



# Motivating Adults to Study: How effective is computer based training?

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Since the inception of free computing courses at Unitec New Zealand in 2001 it was hoped that the community would benefit in several ways; one of those being that particular sectors of the community e.g. senior citizens, those from lower decile areas and EAL students, encouraged by the free courses would increase their computing literacy rate. It was anticipated that there would be a transition through to enrolments in other courses at Unitec.

Research carried out in 2002 on gender ethnicity and age issues showed expected trends in that the number of unemployed, people from diverse ethnic backgrounds and women who participated in these free courses was significant. *Hart & Sathu (2002)*.

Evaluation forms gave feedback of identifiers of initial barriers to learning in low decile areas in West Auckland. Some of these were:

- travelling distance to the courses
- lack of transport
- time restraints due to work and family commitments
- fear of large educational institutions

In 2003 Unitec was approached by Community Learning Information Centre for Information Technology (CLICIT) – a joint initiative between Waitakere City Libraries and the community-based Ranui Action Project (RAP) to implement our free courses at their learning centre in Ranui – a low decile area in West Auckland.

Unitec has now placed three free computers and a printer in the Ranui Community Centre with software –MS Windows/ Office XP, and computer based training programmes. The CBT courses comprise seven International Computer Driving Licence (ICDL) modules (level 2). The first part of a longitudinal research project is now being carried out to evaluate the role played by the free CBT

courses offered in the community in motivating people to participate in further study. The instructional design of the courses guides the learner through each step. There is a tutorial assistant available to answer any questions. End of unit tests are available and results can be printed.

Key research questions are

- Does free self-paced ICT learning located within a small local community motivate the learners to identify value in future learning?
- Do people intend to go on to further study?

Six to eight members of the Ranui community will be selected (of volunteers) as research subjects while participating in the free learning. After completing one module interviews will take place to discover whether there has been a significant ‘enlightenment’ to the learner to continue. How does the learner think they have succeeded and benefited and are they willing to continue with further ICDL modules? Are they motivated to enrol in further modules and or study? The expected outcome is the learner will wish to sit tests at the end of each module. The motivation to continue with each module will depend upon their success in their first tests.

## References

Hart., L, & Sathu, H., (2002) Critique and Conscience of Society: A Case Study of Free Computing Courses. *Technology and Innovation – New Understanding and Influences.*, Hamilton: NACCQ, 231-233.