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Abstract

Grappling with the Future of E-learning at Auckland University

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Like many other universities around the globe, Auckland University, New Zealand has grappled with the adoption and application of e-learning technologies. The university is well respected nationally and internationally as a research led learning institution. And, in order to ensure participation in the emerging global knowledge economy, considerable investment and commitment is now being made in developing best practice and new pedagogy for flexible and distance learning.

The University has invested substantial resources devoted to the creation of an entirely new entity, the Centre for Flexible and Distance Learning whose mandate is to develop learning opportunities that can be offered at a lower cost, with easier access and improved quality. As a stand-alone Centre within a University accustomed to meeting the needs of a traditional face-face educational market, many challenges and opportunities lie ahead if sustainability is to be achieved.

E-learning has become a catalyst for rethinking the teaching and learning philosophies and approaches which have so steadfastly underpinned the existence of traditional universities. Flexible and distance learning practices and technologies have the potential to add value and enhance the future development of these traditional institutions. They have also been described as "disruptive".

The notion of flexible and distance learning as disruptive technology has many implications for the emergence of a new Centre such as ours. The decision to invest in this potentially disruptive technology indicates willingness by the institution to acknowledge that new models of learning may have a beneficial effect on current practices.

This paper will outline the specific intentions for development and operation of the Centre for Flexible and Distance Learning and will explore the

challenges faced in light of the consideration of e-learning as a disruptive technology.