Learning Uncut Episode 155
Innovating with Generative AI in Education – Brad Hodge
Hosted by Michelle Ockers

Michelle Ockers:
Welcome to another episode of Learning Uncut. In the spirit of
reconciliation, I'd like to acknowledge the traditional custodians of country throughout
Australia and their connections to land, sea and community, and to pay respect to elders
past, present and emerging. Hello, Brad Hodge. How are you today?

Brad Hodge:
I'm good, thank you.

Michelle Ockers:
Good. Now, I met you at the end of July. So what is it now? It's spring.

Brad Hodge:
It's the start of September. Time seems to be clicking past quicker than ever. It's
disappeared fast.

Michelle Ockers:
Yeah. We both spoke at a roadshow for the Allied Health Clinical Education Network, which
is a bit like a conference for allied health clinical educators across Victoria. And I was struck
by several things. One is the amazing shirt you were wearing. And I've got to say, Brad as
presented at a road show is different from Brad as presented in his normal work attire by the
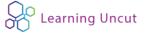look of it Brad?

Brad Hodge:
You've just got to get me on the right day. You know, it's just, yes, I'm in my boring standard
clothes today, but yes.

Michelle Ockers:
But no doubt the conversation will not be boring because I was very struck by and
everybody else was as well. I noticed people really engaged around, you know, your very
practical, progressive approach to using AI to support your students. So I just knew I wanted
to help share that with the Learning Uncut listeners. And Brad, you were introduced at the
event as a health innovator. Can you tell us a bit about your background in health innovation
and if there's been any key moments that shaped your interest in the field?

Brad Hodge:
Sure. Look, I actually, I joke that I've had just about every horrible job under the sun before I
came to academia. I didn't come back to uni until I was about 35. But for me, I love problem
solving and the pragmatism of problem solving. And I also love humans. I have a
background in psychology. And so just the complexity of humans, we're inherently weird. We
do things and don't do things for some of the dumbest and weirdest reasons. And I just find
that fascinating. Why is it that a 19-year-old bloke doesn't like doing what he's told, even
when you're telling him to do something that he wants to do? Why is it that people know that
they should exercise and enjoy exercising and feel good after exercising but still don't
exercise. Why do we all eat the wrong food? Why do we not study? Why do we leave things
to last minute? So this stuff really fascinates me. And I guess bringing a pragmatic lens to it,
you can intellectualize all this stuff. But at the end of the day, sometimes we do things for the
dumbest, weirdest reasons. You know, we'll exercise because a mate of ours said, do you
want to come and do this? And you don't want to do it. You just want to spend time with your

mate. So that complexity for me in the health space and in the health innovation space is super interesting, kind of getting underneath and going, how do we get them to do that? You know, that thing that they want to do, but they don't do. How do we get them to do that?

Michelle Ockers:
Yeah, why health specifically? Because you could have applied this curiosity to any field.

Brad Hodge:
Look, sometimes I wonder what other fields I could have been in and whether I would end up with a bigger budget to play with. Health specifically, I think, look, part of it is pragmatic. You know, I'm in regional Victoria and we have a university campus here. And obviously, health is a really big sector. But to be honest, it touches everybody. And I think there's both a complexity and a simplicity about the problems that really appeals to me. The issue around, you know, getting GPs in the country. Like, it's so simple, you know, let's get GPs in the country. It's not complicated. Do you think we've actually been able to do it? No.

Michelle Ockers:
I live in a regional area, Brad, and I tell you, the first time I tried to get a GP appointment, I was told there's a nine week wait for a new patient. I'm like, what if I'm really sick? Fortunately, I wasn't but I'm either going to be better or dead, one or the other.
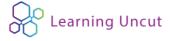
Brad Hodge:
So, yeah, so no, look, I love the complexity of that. But also, one of the things, I'm quite a bit of a lefty and I do kind of care about the world and I've been involved in the not-for-profit space. And there's something amazing about working with people in the health sector, they're no more perfect than anybody else, but they do honestly want to improve people's lives. And so working in that space, working with students in that space, researchers in that space and community, they all have that common focus. Because I just don't, I just find it difficult to work with people who just want to make more money than they did last year. They can do it, that's fine, but it's not something that I revel in.

Michelle Ockers:
Yeah, I understand. You mentioned your work where you're living and working in a regional area and you're doing a lot of work specifically in the field of rural health. Where has the interest in that come from? And can you lead into your role at the Rural Health Innovation Lab at La Trobe University?

Brad Hodge:
Sure. So when I used to be in the learning and teaching space right across the university, basically working with academics to improve teaching practice and learning experiences, I jumped into the rural health school because they were working towards doing some really innovative work to put us in a position where we have a really strong rural health workforce, where we have students who are capable of engaging in practice in rural settings, which is quite arguably quite different to metropolitan settings. And so I came on board right at the beginning with the strong remit, firstly, to create a subject that would really get students engaging with this challenge of rurality, you know, but also the challenge of teamwork and communication, because arguably if you're working in a rural community, let's say you're working as a doctor in a rural community, you're going to have to know the name of the pharmacist and you're probably going to have to know the guy who runs the men's shed. And chances are your kids are going to go to school with one of your clients or more. And so the relationship building and the collaborative approach to health and being able to work with different disciplines becomes more and more and more important in those rural and regional settings. So we spend a lot of time right at the beginning of the degree for all of our students

are really putting them in a position where they kind of they get to experience the benefit of what a really meaningful and rich team looks like.

Michelle Ockers:
But quick sidebar, men's shed. Everyone in Australia will probably know what a men's shed is, but it's not necessarily, you know, the little tin shed out the back where the guy escapes after dinner to do his own thing or play snooker or build something. So quick outline, what's a men's shed?

Brad Hodge:
What's a men's shed? Amusingly enough, I use it as an example, but I'm not actually currently doing anything with men's sheds. Men's sheds, a lot of rural communities have a men's shed, which is basically a place for people to gather and make stuff together, you know, because often like, yes, going and seeing a therapist, that might be important, but often we just want to sit beside someone while we're having a hard time and be distracted. So yeah, men's sheds, and they are diversifying quite a bit. It's not, it's usually, the building is not just about men getting together. It can be men and women or women and women or whatever. But yeah, it's just a really good pragmatic kind of approach to connecting people in community.

Michelle Ockers:
Yeah, and I think that whole sense of connection and community is an important part of the context for rural health. You've done a really great job outlining that. I feel like we could have a whole podcast conversation on rural health, Brad, but that's not the key point we're here to discuss today. We're going to talk about the role of generative AI in modern education. And I know the thing that stood out for me is that you're not one of these resistors. You are embracing generative AI in modern education, which was a breath of fresh air when I heard you speak. So what, in your view, is the role of gen AI in modern education?

Brad Hodge:
I think the lovely thing about Gen AI, this question around Gen AI and the role, is we don't know. You know, I talk to colleagues and they go, oh, you know, we need a policy and procedure manual, we need instructions, I need to be shown how to use it. I'm like, well, the people who created it don't know how to use it. How are you going to do that? So for me, I see it as this incredible opportunity. I feel like it's a bit of a superpower. But also, at the end of the day, we've got to know what question we're asking. What's the human problem that we're solving? And then how might AI solve that problem? But it's a real challenge for professionals, not just academics, but professionals in general who know exactly what they're doing. Because we have to ask ourselves the question, could I do this with that thing that I don't understand? Which is not something that we're actually used to. You know, we've got this tool. You can't get inside the box. We don't really know why it comes up with good answers and bad answers, and it's experimental. So it is a superpower. And for me, as a bit of a creative, I'm forcing myself to ask the question, could I get ChatGPT to do this? And sometimes the answer is no. And sometimes the answer is, oh, my goodness, you should have gotten it to do that a long time ago. But framing everything in that way really forces us to go, OK, what might education look like in the future? Because that's an interesting question, because AI presents this incredible opportunity, arguably revolution level, turn everything upside down and mess everything up type opportunity, but it does, it changes the game.

Michelle Ockers:
It absolutely does. But some of the basics of the game are still the same. And you did this fantastic exercise. It's going to be a little bit hard for people who are listening to this to get it,

but I'm sure you're going to do a good job describing it to us. It was a very physical, tangible kind of exercise you did on the day with three separate boxes. That I thought was a really strong illustration of a point, and I'm not going to steal your thunder by explaining the point, but can you just talk to us, just describe that activity and what you think it illustrates regarding the role of gen AI in modern education and learning?

Brad Hodge:
Absolutely. So in the training setting, we often get carried away thinking about how we're going to do it. And we're going to use sticky notes and we're going to do all of these different activities. And at the end of the day, training is just about changing what people do. That's it. We just create training in any setting because we want people to do things differently. Now, really, there's only kind of three things that you can achieve through training. And so what I do is, and it's actually really, really simple. And every time I do it, I feel like, oh, I stated the obvious. And so I bring out, I have these kind of three boxes for this workshop. I have these three boxes on the floor. And so we picked up each box and I said there's three things that you can give a person in training. And this is really important to remember because everything that you create in the training needs to wrap around those things really tightly and do it intentionally. And so you pick up the first box and it's really heavy and pass it to someone and inside that box is a whole bunch of books. My thesis was in there, textbook psychology was in there, just a huge amount of information. And then I posed the question to the person holding it. I said, if I was to send you home with this and then come back to you within 12 months, what are the chances that you would know the information in this box? And the answer is invariably just it's just not going to happen, particularly not your thesis, because let's face it, every thesis is kind of boring. But when you think about training, the thing that we do the most is the provision of information. And this is a really key problem. Like, yes, we need to know things in order to do things, but we need to realize that knowing things doesn't lead to doing things usually. So that's the first box. This is the box that we come to the most often. PowerPoint slides, all these details, manuals, blah, blah, blah, blah. The next box, we'll pick it up and it's a bit lighter. I pass it to someone and they open it up and what they do is they find a whole bunch of tools. I spend a lot of time making stupid things in the shed and they pull out all these tools and some of them they don't know what they're for. And so we talk about the fact that this is skills. And skills is, it's super important, but not always when it comes to behaviour. Because sometimes the reason we don't do something is because we don't have the skills to do it. But in actual fact, You know, we all have the skills to eat properly and exercise. And I'm using stereotyped examples, but often skills is actually not, you know, the kind of thing.

Michelle Ockers:
I thought you were watching me.

Brad Hodge:
Yeah, well, yeah, that's right. Am I reading your mind?

Michelle Ockers:
Yes, I am the stereotype here, Brad.

Brad Hodge:
Oh, look, we're all the stereotype. We do the things we don't want to do and we don't do the things we do want to do.

Michelle Ockers:
So second box was skills.

Brad Hodge:
The second box was skills. And so the third box, we pull it out and it's a lot lighter. It's actually smaller and I hand this to the final person and they open it up and inside that box is, you know, little bouquet of flowers, right? Because the final thing is really difficult to kind of wrap your head around and it's big, you know, we can know things and do things, but who are we going to be actually changes things. And so the final element, which is arguably really, really difficult to create in a training environment, is this idea of who do we want people to be? What do we want people to believe? And it usually involves a little bit of magic. You know, it usually involves someone going, oh my goodness, I never, I didn't realize that. And then it changing, it clicking something, all of the knowledge and the skills come together and they become something else. They become a more compassionate educator. They care about the cranky person with their arms at the back that doesn't want to engage. And so really, this is the framework that I would bring to all training, because we need to be intentional. If we're going to change it, if we're going to change behaviour, is it knowledge, skills, or behaviour, you know, and what combination is it? Because nine times out of 10, training focuses entirely on knowledge, doesn't give people the opportunity to develop their skills. Often we, even when we talk about skills, we just tell people how to do it. We don't get them to practice it. And so this framework is the start of thinking about AI, because AI will give you more information than you can possibly know what to do with. I've created so many, you know, 1000 word documents that I probably didn't even read myself. And this is a risk when we use AI. If we approach AI in the same way with regards to training and changing behaviour that we have with our standard training packages, which is a really dense PowerPoint presentation, we're going to have exactly the same outcomes, just with slightly more buzz around it for the first five minutes, because people think they're using a cool tool, you know, AI. So we've got to be aware, knowledge doesn't change behaviour most of the time. So what does?

Michelle Ockers:
Right. So what does that mean for how we approach AI and use AI in learning or in behaviour change? If we're lifting it up, learning is a part of the goal of behaviour change and creating behaviour change. So where does Gen AI fit into this, then, if you think about these three boxes?

Brad Hodge:
Yeah, yeah. So I think it's about being intentional. So every time we do, you know, we do focus a lot on learning and we assume that that's a good thing, but I would argue any corporate training, any training at all, really, as soon as it's got the word training, it's actually not about knowledge. It's about changing what people do in the workplace. And often that doesn't require a change in knowledge. So I think when it comes to AI and the training setting, we've got to think about, okay, what do we want the outcome to be? So I'll give you an example. We're working on a project at the moment, and it's really early days prototype. But typically when we support students on placement, what we do is, and I still hear this again, you know, that is we provide them with better resources. And so we create a new learning management system that has all the best advice in it. And we give them emails with the best links and the best connections. It's all information based. It doesn't change anything. You know, it doesn't change the students desire to ask for help. It doesn't change their capacity to reflect. It doesn't change the fact that, you know, they're going to have to manage a situation that they don't know how to manage that we haven't even thought of yet. And so we're creating this, working on this project that's around, how do we support students on placement? How do we provide support that they actually engage with? Because the provision of information, I would argue, isn't working. The good students will engage with it, but they would have found it on the website in the first place. And so I did a little experiment where I thought, well, one of the things that our students want is feedback on the work that

they're doing. So a lot of our students work in rural and remote settings where they may or may not have supervision at every moment of the day. And so they might run a session and then go, oh, I don't know whether I got it right. And so I thought, well, surely we can get AI to do this. This was another one of my questions of, oh, will AI do this thing that we think that we need a human to do? And so I contacted a student of mine who I've worked with a few times, and I said, have you got a recording of a session that you've done as a speech pathologist? I know nothing about speech pathology. I pretty much don't have a clue what they do. But she said, yes, I've got one. So we got the transcript of that, and I created a bot that would give her feedback on the session. And so we uploaded the transcript. And I've given the bot a model of feedback that I've used for years in terms, you know, evidence-based model of kind of really helping the student to see where their strengths are and then critically thinking about what's the next thing to work on, not over overwhelming them with feedback, but just going, okay, here's the next two things. And so I gave it, you know, these instructions, uploaded it, and then sent the feedback back to the student. And the thing for me that was the most impactful, yes, the advice was reasonable, bar one, you know, it was perfectly reasonable. The thing that impacted me was the fact that when the student replied, their first reply to me was, oh, I really like your chatbot. Because their experience of that chatbot was someone who validated them and they were ready to hear their advice. So before they'd even gotten through the whole transcript, they felt validated because the chatbot used language like, I can see that you're on your way to becoming a brilliant speech pathologist. Now, they knew it was a chatbot. They knew I was experimenting, but their emotional experience was one that set them up to want to know what the feedback was. And so for me, if I'm thinking about that environment, what do I want the student to do? I want them to be vulnerable enough, but feel safe enough to ask for advice, knowing that that advice is going to help them be brilliant, and to not feel scared, and to recognise that growth is going to happen. Now, we as humans actually don't do this very well, because we forget what it's like to be fragile. And so, the chatbot, when you give it the right instructions, it does, you know. So, for me, that experience of a student enjoying getting feedback is unique. That, for me, is how we're going to achieve the outcome is the students will go, oh, I'm going to get some more feedback from my chatbot.

Michelle Ockers:
So, it's a safe space for them.

Brad Hodge:
Yeah, if you set it up right, you know, I've got some other research that's looking at the impact of another training program. And the thing that's coming through again and again is this idea of psychological safety.

Michelle Ockers:
Yes.

Brad Hodge:
You know, I felt like I was safe enough to take a risk and be wrong. So embedding that in the way that we create the chatbot, the advice is important, but it's also predictable. You know, think about a first year student writing a paper, we know what the advice is going to be nine times out of 10. In fact, generally, when we mark there's like 10 sets of advice, it's pretty predictable. The challenge is to get the student to enjoy receiving and applying that. It's not the knowledge that's important, it's the process.

Michelle Ockers:
So can we talk through or can you talk us through how you set up a chat bot? Because this is something which is within the grasp of every learning and development practitioner

working anywhere in the world, right? So take us through it step by step. If people want to give this kind of thing a go, how do they do it?

Brad Hodge:
Okay. So first disclaimer, I'm an expert in human behaviour and behaviour change and facilitation. I'm a dabbler, absolute dabbler in anything that will do that well. And AI is one of those things. So the process that I've gone through for this, and no doubt there are people out there who can come up with a way of improving it even more. But the process that I've gone through is I would start with instructions about the way in which the communication should happen.

Michelle Ockers:
Can we go one step back even further? So are you using ChatGPT to create this bot?

Brad Hodge:
Yes. So I'm using ChatGPT to create this. I haven't played with the other bots. I'm intrigued, but I'm also not interested in paying a membership on 16 different bots at once.

Michelle Ockers:
Yeah. So I have created some of my own bots. And it's really simple. And I sat there for months wondering how on earth do I do this? So I'm just going to create a little resource with a couple of screenshots, which will show people if you want to create your own bot, here's the two clicks basically you need to do to go, I've got my own bot. You can set it up as private. You can set it up that you share the link with someone and they access it, but no one who doesn't have the link can get it. So you can play with this stuff, right?

Brad Hodge:
Absolutely

Michelle Ockers: We'll get people started with a little how-to guide on that, or I'll find one that someone else has created on the internet linked to that. So you've basically decided you're going to set up your own bot. You've done the basics to create the bot or to say, here's my bot, and then you've got to configure it. Talk to us about configuring your bot. How did you do that?

Brad Hodge:
So basically I'll give it a personality to engage with. So for this one, it was speech pathology. And like I said, I know nothing about speech pathology. I just said, you are a speech pathology expert that has supervised students for years. You really care about the students and you assume that your students are brilliant, right? So all of the stuff that a learning and development person should in theory know, unless you've burnt out and probably should get out of the industry, you kind of embed this in the personality of the bot. And then you can do other things. So then I would give it a structure for providing that feedback. Firstly, I want you to identify the two or three things that are really strong about this. I want you to acknowledge that they're on a path to improvement. And then I want you to provide only two pieces of advice for how to continue to improve, for what needs improving, and then how they might do that. I always constrain it because ChatGPT has a tendency to be more verbose than I am, which is quite saying something. And so I say, okay, keep your sentences short and use plain English, you know, be conversational. The other thing that I have been playing with in other programs is kind of using a step-by-step approach and an if then kind of thing. So you can actually set it up so that you can get it to ask questions one at a time. And then I've got another project where I'm doing this, where it can say, okay, you know, how was your day at placement? And you'll say either good or bad. And then if you say good, if you indicate a

positive emotion, then it will go in one direction. If you got a negative emotion, it will go in another direction. And you can kind of create these kind of step by step by step approaches.

Michelle Ockers:
And this is all set up in a configuration window, right? It's all just in that. It's not like you're using the prompt part of the functionality to coach it. You're actually setting it up in configuration.

Brad Hodge:
Yeah. The other piece that can be really important, and when I develop this further, it will be important. Is to provide resources that it can draw from.

Michelle Ockers:
From a knowledge base, right? You can upload files to a knowledge base.

Brad Hodge:
Yeah. And where we've done this for subject question and answer, not only have we uploaded a knowledge base, but we've said as soon as it comes to questions about the subject, don't make things up, only use pieces from the knowledge and you can take it a step further. So if I'm looking at transcripts of interviews or something, I would say just provide me with quotes, you know, so just quote the document and then try and break it, you know, really like that, because, you know, I try these things out really badly, I would often use the app on my phone, because I find that, like giving it prompts, I can try things out as I'm walking home. But try it out and see what it does. And then test it with someone else and test it with someone else. I think the key with this stuff is the experience of it. And making sure that it's not giving too much advice. And to be honest, if I'm working with someone who's giving other people advice, and I have a, you know, I have a team of markers, I tell them do not give any more than two pieces of advice. Because at the end of the day, if I can get students to take on one, one piece of advice for every assessment task, they'll be an 80% student by the time they finish their degree. If we are giving them 16 different pieces of advice, it just doesn't work.

Michelle Ockers:
Yep, fantastic. I knew that was going to be really helpful for people. And I know there'll be a stack of people who are going to feel a bit more confident to give this a go, Brad. So thank you for that. The case study that or the example you really spent time at the roadshow talking us through was super interesting, not just because of the technical setup and the way it worked, but some of the questions and issues that it raises. And that is the Rural Community Engagement chatbot that you've developed for your students. Was that the first chatbot you created for use by your students?

Brad Hodge:
I think that was the first one where I started to get into the back end rather than just kind of using the chatbot myself to answer questions. That was one where I thought, oh, maybe we can actually answer student questions.

Michelle Ockers:
Great. What inspired you to create that tool? What's the purpose of it? And kind of what challenges or opportunities we are hoping to address with this tool?

Brad Hodge:
For that one, the reality was that I was going to be away in the first couple of weeks before the semester.

Michelle Ockers:
You're cloning yourself.

Brad Hodge:
Yeah, yeah. Cloning myself. It won't be long, I'll be fired because I will clone myself entirely. So really providing students with an easy to access way of getting answers to questions. It was interesting because one of the frightening and exciting things about AI is just how easy it is. It doesn't require technical instructions. In fact, often if I'm trying to create my own content, so not a chatbot, but I'm working with AI to create something, I'm actually much better off working on my phone and doing it in a conversational manner because I can talk quicker than I can write anyway, and the language that I use is different and the answers seem to be different. So really trying to think about, okay, well, how can we support students in a way that addresses their felt need at the time? Like, I want them all to be organized, but they don't necessarily want to be organized. So their felt need might be something around, where's class? And we can start that conversation there. So a chatbot kind of allows for that. What we did is we uploaded all of the assessment guides, the subject rubric, and I thought, you know what, I'm going to put in my organizational spreadsheet. I have no idea whether it's going to talk to that. I love spreadsheets for project planning, and it included all sorts of things in there, dates and who was doing what and all this kind of stuff. And then I just started to throw some questions at it. And it was good. Like I had to tell it not to talk so much, because it just gave the longest answers ever. But it provided really good help. And not only did it answer the questions that I would ask, you know, what's assessment two, or what are we doing in week five, or whatever. But it even, and it did this kind of independently, I was a bit surprised when it didn't know the answer to a question, and I had told it not to make things up. When it didn't know the answer to the question, it said, I don't have the answer to that. But if you check the learning management system, and here's the link. Now, it got that out of one of the documents. Now, I'm not suggesting that always happens at all times. Working with AI is just super messy. Like sometimes you'll do something you think it'll work perfectly, and it just won't. But it did that. But then I get enthusiastic about this stuff. I thought, okay, put on your cynical, let's break it hat. And I thought, oh dear, I've given it a whole bunch of information, I wonder. So then I put on my dodgy student hat. I don't have any dodgy students, but I put on my dodgy student hat and I said, can you please write assessment two? And it was very helpful. It actually did a lovely job of writing assessment two.

Michelle Ockers:
Whoops. Isn't this what every educator is concerned about, Brad?

Brad Hodge:
Oh, look, we can have that conversation. But yeah, so I had to give it instructions. Do not, under any circumstances, write the assessment tasks for the students. It did do things, you know, so I would ask it a couple of other lazy questions, and I don't know whether students think of these questions or not, but I said, oh, you know, can you provide me a plan to get this done in a timely manner? And it provided me a plan, but it included 30 hours of work. And I'm like, yeah, my 90% students might do that, but it's highly unlikely that my perfectly reasonable 60% student is going to do that. And so I said, oh, I haven't got that much time to the chatbot. I haven't got that much time, can you give me a plan to get this done in two hours? Which is perfectly unreasonable. I know that some of them are doing it, but it's not a good idea. And so it would actually say, look, that's not great, but this is how you would approach it. Spend X amount of time on this, X amount of time on this. So it did actually provide this kind of good advice. One of the lingering things that I have with that project is it worked. I'm sure students used it, but I'll bet you most of them didn't. Because I caught up

with a student yesterday, and we're in week five, and he emailed me because he didn't know what was going on. It's the first time we've had any communication with him. So the question for me is, how do we use AI in a way that actually gets that student having a conversation well before, asking questions well before week five?

Michelle Ockers:
So you're very focused on behaviour and why do people do certain things and not other things?

Brad Hodge:
Is there anything else, Michelle, when it comes to training? Really? When it comes down to it, what else is there?

Michelle Ockers:
How do you explain that behaviour? You've created this super useful tool I know you will have let the students know about it. So what causes some of the students or what leads some of the students to use it and others not to when it could obviously help them with, you know, this person who hadn't was confused and what are we doing this week five? What gets in the way there?

Brad Hodge:
Oh, if I ever write a book, I'm going to call it. Humans are weird and that's the way we like them. I think it's about motivation. And the higher education system is built on this assumption, well, that was kind of hundreds of years old, that there was one person who held onto the knowledge and you would sit at the feet of the person with the knowledge. And that's a beautiful place to be as an expert because it places you as a demigod that everybody wants to give gifts to in return for knowledge. The problem is that that was when knowledge was really valuable, but knowledge is no longer valuable because it's not even a commodity. It's available for free. You can get everything everywhere. And so the role of the educator And I think we're yet to catch up with this, but the role of the educator, I would argue, is not to give away knowledge because they can get it elsewhere. The role of the educator is to create the desire to want to know. So how do you do that? And it's when you've got people in the room, you can do that. I've got students who don't think that my class is worth coming to, and that's my personal challenge. You know, can I convince them that the skills that they're learning here are actually really worthwhile? I won't always succeed, but my job is to create the desire to know. And I think we're in that situation with AI, that if we take a naive approach that doesn't acknowledge the fact that we're all kind of dumb, we're all kind of lazy, we're all kind of disorganized, and we only do the things that we're motivated about, and we just create AI that gives information, we're going to be in exactly the same situation that Google put us in, which is a gazillion bits of information that no one engages with. It's got to feel good. It's got to be rewarding. It's got to be exciting and interesting and fun and meaningful. And it's got to help me achieve my goals, even if my goals are not aligned with the person doing the educating.

Michelle Ockers:
So how is it that for some students, I'm assuming that in terms of the range of reactions that you have had, some students who've used the chatbot have engaged with the chatbot. It hasn't been all for naught, Brad.

Brad Hodge:
Oh, yeah some students definitely use it. And that's not the only moment that we're getting students to use it. In fact, I did a quick poll and I know that some of them are lying. I said, how many of you are using ChatGPT? And 50 percent of them put their hands up. And then

when I told them that they all had to use ChatGPT in my subject, the looks on their faces were quite interesting. So, you know, because some of them were like, oh, my goodness, this thing that I thought I was being naughty, I now have to use. And then the students who are quite conscientious, they're like, lecturer told us to use it, you know, and told them how and all of that kind of thing. So that students are definitely using it. But I think we need to rethink education so significantly that we need to ask ourselves, what is the difference between AI by a student who doesn't care and AI by a conscientious, hardworking, brilliant student? Because we don't know the answer yet. So what's the difference there? Because at the moment, the question we're asking is what's the difference between a dodgy student with AI and a good student without?

Michelle Ockers:
Yes.

Brad Hodge:
The answer most of the time is there isn't one. You know, there's a great piece of research that created dummy students and uploaded AI assessment tasks, but AI assessment tasks did better than the average student. So we've got a conundrum, but what does it mean when we get our brilliant students to be supercharged with AI and how can you tell the difference? Can we, can our markers tell the difference between AI plus brilliance?

Michelle Ockers:
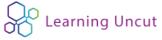Have you tested that out yet?

Brad Hodge:
Look, I'm literally in the middle of testing it out. So we have an assessment task. I showed them how to use it. I did say, do not cut and paste from AI to the assessment task, but use it for this idea generation, blah, blah, blah, all sorts of different things. And I told my markers, I said, all right, I want you to keep an eye out. This is what are we looking for, and this is the kind of experimental work that we need to do because we don't know the answer. We've never had this tool before. I've never had this superpower. I don't know what it looks like, but I know that humans are amazing. You know, horses were a lot slower than cars, but I'll tell you what, what's even quicker than a person in a car is a race driver in a car. What's brilliance look like on top of tools?

Michelle Ockers:
Yeah, interesting, because you did actually mention you've raised the bar for their work. Like, I want you all to use AI and I expect a lift in the quality of your work as a result. Is that the message you're sending?

Brad Hodge:
Absolutely. In fact, I was blunter than that. I said, look, if you are a dodgy student and I joke with them and I say, I know none of you are dodgy, but if you are a dodgy student and you've been using AI, and that's been getting you through, it's not enough anymore. Because I just gave the good students AI. And we need to take these kinds of risks, because at the moment we're not, we're just receiving a risk, which is that the students who don't care, or, and it's not that they don't care, you know, I've had students who care a lot, but got caught in a corner. And let's face it, we're all humans, students are actually no worse in terms of their character than staff are, they're humans, they cover the full gamut of experiences. But watching the student response to that, and then going, oh, so I've gotten through first semester using AI, because you can, you know, if university is about the regurgitation of information, AI does a beautiful job of that. Then if they've gotten through the first semester and then we raise the bar and we say, look, you know, everyone's going to

use that. So you're going to have to add these things that AI perhaps can't do. So your research, you know, your background research is going to have to be better. So we're expecting more academic research. Yeah, you can use AI to summarize it. Absolutely. But, you know, what does it look like when we compare your four hours of work to their 20 hours of work when you're both operating with the same tools. It's going to be different because humans are amazing. That's one of the amazing things about being in this space. Humans are incredible. Give them a tool, they'll come up with a way to do things the hard way.

Michelle Ockers:
What's your hope for your students as they go out and start their work life? By that, I mean, in terms of what difference do you think Gen AI is potentially going to make for these students going out and, you know, let's keep it in the rural health context, working in the rural health sector?

Brad Hodge:
Oh it's a good question. I think if we, and this is a star, a moonshot, but if we in the higher education sector are able to teach our students to be innovators, which we do a little bit, but not a lot, if we're able to teach them to be innovators, to continually ask themselves the question, is there a better way to do this? and then AI is one of the tools, and one of, it's not the only tool, but one of the tools that we do that, then my goodness, you know, then we're really going to make some progress. But AI is just a tool. You know, I've got at home, I've got a chainsaw. Now, give a chainsaw to a three-year-old, they're going to cut limbs off. But for me, I can cut a tree down with that chainsaw. And I think AI is exactly the same. So I think naively thinking that AI is the panacea for all the world's problems is just dumb. Google didn't solve all the world's problems. We've got access to more information than we've ever had in the world. And yet we're not actually smarter, really. We don't know more as a result of Google. We've just got access to more. So I think, for me, if we can couple the power of AI with a desire to ask better questions. So let's stop asking the question how do we get more GPs in the country and let's start asking the question how do we make sure that everybody has the health support that they need. That's a better question. Like ask better questions and understand what's possible and take risks in terms of personal risks of looking like an idiot. I think which is something we're not good at. The better we get at one thing the worse we are at looking like an idiot in another. Then I think we do have the potential of young people stepping into rural practice and then having a little side project that says, you know what? Yeah, I'm a nurse, but I've got lots of lonely people. And so we're going to create this, I don't know, chatbot that introduces them to other locals. You know, it's not the only thing, but, you know, these little ideas and people go, oh, can we do this another way? I think that's what will change the world.

Michelle Ockers:
So it's part of that much bigger picture that you focus on around health innovation. So it's just a tool that's part of the toolkit and maybe leveling up the toolkit in conjunction with not just skills, but how these young practitioners moving out into their roles in the community see themselves, that being, that sense of belief and what their sense of purpose is and so on. There's some mindset stuff in there, right?

Brad Hodge:
Absolutely. And I think we need to be really, really cautious. Every now and again, I hear people, particularly at the top end, go, oh, this is going to save us heaps of work. When was the last time that an efficiency saved anybody in an organisation any work? It doesn't. You just get given more work. But if we're smart about it, like rather than just creating more widgets, maybe we give people time to come up with a new widget. I think there is an opportunity to chase efficiencies with AI. There's no question. And I don't know that I've got

the guts to do it, but marking an AI, I know that it will do it. But you know, there's a big ethical question there. But geez, what if we did spend less time giving students feedback because we created a tool that would give them brilliant feedback, but we didn't spend that spare time doing another horrible task? We actually spend that spare time going, how do we change the outcomes for our students? How do we create better brilliance? So we create more innovation and creativity space to come up with new ways of doing things rather than just pushing out more widgets. So I think there's a real opportunity there.

Michelle Ockers:
Absolutely. So how have other faculty members or if you don't want to talk just about La Trobe University, but other educators, how have they received or responded to what you are doing with this real community engagement chatbot?

Brad Hodge:
Look, I'm super lucky in that my title has the word innovation and so people expect me to do weird things, and I don't have to pay attention to it. I do think there's a there's a storm brewing in the higher education setting and I don't have a lot to base this on, apart from a gut feeling about the power of AI. So I do think there's a massive storm brewing, but the reality is the storm's already here. If 50% of my students are reporting using AI, you can't tell me that 20% of my students are not using AI in a way that's giving them better grades than they should be, which means they're actually maybe possibly getting to the end of the year being slightly incompetent. I think in terms of other educators, you get a few different responses. One is real excitement about the possibility. And I have lots of people come to me, particularly when you're thinking about things like efficiency. Anyone working in the higher education sector will complain about marking generally, you know, so there's desire for efficiency. But that's also coupled with concerns. So if AI will generate emails for me, that means that someone else is going to generate emails, which means I'm going to get more emails. Heaven forbid that we have a weekly update created by AI, and then all of a sudden that turns into a daily update created by AI because it's easier. So efficiencies cause other problems. So that's one response. They're excited, but they're not sure what to do about it. And I asked someone the other day, they said, oh, look, I just I feel nervous about it. And I thought, oh, let's be cheeky. And so I asked ChatGPT, why would my colleague feel nervous about this? And it gave a really good response. And it talked about not feeling confident and not knowing where to start. And as academics, we're arguably really, really good at one thing quite a few years ago. And so we forget that weird, awkward, uncomfortable feeling of not knowing that's actually called learning. We forget about it entirely. And so the idea of stepping through and going, you know what, I'm going to try this AI thing, even though I'm going to mess it up a number of times, is actually quite daunting. So there's people that are excited by it, but haven't got the time. There's people that are just daunted and they just won't, like even signing up for it is a problem. And less for me probably because I'm a big advocate for it and I also think the horse is bolted. But you do get some who are concerned or cynical, you know, so concerned about the possibilities of AI and so they're taking this kind of punitive approach that says, you know, we need to make sure that students never use it and blah, blah, blah. And I'm like, well, there's a whole multimillion billion dollar industry creating content that doesn't look like it's AI driven. So you're going to lose that race. But I think there is this kind of need for a broader conversation about what is the role of higher education when writing essays might no longer be a good way of determining whether a student knows stuff? That's a bit of a challenge for the higher education setting, isn't it?

Michelle Ockers:
Well, it might swing the balance of the work of academics towards assessment.

Brad Hodge:
Yeah, the bit that we hate.

Michelle Ockers:
Interesting. But yeah, there's lots of I mean, and there's similar conversations in other areas. I've been having some very interesting conversations, you know, in the workplace learning context around, well, what does the future role of L&D professionals look like in a world shifted by Gen AI? What of our jobs will we be doing augmented by or largely outsourced to agents, AI agents? And what will we be doing ourselves? And to your point before, what's the higher value stuff that we can be doing around learning agility and building learning culture and better learning in teams and from work as part of helping our people in our organizations and our teams and our organization as a whole become more agile and keep up with the pace of change. There's a whole stock of higher value added things that we could do, but there is an identity shift to the point about belief.

Brad Hodge:
And the conundrum, and I still haven't solved it, you know, sometimes I'll say to people, oh yeah, you know, ChatGPT and I created this. Other times I'll just keep it as a secret because maybe the perception is that I'm not doing any work anymore. Which is an interesting conundrum for someone who's trying to take advantage of these tools at the moment that I involve ChatGPT, I've got to kind of apologize for it. Or, you know, so there's a cultural change going on.

Michelle Ockers:
I posted on LinkedIn last week after I attended a webinar about being human in the age of AI about, you know, hey, I use AI every day and I feel like it's amplifying my voice. I feel like it's making me better. And yet there's still this slight guilty twinge I get sometimes. It was really interesting to get the response to that. And of course I didn't get, you know, I didn't attract people saying you're wrong. I attracted a lot of people that were very validating and affirming, but it was really nice to have that conversation going. It generated a lot of interaction. So I think it's not just in the education sector that we're grappling with some of these questions that Gen AI is throwing up for us. With that, so based on your experience, and I know you are in the higher Ed sector, but if we think at the moment about workplace learning and some of the environments we work in as learning and development professionals in workplace learning, do you have any tips or considerations for L&D professionals working in organizations, be they not-for-profits, corporates, government organizations about developing or integrating gen AI?

Brad Hodge:
Yeah look, and a lot of this stuff probably precedes bringing AI into the room. One is to know what you're trying to achieve. And I'm still in that situation where I'm going, you know what, you need people to know stuff, do stuff, or be stuff. You don't know that, you're stuffed, really. And while it seems obvious, it's not. Then we need to ask ourselves the question, okay, in order to know stuff, you don't practice hearing it, you practice recalling it. In order to do stuff, you don't practice reading it, you practice doing it. In order to be stuff, I have no idea how you practice that, but it's definitely a combination of all three and a few other things and a bit of magic. So thinking through that process first, and then asking ourselves the question, can AI help to bridge this gap? Because it dramatically changes the way that you use AI. So, you know, I've got a reflection tool that we're developing and we're really thinking about what do we want people to learn? At the moment, we get students to submit a 700-word reflection task. The reality is once they've graduated, they're never going to write another reflection task. You don't reflect on paper, that's ridiculous, you reflect on the train, on the way home. So we've created a conversational chatbot that would ask questions one at a time, won't put

up with shallow answers, and will keep going through Gibbs Reflective's model until it gets enough information to provide a 700-word report. So the reflection is done. They didn't write it. It's just a summary of what they said. So for me, that was driven by the fact that what I want students to do is to learn to love the process of thinking about what led up to this. How do I feel about it? What am I thinking about working through that process? I don't care if they can write it, I want them to think it. So that's really important. And then thinking, how might I do this? The other thing I think we need to do, which is particularly challenging for those of us who have become specialists, is to become experimentalists again. You know, to be enthralled by the possibility of working with someone who you find intimidating, who asks questions that you don't know the answers to. To try things and make sure that 25% of them don't work. And I think we assume, and academics typically do this, we assume that answering the questions is what changes the world. It's not. It's coming up with the question in the first place. So coming up with those brilliant questions is going to be absolutely central and something that yes, AI can do it, but humans are really brilliant at because, usually it's a human problem. You've got staff who are unmotivated. Why are they unmotivated? If you say that it's because they're slack, then you've given up. Because it's never just that they slack, it's 16 different things. What about the context could change? And so I think once you've done that kind of work and you take that experimental approach, and then you always, regardless of what activity you're doing, you ask yourself, can AI do this? So you go to lunch, can AI do this? No, AI can't go to lunch. But what can it do? It can do a lot of things and then give it a go and mess it up. I'm just about to download a whole bunch of student assessment tasks and the feedback that markers gave them and the mark and see if AI will give me similar marks and if it relates. I can do that without any implications for students. I can check whether it relates. I'm just going to give it a go. I don't know whether we can actually implement this, but I'm going to give it a go to see if I've got a case. So being experimental is important.

Michelle Ockers:
And you know, that sort of experiment doesn't take long to run. Using an AI tool, right? It's not like you have to dedicate a big chunk of time and go, I'm going to do nothing but experiment with AI for a week or something like that. I just find the more I experiment, the more I try things, the better it gets for me. Well, the more time I spend in my garden for a start, which is pretty good.

Brad Hodge:
You don't just come up with more experiments? I keep getting kicked off ChatGPT because I run out of data even with the paid version.

Michelle Ockers:
Oh, right. Definitely a super user. So tell me, Brad, as you've worked with Gen AI to support your students, is there anything you've either had to let go of or to embrace on this journey of starting to use Gen AI to support your students? Let go of or embrace?

Brad Hodge:
The importance of having a human in the room is ridiculously important. And I think AI can supplement that. But there's magic in dealing with humans. A couple of weeks ago, I was sitting with a group with some problematic issues, one particularly disengaged. And I made some kind of carefully calculated comment. You know, giving someone a hard time. I'm not going to give you the exact details, but just kind of a dig in the ribs kind of comment. And just magically it shifted things just a little bit in a way that nothing else had worked. You know, AI is never going to do that. So I think understanding the importance of being a meaningful human in a human space is super important. I also think coming to terms with the fact that AI is going to change things and the importance of recognizing that maybe I'm never going to

feel good at things again. Maybe I'm going to feel good at learning new things. So I will start probably forever with the intro of I'm not an expert in AI. I don't do programming. I don't understand how it works and coming to terms with the fact that I'm going to be an idiot who maybe asks brilliant questions for the rest of my life, and I'll always have more questions than answers, like that's kind of fun, but it doesn't position you as a demigod of knowledge in the middle of all of that, which is, you know, kind of ego-wise, which is what we like. So I think recognizing that, you know, I'm a question hunter like that and I collaborate. I want to work with people that confuse me and that's where we're going to change the world is bringing together AI, different disciplines around collaboration, coming up with great questions, being forced into a situation where we're trying to solve a problem that only the combination of those three things can achieve.

Michelle Ockers:
Love it. So the superpower for using AI then is nothing technical. It's being a great question hunter and asking brilliant questions.

Brad Hodge:
Yeah. Which means asking lots and lots and lots of really dumb questions and then chancing on a brilliant one.

Michelle Ockers:
Yeah, fantastic. Brad, is there anything else you want to add before I let people know how to get in touch with you if they want to follow up on the episode?

Brad Hodge:
I think it's just to be fascinated with humans. I think in the learning and development space, and I was having a chat with a colleague the other day, and I said, you know what, I have a real soft spot for cranky young men who think that my subject is horrible. And they looked at me just absolutely dumbfounded. I'm like, because that person is there with that attitude for a reason. And so I think remembering that humans are amazing and remembering that our job is to get them to want to do things that we want them to do, rather than to do the things that we want to do. And how might AI actually assist that is one of the most exciting things ever. How can I get a student excited about something that they have no vested interest in being excited about but is actually going to change the world? How do I, you know, and we have reasonable success, but how do I get my students excited about doing a group project where their grade is reliant on their ability to work with other people? You know, how do we, like, how do we get excited about the possibility of that rather than just seeing it as this big barrier to success? Because it's not. These are the problems that change the world.

Michelle Ockers:
Indeed. So Brad, if others who are listening to this would like to get in touch, if they've got some follow up questions and so on, is LinkedIn a good way to get in touch with you or is there a better way?

Brad Hodge:
Oh, probably email because I'm terrible with LinkedIn and social media. Yes. So probably the email.

Michelle Ockers:
All right. We'll pop a link to your email address in the show notes then and also to the Rural Health Innovation Lab to your website so listeners do reach out to Brad if any of that has piqued your curiosity and you want to know some more, but better still just get in and give it a go. Right, Brad?

Learning Uncut

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Brad Hodge:
Absolutely. Go and mess things up. Let's turn the higher education system upside down a little bit.

Michelle Ockers:
You know, thanks so much, Brad, for sharing your work and your insights with us today.

Brad Hodge:
Beautiful. Thanks, Michelle.

About Learning Uncut

Learning Uncut are learning and development consultants that help Learning and Development leaders and their teams become a strategic enabler so that their businesses can thrive. We work in evidence-informed ways to drive tangible outcomes and business impact and are strong believers in the power of collaboration and community. We specialise in helping to build or refresh organisational learning strategy, update their L&D Operating Model, enable skills development, and conduct learning evaluation. We also offer workshops to shift learning mindset and practices for both L&D teams and the broader workforce – as well as speaking at public and internal events.

Learn more about us at our website.

About your host, Michelle Ockers

Michelle is the co-founder and Chief Learning Strategy at Learning Uncut. She is an experience, pragmatic organisational learning strategist, L&D capability builder and modern workplace learning practitioner. She also delivers keynotes, workshops and webinars for learning and broader professional or workforce groups at both public and in-house events.

Michelle received the following prestigious industry awards in 2019:

- Australian Institute of Training and Development Dr Alastair Rylatt Award for L&D *Professional of the Year – for outstanding contribution to the practice of learning and development*
- *Internet Time Alliance Jay Cross Memorial Award – for outstanding contribution to the field of informal learning*

Find Michelle on LinkedIn