

Edith Cowan University  
**Research Online**

---

ECU Publications Pre. 2011

---

2006

## Rags to Riches and Conflict on the Playground: Contrasting Narratives of E-Learning in an Educational Faculty

Geoffrey Lautenbach  
*University of Johannesburg, South Africa*

Duan Van der Westhuizen  
*University of Johannesburg, South Africa*

Joseph Luca  
*Edith Cowan University*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://ro.ecu.edu.au/ecuworks>

 Part of the [Education Commons](#)

---

This is an Author's Accepted Manuscript of: Lautenbach, G., Van der Westhuizen, D. & Luca, J. (2006). Rags to Riches and Conflict on the Playground: Contrasting Narratives of E-Learning in an Education Faculty. In E. Pearson & P. Bohman (Eds.), Proceedings of World Conference on Educational Multimedia, Hypermedia and Telecommunications 2006 (pp. 1700-1707). Chesapeake, VA: AACE. Copyright by AACE. Reprinted from the Proceedings of World Conference on Educational Multimedia, Hypermedia and Telecommunications 2006 with permission of AACE (<http://www.aace.org>) Available [here](#)  
This Conference Proceeding is posted at Research Online.  
<https://ro.ecu.edu.au/ecuworks/2270>

## **Rags to Riches and Conflict on the Playground: Contrasting Narratives of E-Learning in an Education Faculty**

Geoffrey Lautenbach & Duan van der Westhuizen University of Johannesburg, South Africa Joe Luca Edith Cowan University, Perth, Western Australia

**Abstract: We have argued before that personal learning experiences and, to a degree, the teaching experiences of lecturers could be seen as directive indicators of their e-learning uptake. We have also proposed that their 'narrative situatedness' is where we believe reasoning about engagement with educational technology can be found. Through narrative analysis of a number of interviews conducted with lecturers we have identified contrasting 'stories' of two lecturers who began to use technology in their teaching at around about the same time within an Education Faculty. These two narratives provide insight into why the one lecturer (Ellen) succeeded in her e-learning endeavours and why Rose has not yet managed to change her fundamental ideas about teaching and knowledge in any significant way. These two narratives are presented in this paper to expose these lecturer's unique and contrasting 'cultural worlds' and shed light on issues that may not have emerged through other methods.**

### **WHY NARRATIVE?**

This is a follow-up to a paper presented at the 2005 EDMEDIA conference in Montreal, Canada where we reported on methodologies implemented to investigate how engagement with e-learning reflected possible change in epistemology and pedagogy of lecturers (Lautenbach & Van der Westhuizen, 2005a). In the initial paper we argued that the personal learning experiences and, to a degree, the teaching experiences of lecturers could be seen as directive indicators of their e-learning uptake. We also proposed that their 'narrative situatedness' was where we believed reasoning about engagement with e-learning would be found. We were particularly interested in the *changing epistemologies and pedagogies* of lecturers as they engaged with e-learning. In this paper we present only two of the individual narratives that emerged from the analysis of the data that were collected. These two narratives provide insight into why the one lecturer (Ellen) succeeded in her e-learning endeavours and why Rose has not yet managed to change her fundamental ideas about teaching and knowledge in any significant way. By taking note of the contrasting content of each narrative we aimed to expose the boundaries of cultural discourse about professional work of these two lecturers engaging with educational technology at the institution.

As educational technologies develop, the role of narrative has become more prominent, indicating that the distribution of cognition (Brown, Duguid & Collins, 1989; Salomon, 1993; Brown, 2000) cannot rule out the influence of lecturers' stories and their emotional and social content. Bruner (1996:133) supports this view by stating that narrative can be used as a context for much of 'human-with-tool action'. The data that were collected from individual interviews were narratively-rich (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) and had sufficient ethnographic qualities (Wolcott, 1994) to justify the interviews in which they told their experiential stories – the "way of life" (Wolcott, 1994) that they had cultivated during their engagement with the tools of e-learning (see also Henning & Van der Westhuizen, 2004). The whole idea of capturing *content* as well as *discourse* is what led us, as researchers, to the *stories* that would possibly not have emerged through other forms of analysis.

### **A RESEARCH DESIGN TO ELICIT NARRATIVES**

In searching for a research design that would optimally capture lecturers' stories of first encounters with e-learning, the research process directed the design towards a hybrid in which narrative inquiry evolved as the main genre. This evolution occurred from a triangular hybrid that included components of the ethnographic, the ethnomethodological and the narrative tradition of qualitative inquiry (Flick 1998; Alvesson and Sköldbberg, 2000; Henning, Van Rensburg & Smit, 2004) and resulted in narratives that were constructed systematically from content, discourse and narrative data (see Lautenbach & Van der Westhuizen, 2005a and 2005b) and crystallised into elements of the eventual stories.

In the *narrative inquiry* component, language was seen as a strong determinant of meaning (Henning et al., 2004:42) and was used to search for the construction and maintenance of the directive discourses in the narrative interview texts. Fairclough (1995) highlights the value of critical discourse analysis as a method to be used alongside other methods in social scientific research on social and cultural change where the institutional context and the wider societal context or “context of culture” were explored. In this inquiry, we adopted critical discourse analysis of narrative content in the light of the emergence of the critical, social and historical turn that Fairclough (1995) called for. Discourse markers and narrative segments from the individual interview transcripts were used to make up lecturers’ stories of their engagement with ICT, thus capturing stories and their discursive qualities. These narratives can, therefore, be seen as social constructions that shed light on the lived experiences of the two lecturers within the very specific e-learning environment at the institution.

Narrative inquiry, moreover, seems to fit seamlessly into the genre of design for the larger inquiry and integrated well with the other forms of qualitative data collection techniques (Riessman, 2002; Chase, 2003). Narrative can, therefore, be seen as a potentially useful research tool in this inquiry to complement the use of ethnographic and ethnomethodological data collection strategies, including interviews and observation (see Lautenbach & Van der Westhuizen, 2005a).

## **STRUCTURE OF THE NARRATIVES**

Data derived from the interview transcripts using Activity Theory as an analytical lens (Lautenbach & Van der Westhuizen, 2005b, p 55), were plotted onto a table using the headers *past*, *present* and *future*. This analysis was then supplemented by discourse analysis and the conceptualisation of narrative segments from the restructured data. These narrative segments, therefore, outlined a definite beginning followed by a logical progression of events. Both narratives started with a short description of *the kind of story* in which each participant placed herself. This covered the notion of place (situation) and set the scene for each narrative. We then described *how the participants positioned themselves and others in the story* with emphasis on the personal and the social (interaction). This was followed in each case by an elaboration on the *identity claims* made by the participant. Both narratives demonstrated the changing nature of situations and how they eventually led to the participant’s present situation. In the writing of the narratives, we aimed to emphasise the performative approach by seeing story-telling as “a reciprocal event between the story-teller and the interviewer” (Riessman, 2002, p701). The lecturers’ ‘preferred identity’ was revealed in the stories they told. By viewing all of the above-mentioned factors as part of the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space as proposed by Clandinin and Connelly (2000), we aimed to derive interpretations and write research texts in the form of narrative segments that addressed personal and social issues while also addressing temporal issues by not only looking at the event, but also to its past, present and future (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000:50). Each of the narratives were loosely based on what the participant did in the past, what they are currently doing, and what they aim to do in the future (continuity/temporality). We ended both narratives with a brief elaboration on the nature of each participant’s emerging epistemology and pedagogy.

## **INTRODUCING THE CHARACTERS**

The following background information is essential to see the link between the two stories presented below. Rose, an experienced teacher and lecturer was ‘invited’ to co-present a module using e-learning with Ellen, who at that time had just made a return to teaching undergraduates after a long sojourn into the postgraduate field. Both were novices in the field of educational technology and were ‘forced’ to take up the challenge. Ellen’s story, in contrast to Rose’s story, is a typical Cinderella, rags-to-riches tale and the two narratives are divergent in many ways. Here are their stories...

### **Rose’s Story: Conflict on the Playground**

Rose is a senior lecturer with many years of experience in traditional face-to-face teaching. Rose's narrative is a story of a '*child on the outside looking in.*' Like a child on a playground who is invited by other children to take part in a game, Rose reveals the story of a lecturer who somewhat reluctantly agrees to take part in a 'new game.' This reluctance to take part seems to be as a result of Rose's 'comfort zone' with what she was doing at the time and perhaps an indication of the fact that she was not quite *au fait* with the rules of this game. Rose had up to that point, been teaching quite 'peacefully' and effectively in traditional face-to-face contact sessions, a preference with which she is comfortable. As for the 'rules', Rose had not even considered using technology in her teaching and had no knowledge of the theory and practice of teaching with technology. A possibility is that Rose was only invited to play because there was no one else available to complete the team on the playground. She explains that she only agreed to take part to assist the players who would have struggled without her input in the game, as these 'players' were Afrikaans speaking students who demanded to be taught in their mother tongue. Without her input, these students would have had to complete the course through the medium of English.

Rose initially situates herself in the story as a '*newcomer*' to the game and claims a lack of experience to be able to make any comments about the rules or intricacies of the game itself. The story reveals her inexperience with e-learning but also points out her commitment to attempt to try out technological tools in the teaching of the course. Rose never really speaks of being in control of her situation and even situates herself *subservient* to the senior colleague who was responsible for the English section of the class. Rose's need to be in control of the classroom situation is also evident in her narrative and she is distinctly unsettled and uncomfortable with the idea of allowing the students to take responsibility for their own learning. Rose ultimately sides with the discontented and disillusioned students and their families, and acts as the '*voice of the masses*' playing a major role in presenting all of their demands and problems to anyone who will listen.

Rose eventually adds her voice to what she sees as a large number of dissatisfied students and their families. She narrates this section of her story from the perspective of a mother who has personally experienced the e-learning problems of her own two children at the institution (albeit in another Faculty). Using the experiences of her sons, Rose describes cases of poor teaching using technology and the negative implications this has for the lecturing staff at the institution. She claims that lecturers' bad planning and presentation can easily lead to student apathy. Rose seems to talk about lecturers using technology as 'others' who are 'out there.' She criticises bad planning and design of online material and activities by 'others' and questions their reasons for attempting to teach with technology. She also exposes certain lecturers who simply place content and classroom transparencies on the web saying that they have made "no contribution to teaching and learning through using technology".

With regard to her identity, Rose positions herself on the sideline like a *spectator* who is observing her child play in a ball game. She is a vocal and critical spectator who comments about the proceedings through the eyes of a concerned parent. Even though she does not quite understand the rules, she is quick to criticise the playing field, the participants, the referee (and his interpretation of the rules) and the ball itself. After a brief sojourn into being involved as a *referee* in the game herself where she was exposed to player uprisings and heated differences of opinion between herself and another referee, Rose tried her hand at reinventing her approach to the game and had a second attempt at improving the game (but this time on her own). This refers to her first and second attempts at teaching a module using both face-to-face and online components. Vital match time was taken up where Rose allowed players to learn and practice the intricacies of the game before she allowed them to actually play for real (using contact sessions to introduce the class to technical issues in a computer laboratory).

Rose demonstrates an example of a frozen and unyielding epistemology. She professes to be comfortable with what works for her at present and does not see herself changing her pedagogy in the near future. She claims that eye contact and face-to-face teaching should be the first priority and does not consider the many benefits of e-learning. Her discourse is one of masked positivism where she presents mere summaries of what she believes to be facts and her beliefs and opinions are not interpretive at all. She claims, for example, to want access to good sources of knowledge stating that text books and printed journals are more reliable sources than the material available on the Internet. Rose tells of a sense of losing control when using technology in her teaching, feeling that she is no longer the expert, as technology becomes the focus instead of the teaching activities. For this reason she sees e-learning as cold and impersonal and claims that most lecturers are currently using technology in their teaching without sufficient knowledge of the pedagogy needed, in order to do so effectively.

## Ellen's Story: Finding the Foot to Fit the Glass Slipper

In Ellen's interview transcript we see a typical Cinderella story. It is the rags-to-riches story of a successful senior academic who gradually 'lost touch' with colleagues within her field of interest and ended up working in isolated projects with colleagues who also eventually developed diverging fields of interest or simply made drastic career moves away from the HEI, leaving her 'alone' in her academic discipline. As a result of these events, Ellen was left to work on her own for a period of time but soon realised that this was an unhealthy situation and even further attempts at collaboration with another colleague in a 'new field' led to dead-ends and in her own words "a feeling of isolation I could not understand at the time." Ellen admits to not being able to identify what initially attracted her to e-learning in the first place but tells her story as someone who was proactive and through reading and research came to attend conferences in the early 1990s where she 'rediscovered' concepts like *distributed cognition* and *networked learning* being discussed in a new and exciting way. The first significant event in this story, referred to as an 'aha moment', was when Ellen tells of her meeting with an unqualified black teacher from an informal settlement community who showed great excitement at the prospects of using technology in his teaching. She quotes him as saying "Oh my life has changed so much. Previously I had to write by hand and now I just say rat-a-tat-tat..." symbolising the sound of his fingers on the keyboard. She also expresses his excitement, telling of how he broke into an impromptu song and dance about the computer. Ellen tells of how she saw a link between her work in human learning, distributed cognition, and tool use (based in Cultural Historical and Activity Theory) in this simple interaction with a single teacher. Just like Cinderella who was excited about the possibility of going to the grand ball at the palace, Ellen too was excited about her newly discovered link between her field of interest and the use of technology in education. But just like Cinderella who was prevented from going to the ball, Ellen was prevented from becoming actively involved in this field because she still felt like an outsider with no right to "gatecrash" into someone else's field of expertise. During the time that followed, Ellen continued to attend courses on e-learning but admits that the focus of these courses was "not suitable for her needs". Just like Cinderella who was left to do all of the menial household chores alone, Ellen was once again left on her own. All of this was soon to change with the appointment of a younger male colleague within the Faculty. Ellen saw how this colleague was sidelined and restricted by 'the system' in all his attempts to introduce e-learning. However, she found that she could respect and support his approach to teaching with technology because of the values and lifestyle he projected through his enthusiasm and interest in effective student learning. It was this innovator and pioneer in the field of e-learning who offered Ellen the 'glass slipper' when he invited her to join him in e-learning research and which she subsequently grasped with both hands. Ellen notes this as "probably one of the best invitations I have had in my life", a significant turning point, as she was accepted with warmth into this e-learning group. From this point on, the discourse of loneliness is replaced in Ellen's story with a discourse of *new-found scholarly engagement*. She tells of how her work was exposed to a fresh audience and how the publication of four to five new articles led to being recognised at an international level within a new field.

Ellen situates herself in the story as the *explorer* searching for a new pedagogical home. She claims to be "living on the web" along with many other people whom she has never met but knows very well through their web sites and email communication. She claims that "you don't have to see them because they live on their web sites and through their work." The world in which she was once lost has somehow shrunk, become less unfriendly, and has opened up new horizons. Ellen looks back on her progress with e-learning and admits to 'getting there by chance.' In her own words her life is "not a life designed for e-learning" but admits to selfish reasons for becoming involved. She tells of wanting to do research, having a particular interest in knowledge and how humans learn using technology and how as a result, saw an opportunity by co-presenting an undergraduate course with another colleague within the Faculty. This is how she came to be involved with Rose and the teaching of an undergraduate module through e-learning.

Ellen positions the students in her narrative as co-investigators in her study of human learning with technology. She even mentions initially finding more value in student-talk than in the talk of fellow lecturers within the Faculty. Unlike other participants, Ellen does not focus on student perceptions and opinions on the use of technology in teaching and learning, but rather focuses on the change in their 'minds' -evident in the way students work, respond, and learn. Ellen aligns herself with fellow lecturers displaying the same limitations and fears but goes on to say that some lecturers display a greater fear of change, and some may never change at all. She does not speak on their behalf but chooses to say "I think most of us don't know enough". Despite initially seeing everyone in the same situation as herself, Ellen then claims that not all e-learning in the Faculty is good. She then distances herself from what she sees as 'bad practice' and chooses instead to associate herself with the good quality work being done by other individuals. At present it is her opinion that lecturers cannot be forced to implement technology in their teaching but it is clear from her positioning in the story that she believes they must be guided in this direction. She goes so far as to reject the idea of teaching only using the face-to-face mode. In the future she proposes 'teaching by example' and suggests the implementation of show-and-tell events where lecturers can share their successful incorporation of technology into their teaching. Ellen also proposes the imperative for high quality work and research from the lecturers

within the Faculty in the future with a specific focus on e-learning.

With regard to her identity, Ellen portrays herself in the early parts of the story as *'the brave protagonist'* who had to deal with changes in her own academic focus, student discontent at having to come out of their comfort zones, and changing attitudes of fellow lecturers towards the success of others. She goes as far as to mention aggression and victimisation by other staff members and admits to 'suffering' at their hands. She identifies this conflict over ICT issues and even admits to being put off temporarily but then tells the story of how she overcame these issues through changing what did not work and learning from past mistakes. Even though she positions herself as the central character in this story, she admits that she is *'not a leader in the field'*. She identifies herself on more than one occasion as a *'senior academic'* but makes it clear that she is not out to force others into following her example. By setting certain examples and creating the opportunity for other lecturers to make up their own minds she positions herself in the story as one who is merely *'fighting the good cause'* within a community in which she is "once again able to think." Ellen identifies herself at the present moment as a member of a vibrant, active, e-learning community which is in fact a small part of one academic department within the Faculty. It is within this 'healthy community' of lecturers with both an educational and technological background that she claims to be able to think once again. The narrative points out that for Ellen, the working context must have a heart: "and the heart of technology is as important for me as the mind." It is within this open minded community that Ellen has found the link between the 'human factor' she enjoys and the technological and educational issues with which she works. Despite the seemingly fearless front put up by Ellen in the early parts of her story, she is currently not at all hesitant to admit her personal limitations with regard to software and certain other technological issues. She honestly expresses a need for guidance and 'very specific support' in some cases, and expresses insecurity if left to her own devices.

Concerning her own emerging pedagogy, Ellen narrates the story of how she initially wanted to directly transfer content from an existing course into an online version of the same course - "I really believed that I could transfer my knowledge of pedagogy just like that..." - and how she came to discover that this was not an effective and practical way of teaching online. She ascribes the demise of her first attempts to good course design but poor use of the technology. In other words, the design was good for traditional lectures but not for use in the WebCT environment. At present, Ellen is comfortable with e-learning and admits to having theoretical knowledge of good practice in this field. She admits to changing her whole way of thinking about teaching and couples this with a change in her way of thinking about education in general. She is aware of her personal theories of knowledge and teaching and uses the terms epistemology and pedagogy freely in her story indicating that she is comfortable with these aspects of her career as an educator. She expresses knowledge of her own personal epistemology and admits to not having to change it when teaching online. Ellen stresses her advanced knowledge of teaching based on many years in education but tells of how she is still exploring her 'online pedagogy.' Ellen professes to have gained from this process from a pedagogical point of view as she can now combine face-to-face teaching with online components of her courses. She clearly states that this is something that cannot be learned from books and that her online pedagogy is dependant on her practical experience in the field. She proposes 'learning by doing' and 'learning from experience'. She implies in her story that her current experience in the field of educational technology has led to her changing her pedagogy which seems to impact on 'everything else.'

## **CONTRASTING PERSPECTIVES**

The five main components of the narratives are presented here in order to make easier comparisons. This is essential in order to see similarities and differences that may have led to Ellen and Rose's divergent attitudes towards teaching with technology.

### **The types of stories in which Ellen and Rose place themselves**

The stories mentioned above differ and the imagery that we have used to represent the participants are aligned with how they represented themselves. Ellen's story is a rags-to-riches story. Just like Cinderella who was excited about the possibility of going to the grand ball at the palace, Ellen too was excited about her newly discovered link between her field of interest and the use of technology in education. But just like Cinderella who was prevented from going to the ball, Ellen was subsequently hesitant to become actively involved in this field where she still felt like an outsider with no right to "gate-crash" into someone else's field of expertise. Just like Cinderella who was left to do all the menial household chores alone, Ellen was once again left without a community. When a colleague in the field of educational technology offered Ellen the 'glass slipper' by inviting her to take part in e-learning research with him, she subsequently grasped the opportunity with both hands. Rose's narrative is a story of a *'child on the outside looking in.'* Like a child on a playground who is invited by the other children to take part in a game, Rose reveals the story of a lecturer who somewhat reluctantly agrees to take part in the 'game.' This reluctance to take part seems to be as a result of Rose's 'comfort zone' with what she was doing at the time and perhaps an indication of the fact that she was not quite *au fait* with the rules of the game.

### **How Ellen and Rose position themselves in the stories**

The way in which they situate themselves in these stories has had an impact on how the lecturers have developed and how they now narrate their experiences. Ellen situates herself throughout the story as *'the explorer'* searching for a new pedagogical home. She claims to be "living on the web" along with many other people whom she has never met, but has come to know very well through their web sites and email communication. Rose initially situates herself in the story as a *'newcomer'* to the game and claims a lack of experience to be able to make any comments about the rules or intricacies of the game itself. Rose never really speaks of being in control of her situation and even situates herself *subservient* to the senior colleague who was responsible for the English section of the class. Rose ultimately sides with the discontented and disillusioned students and their families and acts as the *'voice of the masses'*.

### **How Ellen and Rose position others**

How the lecturers position themselves in the narratives has also had an impact on how they position others. Here we elaborate on the people who are included in the lecturer's community and how they are portrayed in the individual stories. Ellen positions the students in her narrative as co-investigators in her study of human learning with technology. She even mentions initially finding more value in student-talk than in the talk of fellow lecturers within the Faculty. Ellen then positions her fellow lecturers as people who are all in the same boat as herself with the same limitations and fears. She does not speak on behalf of them but chooses to say "I think most of us don't know enough" thereby placing herself initially on the same level as them. She distances herself from what she sees as 'bad practice' and chooses instead to associate herself with good quality work being done by other Faculty members. Rose does not relate to the other lecturers within the Faculty at all and sees them as 'others' who are 'out there.' She criticises bad planning and design of online material and activities by 'others' and questions their reasons for attempting to teach with technology. From this and evidence from the other narratives, it has become evident that in the community of the activity system of e-learning, the place and space awarded to others has had some influence on the development of the 'subjects.'

### **Identity claims made by Ellen and Rose**

Great strides in the development of identity may be seen as visible signs of the way in which lecturers come to terms with and conceptualise the system at the institution. The changing identity claims that lecturers make over time reflect their engagement with the technology. With regard to her identity, Ellen portrays herself in the early parts of the story as *'the brave protagonist'* dealing with change. Although she positions herself as the central character in this story she admits that she is *not a leader in the field*. She identifies herself on more than one occasion as a *'senior academic'*. She later positions herself in the story as one who is merely *'fighting the good cause'* within a community in which she is "once again able to think." Ellen identifies herself at the present moment as a *member of a vibrant, active, educational technology community* which is, in fact, a small part of one academic department within the Faculty of Education. In contrast, Rose positions herself as a *spectator*. She is

a vocal and critical spectator who comments about the proceedings through the eyes of a *mother*. Even though she does not quite understand the rules she is quick to criticise the playing field, the participants, the referee (and his interpretation of the rules) and the ball itself. As seen above, *identity is based in the social network to which one belongs*. Many of the lecturers still think in terms of themselves or their own immediate situation and identity is then based in the individual. In this case, tasks prevail over relationships and *no sense of community* exists. In other cases, *identity is based in the social network* that is emerging within the Faculty of Education where lecturers identify themselves as *part of a community*.

### **Ellen and Rose's Views of Personal Epistemologies and Pedagogies over Time**

This section deals with the issue of changing theories of knowledge and teaching as depicted in their narratives. The way in which the lecturers make these changes (or not) is evident in the issues they describe in their stories in the quest for the development of a functional online pedagogy. Ellen, firstly, narrates the story of how she initially wanted to directly transfer content from an existing course into an online version of the same course and how she came to discover that this was not an effective and practical way of teaching online. She ascribes the demise of her first attempts to good course design but poor use of the technology. At present, Ellen is comfortable with the idea of teaching online and admits to having theoretical knowledge of good practice in this field. She admits to changing her whole way of thinking about teaching with technology and couples this with a change in her way of thinking about education in general. She is aware of her personal theories of knowledge and teaching, and uses the terms epistemology and pedagogy freely in her story, indicating that she is comfortable with these aspects in her career as an educator. She acknowledges her sound epistemology and admits to not having to change it much when teaching online. Her pedagogy, however, has changed to adapt to the online mode. She now comfortably combines face-to-face and online teaching in her courses. She states that this cannot be learned from books and that her online pedagogy is dependant on her practical experience in the field. She implies in her story that her current experience in the field of educational technology has led to her changing her pedagogy which seems to impact on 'everything else.' Rose, on the other hand, demonstrates an example of a frozen and unyielding pedagogy. She professes to be comfortable with what works for her at present and does not see herself changing. She claims that eye contact and face-to-face teaching should be the first priority and does not consider the many benefits of using e-learning at all. Rose admits to a sense of losing control when using technology in her teaching, feeling that she is no longer the expert when teaching with technology as technology becomes the focus instead of the teaching activities. For this reason she sees e-learning as cold and impersonal. Her final claim about teaching with technology is that in her opinion, most lecturers are currently using e-learning without sufficient knowledge of the pedagogy that is needed in order to do so effectively.

### **A FINAL WORD**

It seems that Rose still sees e-learning as *access to information* and not as a *process of distributed engagement and learning* (compare Henning 2003). By experiencing distributed cognition and developing social constructivist ideas of teaching, we would argue that Ellen has changed her pedagogy based on a flexible and evolving epistemology. In doing so she has begun to exemplify what Nardi and O'Day (1999) refer to as "keystone species" in the establishment of learning and information ecologies in their workplace. These are like key components of a natural ecosystem that are essential to the survival and existence of the system. Furthermore, we suggest that this pedagogical change and has led to, if only emergently, some form of learning and information ecology in her work environment. The formation of this 'ecology' seems to be closely related to interactions with lecturers and other key members of the 'ecosystem' and highlights the potential of a healthy and vibrant 'community of practice' for these lecturers. With no formal 'curriculum' for lecturers to follow in this process each one has entered the system with a life history (and thus a 'lived experience') that has ultimately played a role in how they engaged with technology and due to the uniqueness of each life history, each of their stories differs. They have all 'landed' in the system in a different way and their *varying levels of engagement with the tools of e-learning can be related very much to how they position themselves in their stories*.

Rose's story tells us that her encounters with e-learning did not inform her pedagogy. She is more comfortable within the traditional community of lecturers and positions herself as an outsider when referring to the



new e-learning community that has developed. *The story of conflict on the playground* tells of a lecturer who was reluctant to take part in the 'game.' It is a story of a 'newcomer' taken out of her 'comfort zone' who does not relate to lecturers using technology in their teaching. No sense of community is evident in her story and she finds herself alone. Rose positions herself as a vocal and critical *spectator*. Her *frozen and unyielding epistemology* may be linked to her fear of losing control and her fear of no longer being the expert when teaching with technology. Ellen speaks of being part of a new and extended e-learning community of international scholars, students and lecturers, some of whom she has never personally met, but she knows them very well through web sites and email communication. Another thing that distinguishes her from Rose is the sense of belonging as a *member of a small but active, educational technology community* within the Faculty.

Ellen has changed her pedagogy despite her self-professed technological 'deficiencies.' The story, *finding the foot to fit the glass slipper*, is a rags to riches story of a lecturer from humble beginnings who rose to a level of advanced scholarship in a new field. She admits that she is *not a leader in the field*. She is merely '*fighting the good cause*' within a community in which she is "once again able to think." Despite these deficiencies Ellen is comfortable with the idea of teaching online and admits that theoretical knowledge leads to good practice in this field. Moreover, Ellen is proof of the fact that low technical ability does not have to be seen as a hindrance to successful teaching online.

## REFERENCES

- Alvesson, M. & Sköldbberg, K. (2000). *Reflexive methodology: new vistas for qualitative research*. London: Sage.
- Brown, J.S. (2000). Growing up in a digital age. *Change* 32(2), 10 - 21.
- Brown, J.S.; Collins, A. & Duguid, P. (1989). Situated cognition and the culture of learning. *Educational Researcher*, 18(1), 32 - 41.
- Bruner, J. (1996). *The culture of education*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Chase, S.E. (2003). *Taking narrative seriously: consequences for method and theory in interview studies*. (In Denzin, N. & Lincoln, Y.S. eds. (2003). *Turning points in qualitative research: tying knots in a handkerchief*. Walnut Creek: AltaMira Press. pp. 273 - 296.)
- Clandinin, D.J. & Connelly, F.M. (2000). *Narrative Inquiry: Experience and story in qualitative research*. San Francisco, California: Jossey-Bass Inc.
- Fairclough, N. (1995). *Critical discourse analysis: the critical study of language*. Edinburgh Gate, Longman.
- Flick, U. (1998). *An introduction to qualitative research*. London: Sage Publications.
- Henning, E. (2003). I click, therefore I am (not): is cognition "distributed" or is it "contained" in borderless e-learning programmes. *International Journal of Training and Development*, 7(4).
- Henning, E.; Van Rensburg, W. & Smit, B. (2004). *Finding your way in qualitative research*. Pretoria: Van Schaik Publishers.
- Henning, E. & Van der Westhuizen, D. (2004). Crossing the digital divide safely and trustingly: how ecologies of learning scaffold the journey. *Computers in Education*, 42, (2004). Washington, Elsevier.
- Lautenbach, G.V. (2005). *Lecturers' changing epistemologies and pedagogies during engagement with Information and Communication Technology in an Education Faculty*. Unpublished DEd thesis. Johannesburg, University of Johannesburg.
- Lautenbach, G.V. & Van der Westhuizen, D. (2005a). *Investigating lecturers changing epistemologies and pedagogies during engagement with e-learning in an Education Faculty*. Proceedings of the ED-MEDIA Conference, Montreal, Canada, June 2005, AACE, Norfolk.. 2880 - 2887.
- Lautenbach, G.V. & Van der Westhuizen, D. (2005b). Hybridising methods towards narratives in an educational ICT inquiry. *Education as Change. Special Issue: ICT in Education* 9(2). 46 - 73.
- Nardi, B.A. & O'day, V.L. (1999). *Information ecologies. Using technology with heart*. Cambridge: The MIT Press.
- Riessman, C.K. (2002). *Analysis of personal narratives*. (In Gubrium, J.F. & Holstein, J.A. eds. (2002). *Handbook of interview research: context and method*. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications. pp. 695 - 709.)
- Salomon, G. (1999). *Individual and societal aspects of learning*. Online. Available: <http://construct.haifa.ac.il/~gsalomon/indsoc.htm> Accessed 20 December 2004.
- Wolcott, H.F. (1994). *Transforming qualitative data. Description, analysis and interpretation*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.