



Delivery of courses with remote partner institutions

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ABSTRACT

There is an increasing need to deliver courses at a distance. Distance delivery has been tried before but with a major flaw, the cost has been too high. This high cost has come from additional locations, communication costs, and production costs. This paper discusses plans to teach our degree in Malaysia where the goal is a minimal marginal cost for additional locations or lecture hour (say \$20 per contact hour).

Jacobs (1998) presents a review of a UK enquiry into Higher Education, the 'Dearing report' which placed a heavy emphasis on C&IT (Communications and Information Technology). Jacobs states that from the start of the Report, near the beginning of the Introduction, educational technology is identified as being crucial to the future of higher education:

"New technology is changing the way information is stored and transmitted. This has implications both for the skills which higher education needs develop in students, and for the way in which it is delivered."

However, while there is an open-eyed recognition that the enormous potential of C&IT in teaching and learning will be realised only if there is an immediate investment in time, adequate resources and staff development, success will depend on the management of change. Thus, says Dearing:

"The development and implementation of an integrated C&IT strategy will be one of the main challenges facing managers of higher-education institutions".

There is little critical analysis of the efficacy of on-line distance learning and less still on appropriate

management strategies, the main challenge Dearing offered.

One major approach may be arrangements made with other institutions outside New Zealand. The advantages of these associations are that structures are in place, academic quality processes are already developed and that the student stream is established. Both such institutions, however, are unlikely to be able to deliver the courses entirely on their own and will be reliant on Otago Polytechnic staff for delivery for the foreseeable future. The non-distance option is very expensive, it involve a rotating roster of staff travelling to Malaysia.

We are developing a management and implementation strategy (as Dearing challenged) that will allow the delivery of Otago Polytechnic courses to the foreign institution in part, from a distance. To do this we will rely on distance technologies. To do this we must find answers to two crucial questions:

Two major questions arise:

1. Can the courses be delivered in such a way that it benefits both distance and local students?, and
2. Is the minimal marginal cost feasible and what impact does this system have on networks etc?

We wish ourselves luck.

References

- Jacobs, G. (1999) "The Dearing Report: summary with respect to learning technology, and some first thoughts." *Interaction* 1(3). <http://www.warwick.ac.uk/ETS/interactions/>