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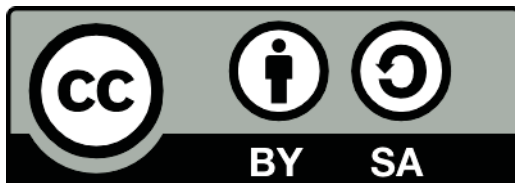
The Centralised Development of Elearning Resources

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the

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Abstract

This thesis explores the centralisation of elearning resource development in New Zealand Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics (ITPs). There was a significant gap in existing research relating to the organisation of elearning resource development. The tertiary education sector has been subject to significant and rapid change with associated challenges. Centralisation has been mooted as contributing to a solution for these challenges. The lack of research around centralised development of resources makes it difficult to support such a claim. To address this, the thesis explored three areas: the extent to which centralised development of elearning has been adopted, the perceived advantages and disadvantages of a centralised model, and the attitudes teaching staff hold towards a centralised model.

The study applied a mixed method convergent parallel research design. This drew on data from interviews with elearning managers and from a survey of teaching staff.

Findings established that three categories of centralisation exist in New Zealand ITPs; decentralised, centralised and highly centralised. The typical composition and functions of the centralised teams were defined for each category. The findings supported the perceived advantages and disadvantages identified in existing research, but also identified additional advantages. These included better project management, more clarity around roles and responsibilities, that elearning resources produced by a centralised unit was more student focussed and specific cost saving information. Levels of understanding around the financial advantages of a centralised model were inconsistent. The attitudes teaching staff held towards a centralised model were seen as to some extent ambivalent. Attitudes were more positive where the staff already operated within a centralised model.

The thesis makes a significant contribution where there was a gap in existing research. This new knowledge is directly relevant to current decisions around cost of development, composition of central teams, expectations when adopting a centralised model, and planning to centralise or decentralise. These findings are both timely and significant as recent mergers, qualification reviews and the expectation to innovate and adopt new models of delivery increase the need for more efficient solutions to creating elearning resources.

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While the experience of writing a thesis has left me with many questions around traditional tertiary methods, and whether they are effective in impacting on capabilities beyond research skills, I am incredibly grateful that I have been in the privileged position to experience it.

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