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### Computer-mediated environment as a new technological real virtuality triggering virtual identity development

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In contemporary higher education, it has become a commonplace to emphasize that our globalized world is undergoing an identity crisis. The signs of this crisis particularly in social and cultural spheres are abundantly increasing as we go through the global, postmodern and information era in which the concept of identity turns out to be more complex than ever before.

This paper explores significant trends in contemporary higher citizenship education including a specific focus on the role of ITs and communication technologies, as well as new emerging technologies on the development of new emerging identities, particularly, virtual identity.

The purpose of this paper is to bring together various elements that represent the complex conceptuality of virtual identity within technological society. It engages into a research of what awareness young people are now getting of new information and communication technologies and how global media may possess the potential to transform their identity and in what way educational institutions should understand and respond to this evolving virtual reality.

In this paper, we address these issues both from a quantitative and qualitative standpoint. The key issues under research include the Systemic approach to identity formation as a synergy of information and communication technology (ICT) and virtual reality in citizenship education at Riga Technical University, Faculty of Mechanical engineering, Transport and Aeronautics (Riga, Latvia). The Sociometry method and Optimization theory are the factors that integrate all the elements.

The research results have demonstrated that the Tree-model of identity development offers a methodology for identity construction by evaluating virtual reality as the potential for the development of a creative personality. Implementation of the obtained research results can contribute to the working out of a scientifically grounded concept providing recommendations for the efficient strategy of identity formation in a computer-mediated global environment.

*Keywords: identity crisis virtual reality virtual identity synergy of information and communication technology (ICT) and virtual reality new emerging identities global media*