



Reviewing (traces of) European Virtual Campuses

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Report Theoretical Categorisation of Virtual Campuses

Table of Content

Types of Virtual Campuses	3
Theoretical Categorisation by IAC and other experts	11
Theoretical Categorisation Approach on the wiki.....	16

Types of Virtual Campuses

As seen from the previous chapter of this handbook, Re.ViCa partners determined quite early in the project that no simple definition of the term *virtual campus* could be agreed upon. A virtual campus might represent a grand consortium of national university partners, yet might as easily be formed within a single university department. Learning could take place entirely via the internet, but a more traditional-seeming “blended” or “hybrid” format might flourish as well. No two countries examined have seen the term used in quite the same way – and thus it is appropriate that in the end, no single definition of a *virtual campus* is here given precedence over any other.

This has meant, of course, that the list of institutions to be inventoried and classified as part of the [Re.ViCa wiki](#) project has become increasingly inclusive, and therefore expanded at a pace that has surprised even the core team (at the time of writing, over 500 discrete programmes worldwide were represented, with new ones still being identified for inclusion every month). The broader the definition of *virtual campus* became, the more complex the task of developing a taxonomy to describe the various virtual campuses seemed. Yet a primary outcome of this handbook was to come up with a practical yet comprehensive mechanism by which to do just that: i.e., to categorise the various types of virtual campuses as part of a broader process of identifying measures of success, best practices and generic parameters that might influence future virtual campus outcomes. There might be no standardised definition of a *virtual campus* itself, but a standardised system for categorising virtual campuses would be required all the same.

Developing a system which identifies the key similarities and differences among the different initiatives, manifestations, and instances in which virtual campuses are initiated has required a process of iteration among [project partners](#) and members of Re.ViCa’s broader [International Advisory Committee](#) (IAC). Some approached the matter through literature review, whilst others undertook the technological process of wiki categorisation to “test drive” the theories being discussed. We have debated classification criteria ranging from the geographical to the pedagogical, with the system described in this chapter ultimately approved by partners as the culmination of a thorough process of investigation and discussion.¹

Partners remain keenly aware that the results of this undertaking are not necessarily complete; in the future, categories may still be subject to clarification, expansion and/or change. Technological advances cannot be anticipated, after all, and in this new era, educational concepts and settings may shift as rapidly: today’s commonplace ideas may seem outlandish only a few years on. Our system has sought to take such potential for change into account, a decision which has limited somewhat the scope of categorisation within the areas of presently understood pedagogies, technologies and learning styles – yet one which should contribute significantly to the project’s long-term relevance.

Our categorisation system is also intended to clarify the “marketspace”, providing key actors with a better understanding of evolutions and trends within the higher education landscape. It is focused deliberately on virtual campuses within the postsecondary (and primarily higher) education sector, although it might be extended (with appropriate adaptation) to other areas of education – such as virtual schools or virtual training. Finally, with respect to this handbook, the system of categorisation described herein can be used as a reference tool to complement the next chapter, the *World Tour*.

References

¹ Bristow, S.F., “Creating a Suitable Categorisation Model for Re.ViCa”, *Re.ViCa Newsletter*, April 2009, 1.

Re.ViCa's Approach to Virtual Campus Categorisation

As discussed in a recent paper by Re.ViCa partners,² it was clear from the start of our investigation that we might take numerous approaches to classifying virtual campuses, addressing aspects such as funding model, degree of “virtuality”, organisational model, partnership model, and various other criteria. The list grew increasingly complex as we examined existing work in this field, including that of the [BENVIC project](#)³ and the [UNESCO IIEP project](#) on the Virtual University and e-Learning, as well as studies carried out by researchers like Robin Mason, Sabine Seufert and Paul Bacsich (Re.ViCa's own lead researcher). Readers will find a top-level overview of this research online, within the Re.ViCa wiki page on [categorisation](#).⁴

The UNESCO categorisation of [Virtual University Models](#)⁵ was taken as our most appropriate starting point, although this was modified to include four additional parameters. As such, all virtual campuses and programmes listed in the wiki are now classified according to the following criteria (elaborated in the subsections which follow): (A) UNESCO Category, (B) Political Scope of Initiative, (C) Current Status of Initiative, (D) Internal Scale of Initiative and (E) Academic Level of Initiative.

Categories which are less directly related to virtual campus classification have been applied to relevant wiki articles as well, e.g., for countries of origin, research labs and even publications ([among others](#)). These additional categories are addressed briefly at the end of the chapter. Note that – as discussed elsewhere in this handbook – an institution need no longer be operational to be valuable to the Re.ViCa inventory.

² Bacsich, P. et al., "The Re.ViCa project: a review of virtual campuses", in *Collected papers of the Cambridge International Conference on Open and Distance Learning 2009: Supporting learning in the digital age: rethinking inclusion, pedagogy and quality* (September 2009), 60, <http://www2.open.ac.uk/r06/documents/CambridgeConferenceMainPaper2009.pdf>.

³ Benchmarking of Virtual Campuses (BENVIC), "What is a Virtual Campus?", 2002, <http://www.benvic.odl.org>.

⁴ Re.ViCa wiki, "Categorisation", <http://virtualcampuses.eu/index.php/Categorisation>.

⁵ "Virtual universities: emerging models", in *The Virtual University Models and Messages: Lessons from Case Studies*, ed. D' Antoni, S., (UNESCO IIEP. 2006), <http://www.unesco.org/iiep/virtualuniversity/home.php#models>.

A. UNESCO Categorisation of Initiatives

The following categories form the basis of the Re.ViCa virtual campus categorisation scheme. For completeness, the full UNESCO [Virtual University Models](#) definitions follow the adopted Re.ViCa naming convention in parentheses (where relevant).

The basic UNESCO categories are as follows:

- **Newly Created Institutions** (UNESCO: *a newly created institution operating as a virtual university*)
- **Evolution of Existing Institutions** (UNESCO: *an evolution of an existing institution, with a unit or arm offering virtual education*)
- **Consortia** (UNESCO: *a consortium of partners constituted to develop and/or offer virtual education*)
- **Private Providers** (UNESCO: *a commercial enterprise offering online education*)
- **Private Nonprofit Providers** (Re.ViCa has added this special category for clarification)

Each UNESCO category is reviewed in the next few pages according to its Re.ViCa interpretation.

Newly Created Institutions: *Institutions created specifically to operate in e-learning mode (usually in or after 1996). A newly created institution should represent a “new build” university, virtual from its inception. Institutions thus classified typically provide either all or most of their course offerings online. There are fewer newly created institutions than a hopeful analyst might imagine (45 at the time of writing), although there are countries in which such entities flourish. See, for example, the Italian telematic universities and the Korean cyber universities on our wiki. In general terms, it seems that many governments and agencies in Europe and beyond remain reluctant to invest in these distance e-learning sites.*

❖ Examples: [Swiss Virtual Campus](#); [UNITAR](#) (Malaysia)

Evolution of Existing Institutions: *Institutions which – though founded as traditional or standard (paper-based) distance learning institutions – have evolved from their original format to offer courses through e-learning. An evolution of an existing institution might refer to an entire university with a significant virtual campus offering; a department (e.g., e-learning or other subject) offering pure-mode online degrees; or an e-learning offshoot which has branched out under its own name/business model (to name but a few of the configurations we have seen). This is perhaps the most inclusive of virtual campus categories, with 175 members in our inventory at the time of writing.*

❖ Examples: [Open Universiteit Nederland](#) (Dutch Open University); [Massey University](#) (New Zealand)

Consortia: *Associations of partners working towards a common goal. This typically indicates an association of businesses, institutions and/or agencies formed for the purpose of engaging in a joint venture with a substantial e-learning aspect. We speak about a consortium of partners as constituted to develop and/or offer virtual education, where a number of universities join together in a more or less tight organisational framework to wrap a “skin” of virtuality around them. The European Commission has directly or indirectly fostered several of these, as have national funding agencies (e.g., in the UK). Generally speaking, this is a rather comfortable model for governments and related agencies, with 123 represented in our inventory at the time of writing.*

❖ Examples: [UNINETTUNO](#) (Italy); [Katholieke Universiteit Leuven Association](#) (Belgium); [eCampus Alberta](#) (Canada)

Private Providers: *Institutions which provide e-learning through a company aiming to produce a profit. (These are known as commercial enterprises under the UNESCO scheme.)* When it comes to the matter of private providers, the extent to which a virtual campus can be considered commercial is sometimes opaque. This distinction is not always explicit with respect to traditional universities either, as most of these now operate in the commercial world themselves to some extent. There were 74 private (for-profit) providers in the wiki at the time of writing, pre-screened for academic accreditation and reputation, although there are several hundred more examples known (many concentrated in the USA).

❖ Examples: [U21Global](#) (Singapore); [University of Phoenix Online](#) (USA)

Private Nonprofit Providers: *Institutions that provide e-learning, which are neither public institutions nor commercial enterprises, but are rather set up in nonprofit form (such as foundations, charities, or religious bodies).* Introducing the subcategory of private nonprofit providers allows for further granularity within the original concept of private providers. Unlike private for-profit providers, in some countries, these entities may receive public funds.

❖ Examples: [Egyptian E-Learning University](#); [Arab Open University](#)

Prior to implementation, partners reviewed subtle distinctions among UNESCO categories, critical to establishing a framework for classification. Would an *evolution of an existing institution* include the for-profit arm of a traditional university, or would this be classified as a *private provider*? (It is the former.) Must a *newly created institution* be 100% online? (No.) A wiki is particularly well-suited to this iteration process, in that it allows individuals with specialised knowledge to assist with hands-on classification (and re-classification) of an initiative or institution where grey areas exist. Similarly, wiki format allows us to address overlaps by placing programmes into multiple categories as needed – see, for example, the [UK e-University](#), which for all our efforts could seem to fit neatly into any of the above categories, depending on the criteria given precedence.

B. Political Scope of Initiatives

The following categories form the basis of Re.ViCa's cross-cutting political categorisation scheme. For initiatives which involve administration, course development and/or course delivery by one or more institutions, we consider whether these are:

- National Initiatives
- Multinational Initiatives
- International Initiatives
- VC Supported by EC (Virtual Campuses Supported by the European Commission – a special kind of “International Initiative”)

Each political category is reviewed below according to its Re.ViCa interpretation.

National Initiatives: *Initiatives from one country – or a region, state or province within that country – involving institutions nationwide, in most cases founded (and funded) by a national agency.* This term refers to an initiative taken by a ministry or national agency in a country to set up a programme focused on e-learning in university-level institutions. Note that “national” may refer to an autonomous or semi-autonomous part of a country, e.g., Scotland (UK) or Catalonia (Spain) – or even to one of the states or provinces in federal countries such as Australia, Canada, China, India or the USA.

Typically most countries have only one national initiative extant at a time, and many countries (e.g., in Europe) have none, or none currently. There has been recent discussion within the project and International Advisory Committee around the premise that *Europe is tired of national initiatives*. While this is accurate at a headline level, especially in the westerly European Union, the truth is more complex. One country retains a seemingly inexhaustible enthusiasm for them (the UK); and they continue to appear towards the east end of the EU (e.g., Bulgaria and Estonia) and just south of the EU (e.g., Egypt).⁶ Thus there are in fact just over 20 different countries with one or more national initiatives. See the *World Tour*, chapter 3, for details.

- ❖ Examples: [Open Universities Australia](#); [Hanoi Open University](#) (Vietnam)

Multinational Initiatives: *e-Learning initiatives taken by more than one country but not many, and not by a supranational political grouping or range of countries in a region (e.g., the European Union).* As with international initiatives, in this arrangement partners act together to set up a programme focused on e-learning within university-level institutions.

- ❖ Example: [eChina](#)

International Initiatives: *e-Learning initiatives straddling more than one country and promoted by an international agency or supranational body such as the EU, World Bank or UNESCO.* This typically refers to an initiative taken by a supranational political grouping or range of countries in a region – such as the European Union – to set up a programme focused on e-learning within university-level institutions. The case of EU-wide initiatives funded by the EU is taken separately; see below.

- ❖ Examples: [United Nations University](#); [University of the Arctic](#)

VC Supported by EC: *Virtual Campus projects supported (funded) by the European Commission.* This category is in fact a special case of the prior one. It includes assorted virtual campus-related projects selected under different calls from the European Union.

- ❖ Examples: [Virtual Campus for A Sustainable Europe](#) (VCSE); [OIKODOMOS](#)

Occasionally, representatives of each political initiative type listed above will set up a consortium or generate a *newly created institution*, leading to some overlap among UNESCO classifications. This is neither unusual nor problematic under the Re.ViCa classification scheme.

At the time of writing, the wiki inventory contained 19 international initiatives; 58 national initiatives; and 74 VC supported by EC (typically short-term projects with fixed end dates). There was only a single multinational initiative, though there are known to be more.

⁶ Bacsich, P. et al., "The Re.ViCa project: a review of virtual campuses".

C. Current Status of Initiatives

A number of initiatives which operated previously do not now exist. Many remain of interest to analysts and are thus inventoried for this project, whatever their fate. Differentiating among reasons for closure is critical to understanding a virtual campus's unique story – indeed, we are particularly interested in comparing those entities which have collapsed and yet somehow continued, albeit with a modified structure, within higher education.⁷

We presently distinguish between the following:

FELIs (Failed e-Learning Initiatives): *Initiatives which are no longer active, and are commonly considered to have specifically “failed” to meet their goals (e.g., by entering bankruptcy).*

❖ Examples: [US Open University](#) (USA); [UK e-University](#) (UK)

CELIs (Ceased e-Learning Initiatives): *Initiatives which – for reasons other than failure – are no longer active and have officially ceased to exist. These initiatives may have come to a planned close due to a number of factors, including re-branding as (or merging with) another institution or initiative; or meeting project goals (as in the case of a fixed-term project).*

❖ Examples: [e-TQM College](#) (UAE); [Swiss Virtual Campus](#)

As it is often difficult to obtain information about initiatives which have ceased operations, differentiating between these two categories can pose a challenge to even the most skilled desk researchers. Furthermore, that certain entities have failed outright may seem unarguable to some, yet remain debatable for others – and there is rarely anyone left standing who is willing to clarify things after operations have ceased.

There are unintended ambiguities here as well. What if a failure has been gradual enough to appear (to external observers) like a planned closure? And if this is possible, then is there any substantive difference between the categories? Despite the apparent simplicity of the distinction between them, these two have been challenging categories to apply. It would seem that here as in other attempts at granularity, categorisation introduces divisions into the seamless but complex space of virtual campuses.

D. Internal Scale of Initiatives

The scope of an e-learning initiative within an existing institution may tell us much about it from the outset – and help form a simple basis for comparison. Without a strict definition of *virtual campus* in play, classifying e-learning initiatives by relative scale emerged early on as a desirable tool.

Re.ViCa has arrived at a three-tier differentiation:

NELIs (Notable e-Learning Initiatives): *Initiatives which are interesting in a country, e.g., to other universities or analysts, and satisfy many but not all MELI criteria.*

❖ [University of Jyväskylä](#) (Finland); [Université Nancy 2](#) (France)

MELIs (Major e-Learning Initiatives): *Initiatives which operate on a large scale within an institution, at the top level. Detailed organisational criteria are identified clearly on the Re.ViCa [wiki](#) and in chapter 2, *What is a Virtual Campus?**

❖ [Beijing Normal University](#) (China); [University of Ulster](#) (Northern Ireland)

GELIs (Giant e-Learning Initiatives): *Initiatives which are very large MELIs.*

❖ Examples: [The Open University](#) (UK); [Open University of China](#)

Partners have pointed out that surely *all* programmes contained within our inventory should be considered NELIs, or “Notable e-Learning Initiatives”, in a literal sense; if not, then why are they included within our research? Some confusion has therefore surrounded the application of the NELI category. Indeed, there was much internal discussion regarding what the word *notable* should indicate in any context, as we worked to identify to whom an initiative need be considered *notable*

⁷ Re.ViCa wiki, s.v. “Project”, <http://www.virtualcampuses.eu/index.php/Re.ViCa>About> (accessed November 2009).

enough for study. We came to accept the views of various well-known e-learning experts, agencies and project reports which noted the significance of an initiative or institution – and as such we dutifully scoured the main sources of “notes”, including (but not limited to) [UNESCO](#), the [Observatory on Borderless Higher Education](#) (OBHE), the [Commonwealth of Learning](#) (COL), and various conference proceedings. But then of course many of our IAC and some of our project team are “Re.ViCa experts” who participate in organising conferences, so that some circularity is introduced.

Interestingly, it has been suggested that it is the term *initiative* itself which might benefit most from additional discussion in the future. For our purposes, when differentiating among GELIs, MELIs and NELIs, an initiative need only be a coherent, recognisable postsecondary education effort with somebody initiating, overseeing and managing it. In practice, this means that some “notable e-learning initiatives” may be at the departmental level and indeed quite small. This type of analysis might lead in time to an intermediate category of DELIs, for notable initiatives which are sizable at the departmental level.

E. Academic Level of Initiatives

The separation of virtual campuses and institutions into the familiar academic categories was anticipated by partners to be one of the more intuitive aspects of Re.ViCa categorisation. On the contrary, we discovered quickly that when the scale is truly global, defining even the word *college* is not always a clear-cut task. And when it came to the more nuanced terms, e.g., *university college* and *open university*, we did encounter outright differences in opinion regarding proper usage. These appeared to be both linguistic and genuinely ideological in nature (and might raise questions about any process of comparing international academic institutions).

Following partner consultation, the basic postsecondary academic categories now used by Re.ViCa are Universities; Open Universities; University Colleges; and Colleges.

Each academic category is reviewed according to its Re.ViCa interpretation below.

Universities: *Degree-granting institutions (public or private) providing tertiary-level education with undergraduate and postgraduate degrees issued in their name.* In several countries there are institutions, including prestigious ones, who satisfy the above definition of universities but which do not have the term *university* (or its equivalent in local language) as part of their name. For uniformity, Re.ViCa categorises these as “universities” (along with any other appropriate classification). There are also select national, multinational and international Initiatives bearing the name *university* which do *not* meet the criteria laid out herein.

❖ Examples: [Aristotle University of Thessaloniki](#) (Greece); [Czech Technical University](#)

Open Universities: *Generally speaking, distance learning universities which are open to all inhabitants of a region (with few or no prerequisite qualifications).* In our wiki, the vast majority of institutions with *open university* in their name are categorised by us as “open universities”. In addition, any institution (not a consortium) which is a university and a member of one of the international associations of open universities – such as EADTU or AAOU – is categorised by us as “open universities”. There are a few other examples which self-declare as “open” even if the word is not in their name.

❖ Examples: [Open University of Hong Kong](#); [Ramkhamhaeng University](#) (Thailand)

University Colleges: *Typically, an institution (public or private) providing tertiary education at the level of undergraduate degrees, which does not have full university status and powers (for example to award postgraduate degrees in its own name).* A university college normally does not do research, but this may depend on the country context. Institutions describing themselves as “university colleges” are typically classified under this name – with a few notable counterexamples such as [University College London](#). For a fuller discussion see the Wikipedia article on the term [university college](#).

❖ Examples: [Jutland University College](#) (Denmark); [Hogeschool-Universiteit Brussel](#) (Belgium)

Colleges: *In most countries surveyed, institutions which provide tertiary education, but not at the level of university degrees.* Exceptions exist, e.g., in the USA, where the term *college* is used generically to refer to any higher education institution which awards undergraduate degrees only. We would categorise these as “university colleges” – and if they offer postgraduate degrees as well, we categorise them as “universities”. For a fuller discussion see the Wikipedia article on the term [college](#).

❖ Examples: [Hibernia College](#) (Ireland); [Corinthian Colleges](#) (USA)

As noted earlier we touch very little on pedagogy, except for the category of Open Universities. It is likely that other activities will soon encourage us to add to the categorisation, for example to have a general category of Distance Learning Providers to include such institutions as [NKI](#) (which are open colleges, not open universities) and one for Dual-mode Institutions where the face-to-face and distance learning operations are in approximate balance, such as [Thompson Rivers University](#). On the technological side one could usefully categorise those institutions which still use television – more than many imagine, including [Ramkhamhaeng University](#) and [Mackenzie University](#), as well as several pure distance teaching universities. Thus there is plenty of momentum still in the categorisation process.

Miscellaneous Categories

Not every article included in the wiki describes a virtual campus or e-learning programme – yet all are, to some degree, categorised for search and review. Other article types readers may wish to explore include [OECD members](#), [ministries](#), [distance learning associations](#), institutions studied by [MegaTrends](#), and [e-learning experts](#) (to name just a few).

An extensive geographical categorisation has been undertaken as well, sorting virtual campuses and programmes by country, region(s), native language, G8/G20 status and more, with nearly 180 geographically oriented categories applied at the time of writing (see the wiki [Categories](#) page for a full list). Regional analysis takes place in the *World Tour* chapter which follows, in which we leverage our notional categorisation to focus on the kinds of institutions that exist in different parts of the world, examining whether a virtual campus’s regional location may have a significant impact on the way it operates (and, as part of our overarching project goals, whether European virtual campuses operate in a significantly different manner from their non-European counterparts).

Conclusion

Whether the system of categorisation developed for Re.ViCa is “successful” remains to be seen. Developing a system which is comprehensive has, thus far, taken a back seat to creating one that is primarily *functional*, a goal we feel has been met. We would hope that every virtual campus and programme represented on the wiki would now fit neatly into at least one of the categories outlined above (some, we know, have made their home in as many as five – or more). Yet we would not delude ourselves into thinking this system perfect. As noted in this book’s *History of Virtual Campuses* (chapter 1), there is no strict definition of *virtual campus*. Until one is located, there can be no strict approach to categorisation either.

In the meanwhile, the Re.ViCa wiki’s search and sort capabilities have already begun to provide fruitful comparators for those seeking to analyse virtual campus initiatives worldwide. It is fascinating, for example, to compare the members of the current [Private Providers](#), [Newly Created Institutions](#), and [International Initiatives](#) categories – as much for their remarkable diversity as in hopes of identifying overlaps. No category ever seems complete when its constituent members are examined, a fact which researchers should not find daunting. The project has been developed by and for an active research community. We would hope that any remaining gaps can be filled in, over time, with input from this same group.

Theoretical Categorisation by IAC and other experts

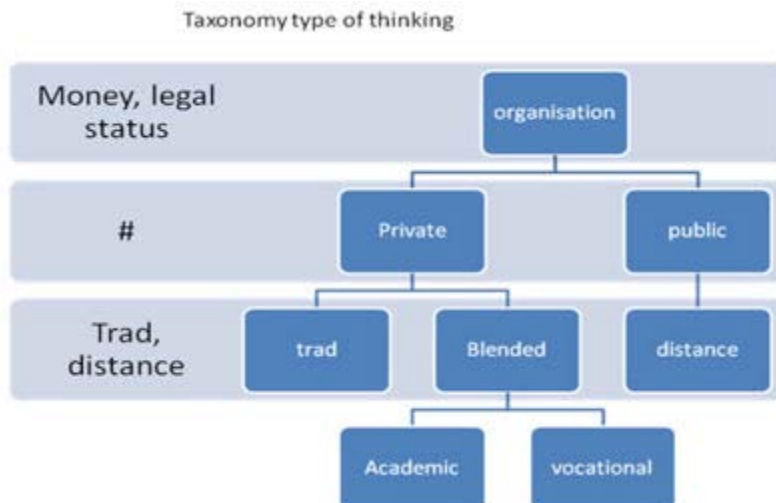
As listed by the IAC

As discussed during our key meeting in Lisbon with the [International Advisory Committee Working Group 1](#) (notes taken by [Anna-Kaarina Kairamo](#)) Discussed themes

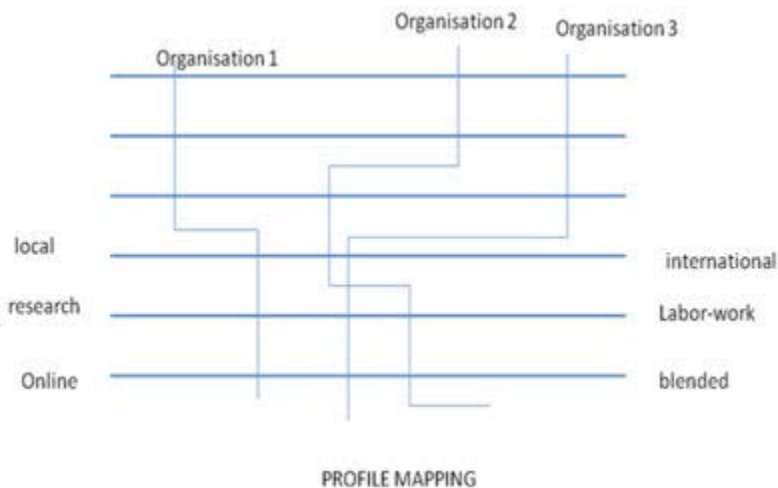
1. National – international different category, because of different laws
2. Granularity in categorisation essential
3. Some criteria which can be used are
 - legal existence
 - money
 - single /multiple
 - traditional / blended / distance, sector
4. Criteria suggested are on different level or dimensions (academic single institution, vocational are organizational criteria, distance teaching is about the method)
5. What is HE? What is Re.Vica framework?
6. Categorisation is always subjective, prefer merely dimensions instead of categories, cases can positioned within the dimensions
7. 1 Case in category problematic, 2 min so that comparison can be made
8. Frame factors (context) important
9. Cultural approach (different academic cultures of the disciplines) should be included in the criteria, culture and structure are intertwined
10. Focus on question HOW to build virtual campus instead of searching answer for question WHAT use inductive method instead of deductive
11. Instead of taxonomy profile of the VCs can be used (pict. 2 below)

Useful resource: [Trainer's and Professional's Guide to Quality in Open and Distance Learning](#)

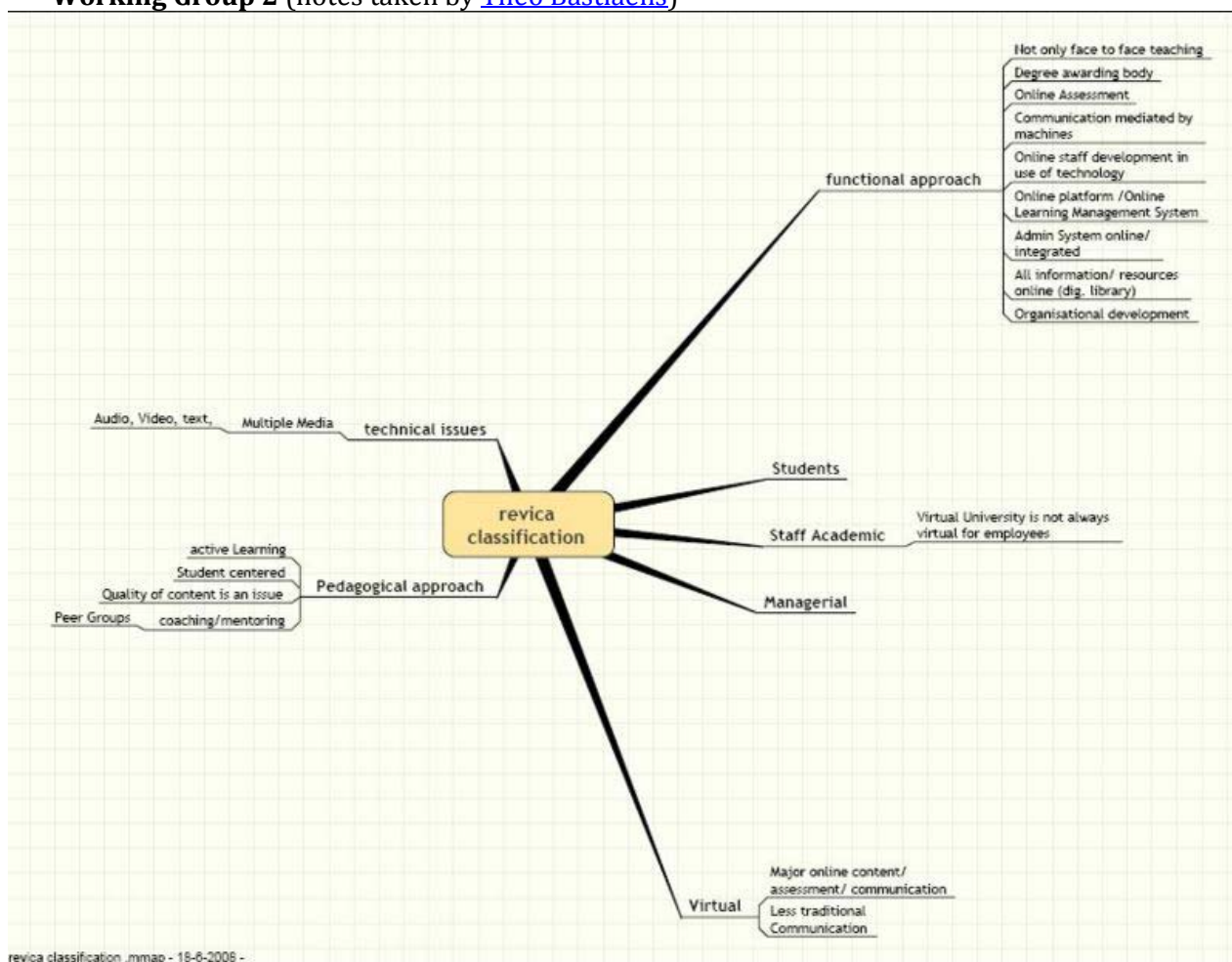
Picture 1:



Picture 2:



Working Group 2 (notes taken by [Theo Bastiaens](#))



Working Group 3 (notes taken by [Ilse Op de Beeck](#)) The discussion that took place in group 3 on the topic of a Taxonomy revolved around the idea of plotting 'Virtual Campus' along the lines of certain dimensions, and then to identify where there are clusters. This can form basis on which a taxonomy can be build. It will also allow institutions to compare themselves with each other.

Here is a list of possible dimensions that could be used:

Full academic driven (research oriented)	Fully labour market
---	----------------------------

driven)	driven
Single	Partnership
Small scale (< 100 students)	Large scale (> 100.000 students)
Local	International
Monolingual	Multilingual
Fully online	Deeply blended
Non profit orientation	For profit orientation
Mono-programme (# programmes, # of subjects)	Multi-programme
Central decision making	Decentralised decision making
Highly funded	Non funded
Objectivist	Constructivist
Distribution	Cooperation
(who produces the programme)	

As listed by other authors or project reports

[Towards a Virtual Campus Observatory for Latin America](#) By [Paul Bacsich](#), 2001 (Extract)

DIMENSIONS OF VIRTUALITY

Virtuality in a university is in my view a matter of degree, not kind. At the EdMedia workshop in Summer 1996 in Boston I proposed “five dimensions of virtuality”, and to these five I more recently added a sixth (at Online Educa 96):

1. To what extent are students not physically present on campus?
2. To what extent are staff used in non-conventional modes and contracts? (Part-timers, consultants, teleworkers, etc.)
3. To what extent is computer and network support out-sourced?
4. To what extent has physical infrastructure begun to be reduced?
5. To what extent has the legal and institutional strength been reduced? (By use of devolution, consortia, ad-hoc collaborations, etc.)
6. To what extent has the degree structure begun to dissolve into ever-smaller modules studied in an ever more flexible pattern?

ORGANISATIONAL MODELS

This is a fascinating subject, but one on which it is hard to get good information unless one is an “insider” to the organisation in question. The section below draws on material from the author, Robin Mason [2001] and Terry Anderson (Anderson and Downes [2000]), all of whom have significant experience working in several different organisations and advising several others

Types of Virtual University I detect three distinct abstract types of Virtual University:

1. A “green fields”, that is, “new build” university which is virtual from the start. In their era, the “mega universities” (Daniel, 1996) might have been so described. More recently in the European theatre, the UK University for Industry is the best known example, provided one takes a wide enough definition of “university” since its courses are on the whole sub-degree courses oriented to industry.
2. A virtual university [consortium](#). This is where a number of universities get together in a more or less tight organisational framework to put a “skin” of virtuality around all of them. The European Commission has directly or indirectly fostered several of these, as have national funding agencies including in the UK. The UK e-University is the latest example.
3. A “skin” on a conventional university (campus-based or distance learning-based), like the rind on an orange. This is what I call the Virtual Campus model – a centrally directed online learning initiative. There are at least 100 North American examples, and many more in other parts of the world including in the UK.
4. Virtual Universities run by non-university organisations ([private providers](#)).

Prof. [Robin Mason](#)'s Classification (2001)

As an alternative viewpoint, Mason (in a paper dated 2001 but written some years previously) proposes 6 models, but admits that some blur into each other. Note that some models apply to single institutions, or almost require these, as well as to consortia.

1. Brokerage – “a new organisation set up to provide courses for the life-long learning sector, but using the teaching and course resources of existing institutions”, with a “very small number of permanent staff”. Her examples: OLA (Australia), Ufi, Jones.
2. Partnership – “agreements among existing universities”. Her example: OU partnerships.
3. Umbrella – “existing organisations pull together... under the aegis of a slim superstructure”. Her examples include the Scottish University of Highlands and Islands (UHI) and Western Governors University in the mid-west US; but there are several more examples including UniRede in Brazil – see www.unirede.br
4. Greenfield – “setting up an entirely new organisation”. Her examples include new small open universities (such as TechBC) and Magellan University.
5. Network – “where existing universities and education providers collaborate in a variety of combinations” with “no central driver of the programme”. Her example is the VIRTUE project of EuroPACE.
6. Dual-mode – “teaching the same courses both face-to-face and off-campus”. Her examples include University of Southern Queensland, Penn State, Wisconsin and Phoenix; but there are many many more.

[BENVIC - Benchmarking of Virtual Campuses](#)

The dimensions

A virtual campus may typologically be described in a multi-dimensional matrix, of which the dimensions are:

- ▶ The institutional basis and mission
- ▶ The scope of the offer
- ▶ The deployed activities
- ▶ The scale of the partnership
- ▶ The partnership organisation
- ▶ The audiences
- ▶ The used teaching/learning scenarios

Sabine Seufert, E-Learning Business Models. Strategies, Success Factors and Best Practice Examples

Among innovative E-Learning business models, one may distinguish between

the Alma Mater Multimedialis, which describes a "traditional university" in the transformation process focusing on implementing the new learning paradigm, and several models offering new ways of delivering education, which include

Virtual Universities

University Networks

Corporate Universities

Education Providers

Education Consortiums

search go

NAVIGATION

- [Main Page](#)
- [Historical overview](#)
- [Virtual campus](#)
- [Inventory](#)
- [Critical Success Factors](#)
- [Resources](#)
- [Project](#)
- [Community portal](#)
- [Recent changes](#)
- [Random page](#)
- [Help](#)

Hibernia College

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Hibernia College is an international provider of online programmes at undergraduate and graduate level. It is based in Dublin, [Ireland](#) and accredited by the Irish Government's qualifications awarding body for third-level educational and training institutions outside the (public) university sector, HETAC, (the Higher Education and Training Awards Council).

Hibernia College provides all of its courses with a substantial online component, using state of the art technology for both synchronous and asynchronous course delivery. Hibernia College offers a blended learning format that combines the many advantages of interactive, multimedia-rich online content with the proven qualities of face-to-face tuition through periodic on-site sessions. The college has designed, developed and implemented a system, which it claims is "at the leading edge of international educational delivery". This technology infrastructure allows for increased student-tutor contact and encourages and supports self-directed learning in a way that is not possible using conventional modes of delivery.

Its web site is at <http://www.hiberniacollege.net>

Programmes include:

- ▶ [Higher Diploma in Primary Education](#)
- ▶ [MSc in Pharmaceutical Medicine](#)
- ▶ [iTeach, online initial teacher](#)



Case Study

[\[edit\]](#)

For further details see [Hibernia College - case study](#).

References and reports

[\[edit\]](#)

1. [Official homepage of Hibernia College, http://www.hiberniacollege.net](#)

> [Programmes](#)

[Categories: Ireland | Colleges | Newly created institutions | Private providers | MELIs](#)

[Article](#) [Discussion](#) [Edit](#) [History](#) [Protect](#) [Delete](#) [Move](#) [Watch](#) <<<

 **NAVIGATION**

- [Main Page](#)
- [Historical overview](#)
- [Virtual campus](#)
- [Inventory](#)
- [Critical Success Factors](#)
- [Resources](#)
- [Project](#)
- [Community portal](#)
- [Recent changes](#)
- [Random page](#)
- [Help](#)

Category:Newly created institutions[Category](#) [Discussion](#) [Edit](#) [History](#) [Protect](#) [Delete](#) [Watch](#) [>>>](#)

This is the category for entities which are newly created institutions (per the UNESCO Virtual Universities classification scheme). This is presently understood to mean those created specifically to operate in e-Learning mode, usually after 1996.

Articles in category "Newly created institutions"

There are 45 articles in this category.

A

- [▶ Al-Madinah International University](#)

B

- [▶ Bankit University Teledukasi](#)

C

- [▶ Campus Numérique Francophone de Dakar](#)
- [▶ Capella University](#)
- [▶ Cardean University](#)
- [▶ Cyber University](#)

D

- [▶ Daegu Cyber University](#)
- [▶ Dutch Digital University](#)

E

- [▶ E-Campus Telematic University](#)
- [▶ University of Eastern Finland - case study](#)

G

- [▶ Georgia Virtual Technical College](#)
- [▶ Gotland University](#)
- [▶ Guglielmo Marconi Telematic University](#)

H

- [▶ Hanyang Cyber University](#)
- [▶ Hibernia College](#)

H cont.

- [▶ Hong Kong Virtual University](#)

I

- [▶ Idaho Electronic Campus](#)
- [▶ Illinois Virtual Campus](#)
- [▶ International Cyber University](#)

M

- [▶ Multimedia University](#)

N

- [▶ National Programme on Technology Enhanced Learning](#)
- [▶ NextEd](#)
- [▶ Northcentral University](#)

P

- [▶ Pakistan Virtual University](#)
- [▶ Peer 2 Peer University](#)
- [▶ Pegaso Telematic University](#)
- [▶ Punjab Technical University Virtual Campus](#)
- [▶ PurpleTrain.com](#)

R

- [▶ Royal Roads University](#)

S

- [▶ Scottish Knowledge](#)
- [▶ Scuola IaD](#)

S cont.

- [▶ Seoul Digital University](#)
- [▶ Southeast University](#)
- [▶ Syrian Virtual University](#)

T

- [▶ Tamil Virtual University](#)
- [▶ Thompson Rivers University](#)

U

- [▶ UKeU](#)
- [▶ UVB Campus](#)
- [▶ Universiti Tun Abdul Razak](#)
- [▶ University of the People](#)
- [▶ Università telematica internazionale UNINETTUNO](#)
- [▶ Université Virtuelle de Tunis](#)

V

- [▶ Virtual University for Small and Medium Sized Enterprises](#)
- [▶ Virtual University for the Semi-Arid Tropics](#)

W

- [▶ Western Governors University](#)

[Category](#) [Discussion](#) [Edit](#) [History](#) [Protect](#) [Delete](#) [Watch](#) [<<<](#)