

Interim List of Exemplars



A Transnational Appraisal of
Virtual School and College Provision

Deliverable: D2.3



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Abstract	This report gives summary details of the virtual schools and colleges currently identified by the project, with particular attention to Europe. It provides overviews and brief analysis of the findings with some notable examples to illustrate these and looks forward to the selection of case studies early in 2012.
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Executive summary

1. The target for this Deliverable is to have brief “stub” entries on at least 100 Exemplars, [Note that “Exemplar” is the VISCED equivalent to “Programme” or “Notable E-Learning Initiative” in other projects.] Exemplars will be institutions making strong effective widespread use of ICT in teaching – virtual schools, notschools, homeschooling support frameworks, e-mature schools, virtual colleges, hybrid colleges etc.
2. Wikipedia defines a *virtual school* as '*an institution that teaches courses entirely or primarily through online methods*'. A *virtual college* is a post-secondary non-HE provider where there is a rather small core of physical organisation and face-to-face teaching, and a rather large amount of distance teaching, usually nowadays carried out with a significant amount of e-learning.
2. Our exemplars fall broadly into three categories: virtual schools and colleges operating in a single country or region; virtual schools and colleges operating across more than one country, including global organisations; organisations which are provisionally listed on the wiki¹, but which require further investigation to establish whether they are currently active and fit the project definitions.
3. At the outset a target of 100 exemplars seemed reasonable and we expected that the vast majority of these would come from the USA, with a smaller number from Canada and some in Australasia. We did not expect to find more than a handful in Europe.
4. The interim list of exemplars has been growing on the wiki since summer 2011, some embedded in country reports, with an increasing set also having their own entries on the wiki. In this report the material and key definitions are consolidated into nine chapters, with one for each continental region (Europe, Africa, Asia, The Americas, Australasia and ‘Islands’).
5. The current state of our research has identified around 450 virtual schools and colleges across the world. 260 of these are in the USA. Even outside the US we currently have identified over 100, with, 30 in Canada and 59 in Europe. Australasia has at least 19. There are relatively few in Africa. Asia almost certainly has more than we have identified but China has not been one of our study countries. There appear to be surprisingly few in Oceania and the Caribbean and indeed across many multi-island nations where they might be expected. We have identified 53 “notable” examples worthy of consideration as case studies.
6. VISCED researchers have identified approximately 70 European institutions and initiatives which justify an individual entry on the wiki. In order to construct an initial inventory VISCED took a broader definition of virtual schools and virtual colleges in Europe than it did elsewhere.
7. The 59 schools found so far in Europe demonstrate a broad spectrum in terms of the target cohorts they aim to support and full-time, part-time, full curriculum and supplemental offers. Schools have been established to serve: sick students in hospital and home; excluded or at risk of

¹ <http://virtualschoolsandcolleges.eu>



exclusion; children of travelling families; students wishing to study subjects not offered by their host-schools; rurally isolated students; children of expatriate families; students seeking credit recovery, catch-up or revision; students who prefer self-directed learning.

8. Whilst England, Finland, Netherlands and Latvia have the greatest number of schools, no single country dominates the findings with all of the larger Western and Scandinavian European nations represented. To the South, Spain, Portugal and Italy are also represented. This is in contrast to Central, and Eastern Europe where VISCED has identified very few virtual schools or colleges.

9. Seven schools in Europe have been identified as notable exemplars: Sofia Distansundervisning [Sweden]; Bednet [Flanders, Belgium]; The Escola Móvel project [Portugal]; iScoil [Ireland]; Otava Folk High/Nettiperuskoulu [Finland]; InterHigh School [Wales]; and The Open High School [Turkey].

10. The most notable exemplar in Africa is the Africa Virtual School [AVS].

11. In Asia and the Middle East VISCED researchers have so far identified only six institutions which meet the 'virtual school' criteria applied within the project. including three notable exemplars.

12. The 260 USA virtual schools have been categorised as follows: State-wide Public Schools [2 notable exemplars]; State-wide & Multi-district Charter schools [3]; Single District Public Schools [2]; Single District Charter Schools [1]; Consortia [3]; Private Provision of Public Schools [1]; Post-secondary Schools Provided by Higher Education Institutes [2]; Inclusion [6].

13. In Canada eight notable exemplars are described, with one each of :Province-wide public school; Province-wide First Nation Public School; First Nation Public School; Province-wide multi-school board public school; Multi School-Board public schools consortium; Public School Board [for Catholic schools]; Province-wide national and international private school; Province-wide public school.

14. Latin America has yielded 17 virtual schools and 14+ colleges. Notable exemplars are described in Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Brazil and Mexico.

15. Seven notable exemplars are described in Australasia: Australia [6], New Zealand [1].

16. In 'Islands' we have identified 4 virtual schools and 3 virtual colleges, with notable exemplars in the Cayman Islands, Trinidad & Tobago, Barbados .

17. During the second year of the project we will continue to fill gaps on the wiki, both within and beyond Europe. We suspect that there may be numbers of virtual schools that we have not yet identified in Europe, especially in eastern Europe and former Soviet bloc countries and Turkey. If resource levels permit, we will undertake additional research there in East Asia.

18. We have concentrated more on schools than colleges thus far and will be undertaking further research to locate more colleges, which are under-represented in the country reports and wiki entries at present.

19. The research to date will feed in to Work Package 3 [Analysis & Recommendations] and Work Package 4 [Success Factors] and most immediately into the development of case studies. The exact number of case studies will be determined early in 2012 and is likely to be around 10. It is probable that we will select around 5 from the European Notable Examples.



1 The brief

This is Deliverable 2.3 of Work Package 2. The Deliverable Title is:

Interim Exemplars

The Work Package Title is:

Field Research

It runs from month 1 [January 2011] until the end of the project [December 2012].

Deliverable 2.3 is summarised in the work plan as follows:

The target for this Deliverable is to have brief “stub” entries on at least 100 Exemplars, [Note that “Exemplar” is the VISCED equivalent to “Programme” or “Notable E-Learning Initiative” in other projects.] Exemplars will be institutions making strong effective widespread use of ICT in teaching – virtual schools, notschools, homeschooling support frameworks, e-mature schools, virtual colleges, hybrid colleges etc.

We have substantially exceeded this target.

The current state of our research has identified around 450 virtual schools and colleges across the world. 260 of these are in the USA. Even outside the US we currently have identified over 100.

Of these, 30 are in Canada and 59 are in Europe. Australasia has at least 19. There are relatively few in Africa. Asia almost certainly has more than we have identified but China has not been one of our study countries.

There appear to be surprisingly few in Oceania and the Caribbean and indeed across many multi-island nations where they might be expected. This issue and many others will be looked at in 2012.

We have identified 53 “notable” examples worthy of consideration as case studies.



2 Introduction

In this section we address:

- the project definitions of **virtual school** and **virtual college**;
- our treatment of **exemplars**;
- our treatment of geographical regions.

During this first year of the project we have concentrated most of our energies on investigating virtual schools, rather than colleges and that is reflected in this report. During the second year this balance will be redressed; we are aware that there are significant numbers of these which we have not yet documented.

2.1 Definitions

Virtual School

Wikipedia defines a *virtual school* as

an institution that teaches courses entirely or primarily through online methods.

We impose the further restriction that the courses are similar [in purpose and outcome] to those normally taken by school-age children – but there may be a few students in the virtual school who are beyond school leaving age.

Virtual College

A *virtual college* is a college [post-secondary non-HE provider] where there is a rather small core of physical organisation and people carrying out face-to-face teaching, and a rather large amount of distance teaching, usually nowadays carried out with a significant amount of e-learning. There is not an absolute distinction between face-to-face colleges and distance teaching colleges – most distance teaching colleges in fact use blended learning for their offerings, often via a network of tutorial centres.

In essence, a virtual college is a college where the virtual campus is or has become dominant over the physical campus.

2.2 Exemplars

Our exemplars fall broadly into three categories:

- virtual schools and colleges operating in a single country or region;
- virtual schools and colleges operating across more than one country, including global organisations;



- organisations which are provisionally listed on the wiki², but which require further investigation to establish whether they are currently active and fit the project definitions.

At the outset of the project, a target of 100 exemplars seemed reasonable and we expected that the vast majority of these would come from the USA, with a smaller number from Canada and some in Australasia. We did not expect to find more than a handful in Europe.

The current state of our research has identified around 450 virtual schools and colleges across the world. 260 of these are in the USA; 30 are in Canada and 55 are in Europe. Australasia has at least 19 but there are relatively few in Africa. Asia almost certainly has more than we have identified but China has not been one of our study countries.

2.3 Geographical regions

For the purposes of this analysis, we have grouped countries into six areas. The first five are geographically based; the final section on 'Islands' covers islands and island groups not included in the five 'continents'. The groupings and divisions are explained at the beginning of each section:

- Europe [section 3 of this report]
- Africa [section 4]
- Asia [section 5]
- The Americas [section 6]
- Australasia [section 7]
- 'Islands' [section 8].

Definitions of all regions and other geographic and political entities are all available on the VISCED wiki. In most cases these have been taken from Wikipedia and other encyclopaedic sources, but often with slight modifications to suit the purposes of the VISCED project and to allow each country (even those which straddle continental boundaries) to be considered in just one section of this and related reports.

2.4 Acknowledgements and related aspects

In addition to the authors of this Deliverable, much credit is due to the editors of the many country reports on the wiki and in particular to the editors of the hundreds of virtual school and virtual college entries on the wiki, from which much of the material is drawn.

In order to preserve the variety and authenticity of this material, only minimal editing of layout and punctuation has been done for the text of the entries on virtual schools and colleges.

² <http://virtualschoolsandcolleges.eu>



3 Europe

VISCED quotes the Wikipedia definition:

Europe is one of the seven traditional continents of the Earth. Physically and geologically, Europe is the westernmost peninsula of Eurasia, west of Asia. Europe is bounded to the north by the Arctic Ocean, to the west by the Atlantic Ocean, to the south by the Mediterranean Sea, to the southeast by the Caucasus Mountains and the Black Sea and the waterways connecting the Black Sea to the Mediterranean. To the east, Europe is generally divided from Asia by the water divide of the Ural Mountains, the Ural River, and by the Caspian Sea.

Including Turkey in Europe, and considering countries with partial recognition (such as some regions of the former USSR), gives a total of 63 countries to consider.

3.1 Overview

VISCED researchers have identified approximately 70 European institutions and initiatives which justify an individual entry on the wiki. In order to construct an initial inventory VISCED took a broader definition of virtual schools and virtual colleges in Europe than it did elsewhere. This has resulted in the 'Long-List of Virtual School and College entries on the VISCED wiki for Europe' below at section 3.3. However, on further investigation a number of these are not virtual schools [although they are noteworthy] and have consequently been removed from the 'Virtual schools in Europe' category of the wiki. They are retained elsewhere as individual entries and within the relevant country reports.

Deeper investigation of the long-list suggests that VISCED has thus far identified a total of approximately 55 true virtual schools and colleges in Europe. Whilst the search has been deep and assiduous it is inevitable that there still exist European virtual schools or colleges which VISCED is yet to identify.

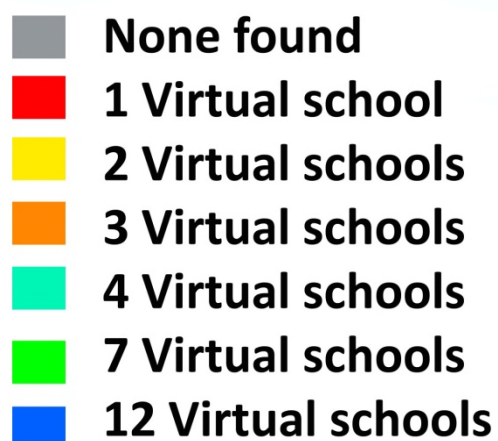
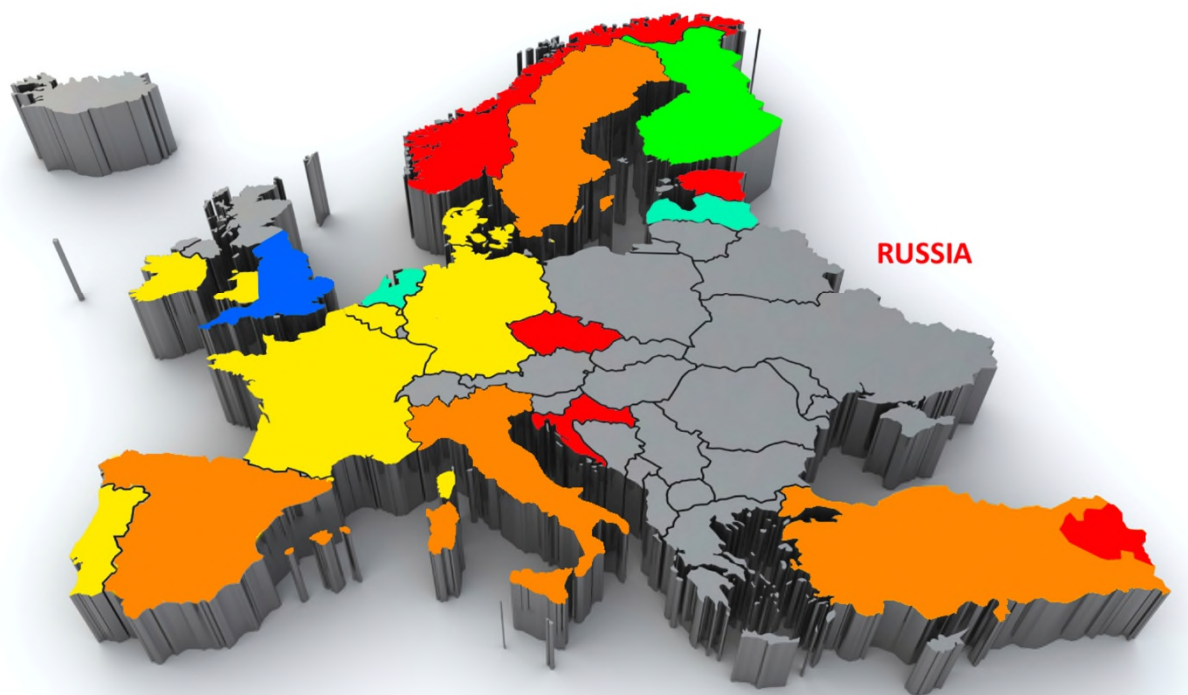
These 55 schools demonstrate a broad spectrum in terms of the target cohorts they aim to support and full-time, part-time, full curriculum and supplemental offers. Schools have been established to serve:

- sick students in hospital and home;
- excluded or at risk of exclusion;
- children of travelling families;
- students wishing to study subjects not offered by their host-schools;
- rurally isolated students;
- children of expatriate families;
- students seeking credit recovery, catch-up or revision;
- students who prefer self-directed learning.



However, with some notable exceptions, they tend to be considerably smaller than counterparts in the USA, Canada and Australia where student populations of several thousands are common. The geographical distribution of the virtual schools we have found in Europe is shown in the map below:

EUROPE - VIRTUAL SCHOOLS





Whilst England, Finland, Netherlands and Latvia have the greatest number of schools, no single country dominates the findings with all of the larger Western and Scandinavian European nations represented. To the South, Spain, Portugal and Italy are also represented. This is in contrast to Central, and Eastern Europe where VISCED has identified very few virtual schools or colleges. Analysis of the reasons for this is ongoing but an obvious [possible] explanation is that the investment in the educational and domestic technical infrastructures in these areas lags behind that in Western and Scandinavian Europe. Notwithstanding the near blanket representation in Western and Scandinavian Europe there is, as yet, no single 'national' movement and no co-ordinated 'European movement'. Neither is there any *apparent* obvious government support or enthusiasm for virtual learning at a strategic level. Governments do, however, support individual projects – in fact the state is the biggest supporter of individual virtual schools. There are a significant number of private schools although no single provider is dominant.

One exception is the European Virtual School [EVS] – the regional branch of the World Virtual School [WVS] – a U.S. based, non-profit body with over 500,000 students worldwide. The European Virtual School's most recent enrolment figures suggest that there are some 56,000 students across Europe and a further 58,000 in Turkey. EVS is the only visible, significant, virtual school presence yet identified in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union with over 8,000 students in Russia alone.

3.2 Notable examples in Europe

The text for these examples is sourced directly from the VISCED wiki. The notable examples are designed to illustrate the different types of virtual school currently operating in Europe – many of these are somewhat 'under the radar' and the lack of national regulatory frameworks is addressed in D3.5 *Interim Policy Recommendations*.

3.2.1 Sofia Distansundervisning [Sweden]

Sofia Distansundervisning [**Sofia Distance Learning, Sofia Distans**] conducts instruction in grades 6-9. Teaching is done via computer, and it offers all subjects.

Sofia complies with the compulsory school curriculum and assessment criteria and students are graded in grades 8-9.

Students are mostly living outside Sweden, but the school also teaches students resident in Sweden who, for various reasons do not attend a regular school.

Sofia Distansundervisning's main office is in Stockholm, Sweden. Sofia Distance gives the student:

- clear instructions and goals for the studies when the school year begins
- freedom from study planning to take responsibility for their studies
- freedom by time-independent studies, which means that the student can choose when he / she is studying and using the time right she / he needs in the different subjects
- freedom by location independent studies, which means that the student can choose from which she / he is studying



- opportunity for individualized instruction based on student's knowledge and prerequisites
- opportunity to follow the Swedish school abroad
- able to read only the subject of Swedish distance to get permission to Swedish upper secondary school
- option, when appropriate and in consultation with the teacher read the G-courses aimed at grade G in the core subjects of Grade 9
- opportunity to study in an alternative way to grades in grade 8 and 9, based on current curriculum and of targets
- chance to get to know fellow students in other countries and other cultures

3.2.2 BedNet [Belgium]

Bednet is a regional project in Flanders, Belgium, in which 6 to 18 year old children who are suffering from long term and chronic diseases can follow lessons and interact with their class through videoconferencing [from home or the hospital].

Bednet's aim is to create a child-friendly environment where a long-term ill child can resume his/her lessons in the classroom from home or from the hospital as well as stay in touch with their teachers and class mates.

Bednet works further on the ASCIT project which ran from 2005 to 2007. In 2007 the first children were able to try out the new Bednet system with their class. In the first complete school year for Bednet, 2007-2008, a total of 39 children were coached. In the past school year, the preliminary count went up to 77 children. The Flemish government already assigned a project coordinator, working means and IT-support to the project.

During the past years, Bednet with its partners has been working on a simple and user-friendly system, and has been offering a service which has shown its use for children and teachers.

Legally speaking, Bednet is a non-profit organisation or in Dutch: 'vereniging zonder winstoogmerk' [vzw]. The main office of Bednet vzw is located in Leuven, Belgium.

The Bednet website is <http://www.bednet.be>

The Bednet system

Bednet is a tailor-made system with a personal approach: when a child with a long term or chronic disease is registered at Bednet, a regional Bednet employee prepares the procedure for this student together with his school, the hospital school, his/her parents and, if applicable, a charity involved. Belgacom, one of the Belgian internet providers, installs a broadband internet connection in the child's home and in the classroom free of charge for the duration of the course. Bednet also provides a helpdesk for child and class.

The child is linked to his class via the Internet. A Bednet set consists of 2 laptops [one with the child, one in the classroom], two webcams, two scanner-printers and a photo camera focusing on the blackboard. Whenever the teacher places a document onto the scanner in the classroom, the same document will be printed at the child's home after a short time, and vice versa. The sounds and



images from the webcam allow the child to follow the school's lessons in real time. If he has a question or an answer to an asked question he can let the class know by giving them a sound or light signal. This way the ill child is able to follow the lessons as they are happening. After school the system can be used to give out homework and tasks or to hand them in. The child can sit tests and exams under supervision of the teacher at the same time as or at a different time than the other children. All these possibilities enormously increase his chances to succeed. But also the psychological impact is important because the child is visible again in the classroom and takes part in the social life of the class.

The Bednet employee also builds a regional network to enlarge the impact of the project for all persons involved [children, parents, school groups, pedagogical advisory organisations, CLBs [centres for student counselling], hospitals, patients' organisations, ...].

Bednet is carrying out pioneers' work in this field and is working on a structural solution for all children with long term diseases. Since the Bednet system is focusing on simple and user-friendly technology and the physical limitations of ill children and those in rehabilitation, it can easily be adapted to all languages and to different target groups [such as patients in home care, seniors].

The current challenge is an enlargement of scale. With the support of the Flemish government, Bednet wants to take on an additional number of employees. Bednet is expecting an increase to 100 to 150 children for the school year 2009-2010. The intention is to increase the number of children gradually to 500 over a few years, starting in 2010-2011. The services and scale depend on the availability of personnel and hardware.

Partners

Besides the appreciated support by the Flemish government and the provinces of Antwerp and East-Flanders, Bednet is also supported by Belgacom, GDF-Suez, PC Solidarity, Kom op tegen Kanker en the Koning Boudewijnstichting. On the IT level, Bednet cooperates with Develop-IT and Androme.

3.2.3 Escola Móvel [Portugal]

The Escola Móvel project [Mobile School] has emerged as a project of distance learning in Portugal, using a technology platform [LMS Moodle] to support learning for students of the 3rd cycle of basic education, children of occupational travellers, in order to meet the specific needs of this community in terms basic education. The curriculum of the Escola Móvel was initially constituted by the disciplines that make up the National Curriculum for Basic Education 3rd Cycle, with the exception of Physical Education. The Escola Móvel project was extending its educational provision and implementation of distance education, ensuring the integration of different public and school providing compulsory schooling, with the possibility of continuing studies in secondary education. In addition to the children of occupational travellers and students, this project was expanded to include other children and youth who are at risk of failure, early school leaving and social exclusion, especially young people supported by the institution Ajuda de Mãe [Help young Mother] and students over 15 years, for various reasons have not completed compulsory education. The work



aims to provide differentiated learning contexts and individualized tutoring in conjunction with each educational area.

Sourced from Escola Móvel website

Escola Móvel started as a project designed and implemented in 2005/2006 by the Portuguese Ministry of Education through the Department for Innovation and Curriculum Development, in cooperation with the different Regional Departments of Education and schools across the country. This project aimed at responding to the **needs of travelling families regarding their children's education, since the constant movement between regions, towns and schools, made it extremely difficult for children and teenagers to attend classes regularly or feel motivated to engage in learning**, with high rates of dropout and failure. With the collaboration of a restricted group of teachers and the allocation of technological resources, Escola Móvel began to offer travelling children and teenagers the possibility to **attend school every day through a virtual environment which provides both learning and socio-affective stability**, by allowing them to interact with the same teachers and classmates throughout the year.

Escola Móvel **started with a small group of 13 students, attending the 3rd Cycle of basic education** – 7th, 8th and 9th year of schooling [lower-secondary] – who had access to a weekly learning plan in the subjects of the National Curriculum, communicating synchronously and asynchronously with their teachers. In order to provide face-to-face interaction and minimise students' isolation in the learning process, there was one week of "presential" activities that involved the different subjects and established the roots for a blended learning environment.

The evaluation of this first year clearly showed where improvements should be introduced, and in the course of the two following years, Escola Móvel went through several organisational and pedagogical changes:

- Adjustment of the national curriculum to students' needs and characteristics, with four more traditional subjects – Portuguese, English [first foreign language], Spanish [second foreign language], Mathematics – and the creation of subject areas providing a more integrated approach to knowledge – Past and Present World [History and Geography], The Universe and Life [Natural Science and Physics/Chemistry], Communication and Expressions [Art, Music and ICT];
- Organisation of a daily synchronous timetable with periods for the different subjects and subject areas;
- Establishment and reinforcement of partnerships with schools, educational organisations and institutions, such as Vodafone, the National Reading Programme and Live Science Centres, in a network of exchange and support aiming to promote students' success and inclusion;
- Organisation of four "presential" weeks per year [September, January, April, June], where it is possible to reinforce the sense of belonging to a school as a community, foster citizenship



skills and interpersonal relations, as well as to promote activities which complement online classes, including field trips to science centres, museums and historical sites;

- Appointment of tutors who guide and support a small number of students [an average of four students per tutor], working alongside with parents.

The positive results achieved by students soon led to the enlargement of Escola Móvel to other age groups and learning needs:

- Younger students from travelling families attending the 2nd Cycle [5th and 6th years of schooling];
- Students from travelling families who finished basic education and proceed to upper-secondary level in professional courses;
- Teenage girls in the situation of early motherhood, helped by an institution due to their families' lack of support, and whose new responsibilities pose serious difficulties in the attendance of regular schools;
- Students identified by partner schools as having repeatedly failed to complete basic education.

In 2008/2009 Escola Móvel **started preparing its establishment as a state school, which took place on 31st July 2009**. In fact, the growth in the number of students in a few years, from 13 to about 100, and the **almost inexistent dropout and failure rates among these students** – including in the national examinations – validate this school as an educational environment which responds to actual needs by giving specific students the opportunity to do or complete their schooling, and thus broadens their future opportunities.

In 2009/2010 Escola Móvel has kept on improving its response. The enlargement of tutoring periods for individualised support has been one of the most significant changes, with tutors meeting the students three/four hours a week and reinforcing their guidance during the “presential” weeks through face-to-face interaction. The school has already enlarged its offer for upper-secondary students, is currently supporting home-schooling as well as students who are unable to attend their school for more than three months. The teachers have also been developing and improving virtual resources with the support of subject experts.

3.2.4 iScoil [Ireland]

iScoil has been developed for students between the ages of 12 and 16 who have disengaged from the school system. Funded by the Presentation Sisters, iScoil currently caters for 50 learners located in five clusters around the country – Dublin, East Coast, Longford, Limerick and Galway.

iScoil is based on blended learning where students receive both online tutoring and face-to-face workshops. The students are assigned a mentor who identifies the student's interests, facilitates their learning and helps them to work towards a FETAC accreditation. The students are not bound by



a class timetable but can participate throughout the day and at their own pace as the server is open from 9.00 a.m. to 8.00 p.m.

iScoil is an online learning community offering an alternative path to further education and employment. Current studies estimate that as many as eight hundred young people in Ireland do not transfer from primary to post-primary school each year.

Significant numbers of students are not progressing successfully through the current mainstream system.

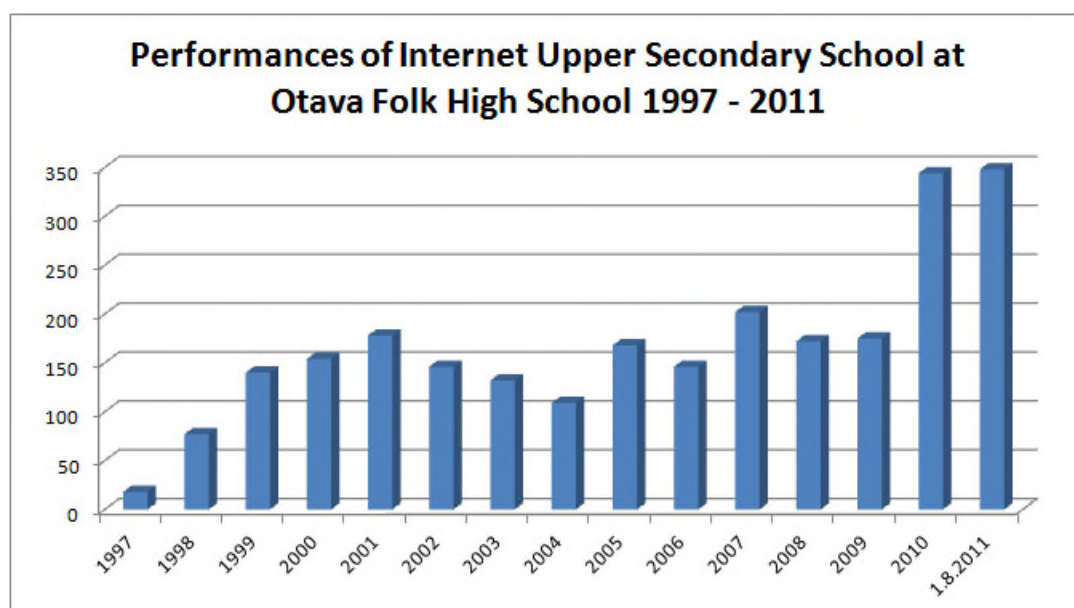
Within this context iScoil aims to:

- Engage young people in learning
- Build confidence and self esteem
- Offer Accreditation opportunities
- Support progression to further education and employment

The web site is at <http://www.iscoil.ie>

3.2.5 Otava Folk High/Nettiperuskoulu [Finland]

Internet Upper Secondary School at Otava Folk High School is a fully virtual school that originates from a project called Internetix. This ESR funded project started in 1996 aiming to find solutions to take school to students instead of forcing them to travel long distances or having to move in order to get to school. In the project eLearning material was produced and special demand seemed to be in upper secondary school courses. The first distance learners of Otava Folk High School started in 1997 – at that point there were 13 students, today 536.





Otava is both national and international upper secondary school operating in Finnish, students living all around the country and world. Typical virtual school student comes from one of the following groups:

1. parents of small children
2. professional and semi-professional athletes
3. people who travel a lot [because of occupation or for other reasons]
4. people living abroad
5. shift workers
6. people who cannot attend school for reasons of health
7. people with previous negative experiences like bullying or frustration
8. people living in sparsely populated areas

Flexibility seems to be greatest advantage of distance schools. In distance school one can rhythm their schedule and studies to their other life easily. There are no terms or periods, instead each student can study according to their own schedules. There are no obligatory contact days which lead to the fact that most of students never actually visit the Otava campus.

Its website is <http://www.nettilukio.fi/fi/sisalto/>

Three types of courses:

In Otava Folk High School the students can choose between three ways to accomplish courses.

Non-stop-courses

Each student is free to pick any upper secondary school course in his/her schedule any time he/she wants. Courses are always open and the student can choose any courses and study at his/her own phase [i.e. according to his/her personal learning plan]. Studying is quite independent and sometimes lonely, too. Even if the studying is independent of point of time, it offers no fast food as the learning always takes its time, no matter how flexible the frames.

Interaction is limited mainly between student and teacher [Skype, chat, e-mail etc.].

Collaborative courses

Several times a year there are also collaborative courses which begin and end on fixed dates. Booking beforehand is necessary and presence is obligatory. When participating on a virtual class the students are able to work on issues together and use each others as resources. Anyway, also these courses are located in a closed learning environment and they are closed from the rest of the world. Only the students and the teachers have access to the course.



Discussion forums, wikis and virtual conferencing tools are widely used in collaborative courses.

Phenomenon based learning

In addition to these two options, Otava Folk High School offers its students courses where they can learn together with other people.

Instead of enrolling in a course in a specific subject such as mathematics, biology or philosophy, the student has a chance to grasp a bigger entity, a real life phenomenon. The phenomena so far studied at Otava are among others hunger and thirst, welfare state, piracy and human being 2.0. The idea is to integrate various subjects in the studying of the phenomenon. The student can choose approach to the phenomenon, set personal targets and thus choose which [upper secondary school] subjects and courses he/she wants to complete.

As the phenomena to be studied are authentic, real life phenomena are the courses also out in an open and public online environment <http://ilmiopohjaisuus.ning.com> so that people in various roles and with different interests can attend. There are project managers, pedagogues, experts, media tutors, subject teachers – and students, of course. Lurking is also allowed and anyone interested also from other schools and from outside the school world is welcome. The roles are often mixed and the teacher doesn't have to be an expert in everything. Expertise can be found also outside the school or – as it often is – among students.

Web2.0 technologies [blogs, wikis, video conferencing and social bookmarking] have a lot to offer in this kind of learning and studying. These technologies change the role of learning [and teaching] towards taking risks, tolerating uncertainty, tolerating incomplete world, flexibility to change plans while on the road.

3.2.6 InterHigh School [Wales]

Founded in September 2005, *InterHigh School* offers a complete secondary school education on the internet. Lessons are delivered by teachers and the pupils logging into virtual classrooms. It is based in Wales.

There are currently 250 pupils in the school between the ages of 10 to 19, about equal numbers of boys and girls.

Classes are kept to a maximum of 18 pupils. There are a total of 7 year groups, currently across 15 “classrooms”.

The staff are made up of the following:

- The Principal
- 17 subject teachers.
- 3 Administrative and Pastoral Leaders



It appears to be the only virtual school in the United Kingdom with features similar to the virtual high schools in US, Canada and Sweden.

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

3.2.7 Open High School [Turkey]

The *Open High School* Turkey [OHS Turkey] supports e-learning interactive distance education by making use of a three dimensional approach to learning materials. It makes use of the following:

- Printed educational materials
- Education through the media
- Face-to-face teaching

These three different approaches to teaching materials make use of the following technologies: printed materials, radio and audio cassettes, telephone and fax, audio conferences, video conferencing, computer, Internet and web conferencing.

The Open High School's main office is situated in Ankara, Turkey. It has other campuses in different parts of the country.

It was established in 1992 within the department of Film, Radio and Television Training. Its mission is to promote equal opportunities for education for all, making use of cutting edge information and communication technology. It also saw as its mission to bridge the gap between the knowledge of technologies used at school and those used in the professional and industrial environment.

It combines technology from scientific and technological development with face-to-face training activities to offer a truly holistic education to thousands of students all over the country and beyond. Face-to-face training schedule varies each term but is compulsory. Students can enrol for the face-to-face training in their area when the schedule is available online, to attend face-to-face training in training centres, schools and institutions, primarily public education.

It also offers learning opportunities to Turkish citizens living in Middle Eastern countries. The training period today takes 8 terms or 4 years for the issuing of a diploma even though in 1992 when it started, it only took 2.5 years. It was from the Open High School that the Open Vocational High School was borne.

More information about Open High School can be found via the following link:

http://maol.meb.gov.tr/English_Site/Meslek_Eng_AnaSayfa.html



3.3 Long list of Virtual School and College entries on the VISCED wiki

Only countries with identified virtual schools /colleges are listed. The full entries for each of these can be viewed on the wiki – see <http://virtualcampuses.eu/index.php/Category:VISCED>.

3.3.1 Armenia [1]

- The Armenian Virtual College – the newest learning institute of the Armenian General Benevolent Union [AGBU] – one that will carry on its lifelong dedication to Armenian education with an entirely innovative approach. Through **online education**, the AVC's focus is helping learners acquire basic knowledge in Armenian studies.

3.3.2 Belgium [2]

In Flanders:

- Bednet – see separate entry at 3.2.2 above

In Wallonia:

- Le Service de L'Enseignement à Distance – for French-speaking Belgians: learners are drawn from a variety of different categories of people including the unemployed, students, workers, teachers, military, prisoners, patients in hospitals, persons with disabilities and overseas Belgian citizens

3.3.3 Croatia [1]

- Kartelo – entry on the Re.ViCa wiki, but no recent information

3.3.4 Czech Republic [1]

- Enoprogramme, Czech arm of Finland Global Virtual School

3.3.5 Denmark [2]

- VUC Flex – Adult Education Centres [Danish: Voksenundervisningscentre, abbreviated VUCs] offer school and high school level courses to adults age 18 and up [with no upper age limit, and with occasional but rare dispensations for people under 18] who wish to upgrade their qualifications, e.g. for jobs or for vocational or higher educations.
- Danes Worldwide – offers distance learning in Danish from kindergarten level to the tenth grade for expatriates. The distance learning is organised in such a way that it can be fitted in alongside conventional school lessons.



3.3.6 England [12]

- The Bridge Academy and the Bridge Academy Online – The Bridge Academy Online is a virtual learning environment to enable the school to provide for students outside the confines of the school building and school day. This offer ranges from a 5 GCSE diet to a highly individualised offer which includes [accredited] work and tailored courses.
- Nisai Virtual Academy – is an online learning community and real-time teaching environment, working in partnership with Staffordshire University, focussing on support for NEETs [Not in Employment, Education or Training] and SEN [Special Educational Needs] students.
- The Web School – offers full time tuition to learners aged 11 – 19 in virtual classrooms led by live, qualified secondary teachers. It is an independent school, free from local authority control and therefore learners have to pay fees. It is very small scale currently.
- Briteschool – offers both Primary and Secondary education for home-schooled and expatriate students.
- Wolsey Hall Oxford – uses a learning management system to provide online learning for 14 to 18 year olds studying A-Levels and IGCSEs through personal tutorials, rather than classes. The business has been supporting students on distance learning courses since 1894.
- Periplus Home Education – provides live, online teaching for young people aged 11-18. Students can choose to do a full taught curriculum, individual subjects at any level or intensive, short-term tuition prior to exams.
- First College – is a small family business offering iGCSEs in all mainstream subjects as well as pre-GCSE courses and Advanced Spanish and French.
- The Digital Learning Community – is a self-contained initiative/team within the East Riding Council, School Advisory Service. DLC provides direct teaching services to schools in the shape of lessons broadcast via the Internet to subscribed school cohorts.
- Notschool.net – is an Online Learning Community offering an alternative to traditional education for young people who, for a variety of reasons, are unable to engage with school or other complementary provisions such as home tutoring or specialist units.
- Academus – uses qualified, expert and specialist teachers to deliver online, live and on-demand alternative provision based on England's National Curriculum and QCF qualifications.
- Satellite Virtual Schools – provide an immediate teaching service to individuals, LEAs, and County Councils for the education of students unable to attend conventional schools or who simply prefer to be taught at home.



- Accipio Learning – Accipio Learning claimed to be the UK’s leading provider of live, interactive, online education and offers a learning experience that is similar to a mainstream school. In partnership with schools and local authorities, Accipio teach the most challenging pupils and help them achieve academic success and re-integrate into mainstream school. However in August 2011 Accipio Learning went into Administration.

3.3.7 Estonia [1]

- Audentes e-Gymnasium – offers a combination of conventional and online learning format which is primarily intended for adult learners who have left high school to work and also for those who for various reasons [e.g. health, work or sports career] cannot attend school on a daily basis.

3.3.8 Finland [7]

- Virta – not a stand-alone virtual school but designed to develop a model.
- ENO-Environment Online –global virtual school, operating in 150 countries worldwide
- Kulkuri [“Tramp”] – is a distance school for Finnish children living abroad
- OTAVA: Nettiperuskoulu – is a distance learning school maintained by Otava Folk High School. Its main target group is adults and younger people who do not have a graduation certificate from basic education.
- eLukio – is a consortium of upper secondary schools where courses can be taken virtually from the Moodle platform. Examinations however are mainly taken in one of the network’s schools.
- Sotunki Distance Learning Centre – was founded in 1999 and has nowadays about 130 adult students and 250 single course students from other upper secondary schools.
- Gymnasiet i Petalax – a Swedish-speaking virtual high school.

3.3.9 France [2]

- Beneyschool – is the first Espace Numerique de Travail [ENT] – Digital Workspace [DW] – dedicated to partnerships between classes of middle and secondary schools
- Académie en ligne – created by the Centre National d’Enseignement à Distance [CNED], in 2009, *Académie en ligne* proposes free of charge online courses, covering all years of compulsory education, in all relevant subjects. This service which address both pupils and their family, has been enriched in 2010 with interactive units for primary school and college.



3.3.10 Germany [2]

- Virtuelle Schule – is a non-profit initiative based on three internet platforms including Übergängen Gestalten, which is specifically focused on transition between different school levels
- Deutsche Fernschule – the German school for expatriate children, founded in 1971, provides virtual schooling at all levels

3.3.11 Ireland [2]

- Bridge21- is a joint venture of Trinity College Dublin and Suas Educational Development. It has three core strands:
 1. A schools programme to scale and adapt our learning model for use in Irish secondary schools nationwide.
 2. The Bridge2College outreach programme, based in Oriel House – a team-based experience for young people to explore learning through technology.
 3. A learning and research centre in Oriel House, Trinity College Dublin, to innovate, evaluate and refine 21st century learning methodologies.
- iScoil – see separate entry at 3.2.4 above.

3.3.12 Italy [3]

- HSH@Network [Hospital School Home] – similar to the Bednet organisation in Belgium
- @urora – a project sponsored by the Ministry of Justice to re-integrate young offenders into learning environments
- Scuol@Bardi – a consortium based in Parma designed to reduce commuting by school pupils in remote areas of the Apennines.

3.3.13 Latvia [4]

- Rīgas Tālmācības vidusskola - the only distance education secondary school In Latvia which has been accredited for six years
- Rīgas Komerckola Tālmācības vidusskola
- College of Business Administration
- Latvian Business College

3.3.14 Netherlands [4]

- Acadin.nl – a digital learning environment for supporting gifted children



- Virtual Music School – The virtual music school is a learning environment which was tested in the Utrecht Conservatory where it is now incorporated in the first year of a four year curriculum, and used during school time.
- The Edufax virtual classroom – a private company supplying virtual courses for expatriate children
- EMINUS project at the REA college – virtual vocational training for people with physical disabilities

3.3.15 Norway [1]

- Globalskolen – is part of the EXPAT programme and offers free online education for primary and secondary school age children living abroad, using asynchronous teaching.

3.3.16 Portugal [2]

- Escola Move! – see separate entry at 3.2.3 above.
- Escola Virtual – is an e-learning platform owned by the publishing group Porto Editora, a Portuguese private company. EV works with two different options: [1]Particular – service subscribed by students, teachers and parents who are individually self-study learners. and [2] Institutional – the EV operates as a service to the school where all content can be used by teachers and students in their classrooms.

3.3.17 Russia [1]

- Телешкола [Teleschool] – a non-commercial partnership and fully accredited and licensed distance teaching institution, offering primary and secondary education in the general education system of the Russian Federation with the right to issue secondary school graduation certificates.

3.3.18 Spain [3]

- Episteme: Soluciones Educativas para el siglo XXI – is a virtual school offering support for homeschooling, from primary to secondary education for those who needs a qualification but cannot obtain it through attending school in presence. It is linked to US qualifications.
- IOC [Institut Obert de Catalunya] – provides online distance learning primarily for adults aged 18 and above, but is open to 16-18 year olds who:
 1. live abroad or away from an educational institution,
 2. have a disability,
 3. belong to a particular group [elite athletes, musicians, etc..]
 4. other circumstances at the Institut's discretion.



In exceptional circumstances, students under 16 may be enrolled, but this requires ministerial authorisation.

- CIDEAD [Centro para la Innovación y la Enseñanza a Distancia] – is an arm of the Spanish national Ministry of Education, offering online tuition at all educational levels from primary to the Bachillerato and some professional training courses, primarily for expatriate families, with students in 50 countries.

3.3.19 Sweden [3]

- Värmdö Distans – provides online education for expatriate Swedish children and domestic students who for social or physical reasons are unable to attend their local school.
- Korrespondensgymnasiet i Torsås – is an upper-secondary school run by the local authority open to pupils from all over Sweden. About 80% of its 450 pupils follow its distance education programme.
- Sofia Distans [*Sofia Distansundervisning*] provides virtual schooling for grades 6-9. Students are mostly expatriates [including students at The *Swedish School in Moscow* [Svenska Skolan i Moskva] but the school also teaches students resident in Sweden who, for various reasons do not attend a regular school.

3.3.20 Turkey [3]

- Open Primary Education School – admits all types of students including those who are beyond the age limit for compulsory education and those who could not complete primary school for various reasons. Delivers courses using various ICT resources including television and radio programs, internet, printed documents, CD-ROMs and many other tools.
- Open High School Turkey -see separate entry at 3.2.7 above.
- Open Vocational High School – uses similar methods: this was established in 2006, initially as an offshoot of the Open High School.

3.3.21 Wales [2]

- InterHigh School – see separate entry at 3.2.6
- Coleg Sir Gâr – runs a virtual college from its Llanelli campus, with 4500 students engaged in online learning since 2003.



4 Africa

VISCED quotes the Wikipedia definition:

Africa is the world's second-largest and second most-populous continent, after Asia. At about 30,221,532 km² [11,668,545 sq mi] including adjacent islands, it covers 6% of the Earth's total surface area, and 20.4% of the total land area. With more than 900,000,000 people [as of 2005][2] in 61 territories, it accounts for about 14% of the world's human population. The continent is surrounded by the Mediterranean Sea to the north, the Suez Canal and the Red Sea to the northeast, the Indian Ocean to the southeast, and the Atlantic Ocean to the west. There are 46 countries including Madagascar, and 53 including all the island groups.

VISCED then says:

Not all of these are in our list – only those where e-learning plays a non-trivial role.

The list at present is not complete.

In addition to specific countries, see also:

- *Northern Africa*
- *Sub-Saharan Africa*
- *Southern Africa*

4.1 The current state of research on the VISCED wiki

In spite of considerable desk research and consultation with experts in the field it has proved extremely difficult to identify pure virtual schools or colleges in Africa. This is perhaps not surprising given the relatively poor state of the educational and domestic technical infrastructure. VISCED's parallel research project into virtual HE campuses Re.ViCa found a handful of such initiatives in Africa and during the VISCED research we have uncovered some additional virtual HE provision where countries with historic and/or linguistic links [such as Brazil, Portugal and France] have extended specifically into African nations. However, this is still comparatively rare and does not appear to permeate the pre-Higher Education sectors.

The obvious exception to this is the Africa Virtual School [AVS] – the first regional school of the World Virtual School [WVS] a U.S. based, non-profit body with over 500,000 students worldwide [see sections 3 and 4 below].

Even allowing for the impediments detailed above, the reach of the AVS demonstrates that these are not insurmountable. Several African cities have an infrastructure which could potentially support virtual schooling. It is likely, therefore, that there exist virtual schools in Africa which we are yet to identify. The demand for improving education in the face of severe economic restrictions, plus the



targeted activities of both charitable and private organisations would suggest that we will see virtual schools emerging on the continent. The experience of Canada and Australasia points to some of these evolving from existing distance learning initiatives such as correspondence or radio schools.

There are a number of other global 'ICT for education' organisations which operate across the continent of Africa and it is perfectly possible that some of these will develop [and, indeed, may have already developed] a virtual schooling 'flavour' to their enterprises. Two of the most likely are **iEARN** [<http://www.earn.org/regions/africa>] and **Agence de Consolidation des Technologies de l'Éducation [ACTE]**, <http://www.linkedin.com/company/agence-de-consolidation-des-technologies-de-l-education-acte> operating particularly across Francophone Africa as Africa Acte <http://www.africacte.org/>:

- **iEARN** already operates [in partnership with local bodies] in 30 African nations. Several of iEARN's projects are already identifiable as forming the foundations for virtual schooling.
- **ACTE** operates in a similar number of African nations. It describes its "Centre of Excellence" as *a technology lab that serves as a gateway to free academic services, content development, and activities that ACTE offers to schools and the community-at-large*. Some of its community outreach activities are moving towards virtual schooling.
- **Sous le Fromager** in **Guinea** delivers a significant amount of learning online, but this is aimed more [though not exclusively] at primary age children – this is one of a number of initiatives providing online content which fall short of being categorised as full virtual schools.

4.2 The Africa Virtual School

The most notable exemplar is the Africa Virtual School [AVS]. The AVS is the regional arm of the World Virtual School which describes its offer as:

The World Virtual School offers a full array of elementary, middle school and high school courses, with both remedial, advanced placement and world languages so that students around the world can earn an American High School diploma, entirely over the internet. Students pay membership fees based on their native country's GDP and can earn an American diploma for as little as \$4. For students unable to pay, a scholarship program is available through the WVS.

WVS also offers an International High School diploma program that includes courses of a global nature and perspective, meant to prepare students to participate in the global economic and cultural community on par with students around the world. The International diploma program is offered at the same membership rates as other courses and is available to students of all countries who have internet access.

Figures quoted in November 2011 suggest AVS has over 45,000 students in some 50 countries across the continent. AVS is not actually 'active' in all 50 countries but does operate [with local partners] virtual schools in 20 of these.



Its website is <http://www.world-virtual-school.com/africa/>

The Africa Virtual School has students in the following countries [enrolment figures for 2011 in brackets] but it only operates in those where indicated [bold type and yellow highlighting].

Country	No of students	Country	No of students	Country	No of students
Algeria	502	Ethiopia	6458	Niger	165
Angola	299	Gabon	62	Nigeria	1825
Benin	92	Gambia, The	264	Rwanda	1332
Botswana	980	Ghana	1346	São Tomé & Príncipe	92
Burkina Faso	82	Guinea	91	Senegal	825
Burundi	346	Guinea-Bissau	468	Seychelles	84
Cameroon	980	Kenya	5261	Sierra Leone	641
Cape Verde Islands	56	Lesotho	886	Somalia	825
Central African Republic	854	Liberia	1246	South Africa	3462
Chad	231	Libya	513	South Sudan	824
Congo, Republic of	854	Madagascar	32	Sudan	825
Congo, Democratic Republic of	675	Malawi	892	Swaziland	824
Cote d'Ivoire	46	Mali	482	Tanzania	461
Djibouti	82	Mauritania	98	Togo	642
Egypt	465	Morocco	898	Tunisia	816
Equatorial Guinea	182	Mozambique	426	Uganda	461
Eritrea	78	Namibia	1346	Zambia	2845
				Zimbabwe	3456



5 Asia

5.1 Definition

Wikipedia notes that:

Asia is the world's largest and most populous continent. It covers 8.6% of the Earth's total surface area [or 29.4% of its land area] and, with almost 4 billion people, it contains more than 60% of the world's current human population.

Chiefly in the eastern and northern hemispheres, Asia is traditionally defined as part of the landmass of Eurasia – with the western portion of the latter occupied by Europe – lying east of the Suez Canal, east of the Ural Mountains, and south of the Caucasus Mountains and the Caspian and Black Seas. It is bounded to the east by the Pacific Ocean, to the south by the Indian Ocean, and to the north by the Arctic Ocean.

Conventionally, Turkey is assigned to Asia even though part of it is in Europe.

VISCED has also (as usual) included the Middle East and Turkey in the Asia category of the wiki and the Middle East is dealt with in this Asia Region Report. There are 59 countries listed in the Asia category of the wiki and these can be accessed at the following link

<http://virtualcampuses.eu/index.php/Asia>. Turkey, however, is also included in the VISCED Europe grouping and its three examples of virtual schooling are included above at 3.2.7 and 3.3.19.

5.2 Overview

Even when considering an area [including the Middle East as it does under this definition] that is actually greater than Asia, VISCED researchers have so far identified only six institutions which meet the 'virtual school' criteria applied within the project. This was somewhat surprising. Although there were strong suspicions [based on prior research and consultation with regional experts] that the majority of the 'continent+' had no virtual schools, there are several regions which have been spoken of as being advanced in terms of their use of educational technology – most notably Japan, South Korea, Singapore, India and parts of China [namely Hong-Kong and Shanghai].

However, VISCED research has revealed a number of factors which may explain there being fewer *visible* virtual schools than expected. These are discussed below but it should be noted that it is fully expected that the number of 'Virtual schools in Asia', wiki entries will grow as the project attracts more contributors from the region.

5.2.1 Japan

There are just two Japanese virtual school wiki entries [the NHK Academy of Distance Learning and the Super English Language Virtual High School]. Whilst it is likely that terminology, language and the



alphabet have masked some virtual schools from the researchers it should also be noted that the two schools identified are both 'national' schools.

5.2.2 South Korea

South Korea is an accepted leader in terms of its educational and domestic technology infrastructure and its students have been judged amongst the most competent users of ICTs – it would have been natural to expect a number of virtual school initiatives. However, the single virtual school identified [the CHLS] is the Korean Ministry of Education's **national** virtual school and has upwards of **1.5 million students**. As such, this means that South Korea is a global leader in terms of its proportion of students participating in virtual schooling. It would appear that politically and culturally South Korea retains a belief in centralised provision of education and, as such, there is little need [or room] for other providers to enter the 'market'.

5.2.3 Singapore

As with South Korea, Singapore is considered to be advanced in its infrastructure [and by many, in its education system] and yet the only virtual school identified thus far is an International School – the Singapore branch of an American provider. However, it should be noted that Singapore is a city state with a population of only 3 million confined within a relatively small area. Singapore also seems to have its own, apparently successful, strategies for dealing with students at risk of exclusion – socially or educationally. As such, the drivers we have seen elsewhere for the development of virtual schools have far less traction in Singapore. That is not to say there are no drivers, or virtual schools.

5.2.4 India

It is very likely that there are a number of 'yet to be discovered' virtual schools in India and yet there are almost certainly fewer than many would have predicted. India is a provider of virtual schooling to other parts of the world and has several interesting virtual Higher Education initiatives. However, there are a number of factors which explain the mismatch between perceptions of virtual schooling in India and the reality. Firstly, a number of the virtual schools initially identified turned out on further investigation to be a 'tailored virtual school package' which schools buy in and then implement within their own institution – managed by their own teachers³. Similarly, some municipalities such as Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation have introduced 'virtual classrooms' into all schools and these are sometimes known as 'virtual schools'. As such none of these meet the criteria applied by the project.

There is also evidence that a significant number of 'virtual schools' were offering graduate and post-graduate qualifications and were once more out of scope for the project.

³ See <http://www.smartclassonline.com/SmartClassOnLine/SmartClass.aspx>



5.2.5 China

A decision was taken when designing the VISCED research programme, that *intensive* investigation of China was unlikely to represent the most effective use of scarce research-resource. Initial desk-research would support this approach although it should be noted that there is some evidence that virtual schooling has been deployed [albeit in Hong-Kong which is far from representative of China as a whole] to meet specific challenges such as the disruption caused by the avian-flu epidemic⁴. It is fully expected that virtual schooling will expand significantly in China given that it exhibits a near 'perfect storm' of virtual school drivers [geographic isolation, migrant and transient populations, educationally excluded, specific language needs etc] against the context of an expanding economy.

Elsewhere there is also evidence that the chains of International Schools which operate across the region [but particularly in the Middle East] are developing their virtual schooling capability. The wiki thus contains an entry for the NESA [Near East South Asia] Virtual School -although the actual levels of 'virtual schooling' appear to be low at the present there is already some activity and the phenomenon is noteworthy. The Middle East has clearly presented challenges in terms of research over the past year since many of the countries have experienced substantial upheaval. Interestingly [much like the Hong-Kong example noted above] there is evidence of virtual schooling being identified as a temporary solution to the disruption to students' education⁵.

5.3 Notable examples in Asia

Text below sourced from the VISCED wiki.

5.3.1 Cyber Home Learning System [South Korea]

The Cyber Home Learning System [CHLS] is the nationwide online learning initiative of the South Korean Ministry of Education. The Cyber Home Learning System was developed in 2004 with three key objectives:

- first, to reduce the education divide,
- second, to reduce private tutoring expenses,
- third, to enhance the quality of public education.

In 2005-6 there were over 1.5million participating students supported by over 6,000 cyber teachers.

Further information

CHLS is based on a suite of four major services

- customized learning using content for self motivated study,
- Q&A service with cyber teachers,
- assessment of academic performance

⁴ See <http://onlineschools.magnify.net/video/Hong-Kongs-virtual-school-swine;recent>

⁵ See Bahrain English School

<http://www.britishschoolbahrain.com/images/Newsletter/newsletter21022011.pdf>



- career counselling service for school applications.

References

- The National Innovation Model: Korea's Cyber Home Learning System
- <http://english.keris.or.kr/ICSFiles/afieldfile/2009/01/09/CHLSofKorea.pdf>
- Analysis on the Effectiveness of Cyber Home Learning System
- <http://english.keris.or.kr/ICSFiles/afieldfile/2006/08/10/KERISRandD.pdf>

5.3.2 NHK Academy of Distance Learning [Japan]

NHK Academy of Distance Learning is an educational institution established as one of the affiliated bodies of NHK, Japan Broadcasting Corporation. It consists of three sections. They are a high school, a social welfare education and lifelong learning courses. These are operated on a correspondence basis [postal system in Japan, NHK's educational programs on TV and radio, and new methods of audio-visual education, including e-learning]

High School

In the 1960s, when NHK Gakuen Correspondence High School started, the enrolment rate of high school education in Japan was less than 40%. At that time, the important role of this school was to spread high school education farther and wider for those who could not go to ordinary high school due to economic or other reasons. In recent years, the enrolment rate comes up to more than 97%, but there are still certain people who cannot go to high school regularly; some students cannot find a high school suitable for them, some others cannot adapt to school.

NHK Gakuen offers the following courses:

1. General Course

Students study 74 credits over three years in this course. Finishing all the provided subjects, the students are officially certificated as high school graduates. They have to participate in three major activities; studying with TV and radio, making reports and attending school for classroom instruction. Students learn with NHK TV and radio programs and are provided textbooks based on high school curriculum, send in reports on each subject once a month or so, and the teachers of NHK Gakuen correct, evaluate and return them to each student. Instructors also do their best to encourage students not to drop out. Perseverance is the most effective tool for learning. Not only by mail but also by telephone students can get in touch with teachers for close and direct instruction. In addition to communication by mail, NHK Gakuen has introduced a new system of learning, 'e-learning'. Students are also required to attend some fixed hours of schooling once a month. It is held at NHK Gakuen in Kunitachi, Tokyo and 33 cooperating high schools in each district all over Japan. NHK Gakuen also opens intensive schooling twice a year for those who cannot attend monthly schooling.

2. Special Course for Overseas Japanese

This is a course for students who move abroad willing to continue studying the Japanese high school curriculum preparation for their return to Japan.



Social Welfare Course for the Graduates of High School [two-year program]

In 1988, the Social Welfare Course was created as an advanced extension to the ordinary high school curriculum. The Social Welfare Course is designed to help students to become community volunteers capable of creating a better community and to train themselves to become caring professionals called “certified care workers”. The curriculum includes comprehensive studies of topics that concern the public, including the environment, day-to-day living and culture, and challenges facing human beings, in addition to theoretical studies on welfare. Furthermore, students gain an understanding of the significance of welfare through field education that includes hands-on experience and training as volunteers and social welfare specialists. The academy has a total enrolment of 4,000 students at present, while the graduates of the program, of which there are currently more than 27,000, are actively engaged in social welfare projects across the nation.

Features of Social Welfare Course

1. Preparation for the State Examination for Certified Care Worker The completion of the prescribed courses during the two-year study qualify students for the national exam to become certified care workers.
2. Community School Network This is a network initiated and run by the graduates, and deals with welfare activities in a number of communities.

5.3.3 Super English Language Virtual High School [Japan]

The *Super English Language Virtual High School* in Japan is funded by the National Ministry of Education, Sports, Science and Technology [MEXT] as part of their **Super English language** high school programme, which was initiated in 2002.

Kumamoto was selected as one of 16 prefectures to be the host of a pilot program with the goal of improving English education for the entire country. The Virtual High School idea was home grown in Kumamoto.

The Super Virtual High School is a consortium of:

- Daiichi Senior High School
- Kita Senior High School
- Toryo Senior High School

For more details see <http://www.higo.ed.jp>

1. Vision

Each student signs up for World Culture Classes. These classes will focus on topics that interest students while also teaching them about English and the world outside of Japan. They will spend at least one class hour a week on these classes. Beyond this hour, they may access VHS in their free time, or during extra class hours to complete work or explore the site.



2. Goals

- Get students excited about English by teaching them in English about topics that interest them.
- Further facilitate internationalization by increasing student exposure to non-Japanese young people and give ALTs a greater opportunity to get to know other Japanese students.
- Give ALTs [Assistant Language Teachers] the opportunity to teach a subject other than straight English thus increasing their job satisfaction. They will teach on their own, without a team-teaching partner, though Japanese Teachers of English will be involved in the project. In this way, we will also utilize Kumamoto's ALTs more effectively.
- Expose Japanese students to their role as world citizens and give them enough information to spark an interest in the world outside of our ken, thus further increasing internationalization.
- Give our students the confidence to communicate in English, both with native speakers and other non-native speakers alike.
- Revolutionize English education in Kumamoto while producing active learners who are unafraid to pursue their academic interests and goals.

3. Operation

Though the Base Schools may choose to present the day to day operations of Virtual High School in differing ways, they will all adhere to some basic operational criteria.

1. Each participating school has a 1-hour class devoted to the Virtual High School class.
2. Each student will study the World Culture classes. They use methods such as email, in person activities, web pages and the internet to accomplish class goals.
3. ALTs will design the curriculum. Other ALTs will become Homeroom Teachers and communicate with the students via e-mail while also evaluating their performance. Classes can be from 1 to 4 weeks long.

5.4 List of virtual schools found in Asia

5.4.1 Israel

- ORT Aviv Virtual School – established together with the Hebrew University of Jerusalem in 1997, is a pioneering attempt to harness new information technologies in an effort to enrich and improve the way in which children learn. This is done through the introduction of internet-based curricular modules ("virtual courses") into the conventional classroom.

5.4.2 Japan

- NHK Academy of Distance Learning – see separate entry at 5.3.2 above
- Super English Language Virtual High School – see separate entry at 5.3.3. above



5.4.3 Near East – South Asia

- NESAs Virtual School – is a consortium of 24 Near East South Asia (NESA) Council of Overseas Schools member schools, collectively part of the World Virtual Schools Project.

5.4.4 Singapore

- K12 International Academy – a private online American school.

5.4.5 South Korea

- Cyber Home Learning System – see separate entry at 5.3.1 above



6 The Americas

6.1 USA

6.1.1 Introduction

As of Dec 2011, there are nearly 270 US Virtual School entries on the VISCED wiki. Below is a selection intended to illustrate the spectrum of provision through single institutions through, school-district, multi-district and state-wide with public, private and charter schools offering full-time and supplementary learning to a variety of student cohorts from mainstream to religious groups, offenders and vulnerable young people.

With regards to virtual schooling, the USA is almost certainly the most intensively studied country in the world at the current time. iNACOL [the International Association of Online K-12 Learning] is based in the USA and provides an invaluable focus for research and advocacy. The annual Keeping Pace Reports [for the USA] and the State of the Nation Reports [for Canada] form an excellent foundation for research into arguably the most mature virtual schooling region [North America] - capturing as they do the disparities, differences and nuances between and within nations, states and school boards. iNACOL categorises USA virtual schools in terms of reach as follows

- Single-district programmes
- Multi-district full-time schools
- Consortium programmes
- State virtual schools
- Programmes run by postsecondary institutions

However, the governance models in the USA are much more varied than this [understandably given the variety of political philosophies, funding streams and regulatory frameworks across the 50 states] and the influence of the private sector – both in offering private education and in running public schools – is evident.

USA schools may employ combinations of synchronous, asynchronous and blended learning to support full-time and/or supplementary learners.

6.1.2 Virtual initiatives in schools

Online education in the US has gained considerable traction over the last 15 years – seemingly more so than in any other country. A major report from the International Association for K-12 Online Learning [iNACOL], A National Primer on K-12 Online Learning [Second Edition], estimates that over 1.5 million American K-12 students were engaged in online and blended learning for the 2009-2010 school year [out of approximately 55.2 million students enrolled]. This represents roughly 3% of the US K-12 population.



This relatively small figure belies the scope and nature of the programmes now available. Options vary from state to state, school district to school district, and even from school to school. As the Primer notes, whether a student has the option to participate in “supplemental” [i.e. single] courses or full-time online programmes remains a matter of state policy and local laws, “with a few states providing opportunities for most students, a few states providing almost no opportunities, and most states falling somewhere in the middle”. Moreover, iNACOL and others acknowledge their ongoing struggle to survey data in this relatively new and rapidly changing arena; there is no single authority to whom any of the schools listed in this survey must report, and relevant data is not always made available to the public.

As of 2010, supplemental or full-time online learning opportunities were available to students in 48 of the 50 US states. 38 states had state virtual schools or state-led online initiatives [with a 39th set to open in 2011]; 27 states plus Washington, DC had full-time online schools serving students state-wide; and 20 states were providing both supplemental and full-time online learning options state-wide [but not as part of a state virtual school]. This can be compared to 2001, during which approximately 10 states had state virtual schools and even fewer offered other online education options. The three main types of US virtual school are summarised in brief below, as outlined in Keeping Pace With Online Learning: An Annual Review of Policy and Practice, Evergreen Education Group [2010]. Note that not all schools fit neatly into one of the slots below, but without this kind of rough categorisation it would be exceedingly difficult to approach the vast array of US virtual schools.

It should be noted that where US research literature is quoted the original authors may be applying a specific, quantitative definition of a ‘blended learning’ course [the Sloan definition from Allen, Seaman, and Garrett⁶].

1. *Traditional Course: 0% of instruction or content delivered online*
2. *Web-facilitated Course: 1-29% of instruction or content delivered online*
3. *Blended/hybrid Course: 30-79% of instruction or content delivered online*
4. *Online Course: 80%-100% of content is delivered online*

6.1.2.1 US state virtual schools – overview

- Operate in 38 states
- Are state-led online learning initiatives, with course enrolment ranging from several thousand to 16,000 for 2009-10

⁶ Allen, E., Seaman, J. & Garrett, R. [2007]. Blending In: The Extent and Promise of Blended Education in the United States. Sloan-C Consortium. Available for download at: http://www.sloan-c.org/publications/survey/pdf/Blending_In.pdf



- Boast 450,000 “course enrolments” nationwide, i.e. in which one student takes one course
- Often provide local school districts with **supplemental online courses**, as well as online learning expertise and thought leadership for their own schools
- Have **students who study online part-time only** [taking “supplemental” online courses while physically enrolled elsewhere]
- Saw enrolment increase by nearly 40% from 2008-09 to 2009-10, though most gains came from the states of North Carolina and Florida only
- Have virtual school enrolments exceeding 10,000 for 2009-10 in eight different states [Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Idaho, Louisiana, Michigan, North Carolina and South Carolina]
- Are usually funded by legislative appropriation

6.1.2.2 US multi-school-district full-time online schools – overview

- Operate in 27 states [each has at least one]
- **Have few or no part-time students**; most have enrolment of a few hundred to several thousand
- Usually attract students from across an entire state, so are found in those states that permit students to enrol across district lines
- Are typically charter schools [i.e. special publicly funded schools operating under their own charters/standards, attended by student choice]
- Are usually affiliated with a private national organisation e.g. Connections Academy, K12 Inc., Advanced Academics, or Insight Schools
- Are often funded via state public education funds that follow the student

6.1.2.3 US single school district programmes – overview

- Are represented by only 11 well-established programmes nationwide
- Serve only students who reside within a single, local district of residence
- Serve **mostly supplemental students** [though some serve full-time students]
- Are often focused on credit recovery or at-risk students
- Make up the fastest growing segment of K-12 online learning

There are additionally a number of virtual schools run by consortia or postsecondary institutions, i.e. some which are not state, multi-district or single district schools.



6.1.3 Notable examples

6.1.3.1 State-wide Public Schools: Florida Virtual School and Michigan Virtual School

Florida Virtual School

The *Florida Virtual School* [FLVS] is a US state virtual school founded in 1997. It is located in the south eastern state of Florida, USA. FLVS offers education at the K-12 level [kindergarten through twelfth grade]. FLVS will enrol students through age 19; students must complete their course before age 21. All courses are fully online.

There were 213,296 semester course enrolments for 97,182 students in grades 6-12 in 2009-10. Additionally, in 2010-2011, more than 115,000 students across the state of Florida took at least one course with the Florida Virtual School.

FLVS is roughly three times larger than any other state virtual school, and 10-25 times larger than most.

More Details

The first US state-wide online public high school [i.e. open to all Floridians], FLVS makes its courses free to all Florida students; others may enrol and pay tuition. FLVS is a curriculum provider and does not award diplomas directly. Floridian students are typically enrolled in a Florida public school.

Funding of FLVS is built directly into the state education funding formula. Funding is performance-based: *FLVS receives funding only for students who successfully complete their courses*. This is the same funding formula as for the state's traditional public schools, i.e. the funding tied to that student goes to FLVS.

Florida school districts may select to set up their own FLVS Franchise schools.

FLVS is known [and sometimes maligned] for its use of eLearning Centres [ELCs] and Virtual Learning Labs [VLLs]. 150 schools in Florida have implemented these in partnership with FLVS, in which:

- The traditional school provides scheduled time and a workspace [such as a computer lab or library] and FLVS provides the teacher and an online course.
- ELCs and VLLs each have a facilitator to work in tandem with the online teacher.

State-wide, the number of VLLs greatly expanded in 2009-10 [especially in Miami-Dade] due to class size reduction legislation [as districts select virtual options to meet the new requirements].

The Florida Virtual School web site is at <http://www.flvs.net/Pages/default.aspx>.



References

- “As virtual school options expand, some worry about costs and quality”, eSchoolNews, 20 September 2011, <http://www.eschoolnews.com/2011/09/20/as-virtual-school-options-expand-some-worry-about-costs-and-quality>
- “A National Primer on K-12 Online Learning”, iNACOL, October 2010, http://www.inacol.org/research/docs/national_report.pdf
- “Building the Next Generation of Online Courses”, CHECKpoint eLearning, November 2009, <http://www.checkpoint-elearning.com/article/7423.html>
- Florida Virtual School, http://www.flvs.net/Pages/default.aspx*
- “In Florida, Virtual Classrooms With No Teachers”, L. Herrera, New York Times, 17 January 2011, <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/01/18/education/18classrooms.html?pagewanted=all>
- “Keeping Pace With Online Learning: An Annual Review of Policy and Practice”, Evergreen Education Group, 2010, <http://kpk12.com/reports/>
- “2010 Report on State Virtual Schools in SREB States”, Southern Regional Education Board Educational Technology Cooperative, June 2011, <http://publications.sreb.org/2010/2010ExecutiveSummary.pdf>

Michigan Virtual School

The *Michigan Virtual School* [MVS] is a state virtual resource established in 2000. Run by Michigan Virtual University, it is located in the state of Michigan, US.

MVS had 15,000 course enrolments in 2009-10.

While not a school per se, MVS works in partnership with schools to provide online learning options that supplement what is currently being offered. It targets schools in its advertising, offering to expand curriculum and save money and resources. It does not directly grant credit or diplomas. Courses are almost entirely online, and may be taken either from a school classroom or from home. They may be either instructor led or self-paced.

Courses are available to students at the middle school and high schools levels [sixth through twelfth]. Students taking courses through MVS must be no older than 20 years old.

The Michigan Virtual School web site is at <http://www.mivhs.org>.

More Details

MVS is a “private, non-profit Michigan corporation” funded by annual legislative appropriations, course tuition, and private grants. Its parent organisation is [Michigan Virtual University](#) [MVU], an unusual arrangement.



In 2006, the Michigan Legislature was the first in the nation to pass a requirement that students have an “online learning experience” before graduating

References

- “A National Primer on K-12 Online Learning”, iNACOL, October 2010, http://www.inacol.org/research/docs/national_report.pdf
- “Keeping Pace With Online Learning: An Annual Review of Policy and Practice”, Evergreen Education Group, 2010, <http://kpk12.com/reports/>

6.1.3.2 State-wide & Multi-district Charter schools: Oregon Connections Academy; Open High School of Utah; Georgia Cyber Academy

Oregon Connections Academy

The *Oregon Connections Academy* [ORCA] is a public K-12 school partnered with the private Connections Academy to provide a full curriculum. It is located in the US state of Oregon. Authorised by Scio School District 95C, ORCA began serving students state-wide in September 2005.

There were 2,457 students enrolled in 2009-2010.

ORCA is a full-time tuition-free virtual charter school; students study from home.

The Oregon Connections Academy web site is at <http://www.connectionsacademy.com/oregon-school/home.aspx>

References

- “A National Primer on K-12 Online Learning”, iNACOL, October 2010, http://www.inacol.org/research/docs/national_report.pdf
- “Keeping Pace With Online Learning: An Annual Review of Policy and Practice”, Evergreen Education Group, 2010, <http://kpk12.com/reports/>
- Oregon Connections Academy web site, <http://www.connectionsacademy.com/oregon-school/home.aspx>
- “Oregon Connections Academy”, CCD Public school data 2009-2010 school year, http://nces.ed.gov/ccd/schoolsearch/school_detail.asp?Search=1&SchoolID=411104001680&ID=411104001680

Open High School of Utah

The *Open High School of Utah* [OHSU] is based in the US state of Utah. Founded in 2009, it is a public charter school which aims to provide Utah students with an online, virtual environment to fulfil their “full academic and social potential”. Courses are fully online.



In 2011 OHSU offered education for 500 full-time high school students in grades 9-11, and planned to add grade 12 in 2012.

OHSU offers a full college preparatory programme and the opportunity for students to earn both a high school diploma and an associate's degree from Utah State University. It is estimated that 39% of existing students' "needs [were] not being met in previous school situations".

The Open High School of Utah has been supported in part by a grant from the US Department of Education's Fund for the Improvement of Education [FIPSE].

The Open High School of Utah web site is at <http://openhighschool.org>

More Details

Founded by OER evangelist David Wiley, OHSU is committed to using open educational resources [OER]; the entire curriculum is based on open educational resources, enhanced with screencasts, interactive components and other activities.

As this is a Utah public school, any 9th grade high school student [13 to 15 years of age] in the state of Utah can apply. Enrolled OHSU students can take advantage of the OHSU partnership with Utah-based Brigham Young University Independent Study [in the Utah Higher Education Consortium] to take BYU independent courses at no cost.

All OHSU students are issued/provided a laptop and an internet connection subsidy, along with CDs/DVDs and other instructional supplies. Learning is self-paced, in collaboration with teachers. OHSU utilizes both synchronous and asynchronous types of communication. For each course, students have the opportunity for synchronous instruction with their teacher [daily]. For more details see <http://openhighschool.org/teaching-model>

References

- "A National Primer on K-12 Online Learning", iNACOL, October 2010, http://www.inacol.org/research/docs/national_report.pdf
- "Keeping Pace With Online Learning: An Annual Review of Policy and Practice", Evergreen Education Group, 2010, <http://kpk12.com/reports/>
- Open High School of Utah web site, <http://openhighschool.org>

The charter proposal is at <http://openhighschool.org/wp-content/uploads/2009/07/OHSU-Charter-as-Amended-Apr09.pdf>

Georgia Cyber Academy

The *Georgia Cyber Academy* [GCA] is a full-time, tuition-free online charter school for students in grades K-10, located in the US state of Georgia. It is proclaimed to be one of the fastest-growing public schools in the state [though enrolment figures are not readily available].



GCA is partnered with the private K12 Inc for provide content/curricula. The high school programme is a combination of self-paced work and scheduled lessons and activities. Students will spend no more than 20-25% of their time on the computer in the early grades, and more at higher levels.

The Georgia Cyber Academy web site is at <http://www.k12.com/gca>

More Details

Throughout the year, students are invited to participate in school outings, field trips etc.

References

- “A National Primer on K-12 Online Learning”, iNACOL, October 2010, http://www.inacol.org/research/docs/national_report.pdf
- Georgia Cyber Academy web site, <http://www.k12.com/gca>
- “Keeping Pace With Online Learning: An Annual Review of Policy and Practice”, Evergreen Education Group, 2010, <http://kpk12.com/reports/>

6.1.3.3 Single District Public Schools: WOLF School; Jeffco’s 21st Century Virtual Academy

WOLF School

The *WOLF School* [**Washoe On-line Learning for the Future**] is a free online public school located in the US state of Nevada. Students who reside in Washoe County may attend in grades K-12. WOLF is part of the Nevada Online School Network, and partnered with the private Advanced Academics.

During the 2009-2010 school year WOLF had 208 students.

Learning is 100% online, and may be either part-time or full-time. Students already enrolled in the Washoe County School District may take one course at a time while enrolled full-time at their traditional school, with a \$120 fee per course.

The WOLF School web site is at <http://www.learnwithwolf.com/index.html>

More Details

Washoe County School District will issue a student’s diploma on behalf of the WOLF School.

References

- “A National Primer on K-12 Online Learning”, iNACOL, October 2010, http://www.inacol.org/research/docs/national_report.pdf
- “Keeping Pace With Online Learning: An Annual Review of Policy and Practice”, Evergreen Education Group, 2010, <http://kpk12.com/reports/>



- WOLF School web site, <http://www.learnwithwolf.com/index.html>
- “Washoe Wolf High School”, CCD Public school data 2009-2010 school year, NCES, http://nces.ed.gov/ccd/schoolsearch/school_detail.asp?Search=1&SchoolID=320048000775&ID=320048000775

Jeffco’s 21st Century Virtual Academy

Jeffco’s 21st Century Virtual Academy [Jeffco] offers online courses for grades 7-12 for students throughout the US state of Colorado. The public Virtual Academy is backed by Jeffco Public School and offers both part-time [supplemental] and full-time study. Tuition-free students need to be residents of Colorado and under the age of 21, although out-of-state or international students may enrol on a fee-paying basis.

In 2010-2011 there were 144 full-time and 188 part-time students enrolled.

Learning takes place almost entirely online.

The Jeffco web site is at <http://www.jeffcopublicschools.org/online/>

References

- “A National Primer on K-12 Online Learning”, iNACOL, October 2010, http://www.inacol.org/research/docs/national_report.pdf
- Jeffco’s 21st Century Virtual Academy web site, <http://www.jeffcopublicschools.org/online/>
- “Keeping Pace With Online Learning: An Annual Review of Policy and Practice”, Evergreen Education Group, 2010, <http://kpk12.com/reports/>

6.1.3.4 Single District Charter Schools: SusQ-Cyber Charter School

SusQ-Cyber Charter School

The *SusQ-Cyber Charter School* [SusQ-Cyber] is a free public charter school open to students in grades 9 through 12 who are school-aged residents of the US state of Pennsylvania. It was opened in 1998.

In 2009-2010 there were 190 students enrolled.

Students study from home and are expected to study for a minimum of 5½ hours per school day. Programmes entail regular communication with a teacher [phone, Elluminate] and other features [e.g. physical education requirement at a local gym]. Courses are self-paced.

The SusQ-Cyber Charter School provides, by law, each student with a computer and printer. Internet access is also provided.

The SusQ-Cyber Charter School web site is at <http://www.susqcyber.org/>



References

- “A National Primer on K-12 Online Learning”, iNACOL, October 2010, http://www.inacol.org/research/docs/national_report.pdf
- “Keeping Pace With Online Learning: An Annual Review of Policy and Practice”, Evergreen Education Group, 2010, <http://kpk12.com/reports/>
- SusQ-Cyber Charter School web site, <http://www.susqcyber.org/>
- “Susq-cyber Cs”, CCD Public school data 2009-2010 school year, http://nces.ed.gov/ccd/schoolsearch/school_detail.asp?Search=1&SchoolID=420002800368&ID=420002800368

6.1.3.5 Consortia: Virtual High School Global Consortium; Vermont Virtual Learning Co-operative; Wisconsin E-school Network

Virtual High School Global Consortium

The US-based Virtual High School Global Consortium [VHS] was founded in 1997. It is a non-profit consortium that offers high school courses to students worldwide, and mostly to students within the US. Its offices are located in Massachusetts, US.

The total 2010 student enrolment in its “NetCourses” was 15,237.

VHS students typically access their [asynchronous] online courses from within their local, traditional schools. Courses are mostly supplemental, focusing on Advanced Placement, honours level, remediation and credit recovery.

Member schools pay an administrative fee and pay for professional development. There were 770 member schools worldwide, from 34 US states.

In September 2011, VHS announced a partnership with the private Connections Academy, designed to expand the number of core online courses offered for credit recovery purposes.

The Virtual High School Global Consortium web site is at <http://www.govhs.org/>.

More Details

The Virtual High School has 51 non-US members [international schools].

Students participate in organised online “classes” which do not exceed 25 students.

As noted on the VHS web site:

Schools can join VHS as Individual School Members or Student-Only schools. Individual School Members participate in VHS by freeing a high school teacher one period a day to teach a VHS course



online. Student-Only schools do not have a teacher teaching a VHS course, but only have students taking VHS courses. VHS also accepts individual students

VHS is “based in the Massachusetts Virtual High School” – an entity about which little discrete information exists.

Most participating schools sponsor one VHS course, allowing 50 students [per year] to take one online course through VHS.

References

- “A National Primer on K-12 Online Learning”, iNACOL, October 2010, http://www.inacol.org/research/docs/national_report.pdf
- “Connections Learning Partners with Virtual High School to Expand Core Course Offering”, Connections Academy Press Release, 12 September 2011, <http://www.connectionslearning.com/connections-learning/news/CL-partners-with-Virtual-High-School.aspx>
- “Keeping Pace With Online Learning: An Annual Review of Policy and Practice”, Evergreen Education Group, 2010, <http://kpk12.com/reports/>
- Virtual High School Global Consortium web site, <http://www.govhs.org/>

Vermont Virtual Learning Cooperative

The *Vermont Virtual Learning Cooperative* [VTVLC] is an organisation developed through a partnership of public schools which is funded by a grant provided by the Vermont Department of Education. It is located in the US state of Vermont. The programme enables students to take classes not available at their local schools, or not available at a time during which they can attend them.

VTVLC offered 18 supplemental courses to 300 students in the autumn of 2010.

The VTVLC coordinates the efforts of Vermont public schools to offer online classes. In addition, a broad range of professional development activities are offered to prepare teachers to meet the challenges of teaching in an online environment.

Schools that provide teachers and online classes are able to access other courses being offered through VTVLC from around the state with no exchange or loss of tuition dollars.

The Vermont Virtual Learning Cooperative web site is at <http://www.vtlvc.org/>

More Details

The VTVLC is managed by Vermont’s River Valley Technical Centre School District in partnership with Springfield School District, Burlington School District, Community College of Vermont, Marlboro College Graduate School, and Learning Network of Vermont.



References

- “A National Primer on K-12 Online Learning”, iNACOL, October 2010, http://www.inacol.org/research/docs/national_report.pdf
- “Keeping Pace With Online Learning: An Annual Review of Policy and Practice”, Evergreen Education Group, 2010, <http://kpk12.com/reports/>
- Vermont Virtual Learning Cooperative web site, <http://www.vtvlc.org/>

Wisconsin eSchool Network

The *Wisconsin eSchool Network* is a network of eSchools located in the US state of Wisconsin. They are located in the state of Wisconsin.

The Wisconsin eSchool Network is a consortium of nine school districts, five of which are among the 10 largest districts in the state [Kenosha, Janesville, Madison, Appleton and Sheboygan].

The Network had 4,641 course enrolments in 2009-10.

See <http://www.wisconsineschool.com/Network.asp> for a full list of members.

The Wisconsin eSchool Network web site is at <http://www.wisconsineschool.com/>

References

- “A National Primer on K-12 Online Learning”, iNACOL, October 2010, http://www.inacol.org/research/docs/national_report.pdf
- Wisconsin eSchool Network web site, <http://www.wisconsineschool.com/>
- “Keeping Pace With Online Learning: An Annual Review of Policy and Practice”, Evergreen Education Group, 2010, <http://kpk12.com/reports/>

6.1.3.6 Private Provision of Public Schools: Mississippi Virtual Public School

Mississippi Virtual Public School

The *Mississippi Virtual Public School* [MVPS] is a free state-wide virtual public school, located in the US state of Mississippi. It is partnered with the private Connections Academy for course provision, and [as of November 2010] was the first and only state virtual school to be entirely run by a private provider.

MVPS served approximately 2,863 students with 6,357 course enrolments during the 2009-10 school year. MVPS also offers supplemental AP preparation courses.

MVPS seeks to provide Mississippi students with access to a wider range of course work, with improved flexibility in scheduling. The school was established by State Board of Education legislation



in 2006. MVPS was funded by state appropriation of \$1.9 million in 2008-09, with some additional grant funding, and \$1.8 million for 2009-10.

All students are required to gain approval from their local school before they can take an online course through MVPS. Private and homeschool students must meet the same requirement and must use the local public school for which they are zoned.

For the 2011-2012 school year MVPS reached maximum capacity as the school could no longer afford to bring in students using public funds. Mississippi students in Grades 9-12 and their parents may purchase online courses directly from the National Connections Academy private online programme, which has established a course list and discounted pricing for Mississippi families.

The Mississippi Virtual Public School web site is at
<http://www.connectionsacademy.com/mississippi-school/home.aspx>

References

- “A National Primer on K-12 Online Learning”, iNACOL, October 2010, http://www.inacol.org/research/docs/national_report.pdf
- “Keeping Pace With Online Learning: An Annual Review of Policy and Practice”, Evergreen Education Group, 2010, <http://kpk12.com/reports/>
- Mississippi Virtual Public School web site, <http://www.connectionsacademy.com/mississippi-school/home.aspx>

6.1.3.7 Post-secondary Schools Provided by Higher Education Institutes: Independent Study High School; Brigham Young University Independent Study

Independent Study High School

The *Independent Study High School* [University of Nebraska-Lincoln Independent Study High School, ISHS, UNL Independent Study HS] is an online high school located in the US state of Nebraska. It is part of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

The Independent Study High School had 43 students in 2009-2010*.

ISHS students are located in 135 countries worldwide. Courses are self-paced and designed for the independent learner; they have no age or grade requirements. Home school students may choose to complete a diploma by studying online full time; students enrolled in a local school may take individual [supplemental] courses.

The Independent Study High School web site is at <http://highschool.unl.edu/>



References

- “A National Primer on K-12 Online Learning”, iNACOL, October 2010, http://www.inacol.org/research/docs/national_report.pdf
- Independent Study High School web site, <http://highschool.unl.edu/>
- “Keeping Pace With Online Learning: An Annual Review of Policy and Practice”, Evergreen Education Group, 2010, <http://kpk12.com/reports/>
- “UNL Independent Study High Sch”, CCD Public school data 2009-2010 school year, http://nces.ed.gov/ccd/schoolsearch/school_detail.asp?Search=1&SchoolID=310005901875&ID=31000590187

*Elsewhere [http://www.nytimes.com/2011/11/20/education/stanfords-online-high-school-raises-the-bar.html?_r=2] a figure of 250 students graduating annually is quoted.

Brigham Young University Independent Study

The *Brigham Young University Independent Study* programme [BYU Independent Study] is a university-based online education programme that offers roughly 600 university, high school, junior high school [middle school] and personal enrichment courses to individuals worldwide. It is located in the US state of Utah.

BYU Independent Study targets high school students seeking to graduate early or even simply on time, and high school students taking college courses for dual credit at their high school and prospective college.

The BYU Independent Study web site is at <http://ce.byu.edu/is/site/>

References

- “A National Primer on K-12 Online Learning”, iNACOL, October 2010, http://www.inacol.org/research/docs/national_report.pdf
- “Keeping Pace With Online Learning: An Annual Review of Policy and Practice”, Evergreen Education Group, 2010, <http://kpk12.com/reports/>
- Brigham Young University Independent Study web site, <http://ce.byu.edu/is/site/>



6.1.3.8 Inclusion: Cook County Sheriff's Department Virtual High School; Kenosha eSchool; City of Angels Virtual Academy; The American Academy; Omaha Public Schools eLearning; Slavic Christian Academy

Cook County Sheriff's Department Virtual High School [Offender Learning]

The *Cook County Sheriff's Department Virtual High School* is a fully online high school diploma programme [HSDP] in a US adult jail, launched in 2009. In June 2010, it graduated its first class of seven.

The programme serves 17-21 year olds that have not graduated from high school. Students begin by taking credit-recovery courses before moving on to other graduation requirements. The school's mission is to help students complete high school, setting them "on a path to success, rather than down a road of criminal behaviour."

The programme's private partner is Aventa Learning.

The Cook County Sheriff's Department Virtual High School web site is at

http://www.cookcountysheriff.org/ReentryAndDiversion/ReentryAndDiversion_VirtualHS.html

More Details

HSDP works in coordination with Chicago Public Schools [CPS], which oversees the programme. CPS staff analyze student transcripts, monitor compliance with graduation requirements, and assign final grades based on performance. When students earn all the credits needed to graduate, they receive a high school diploma from the last Chicago Public School they have attended. Alternatively, students can earn an eighteen credit diploma from Pnuema, a private school which utilizes the same online courses

All high school courses offered are approved by the State of Illinois and the City of Chicago, Classes include all core requirements [English, Mathematics, Sciences, Foreign Language], electives [Health, Driver's Education, Career Planning, Art and Music], and credit recovery courses.

Through Aventa, students access their courses online at one of four computer-enabled classrooms; Cook County provides the computers while Aventa delivers the online learning. Each student is assigned a personal online teacher.

References

- "Alternative High School Program in Cook County", Aventa Learning web site, n/d, <http://aventallearning.com/case-studies/Cook-County-Alternative-School>
- "A National Primer on K-12 Online Learning", iNACOL, October 2010, http://www.inacol.org/research/docs/national_report.pdf



- Cook County Sheriff's Department Virtual High School web site, http://www.cookcountysheriff.org/ReentryAndDiversion/ReentryAndDiversion_VirtualHS.html
- "Keeping Pace With Online Learning: An Annual Review of Policy and Practice", Evergreen Education Group, 2010, <http://kpk12.com/reports>

Kenosha eSchool [Vulnerable young people]

The *Kenosha eSchool [eSchool]* is an online high school located in the US state of Wisconsin. Founded in 2007, it is part of the Kenosha Unified School District. Students may study part-time or full-time from any Kenosha district school.

There were 89 students enrolled in 2009-2010.

Its mission

The Kenosha eSchool, in partnership with Wisconsin eSchool Network, exists to utilize new and emerging technologies providing students' access to high-quality standards-driven curriculum in an environment that is self-paced and accommodating to students' varying physical locations, individualized plans, and time frames

Any Kenosha area student grades 9-12 may request enrolment in eSchool courses. Special consideration may be given to students "with significant life obstacles: i.e. dropouts, adjudicated and/or incarcerated youth, teen parents, home-based [home-bound] students, students with physical, mental or emotional difficulties, voluntarily withdrawn or expelled students, self-supporting youth, transient students, students in treatment programs, homeschooled, and open enrolled students."

The Kenosha eSchool web site is at <http://eschool.kusd.edu/>

References

- "A National Primer on K-12 Online Learning", iNACOL, October 2010, http://www.inacol.org/research/docs/national_report.pdf
- Kenosha eSchool web site, <http://eschool.kusd.edu/>
- "Keeping Pace With Online Learning: An Annual Review of Policy and Practice", Evergreen Education Group, 2010, <http://kpk12.com/reports/>; state profile at http://www.kpk12.com/cms/wp-content/uploads/EEG_KP2010-stateprof-WI.pdf

City of Angels Virtual Academy

The *City of Angels Virtual Academy [COAVA]* is the online academy of the Los Angeles Unified School District, or LAUSD. COAVA became a full-time online academy in 2010. Education is available for student in grades 9-12 [high school], with a K-8 curriculum in development as of 2011-2012. The entire 9th and 10th grade curriculum is available online.



Based in California, US, COAVA served 650 students in its first year, 2010-2011.

It is designed for students with special interests and abilities, scheduling problems, or individual needs that cannot be accommodated in the traditional school setting. Those having problems in traditional schools, are single parents, and are potential dropouts are of particular interest. Students study from home.

COAVA serves a student body drawn from a 700-square mile area. Instructional sites house between two and five teachers and are located in community centres, churches, LAUSD-owned properties, and commercial buildings.

The City of Angels Virtual Academy web site is at http://www.lausd.net/City_of_Angels/coava/index-1A.html

More Details

COAVA is a joint venture between Los Angeles Unified School District's City of Angels School, the Office of Instruction, the Office of Educational Technology, and the Beyond the Bell Branch.

References

- "LAUSD offers virtual academy for students", ABC 7 Eyewitness news piece, 16 August 2010, http://abclocal.go.com/kabc/story?section=news/local/los_angeles&id=7613616
- "A National Primer on K-12 Online Learning", iNACOL, October 2010, http://www.inacol.org/research/docs/national_report.pdf
- City of Angels Virtual Academy web site, http://www.lausd.net/City_of_Angels/coava/index-1A.html
- City of Angels School brochure, http://www.lausd.net/City_of_Angels/pdf/COAS%20Brochure.pdf
- "Keeping Pace With Online Learning: An Annual Review of Policy and Practice", Evergreen Education Group, 2010, <http://kpk12.com/reports/>

The American Academy [Drop out and credit recovery]

The American Academy [TAA] Inc. is a private online high school located in the US state of Utah. It specialises in providing a complete high school education to non-traditional students, and providing supplemental "just in time" courses for students struggling to graduate on time [or seeking to graduate early].

Dozens of school districts in several US states [e.g. Washington, Florida] use TAA's services for their students.

Established in 2007, TAA offers a Dropout Recovery Programme web site.



The American Academy web site is at <http://www.theamericanacademy.com>

More Details

Financial partners of The American Academy include Austin Ventures, vSpring Capital and Peterson Ventures.

References

- “A National Primer on K-12 Online Learning”, iNACOL, October 2010, http://www.inacol.org/research/docs/national_report.pdf
- “Keeping Pace With Online Learning: An Annual Review of Policy and Practice”, Evergreen Education Group, 2010, <http://kpk12.com/reports/>
- The American Academy web site, <http://www.theamericanacademy.com>

Omaha Public Schools eLearning

Omaha Public Schools eLearning [OPS] is a district-run school programme in the US state of Nebraska, founded in 2006. OPS was initially designed to meet the needs of credit recovery students in grades 9-12, but evolved into a blended learning programme for all students. Credit recovery students access online content while at a physical school with in-person teachers.

In 2010-2011 there were nearly 15,000 blended face-to-face students; 600 full-time online students; and 2,500 supplemental students.

OPS uses OER content from NROC [Monterey Institute for Technology and Education].

The Omaha Public Schools web site is at <http://www.ops.org/district/>. There is no obvious web site for its eLearning programme.

Note: most of this content is drawn from a single report, “Keeping Pace With K-12 Online Learning,” and at a glance, content has proven difficult to confirm via other sources [Sept 2011].

References

- “Keeping Pace With Online Learning: An Annual Review of Policy and Practice”. Evergreen Education Group, 2010, <http://kpk12.com/reports/>

Slavic Christian Academy [Common interest groups]

The *Slavic Christian Academy [SCA]* offers Christian online homeschooling courses for students in grades 3-12. It is located in the US state of Washington. Founded in 2004, it is a religious non-profit private school with four physical campuses located in the northwestern US, in addition to its online school. SCA graduates receive a Washington State Diploma.

SCA had 249 K-12 students in 2009-2010.



Full-time [grades 3-12] and part-time [grades 7-12] education is available. Tuition may cost between \$240 and \$1680 per year.

Advertising clearly targets parents of homeschoolers, e.g.

“By using SCA’s accredited online program, parents no longer have to worry about obtaining teaching credentials, grading assignments or even creating homeschooling curriculums.”

Completely online courses are provided by the “Switched-On Online” [SOO] curriculum provider. Courses involve teacher-led instruction; “classes” of under 20 students; and teacher support via email or phone.

The Slavic Christian Academy web site is at <http://www.slavicchristianacademy.com>

More Details

Slavic Christian Academy is a member of Association of Christian School International [ACSI], approved by Washington & Oregon Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction [OSPI & ODE], and granted the **provisional accreditation** by the Northwest Accreditation Commission [NWAC].

References

- “A National Primer on K-12 Online Learning”, iNACOL, October 2010, http://www.inacol.org/research/docs/national_report.pdf
- “Keeping Pace With Online Learning: An Annual Review of Policy and Practice”, Evergreen Education Group, 2010, <http://kpk12.com/reports/>
- “Private School Universe Survey [PSS]”, NCES 2009-2010 data, http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/pss/privateschoolsearch/school_detail.asp?Search=1&SchoolID=A0903764&ID=A0903764
- Slavic Christian Academy web site, <http://www.slavicchristianacademy.com/>

6.2 Canada

6.2.1 Introduction

As of December 2011 there are 36 Canadian virtual school entries on the VISCED wiki. Below is a selection intended to illustrate the spectrum through single institutions, to school district, multi-district and province wide, with public and private schools offering full-time and supplementary learning to a variety of student cohorts from mainstream to religious groups and First Nation learners. It is expected that this list will be added to as other researchers become aware of the wiki and begin to contribute. Whilst in some provinces and territories virtual learning has been in decline for 2 or 3 years the figures for Canada as a whole are growing. New virtual schools and consortia are being developed. However some of these remain difficult to identify since they may be small existing

physical schools in remote locations which are now being supported to offer significant online learning. As such they do not always use the term ‘virtual’, ‘online’ or ‘cyber’ schools.

Virtual initiatives in schools

Distance learning is a feature [to a variable degree] of the education systems in all thirteen territories and provinces. The 2010 iNACOL Report ‘State of the Nation: K-12 Online Learning in Canada’ estimated that between 150,000 and 175,000 students were enrolled in distance learning courses and/or programmes. This constitutes between 2.8% and 3.4% of the total K-12 student population. Unsurprisingly, given the vast land area and regional autonomy, there is an extremely broad spectrum of distance learning provisions varying by cities, districts, provinces and territories.

“The highest level of activity appears to be in British Columbia, which also has the most comprehensive legislative and regulatory regime. The only province that does not have its own K-12 distance education programme is Prince Edward Island, which relies upon programmes from other jurisdictions [similar to the three northern territories]. The only jurisdictions that continue to maintain single province-wide systems are Newfoundland and Labrador and New Brunswick.”

“...other trends include a high level of district-based cooperation in the Provinces of Ontario and Saskatchewan. The total K-12 student population in Canada for 2009-10 was just over 5.2 million.”

The 2011 iNACOL report ‘State of the Nation: K–12 Online Learning in Canada’ has calculated that there are now 207,096 K-12 students enrolled in ‘distance learning’. This represents an overall [nationwide] growth in the proportion of K–12 students involved in distance education to 4.2%. This does, however, mask decreases in some provinces e.g. New Brunswick.

The 2011 iNACOL Report mentioned above details the provincial enrolments as follows:

<i>Province/Territory</i>	<i>K-12 Students</i>	<i>Enrolled in DE</i>	<i>Percent Enrolment</i>
Newfoundland & Labrador	168,729	~1,000	1.5%
Nova Scotia	128,131	~2,450	1.9%
Prince Edward Island	21,126	66	<1%
New Brunswick	104,421	1,841	1.8%
Quebec	949,350	~30,000	3.1%
Ontario	2,061,390	~50,000	2.4%
Manitoba	179,975	~9,000	5.0%
Saskatchewan	159,465	3,285	2.1%
Alberta	585,397	21,339	3.6%
British Columbia	649,952	~88,000	13.5%
Yukon	2,933	95	3.2%
Northwest Territories	8,576	20+	<1%
Nunavut	8,855	~0	-

It should be noted, however, that, in the Canadian K-12 context, ‘distance learning’ and ‘distance education’ includes print-based [offline] materials. iNACOL also observed that distance education is



often provided as a solution to longstanding challenges such as geographical isolation and/or non-viable study cohort sizes rather than as a choice for students.

The key 2009 report 'State of e-Learning Canada 2009' provides an overview of the history of virtual schools in Canada:

Virtual schooling in Canada first began in 1994–1995, and advancements in K–12 e-learning continue to develop across the country...In 2003–2004, more than one-third [36%] of secondary schools across Canada had students participating in electronic or online courses. The curriculum of most online courses was developed by the school board, district, jurisdiction or province/territory. The proportion of students enrolled in online courses differed according to the instructional level, type and size of school, and geographic location. More rural schools than urban schools reported having students who participated in online courses. Close to 40% of rural secondary schools reported offering online courses to their students, compared with 35% of urban secondary schools. Only 3% of elementary schools had students participating in online courses in 2003–2004.

Before comparing these figures with those collected by others it should be noted that the report defines virtual schools as follows:

Virtual schools do not have a building or physical location; they are operated and managed online.

It is unclear whether this excludes the many Canadian online, distance learning programmes which consist of a physical location at which students undertake some of their online studies [perhaps a partner school] but where the students' host 'school' is an online entity. It should also be noted that many programmes have appeared since 2003-04.

6.2.2 Notable examples

6.2.2.1 Province-wide public school: Argyll Centre

Argyll Centre

The Argyll Centre is "...an Edmonton Public School in Alberta, Canada, with campuses in Calgary and Lethbridge, that provides distance learning for Elementary, Junior High and High School in both online and offline programs, as well as acting as a facilitator and curriculum resource centre for homeschooling families."

Students can choose to study solely to the Alberta Program of Studies [APS] – either the full annual course load or a few courses at a time – or to blend APS with other programmes of study [providing this meets the provincial Home Education Regulation].

Its website is <http://argyll.e-psb.ca/www/index.php>



Further information

The Argyll Centre is [in relative terms] well-established having developed from the genesis of an experiment in the mid 1990s when a number of Edmonton Public Schools investigated the implications of students having access to 24/7 learning. The Centre formally dates from 1997.

The Argyll Centre offers a variety of home-based and face-to-face, on-site, education options to students throughout Alberta. There appears to be a strong emphasis on parental engagement [or, more accurately, involvement] to the extent that in some programmes the parent is the primary educator for parts of the course[s] and the teacher for others.

Live Online is a constructivist-based approach which combines parent-teacher-pupil triad with synchronous [live] virtual classroom, asynchronous [access anytime] learning tools and spaces, and the home environment. It allows students to set and follow a self-paced, individualized program. Live Online is for Grades 1-9 and aspires to "...construct social learning communities." Students learn in "...multi-graded, cross-curricular learning cohorts."

At the heart of the Argyll Centre's menu is the online programme Learn Net [for Grades 4 to 12] which Argyll Centre describes as

"...a teacher directed, online delivery strategy. Students in both elementary and junior high LearnNet programs are assigned a teacher. Students in High School are assigned a teacher advisor for each subject. Students registered in the LearnNet program can expect teacher to provide yearly and monthly plans to support learning and time management. In consultation with parents and students, adjustments can be made to help meet individual needs."

Students can select to combine online and offline, on-site and off-site or home based study to suit their circumstances [Blended Education]. However, to qualify as blended, at least 50% of the program for grades 1-9 and at least 20% for grades 10-12, must be teacher directed instruction that follows the Alberta Program of Study. The rest of the program may be Home Education that meets the Home Education Regulation.

Other strands include the Alternative High School and the eTourism programme – a semestered "...online program which blends high school tourism credit courses, work/volunteer experience, and Canadian Travel and Tourism [CATT] industry certification." The full range of High School courses offered in 2011-12 is contained in the Argyll Centre High School Guide.

In 2006 Argyll Centre was said to have had supported over 5,000 students through Grades 1-12. More contemporary figures are being sought and will be added when identified.

References

- <http://argyll.e-psb.ca/www/index.php>
- Argyll Centre High School Guide 2011
- http://argyll.e-psb.ca/www/Documents/Argyll_HS_Guide_11-12.pdf



6.2.2.2 Province-wide First Nation Public School: Credenda Virtual High School

Credenda Virtual High School & College

The *Credenda Virtual High School* [CVHS] in Saskatchewan is a virtual school which was established in 2005 to meet the needs of the communities in the north of the province. It has now evolved to become a First Nations high school for all students across Saskatchewan representing a diversity of ethnicity.

Its website is <http://www.credenda.net>

Further information

Credenda employs a synchronous delivery model based on a combination of Desire2Learn Learning Management System [LMS] and Elluminate Live! Virtual Classroom [vClass] to offer online high school and post-secondary learning experiences.

The CVHS offer includes:

- scheduled real time interaction with eTeachers
- 24/7 access to course content
- recorded lessons for review and revision
- the opportunity for students to learn at school, home, or wherever online access is available.
- a range of learning tools; whiteboard, audio, video, chat, web tours, breakout rooms for group work.

CVHS was created to meet a specific need and was not intended to replace schools. It was designed to support schools through partnership working to meet student needs wherever class sizes were too small to justify offering a course [or where the course was best delivered by a subject specialist].

Credenda charges an average tuition of \$500 per class. Students living within a provincial school division in Canada may be reimbursed by their school district for up to two classes per term.

References

See iNACOL 2010 for a vignette of Credenda VHS:

- “State of the Nation: K-12 Online Learning in Canada”, iNACOL November 2010
- http://www.inacol.org/research/docs/iNACOL_CanadaStudy10-finalweb.pdf



6.2.2.3 First Nation Public School: Keewaytinook Internet High School

Keewaytinook Internet High School

Keewaytinook Internet High School [KiHS] in Ontario was established to serve the First Nation communities in the Nishnawbe Aski Nation [NAN]. KiHS was a pilot project for Grade 8 students in three communities but has now expanded to serve Grades 9 to 12 students in fourteen communities.

Its website is <http://kihs.knet.ca>

Further Information

Students attend a community classroom from 9 am to 4 pm and are supported by in-class teacher and teaching assistant and an online teacher. The programme is semester based with students able to take two courses in each of the four [9 week] semesters.

The students complete their actual studies online. The programme is primarily asynchronous, with online teachers posting activities each Sunday and students completing those activities and assignments online as the week progresses. Online teachers also schedule synchronous sessions using Elluminate® or Adobe Connect, as well as using video conferencing, to work on activities that require more direct instruction.

[Keewaytinook Internet High School vignette from iNACOL'S State of the Nation: K-12 Online Learning in Canada]

KiHS has achieved significant success in terms of completion and retention rates and progression to post-secondary education. Completion rates have increased year on year and whereas in the initial pilot year saw rates on a par with First Nation averages [19%] by 2009-10 these were 55% across the programme and up to 80% in some participating communities. Retention rates are typically 70% but with some communities achieving 90%.

Enrolment is also on the increase with a new high of 220 students active in KiHS during the 2009-10 school year.

KiHS is part of the Kuhkenah Network aka K-Net First Nations collaboration.

References

See:

- *State of the Nation: K-12 Online Learning in Canada*, iNACOL November 2010
- http://www.inacol.org/research/docs/iNACOL_CanadaStudy10-finalweb.pdf
- <http://kihs.knet.ca/>
- "K-Net: Connecting Communities One-Click At A Time"
- <http://www.ohcc-ccso.ca/en/k-net-connecting-communities-one-click-at-a-time>
- <http://knet.ca/>



6.2.2.4 Province-wide multi-school board public school [English speaking]: Learn Quebec

Learn Quebec

In 2006 *Learn Quebec* was created to provide a variety of resources to any English-language students [Kindergarten through to Adult] throughout the province. Learn Quebec evolved from a collaborative distance learning programme and retains an emphasis on math and science.

Its website is <http://learnquebec.ca/en/index.html>

Further information

The resources include asynchronous course content tutorials across the curriculum, live tutors available four evenings each week, ICT curriculum support and online professional development for teachers [including a focus on advice and support for teaching with ICT]. The core of the curriculum resources offered appears to be for Secondary students [and then Elementary students].

The synchronous distance education programme uses “...a multi-point synchronous VOIP system with white board applications” and the open source SAKAI as a learning management system. iNACOL 2010 observed

“Because of the platform’s ability with low bandwidth, it is ideal for the restrictive connectivity issues encountered by many of the receiver schools.”

Learn Quebec reported approximately 300 students enrolled in their synchronous distance education programme for 2009- 10 [although they have over 4,000 students who use their asynchronous tutorials].

References

See:

- “State of the Nation: K-12 Online Learning in Canada”, iNACOL November 2010
- http://www.inacol.org/research/docs/iNACOL_CanadaStudy10-finalweb.pdf

6.2.2.5 Multi School-Board public schools consortium: Ontario eLearning Consortium

Ontario eLearning Consortium

The *Ontario eLearning Consortium* is a partnership of District School Boards established in 2001. The OeLC now develops and delivers online courses, resources and modules, trains teachers and performs quality assurances. Recent figures [2011] suggest that the Consortium supports [19 member boards] [both Public and Catholic see the Ontario Catholic eLearning Consortium], representing close to 900,000 students throughout metropolitan and rural areas.

Its website is <http://oelc.ca>



Further information

Ontario has well established tradition of offering district-based online learning programmes— dating back to the Avon Maitland Distance Education Centre in 1994-95. During the 2009-10 school year, the OeLC had 9,695 enrolments – up from 6,276 in 2008-09 [from iNACOL 2010].

References

- “State of the Nation: K-12 Online Learning in Canada”, iNACOL November 2010
- http://www.inacol.org/research/docs/iNACOL_CanadaStudy10-finalweb.pdf

6.2.2.6 Public School Board [for Catholic schools]: Saskatoon Cyber Catholic School

Saskatoon Cyber Catholic School

In 2000 Greater Saskatoon Catholic Schools System in Saskatchewan developed the *Saskatoon Cyber Catholic School* [SCCS] to serve schools across its constituency and catchment.

Its website is <http://scs.sk.ca/cyber/>

Further Information

The Saskatoon Catholic Schools System has been a leader in exploiting technologies in support of students’ learning. In 1999 the Greater Saskatoon Catholic Schools executive council’s desire to meet the changing education environment was the catalyst for the development of the Saskatoon Cyber Catholic School [SCCS]. By August of the following year the SCCS was operational offering 4 courses to the 156 enrolled students. The total [since its implementation] number of students enrolled now runs into several thousands.

Saskatoon Catholic Cyber School was intended to “...*have the potential to meet the needs of students in the global context by providing relevant education using current technologies.*”. The teaching staff were said to be recruited for “...*their content expertise within courses rather than their facility with technology.*” The SCCS website states that teaching staff are all part-time at SCCS and all have taught conventional classes within the school division. NB. This last information is assumed to have currency but this particular web page has not been updated for some time [although the website itself is certainly current].

References

See:

- “State of the Nation: K-12 Online Learning in Canada, iNACOL November 2009
- http://www.inacol.org/research/docs/iNACOL_CanadaStudy_200911.pdf



6.2.2.7 Province-wide national and international private school: Virtual High School Ontario

Virtual High School Ontario

The *Virtual High School Ontario* [VHSO] is a private virtual school. VHSO offers a broad range of courses for Grades 9 – 12 students and also a range of programmes including summer schools, make-up credits and e-work-placements.

In 2009 VHSO had 2,200 active students enrolled across 64 courses.

Its website is <https://www.virtualhighschool.com/>

Further information

Virtual High School Ontario utilises:

- Desire2Learn’s Learning Management System [LMS]
- collaboration tools facilitate communication – teacher to student and student to student
- professional animations, visuals, auditory devices for enhanced visual learning
- interactive exercises and assessments provide the student with an opportunity to evaluate your progress and aptitude
- online DropBox is used for submitting assignments thereby eliminating “snail mail”
- individual online storage space
- individual email account
- course work by past students is available to current students as reference material

The Virtual High School Ontario is also responsible for the [Virtual High School Nova Scotia](#).

References

- Virtual High School [Ontario]: Wikipedia
- http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Virtual_High_School_%28Ontario%29
- “State of the Nation: K-12 Online Learning in Canada”: iNACOL November 2010
- http://www.inacol.org/research/docs/iNACOL_CanadaStudy10-finalweb.pdf



6.2.2.8 Province-wide public school: Virtual Learning Centre, Ontario

Virtual Learning Centre [Ontario]

The *Virtual Learning Centre* [Ontario] was created by the Trillium Lakelands District School Board and has been operating since 1997. The VLC is a partner of both the Ministry of Education and eLearning Ontario. It takes paying public and private enrolments from both within and outwith the province.

Its website is <http://www.virtuallearning.ca/index.php#>

See also the VLCs spin-off the Open School Ontario.

Further information

The TLDSB Director's Annual Report 2010 states that there were 1,787 online credits granted through the VLC.

VLCs courses blend "...synchronous, streamed communication with the flexibility of static, anywhere-anytime course content." VLC reports that attrition rates are under 20%. The programme is predicated on student-teacher interaction and students are encouraged to adhere to timetabling and schedules, and to attend web-meetings.

Whilst there are some self-paced courses available to grades 11 and 12 most require 'attendance' [not necessarily physical attendance] at scheduled 'classes' and follow a semester model.

Residents of Ontario are eligible to take online courses at no charge. However, those in full-time attendance at a publicly funded Ontario secondary school, have to make arrangements with the home school to take courses with the VLC. Where the home school is already collecting the full Ontario grant for the student it must be willing to share a portion of this grant with the VLC. Those outside of Ontario, pay a tuition fee to take courses. Residents of the Province of Ontario, not enrolled full-time in a publicly funded institution, are not usually charged a tuition fee.

References

- *Connecting The Dots: Director's Annual Report. Trillium Lakelands District School Board 2010*
- <http://content.yudu.com/Library/A1q7kv/ConnectingtheDots/resources/index.htm?referrerUrl=http%3A%2F%2Ftlds.ca%2Fannual-report%2F%3Flayout%3Ditem/>

6.3 Latin America

6.3.1 Definition

Latin America is a term used most commonly to indicate as a whole the majority of the countries that comprise Central America and South America. More particularly, as noted on Wikipedia:



Latin America designates all of those countries and territories in the Americas where a Romance language [i.e., languages derived from Latin, and hence the name of the region] is spoken: Spanish, Portuguese, and French, and the Creole languages based upon these.

It is a controversial term to some, and may be used differently by inhabitants of different regions. Spanish and Portuguese are the predominant languages of Latin America [with Portuguese spoken only in Brazil, the most populous country in the region]. The main language of countries is shown on the two lists below where it is neither Spanish nor Portuguese.

On the VISCED wiki, eight countries are listed under Central America:

- | | | | |
|---------------------|---------------|----------------|--------------|
| 1. Belize [English] | 2. Costa Rica | 3. El Salvador | 4. Guatemala |
| 5. Honduras | 6. Mexico | 7. Nicaragua | 8. Panama |

Thirteen countries are listed under South America:

- | | | | | |
|----------------------|---------------------------|---------------------|-------------|-------------|
| 1. Argentina | 2. Bolivia | 3. Brazil | 4. Chile | 5. Colombia |
| 6. Ecuador | 7. French Guiana [French] | 8. Guyana [English] | 9. Paraguay | 10. Peru |
| 11. Suriname [Dutch] | 12. Uruguay | 13. Venezuela | | |

6.3.2 Notable examples found in Latin America

6.3.2.1 ORT, Argentina

ORT Argentina currently includes: two educational campuses; a technical high-school with over 4,500 students; two post-secondary junior colleges with some 1000 students each; a department that develops joint cooperation projects and training programmes with other institutions and enterprises. It also offers virtual education at all levels from *secundaria ciclo básico* to higher education, through ORT Argentina Virtual Campus [<http://campus.ort.edu.ar>]. This is designed to work through blended learning, incorporating social networking and Web 2.0 services, to provide a full range of services to extend the school into the community.

6.3.2.2 Escuela Porvenir, Bolivia

The goal of this Village Power 2000 project is to provide electricity and an Internet connection to a school in deep rural Porvenir, Bolivia. Porvenir is a village of 600 indigenous people living in the Amazon rainforest. Services are limited -- a diesel generator provides electricity sporadically, there is one satellite telephone and there is a small village school. The school provides education to grade 6. Geographically isolated, youth do not travel to another village or town to continue their education. Educational opportunities literally end at grade 6.



6.3.2.3 Think Academy Virtual Academy, Chile

The *Think Academy International Virtual School* [Spanish: Colegio Virtual Think Academy] is based in Santiago and was founded in 2007. According to experts, the method allows young people to learn more and to socialize better, in addition to bringing the cost of education down. It was the first fully virtual school in Chile and aims to establish a platform for virtual education in Chile. Enrolment has grown from 10 students in 2007 to almost 60 this year. Even the Principal's own children are enrolled in the virtual school.

The model is based on the education system in [Finland](#). According to the University of Memphis, USA, the system allows students to socialize up to 9% more while learning 6% more compared to traditional parameters.

Likewise, the students aged 13-18 share their education and experiences with peers from Australia, New Zealand, the United States, England and Portugal, using a method that combines adventure and entertainment and provides a large amount of information using current technology to its maximum potential.

In the case of disabled people, classes are subtitled for the deaf and spoken for the blind.

For logistical reasons, the only class that is not taught is physical education. To overcome this limitation, students are authorized to go out and play with their friends or do sports after 1:30 PM. At the end of the year the youths must take open exams and they can even obtain a certificate from a school in the United States.

6.3.2.4 Instituto Nacional de Educação a Distância [INED], Brazil

This is a private school based in [São Paulo](#) offering courses targeting the education of young and adult individuals – a population described as EJA [Educação de Jovens e Adultos – Education of the Young and Adults]. It also offers technical courses, preparing for the job market [equivalent to college – in Brazil described as Educação Tecnológica] – these courses can be attended by individuals of all age groups that qualify for technical secondary education [ensino médio técnico]. The technical courses at INED are licensed by the Brazilian Ministry of Education to be offered at a distance, in the blended learning mode as the Brazilian law requires [with face-to-face assessments]. The courses at INED are offered mostly using virtual technologies [email, discussion forums] and the students also receive printed course materials.

6.3.2.5 Telesecundaria, Mexico

Telesecundaria is the Satellite Television Network [EDUSAT]. The government accommodated a large proportion of the enrolment growth in lower secondary, particularly in rural areas, through the expansion of the telesecundaria model since it required very little infrastructure and only one facilitator-teacher per grade. Lectures are given via satellite TV in 15-minute programs. In 2002, 1.2 million students were enrolled which represented about 20 percent of the total enrolment in this level. Annual costs per student were about 16 percent higher than in regular schools [counting TV programme production, supplementary materials, teacher salaries, and infrastructure]. Distance



learning has proved to be a cost-effective model although student achievement results and completion rates are not as high as they are in regular secondary schools.

6.3.3 Long list of virtual schools found in Latin America on the VISCED wiki

Countries are only listed if virtual schools have been identified there. Details of all these schools may be found on the VISCED wiki.

6.3.3.1 Argentina [2]

- ORT Virtual Campus – see separate entry at 6.3.2.1 above
- El Surco, La Escuela Virtual

6.3.3.2 Bolivia [1]

- Escuela Porvenir – see separate entry at 6.3.2.1 above

6.3.3.3 Brazil [4]

- Colégio Militar de Manaus
- EVESP Escola Virtual de Programas Educacionais, São Paulo
- Fundação Bradesco Escola Virtual
- Instituto Nacional de Educação a Distância [INED] – see separate entry at 6.3.2.4 above

6.3.3.4 Chile [2]

- Think Academy Virtual International School – see separate entry at 6.3.2.3 above
- Yo Aprendo

6.3.3.5 Colombia [2]

- Escuela Virtual de Caldas
- Virtual Ibero America Colégio XXI

6.3.3.6 Mexico [3]

- Telesecundaria – see separate entry at 6.3.2.5 above
- Red Escolar [The School Network of Educational Computer Science]
- Colegio de Bachilleres [SEAD]



6.3.3.7 Panama [1]

- Instituto Freire – offers a Bachillerato in several Spanish-speaking Latin American countries, including Panama.

6.3.3.8 Peru [2]

- Instituto Educativa Virtual del Callao
- Sanquira Virtual

6.3.4 Long list of virtual colleges found in Latin America on the VISCED wiki

Countries are only listed if virtual colleges have been identified there. Details of all these colleges may be found on the VISCED wiki.

6.3.4.1 Brazil [6]

- Escola Técnica do Brasil
- Fundação Bradesco Escola Virtual
- Instituto Nacional de Educação a Distância [INED] – see separate entry at 6.2.3.4 above
- SENAI [SENAI Distance Education Network] – Serviço Nacional de Aprendizagem Industrial
- SEBRAE
- Serviço Social da Indústria [SESI]

6.3.4.2 Chile [several]

- Centro Virtual de Actualización y Desarrollo del Diseño [CEVADD] is one of a number of examples of private organisations offering virtual courses in vocational areas – this one covers design and illustration of women's' fashion.

6.3.4.3 Colombia [3]

- SENA
- CESDE
- INCAP

6.3.4.4 Uruguay [2]

- Centro Nacional de Educacion a Distancia
- The Labour University of Uruguay – includes numerous virtual training courses below HE level



7 Australasia

7.1 Definition

Wikipedia notes the varying definitions of the term *Australasia*:

Australasia is a region of Oceania comprising Australia, New Zealand, the island of New Guinea, and neighbouring islands in the Pacific Ocean.

Geopolitically, Australasia is sometimes used as a term for Australia and New Zealand together in the absence of another word limited to those two countries. Sometimes the island of New Guinea (Papua New Guinea and the Indonesian part of the island) is encompassed by the term.

Australia and New Zealand are the largest countries in this region.

See also Oceania, regarded by us as a separate continental region.

7.2 Overview

Australia and New Zealand in particular [and to a lesser degree Papua New Guinea] have long-standing traditions of providing distance education. Driven by vast expanses of sparsely populated land [often inhabited solely by cattle farmers and the indigenous peoples] *Correspondence Schools* and then *Schools of the Air* were developed to serve huge tracts of Australasia. More recently, such provision of distance education has been catalysed by the recognition of the needs of Aboriginal communities and itinerant families. Difficulty in relocating teachers to these communities has also aggravated these challenges. Taken as a whole, it would be reasonable to note the similarities with Canada.

However, VISCED researchers initially found it more difficult than expected to identify virtual schools which meet the definitions applied. One reason for this is that a significant proportion of the distance education providers [particularly those established as *Schools of the Air*] are solely for Kindergarten, Preparatory and primary age children. A further significant proportion support either *Preparatory to Middle School* or more commonly *Preparatory through to Year 10 or Year 12*. These have all been deemed worthy of a wiki entry and included in the category 'Virtual schools in Australasia'. Even where it has been impossible to determine the numbers of 'secondary' students it is clear that the school provides elements of the secondary curriculum to learners of secondary age.

VISCED researchers have to this point identified 19 Australasian virtual schools which meet the criteria applied by the project. Of these 16 are in Australia and the other 3 in New Zealand.



Whilst this is perhaps⁷ fewer than one may expect the variety and practice discovered has indeed proved extremely rich. Some of the Australian schools, in particular, are amongst the most substantial and mature schools yet seen.

No virtual school has yet been identified in Papua New Guinea where much of the education is provided by the various dominant churches. Investigation of these has thus far been unproductive. Similarly, no virtual schools have been identified in Oceania.

7.3 Notable examples in Australasia

7.3.1 Brisbane School of Distance Education

The *Brisbane School of Distance Education* [BSDE] is a virtual school located in Queensland, Australia.

BSDE is by far the largest distance education school in Queensland with over 300 staff members [215 of whom are teachers] educating over 3800 students. The Executive Principal also plays a leadership role with the other 6 schools of distance education, which are located across Queensland.

Further information

BSDE has just moved into a purpose-built, Aus \$30million, new facility – a brand new school comprising both junior and secondary schools with playgrounds and classrooms, family rooms and a library. What differentiates BSDE from traditional schools is the large ‘distribution centre’ which is required to manage the substantial amount of materials provided to support learners and their families.

Most students study almost fully online but they, and family members, also attend the school at least once a term or attend workshops and activities held in Queensland regional centres. Parents are encouraged to become ‘home educators’ and are offered support to achieve a recognised vocational qualification as such. In common with other Australian states Queensland has a system of rotating staff around its schools and all teachers are appointed to schools by the state – so there is no ‘cherry-picking’ of staff by the school. BSDE has had to prioritise staff development and is now recognised for its expertise in this area.

No proprietary online materials are used by BSDE. All materials are OER and/or teacher created. BSDE employs a Curriculum Development Team of specialists – graphic artists, developers etc. All online materials are then provided through the Queensland state learning platform ‘One School’. BSDE’s results match, and exceed, those of the best schools in Queensland and the school has evolved from “...the last point of call, to leading staff” across the entire state.

⁷ If one makes a crude comparison of the ratio of virtual schools to national populations then the number in Australasia is broadly in line with the USA and Canada. It should also be noted that the Australian population is largely confined to the coastal cities and that whilst there is a clear need to provide education for the geographically isolated *these are relatively few in number*.



Queensland is at the forefront of the development and testing of the Australian national curriculum – and BSDE is leading the state through ‘wrapping’ the new curriculum and providing it for schools state-wide.

BSDE was the outright winner of the Excellence in the Senior Phase of Learning award at the Queensland 2011 Showcase Awards for Excellence in Schools.

The Brisbane School of Distance Education web site is at <http://brisbanesde.eq.edu.au>

7.3.2 Open High School Australia

Introduction

Open High School is a New South Wales Department of Education and Training [DET] secondary distance education school offering courses in 13 languages to students in Years 9 – 12, and is located in the eastern Sydney suburb of Randwick.

Use of ICT

The *Open High School Australia* [OHS Australia] supports distance interactive e-learning and operates in a distance education mode with students completing the bulk of their learning in their home schools via a variety of strategies including: through the use of radio and audio cassettes, CD ROMs, DVDs, telephone lessons and fax, audio and video conferences, computers/internet and web assisted communication and blackboards – internet-based exercises delivered via the school’s online Learning Management System, Moodle, face-to-face individual and group lessons.

The school also encourages students to attend face-to-face days which are usually held at Open High School once a term for students in Years 11 and 12 and once a semester for students in Years 9 and 10. These are valuable learning experiences where students meet their teachers and the other members of their class.

Student Achievement

Open High School has a history of outstanding HSC results. Students regularly top the state in examinations and approximately one third of each year’s cohort achieve marks which place them in Band 6 for 2 Unit subjects or Band 4 at Extension level, the highest bands that can be awarded. In the 2010 Higher School Certificate, Open High School students achieved first place in each of the following languages: German Continuers, Indonesian Background Speakers, Indonesian Continuers, Indonesian Extension, Japanese Background Speakers, Korean Continuers, Modern Greek Beginners, Russian Background Speakers, Spanish Continuers, Spanish Extension.

Open High School Australia believes that virtual schooling and distance education can in fact equip students with the skills and independence needed to become lifelong learners and teachers as well as producing excellent immediate results at national and international examinations. In 2011, Open High School initiated a project to consolidate the lifelong aspect of its holistic education.



More Details – Mission, Courses, Teaching Methods

Open High School provides learning opportunities for students with different options across geographical barriers throughout the territory of North West. It ensures that options are maintained despite geographical and other individual circumstances. In 2011 there is a network of 19 distance education schools and centres throughout the state delivering education, via a variety of media, to country, metropolitan, interstate and overseas students who meet enrolment guidelines.

Open High School is the only LOTE [Languages Other Than English] specialist school in the network. It currently teaches 13 languages in over 70 courses, to nearly 2000 students from over 500 government and non-government schools. Open High School employs over 100 full-time, part-time and casual teaching staff.

At Open High School, all students are part of a class even though their fellow students are from different schools spread across the state. A teacher interacts with students via written comments, CDs, phone lessons and conversations, fax, email, face-to-face lessons, school visits and study days. Students also have the opportunity to interact with the online learning system, known as Moodle.

Open High School offers courses for the following Board of Studies Stage 5 languages in Years 9 and 10: Chinese, French, German, Indonesian, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Latin, Modern Greek, Russian, Spanish.

Open High School offers Preliminary and High School Certificate [HSC] courses for the following Board of Studies Stage 6 languages in Years 11 and 12: Beginners [Preliminary and HSC], Continuers [Preliminary and HSC], Continuers and Extension [HSC only], Extension [HSC only], Background Speakers [Preliminary and HSC]; and these are for all the 13 different languages.

Open High School follows the prescribed term and holiday dates for NSW government schools as required. Open High School is open from 9.00 am to 3.30 pm on weekdays [except school holidays and public holidays].

Moodle Users

Moodle is Open High School's e-learning site for part or all of very dedicated lessons. Each teacher gives lessons on how to complete studying using the Moodle as well as completing and sending homework. The Moodle site also displays all important dates and time tables relating to various courses. Students use the timetabled periods of their school only for work in an Open High School course. Work not completed during this time must be completed as homework. Students are required to take note of teacher's messages and comments as well as answer questions asked by their teachers.

Teachers are always available to answer questions that may arise, including difficulties with playing CD's, accessing and using Moodle, missing lesson materials or a change in personal details.

The Internet offers exciting opportunities for enrichment of the learning experiences of students studying foreign languages by distance education. The distance education mode requires students to



take extra responsibility for their own learning. It is therefore expected that students will behave in a responsible way in all Open High School learning activities involving Internet use, observing all the rules in the following Code of Behaviour.

Open High School caters for students in Years 9 to 12 who attend a Government or non-Government school which does not offer one of the 13 languages offered at OHS.

Location and Address

Open High School is located in Randwick, Sydney, and is part of the NSW Department of Education and Training's rural and distance education network. For more information on Open High School Australia, visit its website: <http://www.theopenhs-d.schools.nsw.edu.au>

7.3.3 SIDE

SIDE [Schools of Isolated and Distance Education] is Western Australia's largest provider of distance education. SIDE is a secondary facility based in Perth and currently has 'thousands' of students enrolled.

Its website is <http://www.side.wa.edu.au/index.php>

Further information

SIDE was initially established in 1918 as the Western Australia Correspondence School. Today SIDE is a fully online school deploying 'cutting-edge' technologies and pedagogies including the web-conferencing platform Centra and Moodle learning environment. SIDE has a physical school-site with classrooms and a residential facility.

There is a parallel Primary SIDE.

SIDE has a focus on languages – the SIDE website says;

SIDE Secondary School offers a specialist program in Languages. This program includes the selection of four languages: French, Indonesian, Italian and Japanese. The quality of these programs has been enhanced by our Service Level Agreement with both Primary and Secondary Public Schools throughout Western Australia.

References

- SIDE
- <http://www.side.wa.edu.au/index.php>

7.3.4 Karabar High School Distance Education Centre

Karabar is a New South Wales Department of Education and Communities, integrated High School and Distance Education Centre with a total enrolment figure of over 1,000 students of whom there



are 250 full-time equivalent distance learners across New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory [ACT].

Its website is <http://www.karabardec.com.au/default.aspx>

Further information

The school website lists "...a wide range of curriculum options for our varied and diverse community".

These include:

- Distance Education provision for students in Illawarra and South-East Region, half of Riverina Region, a number of schools in the ACT and students studying the NSW curriculum in a number of countries around the world.
- Curriculum provision for the Illawarra and South-East Industry Training College to provide senior students with an educational pathway that enables them to combine studying for their Higher School Certificate with trade training in a range of areas;
- An emphasis on curriculum differentiation in class programming to enable all students to maximise their learning potential;
- Being part of the NSW Department of Education and Training Partially-Selective High School Class Program [introduced in 2010];
- Gifted and Talented Student programs, including a Performing Arts/Gifted and Talented Student Class;
- A Special Education Unit with three classes, including a multi-categorical class;

References

- Karabar High School Distance Education Centre
- <http://www.karabardec.com.au/Home.aspx>

7.3.5 xsel [Selective Virtual High School]

Established in 2010, *xsel* is the Department for Education and Communities **Selective** Virtual High School for high-ability students from 16 schools across Lithgow to Broken Hill in Western New South Wales. The *xsel* virtual provision commenced in 2010 with an intake of thirty Year 7 students only. The school aims to grow until its first Year 12 graduates in 2015.

Students use a variety of online, collaborative and interactive tools in what is said to be Australia's first virtual selective high school.



The xsel program allows academically gifted students in rural and remote areas to stay at home, rather than having to travel to metropolitan areas to attend selective schools.

Students study face-to-face with teachers and peers across the Department's Western region which covers 385,000 square kilometres – an area greater than the size of Germany.

Students still go to their local high school but divide their time between the standard curriculum and the xsel program.

Its website is <http://www.xsel.schools.nsw.edu.au/home>

Further information

Text below is taken directly from the school website.

General Information

The Western NSW Region Virtual Selective High School Provision, [xsel], connects students from across the region into a selective strand covering English, Mathematics and Science using sophisticated technology and personal contact to deliver the curriculum. Students are enrolled both in the selective school [xsel] and also in their local secondary [base] school; meaning that they can access a challenging academic program without leaving home and friends to do so.

Structure

xsel Virtual Selective High School Provision is coordinated by the Manager, xsel, an xsel Teaching, Learning and Technology Officer and an xsel Support Officer. In 2010, the first Year 7 intake occurred of 30 students drawn from 16 secondary schools across Western NSW region. xsel students are divided into 'pods' of ten students with each pod allocated an English, Maths and Science teacher. Each base school has allocated a staff member who acts as an xsel support person to give the students personal assistance. Science teachers at the base school also assist the xsel students with the practical component of that course.

How the school works

Western NSW Region schools have for many years successfully used innovative technology to connect students and teachers in different locations. xsel builds upon and extends this experience into an exciting new range of opportunities for students.

xsel provides teaching and associated support of English, Mathematics and Science, while the base school will provide the rest of the school curriculum and extracurricular activities. xsel programs, teaches, assesses and reports in English, Maths and Science KLA's. Students do not attend these subjects in their base school. Each base school will provide a supervised learning space where the student will go for their xsel lessons. Each time English, Maths or Science appears on their base school timetable, students go to their allocated xsel learning space and participate in the xsel program using the laptop supplied by xsel. In this way, xsel connects via technology the gifted and talented students from across the region.



The students of xsel receive daily lessons [known as 'synopps' -synchronous opportunities] delivered in real time by their xsel teachers. Students will be in small groups [generally a maximum of 10] and use their inbuilt webcam and microphone to connect into the virtual classroom.

Students will also have access to the xsel Moodle website. It is at this site where students download weekly activities and assignments and upload their completed tasks for marking. The xsel Moodle also has discussion forums, wikis, blogs and archival recordings of the xsel synopps. The full use of digital technology means students can fully participate in classes delivered by expert teachers from another location. Teachers and students communicate daily via email as well, which gives each student the individualised attention to support their individual learning needs.

Teachers are selected on merit from across the region and work in both xsel and their base school. Teaching in virtual modes and other xsel activities are conducted from the teacher's base school.

Each term, the xsel students meet for a residential camp. This is an opportunity for the students and teachers to interact face to face and carry out a range of educational activities.

Student Profiles

To gain entry into xsel, students need to have very high academic ability. However, as it is a virtual provision another range of capacities are also highly valued. These include:

- strong technology skills
- highly organised
- excellent time management
- high order problem solving and creative thinking
- highly productive [both in quality and quantity of work produced]
- resilient, trustworthy and reliable

Selection Process

The xsel virtual provision commenced in 2010 with an intake of thirty Year 7 students only. The school will grow until its first Year 12 graduates in 2015.

In Year 7, students are selected for placement in xsel via the Selective High Schools Placement Test. An intake of thirty students will be applied for the 2012 cohort. Future intakes may rise to sixty students per year but that will be decided after the first three years of full operation. To apply for the program students in Western NSW must complete the standard selective high school application form plus the Virtual Selective Class- Report of academic merit and sit the standard Selective High School Placement Test.



For Years 8-12, should a vacancy arise, the xsel selection committee chaired by the School Education Director, will determine the students to be offered places and will determine a reserve list in priority order.

Applicants for entry into xsel for Year 8 for 2012 must complete the Entry to Years 8-12 Selective Schools Application form and the xsel Year 8 Application Form and supply all supporting information to the Manager of xsel by the closing date. The call for applications commences in late June, 2011 and closes in late July, 2011. Details will be published on this website

References

- xsel Virtual Selective High School
- <http://www.xsel.schools.nsw.edu.au/home>
- "Virtual school breaks new ground" [Dept NSW website]
- <http://broadband.nsw.gov.au/news-events/featured/virtual-school-breaks-new-ground>

7.3.6 Northern Territory Open Education Centre

The *Northern Territory Open Education Centre* [NTOEC] in Australia supports Interactive Distance Learning.

It was established by the Northern Territory Department of Education in 1980 to provide secondary and/or professional education for students in isolated and remote locations throughout the Northern Territory of Australia. Today they provide a fully accredited Year 10 to 12 program as well as an increasing level of vocational training to a wide range of school aged and adult students using distance education and open learning strategies. They are one of the best in the country, a succinct example of a virtual school initiative in Australia.

The School's motto is "Education Wherever You Are."

NTOEC make the use of Interactive Distance Learning [IDL] which involves the use of computers and satellite and/or internet connection to communicate using two way audio and video.

NTOEC have multiple IDL studios and broadcast regular lessons. IDL enables the NTOEC teacher to provide audio and visual contact and to share computer applications.

IDL transmission of lessons is used extensively for delivery to Community Schools and for a large number of Senior Secondary courses.

NTOEC enrolls students who are studying Senior Secondary subjects [Years 10, 11 & 12]. NTOEC students come from a range of backgrounds including:

- students living in isolated areas without access to a Senior Secondary School
- students travelling [Australia or International]



- adults wishing to upgrade their Senior Secondary education
- students who have medical, social or behavioural conditions which prevent attendance at a local school
- students who are in jail or a remand centre
- students attending urban NT or SA Senior Secondary Schools who enrol for one or two subjects with NTOEC because they cannot access these subjects at their own school [dual enrolment and/or Holiday School]
- Senior Secondary students attending remote community schools [dual Community enrolment]
- students enrolled with the Alice Outcomes and Alternative Education Programs
- Senior Secondary students who attend an Area School [Jabiru, Batchelor, Alyangula] [dual Area School enrolment]

The school's main office is in Casuarina in the Northern Territory of Australia.

The NTOEC's website is <http://www.ntoec.nt.edu.au/site/>

References

1. Enrolment Eligibility Document "Northern Territory Open Education Centre – eligibility to enrol"
2. Policy Document "Northern Territory Open Education Centre – students based in other schools"

7.3.7 New Zealand Virtual School

New Zealand Virtual School [NZVS] allows students to study courses contributing to NCEA [National Certificate of Educational Achievement -the main school-leaving qualification] and industry based National Certificates

Vision

The New Zealand Virtual School Trade Academy Vision is:

- To broaden learners' horizons through a high quality, technology-based, secular education that provides the skills and knowledge needed to succeed as confident, connected and actively involved members of 21st century societies.

We build our vision upon an adaptation of the core Secondary Futures beliefs:

- Putting Students First



- Developing Community Connectedness
- Creating Positive Social Effects
- Inspiring Teachers so that they can Inspire Learners
- Leading in Technology to Enhance Learning and Reduce Barriers

It is recognized that Secondary Futures Thinking played a substantial role in the early development of the New Zealand Virtual School Trade Academy.

The NZVS web site is at <http://virtual.school.nz>

7.4 Long list of Virtual School and College entries on the VISCED wiki

Only countries with identified virtual schools /colleges are listed. The full entries for each of these can be viewed on the wiki – see

http://virtualcampuses.eu/index.php/Category:Virtual_schools_in_Australasia



8 Islands

8.1 Definition

This section joins together the island nations indexed under VISCED but not covered elsewhere in this report. This includes [among others]:

- The Oceania region
- Islands of the Indian Ocean [a body of water defined by Wikipedia as washing upon southern Asia and separating Africa and Australia; see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Borders_of_the_oceans#Indian_Ocean]
- Islands of the Caribbean [an island group defined by Wikipedia as separating the Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean Sea, to the west and south, from the Atlantic Ocean, to the east and north; see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Caribbean_islands]

8.2 Notable examples found on islands

We have found considerably fewer examples of notable virtual schools and colleges on remote islands than expected. There appear to be none at all in Oceania.

The text for these examples is sourced from the VISCED wiki.

8.2.1 Little Cayman Education Centre [LCEC], Cayman Islands

LCEC is the smallest establishment of the Cayman Islands Department of Education Services, with just four students on roll currently. Situated on the idyllic Little Cayman, primary age students follow the full national curriculum and operate out of a specialist facility with a full time teacher and teaching assistant. Increasing use is made of ICT to link with other schools both within Cayman and other parts of the world to enhance the teaching and learning experiences for students.

8.2.2 Trinidad and Tobago E-Classroom, Trinidad and Tobago

The aim of the Trinidad and Tobago E-Classroom is two-fold — to facilitate educators in managing and promoting learning and to encourage learning in students. Trinibagoeclassroom.com is an online learning management system which makes it easy for an educator to deliver content on a web-based platform where students can watch a video, or do an exam or quiz which is scored immediately. It can be used to conduct full online courses, as well as to augment face-to-face courses. Teachers and students don't need to be web-savvy to take advantage of the technology. Although similar technologies are available at universities, this programme is engineered to target secondary and primary school students. The website contain a very large deployment of hundreds of thousands of students. trinibagoeclassroom.com is facilitated with activity modules such as forums, databases and wikis to build richly collaborative communities of learning around their subject matter. The programme is free to all schools.



8.2.3 Samuel Jackman Prescod Polytechnic, Barbados

Samuel Jackman Prescod Polytechnic offers a number of its courses online. It notes that “Open and flexible means that you do not need to come onto campus for your lectures, but can study in the comfort and convenience of your home or some other place.” Courses are offered online within each of the Polytechnic’s programmes and delivered fully online.

8.3 List of virtual schools found on islands

Only countries with identified virtual schools are listed. The full entries for each of these can be viewed on the wiki – see <http://virtualcampuses.eu/index.php/Category:VISCED>

8.3.1 Islands of the Indian Ocean

- Madagascar Virtual School, Madagascar

8.3.2 Islands of the Caribbean

- The Little Cayman Education Centre [LCEC], Cayman Islands
- Trinidad and Tobago E-Classroom, Trinidad and Tobago

8.4 List of virtual colleges found on islands

Only countries with identified virtual colleges are listed. The full entries for each of these can be viewed on the wiki – see <http://virtualcampuses.eu/index.php/Category:VISCED>

8.4.1 Islands of the Indian Ocean

- Mauritius College of the Air, Mauritius

8.4.2 Islands of the Caribbean

- Las Americas Institute of Technology, Dominican Republic
- Samuel Jackman Prescod Polytechnic, Barbados



9 Next steps

9.1 Further research issues

During the second year of the project we will continue to fill gaps on the wiki, both within and beyond Europe. We suspect that there may be numbers of virtual schools that we have not yet identified in Europe, especially in eastern Europe and former Soviet bloc countries and Turkey. As the text indicates, we have found very few examples in Asia, especially China, and if resource levels permit, we will undertake additional research there. We have concentrated more on schools than colleges thus far and will be undertaking further research to locate more colleges, which are under-represented in the country reports and wiki entries at present.

In addition to locating and documenting further virtual schools and colleges, we will review the current wiki entries in the light of discussions on typology and taxonomy both amongst project partners and with the International Advisory Committee. The issues to be considered include:

- taking a look at International Schools to see to what extent they have developed virtual schooling. It is possible that this may have been masked since they would not use 'virtual', 'online' or 'cyber' in their school name – retaining as they do their original name.
- The suggestion that some countries may be developing virtual laboratories to be shared by institutions. We haven't specifically looked for these. If they do exist or are developed they could provide some valuable lessons. Singapore has Science Net – university-led but supposedly accessible to the general public – and thus schools.
- some initiatives or organisations which call themselves virtual or cyber schools but which we have tended to consider virtual communities, rather than virtual schools or colleges.

The research to date will feed in to Work Package 3 [Analysis & Recommendations] and Work Package 4 [Success Factors] and most immediately into the development of case studies – this is discussed briefly in 9.2 below.

Considerable further checking and cross-checking will be done in 2012 in order to establish the reliability of information provided by virtual schools and colleges, especially on their enrolments and finances.

9.2 Case studies

Task 4 of Work Package 3 involves a series of case studies of virtual schools and colleges and this task starts early in the second year of the project, drawing on material from the field research in D2.2 and, especially, D2.3 of Work Package 2. The case studies are likely to be drawn from the Notable Examples profiled in this report. At present there are 53 of these:

- Europe 7
- Asia 3



- USA 20
- Canada 8
- Latin America 5
- Australasia 7
- Islands 3

The exact number of case studies will be determined early in 2012 and is likely to be around 10. Whilst there are issues of accessibility to some of the virtual schools and colleges identified in this list, we will be aiming to select a number that reflect both geographical regions and types of virtual organisation. It is probable that we will select around 5 from the European Notable Examples.