

The Journal of Distance Learning

Abstracts

BEWLEY, D. (2004). An historical overview of flexible learning in New Zealand from 1990 to the present. *Journal of Distance Learning*, 8(1), 5–16.

The recent progress in New Zealand of flexible learning is reviewed, together with its underlying concepts as expounded at the 1995 DEANZ conference by Bruce King, an Australian. These concepts, which already are known and were developed in New Zealand during the 1990s, are considered in the context of changes in New Zealand's political policies for education. The implementation of flexible learning in that environment is traced, particularly in post-secondary institutions engaged in distance learning.

CAMPBELL, N. (2004). The vintage years of eLearning in New Zealand schools. *Journal of Distance Learning*, 8(1), 17–24.

This article reports on the early development in the 1980s and early 1990s of what is now known as eLearning in the New Zealand school sector. Consideration is given to the social, political, and educational influences that have informed this development, and the author describes some of the eLearning strategies that were adopted. An analysis of these trends and events provides the basis for some predictions of what the future might hold. The author has been involved in the development of eLearning in New Zealand throughout this period and combines personal insights with historical data.

NICHOLS, M. (2004). The financial benefits of eLearning. *Journal of Distance Learning*, 8(1), 25–33.

In the pioneering days of eLearning, many institutions suffered from significant levels of investment in eLearning initiatives that

brought poor returns. Increasingly, eLearning projects are required to justify the budgets they request from decision-makers. However, the benefits of eLearning in tertiary education tend to be less quantitatively obvious than the financial gains that corporate training through eLearning can realise. This paper examines the issues faced by tertiary educators when comparing their eLearning activities with those of corporate trainers, and suggests ways in which specific eLearning projects, both courses and elements within courses, might be justified using CBA (cost-benefit analysis) and ROI (return on investment). The approach suggests ways in which the financially intangible aspects of improved learning and institutional reputation might be considered when justifying eLearning expenditure.

SMITH, R. (2004). The challenges of supporting staff and adult students in an eLearning environment. *Journal of Distance Learning*, 8(1), 34–49.

First experiences of online learning can be daunting for adult students and tutors alike. This study looks at relevant literature on this topic, and explores the responses of four new adult online learners to third-year Teacher Education papers that recently were adjusted to include online elements. It shows where the students sought help and why, describes the areas of most struggle, and suggests how these could be ameliorated. It explores the students' first metacognitive impressions of their online experiences and their self-perceptions as learners. It recommends ways in which future online encounters could be enhanced, both in relation to course design and in the emotional and practical support provided for students' learning.