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Researching the NET: Information and communications technology and research in distance and adult learning.

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Issues

Three ways to look at the impact of information and communications technology on research in open and distance learning.

1 Impact on the substance and nature of what is researched: NETs in open and distance education.

2 Impact on the means and nature of how it is researched: data, recording and analysis

3 Impact on the means and nature of how it is reported, communicated and published
1 Impact on the substance and nature of what is researched: NETs in open and distance education.

Distance education is fundamentally connected to information and communication technologies.

Changes in technology, therefore, do not change the fundamental nature of distance education.

Changes in technology enable the development of new practices, the modification of some existing practices and the redundancy of other existing practices.

The CRIDLA Web discussion voiced a concern for interaction between teachers and students, and for communication and understanding across language and cultural boundaries.
Impact on the means and nature of how open and distance education is researched: data, recording and analysis

Old forms of data can be collected electronically (for example, surveys or tests).

New electronic forms teaching and leaning enable data to be captured electronically (for example, texts of e-tuition, e-evaluations and e-tutorials used as research data).

Electronically stored data (numbers and texts) are able to be transmitted, manipulated and analysed more rapidly and more richly.

New ethical issues emerge (for example, surreptitious access to teachers’ and students’ conversations and work).
3 Impact on the means and nature of how open and distance education research is reported, communicated and published

Research reports and other research reporting texts (papers, articles) can exist solely (or optionally) electronically.

Internet-based distribution and access.

Web-based publications and sites

Issues emerge of a widening divide between rich and poor nations, institutions and scholars as only the technology-rich can reap the benefits of these new means and approaches to research.

*The CRIDALA Web discussion voiced an interest the potential for Internet-based access to such research dissemination, and also for new virtual communities of scholars.*