Lights, Camera, Action: Gathering Experiences of First-time Distance Learners

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ascilite Conference

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Acknowledgment



http://www.dehub.edu.au





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http://www.dehub.edu.au

Aussie PM Julia Gillard arrives in NZ Last updated 18:20 15/02/2011 © 32 comments AT Text Size Print Share





Background

Backdrop of significant challenges facing distance education in which issues of attrition (retention) and completion rates have come into sharp relief.



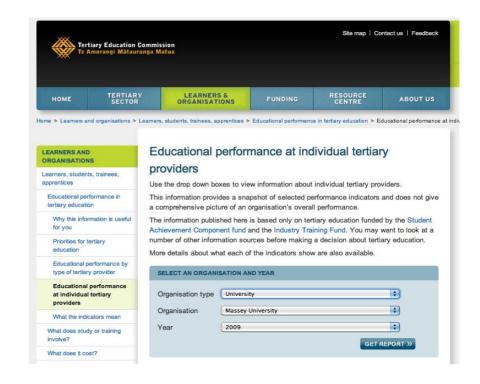


Background

Publication of league tables:

- attrition
- completion
- progression

http://www.tec.govt.nz/







Synthesis of the Literature

- Wealth of literature
- Issues around attrition and completion are complex
- Further investigation required of the 'soft' factors
- Need to move away from "goulash" approach to support
- There is a growing body of literature on first year experience
- Gap in the literature on the experiences of first-time distance learners
- Dearth of research that presents the learner voice





Research Aims

To improve the supports and services available for first-time distance learners.





Research Aims

To improve the supports and services available for first-time distance learners. More specifically...

- To investigate the experiences of being a first time distance learner 'in their own words' from a student perspective
- To develop a set of overarching principles for enhancing distance learner engagement and success;
- To develop a conceptual framework for identifying the most effective use of various intervention tools, supports and resources at early stages of the study lifecycle.





Research Design

- Design-based research
- Phase 2 phenomenological approach
- Case studies of first-time distance learners
- 20 participants broadly representing diversity of distance learners
- 140 volunteers from pool of 750 potential participants
- Obtained full human ethics approval process
- Before and after questionnaire
- Weekly video diaries using Sony bloggie™





Video Diaries

- Adapted from JISC (2006), Arnold & Riddle (2007) and Cashmore, Green & Scott (2010)
- Aim for video diary of ≥ 5 m/pw for ≤ 6 wks
- Actual video diaries were 2 16 m/pw for 7 16 wks
- Participant withdrawals: 2 early, 5 in W7, 5 in W14, 8 in W16
- Data collection aided by 'reflective prompt framework'









30 – 39 years

Maori

4 papers (units)

College of Humanities

Remote location

Not employed

7 children







30 – 39 years

Maori / Pasifika

4 papers (units)

College of Business

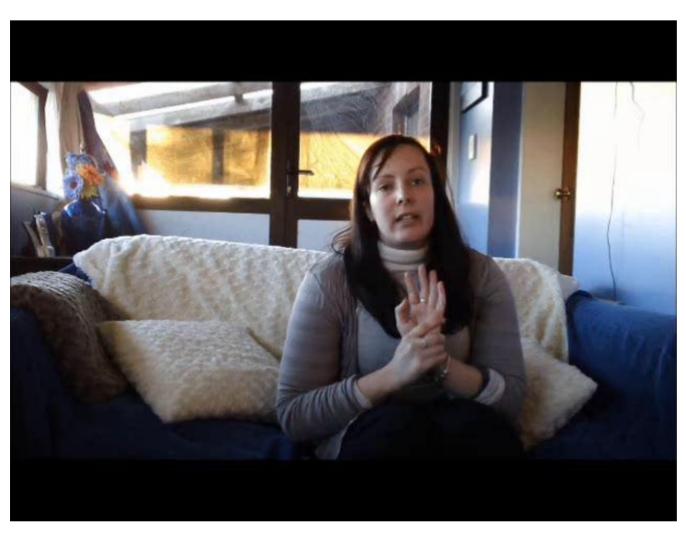
Wellington

FT employment

1 guardianship







20 – 29 years

European

2 papers (units)

College of Humanities

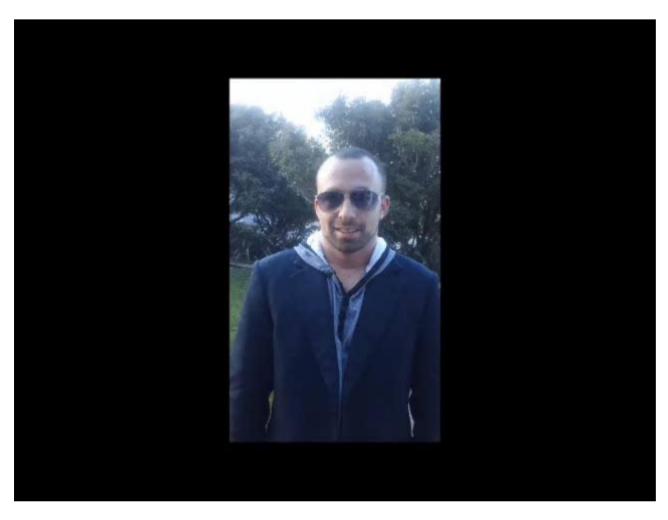
Urban location

FT employment

o children







30 – 39 years

European

4 papers (units)

College of Humanities

Remote location

Casual employment

2 children







50 - 59 years

Maori / European

2 papers (units)

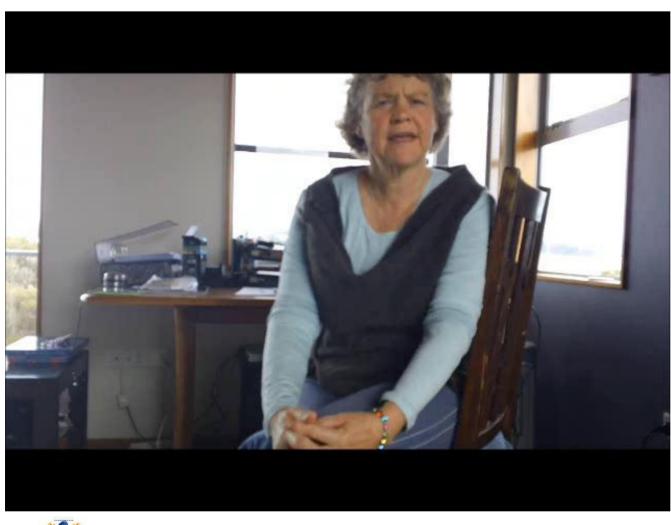
College of Business

Auckland

Seeking employment







60+ years

European

1 paper (unit)

College of Education

Remote location

Employed 3 days





Lessons So Far

- 1. Stories 'add flesh' to the 'soft factors' of what it means to be a distance learner
- 2. Distance learning is perceived to enable tertiary study to fit around other life, work and family commitments
- 3. There is variable digital literacy among first time distance learners
- 4. Important to make explicit tacit knowledge of what's required to be successful as a distance learner.
- 5. Supports and services are not always known about or available at point of need.





Next Steps

- 1. Complete analysis and report
- 2. Develop Student Guide to Distance Learning
- 3. Offer Distance Learner Colloquium

http://wikiresearcher.org/DEHub_Research_Projects/DEHubMassey_University





Questions



"A prudent question is one-half of wisdom."

Francis Bacon

http://www.slideshare.net/mbrownz/



