# HARRIET RIDOLFO INTERVIEW WITH HANNAH

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| Harriet | Q1 Please tell me about your role. |  |
| HannahR1 | Sure. So I’m a lecturer in learning and teaching. I’m currently connected with the School of Humanities and Social Sciences, specifically to the human services portfolio. What does that mean in terms of my role? It pretty much means that I provide consultation, mentoring and coaching around learning and teaching, design and delivery across the courses and subjects that fall into that portfolio. As part of that I am also part of discussion groups and certain committees that across the faculty. In strategising around learning and teaching practices and, well best practices, if possible across the school within the faculty and over and above that I am also a committee member of, well a working group member of the wiki cross-faculty working group |  |
| Harriet: | What are your major responsibilities? How long have you been in role things like that? |  |
| HannahR2 | Sure. So the main responsibilities I have is currently number 1 is to participate in course reviews. This normally includes engaging with stakeholders and advisers across the faculty and in industry to curate and collate and later analyse feedback and review of the ways we are delivering our courses. Specifically in human services it’s an analysis of an online course in term of the benefits for students undertaking this type of, well students in this discipline taking or upskilling in or by the online environment. One other main pinpoint at this stage is working with other lecturers in learning and teaching to define, identify and try and co-locate best practices across the faulty in terms of bettering, of making better the teaching practices of our teaching academics. |  |
| Harriet | Who do your report to?  |  |
| HannahR3 | I report to, officially I report to the Deputy Dean that associate being Lucie Zundans Fraser obviously but I indirectly report to the course director and the head of school in my school. |  |
| Harriet: | Is there anyone who reports to you? |  |
| HannahR4 | Ah no.  |  |
| Harriet  | Q2 What are your experiences of e-learning in your own practice? |  |
| HannahR5 | So my life in e-learning began 14 years ago when e-learning was considered as putting everything on the www and people could access it through their computers rather than through hard copy and by surface mail or land mail so that was my initial experience but as you may be aware e-learning has evolved since those early days and whilst there may be some – oh I don’t want to call it misconceptions – but it could be perceived as a replication of a face-to-face learning experience in an online learning space. I think e-learning, in my own practice anyway is the enhancing of not only your face-to-face but any aspect of your professional practice by online learning tools in face because technology is permeating every section, every area in your life I believe eLearning is a part of everything you deal with in your life today in your electricity bills to upskilling yourself in your own role its actually quite noticeable in a lot of organisations they actually employ specialised eLearning experts to create the knowledge that their stakeholders need to engage with the organisation that they either use or work in. So, in terms of my own practice I see it in two ways; number 1 eLearning is actually a conduit to how I live my life now, so if I want to learn about something or if I want to know more about something I would actually engage in eLearning practices in that it would be online connected and networked and as part of my professional development eLearning seems to kind of be the norm for busy professionals like ourselves.  | L12-L14 NeedL19-L25 Need |
| Harriet | How would you define e-learning? |  |
| HannahR6 | So, um I believe there is um two schools of thoughts which is quite interesting. I actually started off in vocational education ah where eLearning in terms of producing that online learning experience was very based in how one can apply your skills from concept to practical. But then, now and it was more formal; you would learn concepts using the online environment and then apply it to your context. Um which I believe a lot of institutions still use and certainly in our institution a lot of courses and teaching academics still see that as the role of e-learning. However, there has been a kind of second area that has developed from the increase in data and access that um not only the internet has provided but certainly social media and web-based tools and that certainly has impact on e-learning in that um these areas are now informal. So, you have the social media aspects where you have blogs and wikis and people are accessing and not only drawing from those resources, but they’re also contributing and actually creating their own e-learning experiences and resources but at the same time, you have the, um disruption of formal education with open learning and MOOCs where anybody in the world can actually upskill without having to go through the formal processes and that has been, um, facilitated by e-learning, not only as a platform but also as an idea.  | L1-L9 definition of e-learning / complexity?L10-L19 defininition & direction of e-learning / complexity? |
| Harriet | What are your experiences in terms of quality e-learning and the use of associated technologies? |  |
| HannahR7 | I think um in my current practice in terms of university and I myself as a student for a university. I do feel that the current technology ie learning management systems is a ???wired platform in that it feeds into policies and regulations etc. However, the quality of the e-learning that I’ve actually experienced within the platform was not because the platform was utilised the way it was meant to but rather the better quality um online experiences I’ve actually encountered come from the individuals who actually think outside those learning management systems. So, while the learning management system becomes a repository they actually, the innovative facilitators of e-learning that I’ve actually encountered have actually gone beyond that in that in Number 1 they aren’t afraid to actually teach outside the LMS to engage you in learning. One specific example I’ve had is having a discussion outside the normal discussion boards, so that would actually be engaging with the public on twitter. I thought that was a brilliant way to actually ah expand your learning experiences. But at the same time it’s really key in our world today to actually be exposed to that in that 21st century learning skills are actually incorporated into the discipline you are actually engaged in. is that kind of the practicalities you are looking for or? | L7-L10 II/ LMS & A4?L19-L21 CB |
| Harriet | ? |  |
| HannahR8 | There is, well currently as my role I am a member of both the working group for the cross faculty wiki and whilst the wiki itself is an e-learning technology. What lends itself well to the cross faculty professional development aim and goal is that it is a space where um practitioners learning and teaching practitioners can curate and collate then create their own resources that feedback into the learning and teaching community across the faculty. Another concept I’ve seen, I haven’t run it myself was facilitated by a quality online learning lead and that is the Byte & Bite series. So that is using online meeting as we are doing now but her main concern was to deliver key points of learning and teaching strategies and tools that complimented that and. It was very interesting because she didn’t actually have.. Her main goal was not to have that live audience but actually to cater for both asynchronous and synchronous audiences, so she would record those Byte & Bite sessions and make it available across the faculty and even across the university, which I understand and which I’ve actually seen it being used in other areas in the university.  | L4-L9 CB |
| Harriet | Q3 What are your perceptions of enablers to implementing e-learning? |  |
| HannahR9 | So, Um enablers in my mind certainly is supported. If the implementation is successful implementation of e-learning certainly it is supported by good policy. In terms of policy obviously in my situation where in my context where we’re in a formal learning institution there are certainly key things to think about; grade release, integrity and ideas of ensuring that the learning design in the online space is conducive to enhancing the learning in the subjects we offer. I think there needs to be champions in all levels of the institution um so we need um champions in the Senate. People who really believe in quality learning experiences. We need champions in faculty leadership but most certainly we need champions across the actual teaching academic arena – and I’m just gonna kind of flip to the barriers. There has been, and it’s been well documented that while the corporate world, so business areas have embraced e-learning practices to engage with stakeholders to increase their knowledge base to upskill their employees. It’s been very well documented and noted that in universities and oh a lot of post-secondary learning institutions um that the uptake of e-learning or e-learning practices has been slow because of 2 things: No. 1 the university not only in Australia, but across the globe still hasn’t caught up with the disruption around education in the digital age. So um a lot of universities still believe that e-learning is adjunct to their actual teaching practice when in fact those institutions who’ve embraced e-learning practices, good e-learning practices, have gone on to ah bigger and greater engagement from their stakeholders and students. So, and the 2nd part around this is and this is probably common challenge across university and learning institutions, is the idea that university are first and foremost a hot bed of research. So whilst teaching academics um are well versed in the subject matter and appreciate their content, their subject matter, teaching it is a totally different matter especially now in this age of digital learning. So, I guess the enablers are; there’s policy but at the same time policy could actually be a barrier and then you’ve got champions who believe in the practice but then you’ve got the barriers of ah the actual um, academics or staff members who need to implement it. Um one I do, I have noticed in the last few years is that if implementing e-learning actually comes from um let’s call them the masses in other words the teaching staff who are at ground zero, who teach every day and already appreciate the importance of e-learning. If implementing e-learning practices came from that area from that level and then fed by support from leadership and operations and strategic teams across the learning institution then I think it actually alleviates a lot of those barriers but for me I don’t think um not a lot of universities – the ones I’ve seen anyway – have reached that point where uh its a majority of academics who believe in the implementing of quality e-learning subjects or experiences um. Unfortunately even though there are innovators there aren’t a lot of actual ground zero staff members undertaking it. | L1-L3 LM / PolicyL8-L13 LM / champions – B5 too?L17-L27 II/ cultureL38-L46 LM / e-learning knowledge / culture? |
| Harriet | Q4 What are your perceptions of barriers to implementing e-learning? |  |
| HannahR10 | Well it’s a low one in that I feel that more examples from the teaching staff need to come out. There is a need to acknowledge, even in the smallest of changes, so for example I was working with an academic last year who um didn’t believe in discussion forums and even though let’s just say it is a traditional form of e-learning in a formal space in an LMS such as BlackBoard um he felt that email was the best way to communicate with the students so it was matter of creating support mechanisms so that he would take the lead and implement a discussion forum strategy. So, that meant having a meeting with him during the delivery of the subject every fortnight to discuss how his discussion forums are going. Did he feel that he needed to change or add something on a weekly basis? And then we would need actually to set up a reminder on his calendar that on Tuesdays he would actually respond to the student’s questions and responses on the discussion forum. And it was getting him into that practice and getting him to realise it didn’t need to be this elaborate strategy, but it needed to be a sustainable strategy and he needed someone he could call on for support. So and there has been a lot of research on why teaching academics, you know, try something and then in terms of e-learning implementation and then they just let it go or stop using it is because of 2 things: 1 is technology specific so if you do introduce technology into your teaching practice um you need to be aware of its limitations. Now a lot of people will say you just need to learn how to do a work around, actually you need to know your limitations so that you’re not wasting your time kind of figuring out how to use it but you’re actually using it, um at its best. And secondly it’s professional development; e-learning is a fast developing evolving area. You cannot stick to discussion forums for the rest of your teaching life, there are other platforms, other arenas where discussion forums are happening and you need to be aware of that. There’s actually a very interesting article I may have to send you the author. I was just reading about it a couple of weeks ago in the technology The International Education Technology Journal and one of the few academics that were interviewed around educational technology actually highlighted the fact that previously in their own learning lives, so as a student, because it was teacher centred that idea has actually flowed down to their own teaching practice. In that they believed they needed to be experts in everything, including the technology that they use to teach. A couple of academics that they interviewed actually said they gave up the use of technology because they would use it for example in an online tutorial and the student knew more than they did about the technology and for them it was almost embarrassing to admit that they weren’t an expert. And I think that’s a culture change greater than what we have now. It’s a culture change that still needs to be implemented across, specifically, the university level, um, arena.  | L1-L3 CB /sharing practiceL8-L12 CB / PL type of delivery/coaching 1:1 (& B8?)L20 B5?L21-L34 ComplexityL43-L49 II / culture (& identity) |
| Harriet | Q5 How do you think the decisions of organisational leaders affect e-learning implementation? |  |
| HannahR11 | Areas would be good because that’s quite a huge..um |  |
| Harriet | EG Was the implementation of e-learning facilitated by a dedicated individual or group? How have leaders acquired the resources required to implement e-learning (eg new personnel, IT infrastructure)? |  |
| HannahR12 | Yes |  |
| Harriet | That is really interesting |  |
| Hannah R13 | So, I think the one of the key things that is happening, probably not just in my institution in e-learning is um there is a big push for innovation hubs. So, obviously in the corporate world start-up and brainstorming labs are happening to cross to kind of greenhouse ideas so that what every projects they’re actually thinking of implementing is successful. Um in my organisation there is a push for centralised um leadership and also an innovation hub. Um, so, um there are, I mean we have units in the Division of Learning and Teaching, that not only reaches across the university but essentially reaches outside the institution and tries and bring that knowledge in. Um, I think at the moment there are a few challenges in that so previously the Division of Learning and Teaching housed a lot of resources that supported the design of subjects online um and also there were clear communication channels in terms of disseminating good practice and what’s great out there. Um at the moment I think because of the restructure and the centralisation of the resources um and the change in um command and communication channels there has been a gap in the actual flow of information and I think perhaps the key thing is that, things that are happening as in the sort of you know in the greater or more strategic overall goals, whilst they are filtering down, there doesn’t seem to be a really good way of bottom up feedback. So, there would be individual links but really the organisations leaders, I don’t think, they’re actually getting a lot of the feedback. And, I think that is the biggest way of um making decisions, effective decisions about e-learning implementation. Um do have to say I was part of a project, a three year well actually it was more like a sort of 5 year, but I came in the middle of that 5 year project of um initially moving paper based subjects into the online space. And I think one of the great outcome of that project was that the decisions of the leader in that project. So, we had the Learning Design Manager from the Division of Learning and Teaching and the Associate Dean of the faculty, not only conferred with each other and the people above but they actually tried to understand what the implications of their decisions to the project team which I was part of, in terms of implementing the e-learning strategy. And that two way communication channel for decisions is really important because they were then flexible enough to rethink their decisions and make change. So, um, I think whilst organisation leaders may have an overview of the strategic goals of the…. and they would probably have to take all that into consideration, before they made those decisions, they needed to understand what was happening in the actual um level where the e-learning implementation was happening. | L2-L6 II L15-L22 LM / communicationL29-L39 LM / communication & LSU3  |
| Harriet | What specific strategies and actions were put into place to support e-learning use (eg training/support, time to experiment with e-learning, rewards, incentives, communication, accessibility or e-learning components/associated technologies) |  |
| HannahR14 | So, um pretty much they uh they had they couldn’t be too flexible. They actually needed to dedicate a defined amount of time to achieving the goals. So the goals themselves so the goalposts and the aims of moving hard copy subjects onto the online space never changed. What changed was the decision of how to get there and why we needed to get there. Well the how fed in to the why we needed to get there so that was key in making their decision. | L3-L7 LM & LSU3 (& A2?) |
| Harriet | Q6 How do you feel about your level of e-competence? |  |
| Hannah R15 | I think a really interesting discussion around this question is the fact that um whilst we do acknowledge there is a certain level of e-competence required to implement e-learning. One thing I have learnt in the last 5 years is that people will not be forced into thinking like yourself. Whether there is research around the type of digital literacy required in the 21st century such as you know connecting with online research, social media discussions utilising journal database, engaging in technology to ah learn more about all the concepts. One thing I have learnt - I want to say emphasis but I really can’t because one thing I’ve found that um sometimes I would be exasperated at how a teaching academic could not understand it was easier to use a discussion forum rather than replying to every single student using the one way communication of email. I certainly didn’t experience empathy but I did need to learn sympathy so I would understand where the discipline holds valuable. In the school of computing and mathematics they had a real issue about privacy and security and I had to make sure that whilst I did encourage the use of social media or even 3rd party technology I had to make sure the strategy I proposed would not, in their eyes, compromise the privacy and security of their student information. Which I think is quite common across any discipline. But in the school of computing and maths ah it was key because it was their main area of expertise in terms of research. So we had to be careful around that. In the school of Theology what I did find was there was a whole load of, there was a sensitivity of um you know the dignity of the individual in the public space. So while they did use discussion forums, um we had to actually explicitly implement rules of engagement. So, if you didn’t agree with someone’s philosophy or theology you would be allowed to comment but obviously in a constructive way. So things like that. It may sound quite basic e-competence but I think you need to get the basic competence in the e-learning environment down before you can actually change culture and move everybody to the next level. Um it’s not an easy task and I’m sure you understand that arena as well, Harriet. But I think you need to be able to understand that. So it’s quite interesting. You know our organisation has three lecturers where external um innovative teaching and research academics, in the field of learning and teaching in online spaces, are invited to speak. Every time these invitations go out only those who are already at a certain level of e-competence even at the same level as the speaker attends. None of the ones who you would think would want to learn above their level attend, so that’s a conundrum and I think it’s still a long way away um for you know anybody who specifically in my role could encourage or can encourage to change.  | L2-L9 CB / e-competenceL14-L16 MPTP?L30-L34 CB / e-competence |
| Harriet | So preaching to the converted as it were |  |
| HannahR16 | Absolutely. |  |
| Harriet | How about when academics share practice and examples? |  |
| HannahR17 | Um they’re actually seen positively. However again it is based on the discipline so School of Theology they would only present um their learning and teaching practices to everyone else in the faculty if they were allowed to describe their failures. So, um they weren’t prepared to present what they were doing if they weren’t allowed to show areas of um well their gap, let’s say, in their e-competence. Um in the Centre for Islamic Studies, um the incentive there is yes let’s be recognised, however um there needs to be an acknowledgement that their subject content stands outside e-learning. So it is the importance of their content over the use of e-learning that is key to them. So it’s really quite relative to the discipline  | L7-L12 CB Identity? (B6) |
| Harriet | So different disciplines focus on different barriers? Or Issues? |  |
| HannahR18 | It is interesting because even in the school of computing and mathematics, even though you may think that they are in the same arena. They aren’t, um, they believe that there’s a lot to learn in terms of the technical part of technology but they don’t believe technology itself lends to teaching it. So that’s quite an interesting aspect. | L3-L6 CB Identity? (B6) |
| Harriet | How did they respond to your high level of e-competence? |  |
| HannahR19 | And actually that is one of the key things that worked for me in role in that mentoring and coaching um it may be one on one or it could be can you show me a resource or can you show me an example? Absolutely works, absolutely is needed but also what I’ve found is that working collaboratively um for now I would say collaboratively in your subject teams or in schools and I am a strong believer in teaching teams. So, you would have an academic who is very good with the subject matter and then you would have a very innovative academic who would be able to guide the use of technology to enhance that learning so, um, certainly teaching teams would be helpful. Now in terms of professional development that is a conundrum in that everybody will say they have no time. Um I also wonder, because uh we do have a lot of schools who are made up of teaching academics who are part of accrediting bodies so there is obviously an understanding of continuing professional development. But there must be I guess in um our own practice as teaching academics um there doesn’t seem to be as much of an understanding of the importance of continued professional development um. One thing I know doesn’t really work that well, although some may argue it does work and that is doing a generalised PD session. So have a university wide PD session, let’s say on online meetings and then draw examples from schools. What I do find really working and I’ve seen this with other lecturers, learning and teaching is if it’s brought back down to um their own schools being led by an innovator in that area within that school. Um as you are aware in our institution and across universities there is an option – as part of your employee development review – you are required to enrol in some type of teaching in higher education. I haven’t actually seen the courses delivered by my organisation to the teaching staff but I would actually expect that um in that space um whatever they learnt in the formal time that they need to complete these courses. I’m hopeful that they actually are implementing some sort of reflective practice where the academics need to bring in an example from their own space. But you know they’re probably doing that but I don’t know how effective that is but that could also be an option | L1-L4 CB / coachingL6-L7 CB /sharing practiceL11-L13 LM / workloadL19-L26 CB / PL Sharing practice |
| Harriet | So academics only believe other academics in their own discipline? How competent do you think your colleagues are? |  |
| HannahR20 | Now Laughs. That is a very interesting discussion in that um. I. In my own opinion I believe that technology mediates how we interact in the world. So, if you’re not adept to or conversant, even conversant around technology it is very difficult to translate your teaching into the e-learning space. So, certainly one core act is being able to truly understand the use of the learning management system. So whilst it may house information, how is it effectively delivering something? So, think there needs to be that core understanding in terms of um technology stuff um and it actually goes beyond you know; Have edit on. Upload a file. Type text in the field. So, just politely, the minimum for me would be whilst you need to know that, you need to know how the system is delivering your message. And you need to understand it.So, are the students reading pages and pages of text? Is that effective? Is posting 200 YouTube videos enough to engage students or do you actually have to understand learning design and how it connects to using the platform? | L1-L5 CB / e-competenceL11-L14 CB / e-competenceL16-L18 CB / e-competence |
| Harriet | Is there anything you wish I’d asked or anything you wish to add. |  |
| HannahR21 | Sure um. Your questions are quite open. One think I would actually ask is what do you think a leader, um What are the characteristics of a leader that needs to implement quality e-learning experiences? And I say leader loosely in that it is not um the formal…Here’s the manager, here’s the teams, but a leader in terms of a person that leads e-learning implementation. So that it could be an educational support coordinator and it could even be the printery staff. Um.These characteristics I would say are number 1 they would actually need to listen to um – and I know there’s a lot of talk about listening to your students’ needs – but listening and understand are two different things. So, um you would you know – oh yes some of them didn’t like this – but what do you do with that listening is the next, so that’s one of the key things. Understanding the feedback that you receive from your stakeholders; being the students. So, I’ll give you an example. I was working on a subject in the school of – its a mathematics subject – and the teaching academic themselves, decided that rote learning was required, so he created pages and pages of equations and um formulas and I went back to the educational support coordinator to discuss the best way to deliver this. you know there are a lot of tool there – Maths base, Socrative, SmartSparrow and um talking to the ESC, she actually suggested that maybe it just needed to be an interactive pdf. Because, then the students can just print it off and read it anywhere and interact with it in the way they needed to. They can just fill it in and submit it. So the options were use the technology or use a pdf. We brought it back to the academic and he said “let’s try the technology first. So we piloted if for one section of the assessment task and then for the rest we used the pdf. And what we found was even though it was low stake the pdf actually got more submissions than the technology which had all the bells and whistles. So, well I think if the ESC wasn’t brave enough or didn’t want to lead in that space where she understood the technology and she understood the need then it wouldn’t have been as successful as it was.So, that’s one thing, listening and understanding. Ah another key think I’ve found; actually leading. So there is listening and understanding, but making a decision. So um knowing enough of the need to make a decision that a certain task or way of learning or context of learning or content or subject matter is the best way to go. And again this goes back to um understanding the need of the student which is central. But at the same time, not giving way to what is happening but what is needed to learn that actual aspect of it. One last thing is um, you need a true collaborator. So, someone who is an expert um but is willing to um is actually happy to bring on other experts. So there is acknowledgement that they don’t know everything. That’s what I think | L33-L36 MPTP?L38-L43 LM / e-learning knowledge & listening & decision makingL45-L48 LM / collaboration & communication |
| Harriet | What type of support do you think would help enhance e-learning implementation overall. |  |
| HannahR22 | I don’t think any of the implementation can happen without organisational leaders themselves as the hierarchy but definitely you need leadership at every level. |  |