a FP7 project coordinated by the European Schoolnet has recently launched its first community of practice. The aim of the Technology Community is to a) share ideas and information about the use of technology in education, b) inspire teachers to explore new ways of teaching with technology and c) raise questions and seek answers about technology and education. Teachers have a chance to share ideas or raise questions in a debate guided by the inGenius experts.

[Read full article](#)

Paul's Blog

First impressions of New Zealand



I've been in New Zealand only 5 days and have not yet visited any institutions, but I have had the benefit of being hosted by Professor Niki Davis at the College of Education, University of Canterbury. In addition to her US and UK experience she is now working with several of the "networked schools" consortia in New Zealand. The conclusions that follow are, I stress, my own.

[Read full blog post](#)

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This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This website reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein. For more information on the VISCED project, see [the website](#).

Dear Colleague,

as you are either part of the schools and colleges innovation community and/or you have been receiving the Virtual Campus Newsletter in the past, we are sending you the Virtual Schools and Colleges Newsletter. This is a newsletter published by the European Commission-funded [VISCED project](#) (a Transnational Appraisal of Virtual School and College Provision), which is extending the Re.ViCa research. If you prefer not to receive this newsletter, you can let us know by e-mailing <info@virtualschoolsandcolleges.info> or by unsubscribing [online](#).

Thank you for your consideration,
The VISCED team

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Virtual Schools and Colleges Newsletter - May 2012 Issue

Thursday, 31 May 2012

Welcome to the Virtual Schools and Colleges Newsletter

This edition of our 2012 newsletter contains a variety of articles and reports related to the use of ICT in secondary and post-secondary education for 14-21 year olds in Europe and elsewhere. The Virtual Schools and Colleges Newsletter is an outcome of the European project VISCED which is carrying out a systematic review of virtual schools and colleges at international and national levels including a study into operational examples of fully virtual schools and colleges.

You are very welcome to send us news about developments related to virtual schools and colleges in your region or country, share this newsletter with your colleagues and join us on the Virtual Schools and Colleges [wiki](#).

This months' articles

- › [Innolukio to inspire upper secondary schools and students in Finland](#)
- › [Georgia district implements virtual-world technology](#)
- › [Focus on the disruptive nature of innovation in schools](#)
- › [Advice on Virtual Schools to US Policy-Makers](#)
- › [Lots of interest in first virtual charter school in New Jersey](#)
- › [Poland launches significant digital school programme](#)
- › [The History of Finnish educational reform](#)
- › [Mapping Digital Competence: Towards a Conceptual Understanding](#)
- › [Highlights from the Framtidens lärande or Future Learning Conference in Sweden](#)
- › [Call for papers to EFQUEL Innovation Forum extended](#)
- › [Swedish event focuses on innovation in schools](#)
- › [Keynote presentation features VISCED work in New Zealand](#)
- › [Major conference on ICT in Education takes place in Finland](#)
- › [Open and Social Technologies for Networked Learning - conference in Tallinn](#)
- › [UAE launches smart learning initiative for schools](#)
- › [Swedish search service for learning resources](#)
- › [European Virtual Schools Colloquium gets off the ground in Sheffield](#)
- › [Finding virtual schools](#)

News

[Innolukio to inspire upper secondary schools and students in Finland](#)

This week the Innolukio project was launched which is targeted to all Finnish upper secondary school students. Innolukio is a learning platform that aims to increase



interactivity, create connections between students, enterprises and universities and to exploit students' creativity as a national resource. The project also works as an accelerator in developing upper secondary schools and raising their profile.

[Read full article](#)

Georgia district implements virtual-world technology



eSchool News reported in March on the introduction of virtual world technology to schools in the US state of Georgia. The purpose of this project is to help engage students which will begin by offering a 3D virtual-world environment to every classroom teacher in the 35 schools of a school district. The name of this project is "NOBLE" which stands for New Opportunities for Better Learning Experiences. NOBLE offers the ability for enterprise-level account management, school groups, and tools and procedures that make for a secure online environment for students.

[Read full article](#)

Focus on the disruptive nature of innovation in schools



Michael B. Horn recently writing in eSchool News argues that the extensive news coverage in the USA on the value or otherwise of virtual schooling has failed to address 2 critical strands of discussion at the background to these news stories. These are understanding how a disruptive innovation evolves and the role of public policy in shaping it. He makes the point that online learning is a disruptive innovation—an innovation that transforms a sector by making it simpler, more convenient, and affordable. Disruptive innovations have transformed many parts of our society, everything from computing to how we do taxes. But disruptive innovations don't transform the world overnight.

[Read full article](#)

Advice on Virtual Schools to US Policy-Makers



Nora Carr writing in the eSchool News in March makes the argument that the success of virtual schools in the US is posing a challenge to policy-makers. In this article, Nora refers to various actions in the US taken at state-level to introduce new rules and policies in an effort to keep up with the rapid increase in virtual school interest. She argues that virtual learning is here to stay and makes the point that the key for school officials is to think through how to manage this transformative new opportunity wisely and well.

[Read full article](#)

Lots of interest in first virtual charter school in New Jersey



In the midst of quite some discussion in the US about virtual schools in general, the first charter school in New Jersey is having a lot of success in enrolling students for its first roll-out in September and has enrolled more than 300 students in its first week. The New Jersey Virtual Academy Charter School (NJVACS), operating under contract with the for-profit online education company, K12 Inc., has begun advertising its New Jersey program through traditional press releases, email blasts and informational events. Read more about this success in this article in the South Brunswick Patch.

[Read full article](#)

Poland launches significant digital school programme

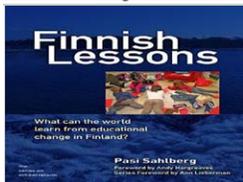


The Polish Council of Ministers has adopted a regulation concerning the implementation of a "Digital School" programme for the computerization of Polish schools and for raising ICT competences. A piloting phase of the project aimed at 380 schools in Poland will equip them with hardware (tablets, computers for students, additional equipment). Also digital and free (under Creative Commons Attribution or compatible) textbooks for grades 4-6 in primary schools (K4-K6) will be created (45 millions PLN - approx. USD 14m - is assigned for textbooks). This is the first major government project in Poland which creates Open Educational Resources especially textbooks.

[Read full article](#)

Reports

The History of Finnish educational reform



"Finnish Lessons" is written by Pasi Sahlberg and recounts the history of Finnish educational reform and describes how the Finnish strategy and tactics differ from those of the global educational reform movement and of the North American reforms in particular. This book also addresses the role of teachers as well as the links between education reform and other sectors of society, and how smart education policies serve to raise a nation's prosperity and reduce poverty.

Rather than proposing that other nations follow in Finland's path, Finnish Lessons

documents how Finland achieved success without going through the arduous and controversial process of implementing competition, school choice, and test-based accountability.

[Read full article](#)

Mapping Digital Competence: Towards a Conceptual Understanding



This report by Kirsti Ala-Mutka and published by the Joint Research Centre - Institute for Prospective Technological Studies (IPTS) last November reviews needs for digital competence, different concepts used to describe and understand it, and related policy approaches and measurements. Based on these, it suggests a conceptual model with the following main areas: 1) Instrumental knowledge and skills for tool and media usage; 2) Advanced skills and knowledge for communication and collaboration, information management, learning and problem-solving, and meaningful participation; 3) Attitudes to strategic skills usage in intercultural, critical, creative, responsible and autonomous ways.

[Read full article](#)

Events

Highlights from the Framtidens Lärande or Future Learning Conference in Sweden



Mats Öström from Ross Tensta in Sweden and partner in VISCED took part on May 15/16 in Framtidens lärande, one of the largest conferences in Sweden addressing IT in schools. Mats provided a summary of what for him were the highlights of the conference. During the starting debate of this conference, participants discussed the degree to which we are facing a borderless society. While arguing about the extent to which the school building itself is disappearing, it was generally agreed that society may not yet be ready for the removal of the school building. Recognising the importance of meeting face-to-face, participants also agreed on the importance of the school building for smaller children.

[Read full article](#)

Call for papers to EFQUEL Innovation Forum extended



The organisers of the EFQUEL Innovation Forum 2012 which is taking place in Granada on 5-7 September have extended their call for papers to 31 May. This forum focuses on the following questions: how can we turn our traditional educational institutions into (r)evolutionary leading organisations? and how can innovation be stimulated? At the same time the conference will observe and analyse how open innovation can be used to transform today's educational institutions.

[Read full article](#)

Swedish event focuses on innovation in schools



Mats Öström, from VISCED partner Ross Tensta Gymnasium in Sweden took part in the SETT Conference on April 25-26. This event targets teachers in Sweden and includes a large number of seminars aimed at helping teachers succeed in the classroom and advising them on how best to use different tools. This event provided a good mix of theory and practice and was accompanied by an exhibition area where you could find several providers of LMS, tools for scheduling, publishing companies and other companies that make tools for education.

[Read full article](#)

Keynote presentation features VISCED work in New Zealand



The keynote presentation given by Paul Bacsich in New Zealand during the recent DEANZ conference featured some of the latest work carried out by the VISCED team. This biannual conference attracted about 150 participants and is the premier conference in Aotearoa New Zealand for leaders and practitioners involved in open, flexible and distance learning. The 2012 conference theme was 'Shift Happens' with three themes of resilience, relevance and reform. Paul's presentation entitled "Towards the Multiversity? An integrated view of where we are in the world of e-learning - tertiary education and schools" will be available shortly on the conference website.

[Read full article](#)

Major conference on ICT in Education takes place in Finland



The Interactive Technology in Education (ITE) conference is the largest conference in Finland related to information and communication technology in educational use. The conference started in 1990 and took place this spring for the 23rd time. The conference was organised in the Hotel Aulanko in Hämeenlinna, Finland and was opened by the Minister of Education and Science Jukka Gustafsson. One of the keynote speakers was Professor Eric Duval, Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, Belgium (presentation).

[Read full article](#)

Open and Social Technologies for Networked Learning - conference in Tallinn



Tallinn is hosting an IFIP open working conference on "Open and Social Technologies for Networked Learning", 30 July-03 August 2012. Tallinn University and University of Tampere (FI) are jointly organizing the event. Open and social technologies play an increasingly important role in many educational settings. Social technologies are entering primary, secondary, and higher education, blurring the boundaries between formal and informal learning. Social technologies have also entered the workplaces, connecting learners and bridging the boundaries between individual learning and the organizational knowledge processes.

[Read full article](#)

Projects

UAE launches smart learning initiative for schools



Public schools in the United Arab Emirates are being upgraded to include significant online opportunities. This initiative is described as being part of UAE Vision 2021 which sees the development of education as being essential. The initiative aims to transform classrooms as well as integrate teachers, students, parents and administrators into a single e-platform and is being introduced in four stages over five years. A pilot of the project, which will include 18 schools covering students from grade six to grade nine, will be launched in September 2012.

[Read full article](#)

Swedish search service for learning resources



Spider is a Swedish national search service for digital learning resources. This service, which uses learning resource metadata for searching, connects a number of Swedish Learning Object Repositories and offers a single point for searching digital learning resources. The Spider search forms can easily be added to any web page or LMS using one of the Spider Widgets. By combining the Spider search service with the WILD Curriculum Cloud Service it will soon be possible to dynamically link digital learning resources to the national curriculum and syllabuses using Semantic Web technology. Version 2.0 of the Spider service will be released in May.

[Read full article](#)

Project news

European Virtual Schools Colloquium gets off the ground in Sheffield



This one day colloquium brings together practitioners and researchers involved in virtual schooling from around the world. The programme for the day includes presentations of different virtual schools from Europe and North America and discussions about quality and critical success factors for virtual schools. Sustainability, regulatory frameworks and pedagogy will also come up for discussion during the day. Recordings of many of the presentations as well as interviews with many of the people involved will be available on the VISCED project website shortly.

[Read full article](#)

Paul's Blog

Finding virtual schools



The VISCED project is now in its second and final year. We are now finishing off many pieces of work so that we can begin the major task of creating the VISCED Handbook on virtual schools. This means that by the middle of the summer we have to have a list of all the virtual schools in the world (for ages 14-21) which is as complete as it can be within our resources. (With the exception of the US - numbers there are still growing fast.) Since the VISCED project is wiki-based, we shall continue to collect virtual schools right up until the end of the project but it will not be possible to include data from these latecomers in our analyses. We are hoping that you, our readers, can help us by "crowdsourcing" new virtual schools in the next 6 weeks.

[Read full blog post](#)

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The VISCED team

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VISCED



A Transnational Appraisal of
Virtual School and College Provision

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Virtual Schools and Colleges Newsletter - June 2012 Issue

Friday, 29 June 2012

Welcome to the Virtual Schools and Colleges Newsletter

This edition of our 2012 newsletter contains a variety of articles and reports related to the use of ICT in secondary and post-secondary education for 14-21 year olds in Europe and elsewhere. The Virtual Schools and Colleges Newsletter is an outcome of the European project VISCED which is carrying out a systematic review of virtual schools and colleges at international and national levels including a study into operational examples of fully virtual schools and colleges.

You are very welcome to send us news about developments related to virtual schools and colleges in your region or country, share this newsletter with your colleagues and join us on the Virtual Schools and Colleges [wiki](#).

This months' articles

- › [New "Race to the Top" competition to enhance teaching in US schools](#)
- › [Market offer for technology support in Italian schools heats up](#)
- › [Status of Learning Solutions Programme in Finland](#)
- › [Virtual Schools in the US sign up to Shakespeare In Bots](#)
- › [Michigan increases number of Cyber Charter Schools despite local objections](#)
- › [Virtual Schools receive official go-ahead in the Philippines](#)
- › [New Media Consortium Horizon Report for K-12 schools](#)
- › [Recent report on Virtual Schools in the US](#)
- › [UNESCO Working Paper Series on Mobile Learning](#)
- › [Study into research cooperation in Nordic countries](#)
- › [International survey on educational leadership](#)
- › [ICDE study on regulatory frameworks for distance education in the Southwest Pacific/ South East Asia Region published](#)
- › [VISCED presented at Future of Education Conference in Florence](#)
- › [Presentation of VISCED at EDEN Conference in Porto](#)
- › [Have your say on how ICT can help make lifelong learning a reality](#)
- › [Interviews, presentations and other materials published about the Sheffield Colloquium on Virtual Schools](#)
- › [Virtual schooling at World OER Congress](#)

News

[New "Race to the Top" competition to enhance teaching in US schools](#)

The US Department of Education recently announced a new "Race to the Top" District competition, one that is aimed squarely at the classroom level with a focus on the



relationship between teachers and students. The proposed competition offers nearly \$400 million in grants and invites school districts to create plans for individualized classroom instruction aimed at closing achievement gaps and preparing each student for college and career. "Race to the Top" supports states that raise standards, build better data systems, evaluate and support principals and teachers, and dramatically transform their lowest-performing schools.

[Read full article](#)

Market offer for technology support in Italian schools heats up



With the recent announcement by Sanako and Toshiba of their agreement to work together it's clear that interest in infrastructure support to Italian schools is on the increase despite severe cut-backs in public spending. Sanako will provide classroom-management software for Toshiba's SCUOLA TECH project which provides a complete solution for Italian schools that are starting to utilize technology in teaching and learning. Find out more from the SCUOLA TECH website.

[Read full article](#)

Status of Learning Solutions Programme in Finland



The Learning Solutions Programme was launched by Tekes in 2011 to develop internationally competent learning solutions as well as new approaches and skills for modern learning and educational environments. The goal is to develop products and services that serve international markets, too. Learning Solutions is a partnership programme, the main partners being the Ministry of Education and Culture, the Finnish National Board of Education, and the Future Learning Finland export programme launched by Finpro.

[Read full article](#)

Virtual Schools in the US sign up to Shakespeare In Bits



MindConnex in Ireland recently announced that it has signed up four large virtual schools across North America to its award-winning Shakespeare In Bits online subscription service. Shakespeare In Bits Live! is a cloud-based service that can be accessed from any location through a browser and internet connection. With over 140 schools accessing the service, Shakespeare In Bits Live! is proving a popular choice with traditional and virtual schools, read more on the MindConnex [website](#).

[Read full article](#)

Michigan increases number of Cyber Charter Schools despite local objections



Oakland County students who are already enrolled in Michigan's only two cyber charter schools will have more options now that Gov. Rick Snyder has signed into law legislation that allows the number of schools offering all classes on computers to increase to 15 by 2015. Many Oakland County superintendents and other educators are opposed to the move to allow more cyber schools before there is more evaluation on the two existing schools that can enroll students anywhere in the state.

[Read full article](#)

Virtual Schools receive official go-ahead in the Philippines



The Open High School System (OHSS) Act establishing the OHSS as part of the Philippine Department of Education alternative secondary education programme was approved on 1st of June 2012. The OHSS will encourage self-learning and will start piloting alternative quality education through print, TV, radio, Internet, teleconferencing, multimedia and computer. The bill covers all youth and adults who have finished elementary education and all other who qualify for high school education. It will adopt the National Secondary Education Curriculum.

[Read full article](#)

Reports

New Media Consortium Horizon Report for K-12 schools



The well-regarded and recently available NMC Horizon Report on K-12 Education reports on several interesting trends related to virtual schooling. In the report, its expert panel describes the Number One Trend for K-12 schooling for the period 2012-2017 as the shift in Education paradigms to include online learning, hybrid learning and collaborative models. The report states that "Budget cuts have forced schools to re-evaluate their education platforms and find alternatives to the exclusive face-to-face learning models. As such, what once was seen as a challenge has now become an increasingly interesting trend".

[Read full article](#)

Recent report on Virtual Schools in the US



The Center for Public Education - National School Boards Association in the US has recently published an interesting report on Virtual Schools in the US. Its main findings include the fact that Online courses and schools enrol a small fraction of the 52 million public school students, but they are rapidly gaining ground. K-12 students take nearly 2 million courses online annually. In addition, about 250,000 students were enrolled full-time in virtual schools in 2010-11, up from 200,000 the year before. The report also found that the development, management and staffing of online courses and schools is supported by both public and private providers. For-profit companies K-12, Inc., and Connections Academy together enrolled nearly half of all full-time online students in 2010-11.

[Read full article](#)

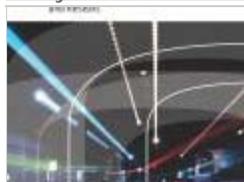
UNESCO Working Paper Series on Mobile Learning



Today there are over 5.9 billion mobile phone subscriptions worldwide, and for every one person who accesses the internet from a computer two do so from a mobile device. Given the ubiquity and rapidly expanding functionality of mobile technologies, UNESCO is enthusiastic about their potential to improve and facilitate learning, particularly in communities where educational opportunities are scarce. This Working Paper Series scans the globe to illuminate the ways in which mobile technologies can be used to support the United Nations Education for All Goals; respond to the challenges of particular educational contexts; supplement and enrich formal schooling; and make learning more accessible, equitable, personalized and flexible for students everywhere.

[Read full article](#)

Study into research cooperation in Nordic countries



This study maps current and planned education and research cooperation that the Nordic countries (Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden) have with Russia. The study includes bilateral, Nordic, regional, intergovernmental and EU levels, but focuses on the bilateral, national level. The study covers all the fields of research and all educational levels: primary and upper-secondary schools, vocational, higher and adult education. This study is of use on both a national and international level. It serves both readers who wish to obtain an overview of cooperation in bilateral education and research between the Nordic countries and Russia, as well as readers interested in becoming acquainted with the various forms in which Nordic countries cooperate in the fields of education and research with Russia as a whole.

[Read full article](#)

International survey on educational leadership



The Finnish National Board of Education has subcontracted a wide international survey on the position of educational leaders and education in different countries. The survey was made by Palmenia Centre for Continuing Education of the University of Helsinki. In the survey information on leaderships models and practices were collected from the following countries or regions: Finland, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Germany, Netherlands, France (Paris), Scotland, Russia (Saint Petersburg), Canada (Ontario), USA (New York City, Los Angeles), China (Shanghai), South Korea, Australia (state of Victoria) and New Zealand.

[Read full article](#)

ICDE study on regulatory frameworks for distance education in the Southwest Pacific/ South East Asia Region published



This study presents the outcomes of case studies of nine higher education institutions, and analyses the key regulatory barriers and enablers for distance education for twenty-three countries in the study region. The existing laws, policies, rules and regulations related to distance and online education in the region have been collated in this study and posted in an open database. The frameworks of countries within the region have been compared for similarities and differences, in particular, highlighting those elements that hinder development in distance education. Read the full report online.

[Read full article](#)

Events

VISCED presented at Future of Education Conference in Florence

Daniela Proli from SCIENTER presented VISCED on June 8 at the "Future of Education" conference organised by Pixel in Florence. This conference, now in its second year, is set to be a significant annual event in the elearning calendar and attracted about 250 people, many of whom came from non-EU countries. Daniela provided an overview of the work carried out by the partnership to date and used it as an opportunity to describe how the



virtual school phenomenon manifests itself in Europe with a specific reference to the European case studies currently being undertaken by the project team.

[Read full article](#)

Presentation of VISCED at EDEN Conference in Porto



The annual EDEN Conference took place in Porto this year from 6-9 June. Attracting about 350 participants, this year the theme of the conference was "Open Learning Generations - Closing the Gap from Generation "Y" to Mature Lifelong Learners". Paul Bacsich presented the VISCED project in a session featuring significant European and International e-Learning Initiatives where he provided an update on the status of the project and highlighted a number of distinguishing features of virtual schooling.

[Read full article](#)

Projects

Have your say on how ICT can help make lifelong learning a reality



A Europe wide consultation into the most relevant change factors and how do they affect lifelong learning is being spear-headed by VISIR, a European initiative bringing together networks representing learners and learning providers. This initiative aims to develop a shared vision about how ICT may help making lifelong learning a reality. Take part in the consultation.

[Read full article](#)

Project news

Interviews, presentations and other materials published about the Sheffield Colloquium on Virtual Schools



Following the success of the first ever gathering of Virtual Schools in Europe, a dedicated section of the VISCED project site has been opened which includes interviews with many of the participants. This event took place on 22 May and brought together virtual school practitioners from all over Europe as well as the US. This section also includes recordings of the presentations that were given, the slides and materials shown and links to many relevant websites.

[Read full article](#)

Paul's Blog

Virtual schooling at World OER Congress



I was fortunate to attend the World OER Congress and Exhibition/Seminar last week at the UNESCO Paris office. The main focus was of course on OER as such but several interesting developments for virtual schools came up.

[Read full blog post](#)

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VISCED



A Transnational Appraisal of
Virtual School and College Provision

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Virtual Schools and Colleges Newsletter - September 2012 Issue

Friday, 28 September 2012

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You are very welcome to send us news about developments related to virtual schools and colleges in your region or country, share this newsletter with your colleagues and join us on the Virtual Schools and Colleges [wiki](#).

This months' articles

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- › [Swedish school without classrooms](#)
- › [FINNABLE 2020 Project is now online](#)
- › [Learn more about the Systemic Learning Solutions project in Finland](#)
- › [ELE - New learning environments in teacher education in Finland](#)
- › [Really blended learning opportunities in Californian High School](#)
- › [Take part in a European public consultation on Opening up Education](#)
- › [Cutting costs through partnership in US cyber schools](#)
- › [Online for-profit college in the US faces difficulties](#)
- › [Report on growing European eLearning market published](#)
- › [US Report on the growth of online courses and the rise in "for profit" colleges](#)
- › [Schools Open Doors to New E-Learning Rules and Ideas](#)
- › [Important Canadian study on online learning reveals colleges as leading providers](#)
- › [Webinar "Benchmark Survey on the Best Practices for Implementing Online Learning Programs"](#)
- › [Film showing unconventional educational experiences in Latin America](#)
- › [VISCED to be presented at EDEN conference focused on students' experiences](#)
- › [First state-funded virtual school in UK soon? Implications](#)

News

[Controversial article about profit-making in US Virtual schools](#)

The Portland Press Herald, a daily broadsheet with a circulation of about 50,000 and serving the largest and principal commercial city in the state of Maine recently published a highly controversial report on motives behind publicly funded virtual schools in the



state claiming that Maine's digital education agenda is being guided behind the scenes by out-of-state companies that stand to profit on the changes and stating that the online education companies that wish to operate Maine's virtual schools divert precious public education dollars into profits and dividends while providing education of dubious quality.

[Read full article](#)

Swedish school without classrooms



The [Telefonplan School](#) in Stockholm has taken a radically new approach to education that involves doing away with classrooms and grades and pioneering a system where students learn in groups at their level, not necessarily by age. The architect behind this school, Rosan Bosch, designed the school so children could work independently in open-spaces while lounging, or go to "the village" to work on group-projects.

[Read full article](#)

FINNABLE 2020 Project is now online



The Tekes funded [FINNABLE 2020](#) is a value network project that creates new learning ecosystems which enable people to learn regardless of time and place. The main aim of the project is to create and develop technologically enabled practices that bring added value to learning and teaching and foster social practices that connect learners to global collaboration, promoting life-long learning.

[Read full article](#)

Learn more about the Systemic Learning Solutions project in Finland



The Systemic Learning Solutions ([SysTech](#)) project promotes the learning and teaching of 21st century skills with the aid of Finnish educational know-how and technological learning solutions. The aim is to make systemic learning solutions an integral part of the Finnish education system as well as an essential part of Finnish education export. The goal is that systemic learning solutions are validated and implemented on a large scale into different educational systems.

[Read full article](#)

ELE - New learning environments in teacher education in Finland



The ELE project is shaping the foundation of the welfare society nationally and internationally. The Finnish educational system and teacher training at the University of Helsinki have created a strong foundation for Finland's success in PISA evaluations. The project uses top scientific expertise to develop learning contents, physical spaces and services and networks with the help of new technology, creating a platform for distributing the Finnish equal-opportunity model of teaching and learning both nationally and internationally. You can find out more at the [ELE project site](#).

[Read full article](#)

Really blended learning opportunities in Californian High School



A recent article in the Inland Valley Daily Bulletin reports on students' reactions to a highschool that combines virtual learning, face-to-face instruction and blended approaches with teachers in the classroom while a student is online in the same room. This new programme at Chaffey District Online High School offers the courses required for college preparedness in California, with the flexibility of allowing students to work at their own schedule with as much supervision and help as they need.

[Read full article](#)

Take part in a European public consultation on Opening up Education



The Commission services (DG EAC) has launched a public consultation on "Opening up Education – a proposal for a European Initiative to enhance education and skills development through new technologies". This consultation is aimed at all stakeholders affected by education and training policies and systems, including school education, vocational education and training, higher education and adult education. Contributions are expected from public authorities, organisations and citizens. The consultation is available until 13 November 2012 - you can access it [here](#).

[Read full article](#)

Cutting costs through partnership in US cyber schools

The US state of Pennsylvania is witnessing the emergence of new partnerships that help cut costs for students attending one of the state's 13 cyber schools. A report in eSchool in late July highlighted the partnership which brings together The Learning Lamp and In-



Shore Technologies who are now offering Blended Learning Technologies (BLT), which provides curriculum, teachers, hardware, and tech support for half the cost districts pay when a student enrolls in one of the state's 13 cyber charter schools.

[Read full article](#)

Online for-profit college in the US faces difficulties



In the July edition of eCampus news there is a [report](#) on the problems faced by Ashford University, one of the fastest growing online schools. One of the biggest problems facing this college is the rejection of its request for accreditation by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC). Ashford's own [website](#) makes no mention of these difficulties and continues to make large numbers of college-level courses available online.

[Read full article](#)

Reports

Report on growing European eLearning market published



Some impressive figures are mentioned in a [report](#) published on 25 September by New Ambient Insight. According to this study, the growth rate for Self-paced eLearning in Western Europe is 5.8% and revenues will reach \$8.1 billion by 2016, up from \$6.1 billion in 2011, according to this Insight report called, "The Western Europe Market for Self-paced eLearning Products and Services: 2011-2016 Forecast and Analysis." In this regional report, revenue forecasts are broken out for twenty-two countries: Spain, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden, Switzerland, Denmark, Italy, Finland, Belgium, Norway, Poland, the United Kingdom, Hungary, Austria, Ireland, Slovakia, Greece, Bulgaria, Portugal, the Czech Republic, and Romania.

[Read full article](#)

US Report on the growth of online courses and the rise in "for profit" colleges



Cracking The Credit Hour, a new [report](#) by Amy Laitinen for The New America Foundation, describes how the growth of online courses and the rise in 'for profit' colleges is adding to pressure on US colleges and universities to move away from the traditional 'seat-time' based model towards a competency based model. In a move supported by the federal government, some schools, colleges and universities have already migrated to a competency based model - something which is said to have been particularly to the benefit of adult learners.

[Read full article](#)

Schools Open Doors to New E-Learning Rules and Ideas



This special report, part of Education Week's ongoing series on virtual education, examines how US state policymakers, educators, and schools are rethinking and changing the rules for e-learning. It provides analyses on the benefits and drawbacks of these changes, and what to expect during this school year and beyond. Read this [eMagazine](#) focusing on US issues.

[Read full article](#)

Important Canadian study on online learning reveals colleges as leading providers



A recent [article](#) in Contact North reports on the main outcomes of a key Canadian study into online learning. It showed that Ontario had over 20,000 online courses available from its colleges and universities and that these generated some 485,619 registrations, making Ontario Canada's leader in online learning. The data also revealed that colleges lead universities in the proportion of their courses available online (23% versus 7%), indicating what the opportunities are for expanding the sector's online learning provision. Colleges also lead in terms of the number of programs with 20% of college programs available online compared to 6% of university programs.

[Read full article](#)

Events

Webinar "Benchmark Survey on the Best Practices for Implementing Online Learning Programs"

Implementing online learning can be a complex process, and a smooth implementation is critical for success. [MDR Education Market Research](#) recently conducted a survey of over 220 educators at all levels on the most critical success factors for implementing credit recovery, online courses, and full time programs. A webinar showcasing the survey results was held on the 20th of September 2012.



[Read full article](#)

Projects

Film showing unconventional educational experiences in Latin America



This documentary film called "The Forbidden Education" is a collectively funded project based on a study which spans eight Latin American countries and analyzes 45 unconventional educational experiences, closely examining the logic of modern schooling and its understanding of education. Available in Spanish, but with English and Portuguese subtitles, it includes interviews with more than 90 education professionals who are applying alternative educational proposals.

[Read full article](#)

Project news

VISCED to be presented at EDEN conference focused on students' experiences



"Learners in the Driving Seat", the 7th [EDEN Research Workshop](#), organised in collaboration with KU Leuven will take place on 22-23 October 2012 in Leuven, Belgium. This year's workshop reflects on how students are driving teachers and instructors in the fields where new learning technologies play an important role. The VISCED paper "Virtual Schools and Colleges in Europe: Looking for Success Factors" was accepted and will be presented during the conference by Ilse Op de Beeck (KU Leuven).

[Read full article](#)

Paul's Blog

First state-funded virtual school in UK soon? Implications



The [Sunday Times](#) reported on 1 July 2012 that the Secretary of State for Education (England) Michael Gove "is expected to sign off on a further 80-100 schools in the next 10 days under the Tory policy to let parents, teachers, charities and other groups set up state schools. They will add to the 92 free schools so far approved of which 24 are already open." One at least is expected to be a virtual school.

[Read full blog post](#)

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- ▶ [e2020 Inc. Goes "Back to School" with Courses based on New Interactive Instructional Model](#)
- ▶ [Extra funding available in the US to support literacy projects](#)
- ▶ [2012 Report on Online and Blended Learning in the US published](#)
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- ▶ [Summary brochure available about the VISCED project](#)
- ▶ [Virtual Schools and Colleges presentation at Media & Learning](#)
- ▶ [Volume 1 of Virtual Schools and Colleges Handbook available!](#)
- ▶ [Meeting of International Advisory Committee taking place in Berlin](#)
- ▶ [Presentation of VISCED at Online Educa Berlin](#)
- ▶ [Critical Success Factors for Virtual Schools presented at EDEN Conference](#)
- ▶ [European Virtual School and College research presented at iNACOL](#)

News

[Join us for a free webinar on the outputs of VISCED on 10 December](#)



The VISCED Project partners are organising a [webinar](#) to present the main findings of the project on Monday 10 December at 15:00 CET. This one hour webinar will provide a summary of the main outputs of the project including a description of the status of virtual schools and colleges in Europe. It will also summarise a set of recommendations generated through the work of the partners related to how best to foster and encourage effective virtual schooling options for those who could best benefit from flexible alternatives to traditional schools and colleges.

[Read full article](#)

[Australia looks towards virtual classrooms](#)



Stuff.co.nz recently reported that the Victoria state government will resort to using “virtual classrooms” - where multiple schools share the same teacher over the internet - as it may not have enough qualified staff to fulfil its promise to teach every child a second language. Before the last state election, Ted Baillieu promised a languages revival in which every Victorian student up to year 10 would be required to take on a language by 2025, starting with prep in 2015.

[Read full article](#)

[Official government report suggests changes in Swedish legislation](#)



A recent report in Sweden may make virtual schooling more available. The basic argument contained in this report is that every child should have an equal right to education. The report suggests that children in community care and children in need of distance education (such as children engaged in elite training) should be able to take part in distance or remote education.

[Read full article](#)

[Designing the Future Classroom Project actively engaged in pilot activities](#)



iTEC (Innovative Technologies for Engaging Classrooms) is a major EU-funded project in which European Schoolnet is working with education ministries, technology providers and research organisations to bring about transformation in learning and teaching through the strategic application of learning technology. The project lasts from 2010 to 2014. The most recent newsletter available from iTEC describes current activities in the project which includes the launch of Cycle 3 at the iTEC teacher workshop, the availability of recommendations on mainstreaming pilot results and the creation of the iTEC Knowledge Map. Visit the iTEC [website](#) to find out more about what is happening in the project.

[Read full article](#)

[Extra funding available in the US to support literacy projects](#)



The U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan recently announced the award of \$28 million for 46 first-time grants that aim to improve literacy skills for students in high-need districts and schools. Funded for the first time under the Innovative Approaches to Literacy (IAL) Program, grants are designed to increase student achievement by promoting early literacy for young children and by motivating older children to read. “Literacy is the key to higher learning and a window to the world”, said U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan.

[Read full article](#)

[e2020 Inc. Goes 'Back to School' with Courses based on New Interactive Instructional Model](#)



High engagement curriculum, media-rich, personalized appeals to today's digital learners. One of the fastest-growing providers of online learning solutions, recently announced that it has released a large selection of courses for the 2012-2013 school year. These courses were built on a new instructional model and expressly designed to meet US state and Common Core State Standards (CCSS).

[Read full article](#)

Reports

2012 Report on Online and Blended Learning in the US published



INACOL has published its annual report on the status of online and blended learning in US schools. Entitled "Keeping Pace with K-12 online and blended learning - an annual Review of Policy and Practice" this ninth annual [report](#) provides a comprehensive overview of various trends and developments. In their opening snapshot the authors point to four themes that stand out from their research. First that while many US states have created or allowed some online and blended learning opportunities, apart from Florida, no state has yet created or allowed a full range of online learning options for students.

[Read full article](#)

Latest edition of E-xcellence Manual on quality assessment published

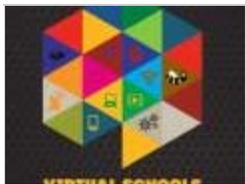


The newest version of the E-xcellence [Manual](#) entitled "Quality Assessment for E-learning: a Benchmarking Approach" was launched at the 25th EADTU Anniversary Conference in Pafos/Cyprus. This manual is the main product of a suite of EU funded projects undertaken under the auspices of EADTU: E-xcellence (2005-2006), E-xcellence plus (2008-2009) and E-xcellence Next (2011-2012). The overall aim of these projects has been to develop a methodology and supporting resources for the quality assurance of e-learning in higher education.

[Read full article](#)

Project news

Summary brochure available about the VISCED project



An 8 page glossy [brochure](#) summarising the main findings of the VISCED Project has been produced by the project team and is available for distribution. This publication is currently available in English however Danish, Estonian, Greek, Finnish, Swedish and Dutch versions will be available shortly. The brochure describes the prevalence of virtual schools and colleges in Europe and includes a series of short descriptions of examples, a set of key success factors and a list of main recommendations.

[Read full article](#)

Virtual Schools and Colleges presentation at Media & Learning



Giles Pepler from Sero Consulting presented the VISCED project during the Media & Learning Conference held in Brussels on 14-15 November. During his presentation, Giles highlighted the ways in which virtual schools and colleges use media to support their learning offer. Giles also managed a stand at the conference where copies of the project handbook and brochure proved to be a very popular giveaway amongst conference participants. [Media & Learning](#) attracted more than 280 people from 41 countries, videos and presentations will be available from the online programme and the conference report will be available shortly.

[Read full article](#)

Volume 1 of Virtual Schools and Colleges Handbook available!



The first of two volumes of the VISCED Handbook entitled "[Virtual Schools and Colleges - Providing Alternatives for Successful Learning](#)" is now available from the project team. This volume includes a summary of virtual school and college activity around the world, a series of case studies, a description of a set of innovative piloting activities supported by the project and a chapter on policy challenges and opportunities. The second and final volume of this handbook will be available in December.

[Read full article](#)

[Meeting of International Advisory Committee taking place in Berlin](#)



A half day meeting of the VISCED International Advisory Committee is taking place on Wednesday 28 November in Berlin. The agenda for this meeting will include a discussion about Key and Critical Success Factors for virtual schools and colleges, and will be based in the outcomes of several project reports. It will also provide an opportunity to discuss policy challenges, opportunities and recommendations for the future.

[Read full article](#)

[Presentation of VISCED at Online Educa Berlin](#)



A presentation of the VISCED project will be given by Nikolaos Zygouritsas, Lambrakis Foundation, Greece on Friday 30 November during a parallel session taking place from 11.45 - 13.00. This session is entitled "An online learning environment can go beyond replication of traditional classroom learning. Online Universities, Distance Learning, Virtual Schools: what makes them work and are they really innovative places?" and will be chaired by Paul Bacsich. The title of Nikos' presentation is "Virtual Schools as Innovative ICT-Enhanced Learning/Teaching Exemplar Initiatives: What Makes Things Work?"

[Read full article](#)

[Critical Success Factors for Virtual Schools presented at EDEN Conference](#)



Ilse Op de Beeck from KU Leuven gave a presentation about VISCED at the recent [EDEN Research workshop](#) held in KU Leuven on 23-24 October. This presentation, entitled "Virtual Schools and Colleges in Europe: Looking for Success Factors" was made on behalf of the VISCED partner EFQUEL and provided an overview of the process in which partners are engaged to identify a relevant set of success factors for the virtual school sector.

[Read full article](#)

[European Virtual School and College research presented at iNACOL](#)



Paul Bacsich, VISCED Coordinator, took part in the recent iNACOL Virtual School Symposium entitled "Inventing the Future of Learning" which took place from 21-24 October in New Orleans. This symposium brought together over 2,000 representatives from national, state, district, private, and other virtual school programs to take part in the largest K-12 online and blended learning conference of its kind in the US. Find out more from the conference [website](#).

[Read full article](#)

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