Lurking, linking and learning

The effects of using technology as part of a mixed-mode studio to enable the design process.

A dissertation by

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Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the MTech Degree in Graphic Design

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January 2013
Declaration

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Abstract

As a second year lecturer teaching Graphic Design, a reflective portfolio as part of an assessors’ training course raised the question, ‘are we using teaching and assessment methods that encourage students to think?’ Research in the field of design education confirmed how current assessment methods focus on the making of artefacts as opposed to the development of problem solving skills. At the same time, an interest in online learning prompted the use of the internet, an online classroom and technologies not normally associated with studio-based learning environments, to enable a new way of working.

The research methodology, design-based research, embraced two concepts: the need for educational change and the creation of usable knowledge that informed practice. The study discusses how technologies such as a Blackboard WebCT6 online classroom, Adobe, Flickr, a blog and email was used to enable the design process in a way that builds visual vocabulary, develops metacognition, and encourages reflection. Analysis of a focus group interview and document analysis reports on the students’ experiences using technology in this regard.

Key words: e-learning, design process, virtual classroom, mixed mode studios, design-based research.
Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the following people who have accompanied and supported me:

My husband and children.

Mari Peté, my supervisor and Franciléne Greyling, my co-supervisor.

Mthandeni Zama, for being open to new ideas.

My students, for being willing participants.
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List of terms

**Blog** – short for weblog. A specific type of website where an individual or a group of authors adds entries or posts on a regular basis. These entries are displayed in reverse chronological order, that is, the most recent entries first. Common features of a blogging system include easy authoring tools that allow for images, text and video to be included in the post. A comment facility allows for readers to make public comments on posts.

**E-learning** - the use of various technological tools that are either Web-based, Web-distributed or Web-capable.

**Flickr** – an image hosting and video hosting website and online community.

**ICT** – Information and Communications Technology. Refers to technologies that provide access to information through telecommunications.

**JISC** - The Joint Information Systems Committee.

**Learning Management System (LMS)** - a collection of e-learning tools available through a shared administrative interface. Blackboard was the LMS used in this study.

**Learning object** – a digital file that can be re-used in e-learning contexts.

**LMS** - Learning Management System

**Lurking** - passive observation as opposed to active contribution in a web environment. For example, reading messages on an internet discussion forum without posting.

**Mixed-mode/blended**/ - these terms are interchangeable and describe an approach to education that combines face to face and distance approaches.

**Online learning** – describes education that occurs only through the Web. It traditionally refers to courses offered long distance.

**Pedagogy** – traditionally understood to refer to instruction, and now used to describe the application of sound education practice

**VLE** – such as Blackboard WebCT6. Used interchangeably with VLE or Virtual Learning Environment.
Chapter 1
Introducing the enquiry
1.1 Background

This study arises against a background of concerns and challenges I have experienced in my capacity as a lecturer teaching second year students in the Graphic Design Department at the Durban University of Technology. My journey began with an assessors’ training course, which exposed the need to adapt my assessment methods and approach to teaching and learning. Subsequently, this understanding evolved into the development of an online classroom and utilising technology as a means to enable the design process.

The study unpacks the characteristics of the design process and also discusses how technologies such as a Blackboard WebCT6 online classroom, Adobe, Flickr, a blog and email was used to build visual vocabulary, develop meta-cognition, and encourage reflection on practice. In addition, the analysis of a focus group interview and digital documents reports on the students’ experiences using technology in this regard.

It is important to note the word ‘design’ is used in multiple ways during the discussion. The ‘design process’ refers to the steps or procedures normally associated with the development of an artefact. The ‘design’ of an online classroom relates to the way the classroom works from an instructional viewpoint and to the physical look and construction of the content using appropriate computer software. The reference to ‘design-based research’ refers only to an investigative approach.
1.2 Context of the study

Trends in education shift over time as societies and the environments they live in change. Today, emphasis has moved towards the learner becoming self-sufficient and able to manage learning in a way that enhances the concept of lifelong learning, and institutions are adopting the concept of a learner-centred environment. Current international discussions on education focus on demographic changes, politics, globalisation and importantly, technology, as factors that are driving educational change (Hernes, 2006; Prensky, 2001a).

Globalisation results in an erosion of physical boundaries and connectivity between people in a global village. Technological advancements like the Internet affect the way knowledge is obtained, disseminated and stored: and because of this phenomenon, some authors feel that the web is paramount to learning (Ally, 2004; Brown, 2002) Ehrmann, 2000). According to Prensky, (2001a:1) this development has given rise to a generation of ‘digital natives’ that Howe and Strauss (2000) refer to as ‘the millenials’ or ‘generation y’. By way of contrast, Bennett, Maton and Kervin (2008) dispute these claims and challenge generalisations made about young peoples’ computer use and skills.

Despite controversy, Wilson and Gerber (2008:29) argue young people today display a distinguishing set of traits that require pedagogical adaptations to course structure, assignments and assessment, which suit their preferred manner of engaging with learning materials and one another. Likewise,
Greyling (2007) describes another debate surrounding the value of technology and learning, and establishes that it is no longer a matter of *if* but *when* to adopt technology as a means to facilitate learning.

Applied, technology used to facilitate learning is generally referred to as e-learning or web-based learning and when inclusive of face-to-face interaction, as blended or mixed-mode learning. The Draft White Paper on e-education (Government Gazette, 2004:17) defines e-learning as “flexible learning using information communication technology (ICT) resources, tools and applications to promote flexible learning environments that promote interaction, collaboration and connectivity”. In this study, e-learning describes the use of various technological tools that are either Web-based, Web-distributed or Web-capable.

The Durban University of Technology Assessment Policy (2005) is in line with government theory. The policy strives for learner autonomy, where learners progressively learn to be self-sufficient, self-directed and self-reflective with minimal intervention by the teacher or lecturer. This policy also proposes that new learning materials should ‘encourage an eclectic approach, taking into account a wide range of resources’.

1.3 Motivation for the study

The completion of an assessors’ training course highlighted a deficit in my knowledge surrounding pedagogy and learning theory. I had a number of years of practical studio experience, which qualified for employment as a
lecturer in the Graphic Design Department at the Technikon Natal. Donald Schon, a philosopher of design and design education, describes a similar scenario relevant to his experience. Waks (2001:47) describes how Schon’s teachers had no formal studies in the art of teaching, but “plunged in spontaneously, guided by their own already formed professional arts”.

My reflection on classroom practice raised questions about my assessment practices, and revealed how one’s teaching method enabled learning. The challenges I was experiencing in my classroom at the time related to the processes students need to participate in before executing their assessment tasks. Students were reluctant to engage in idea generation and planning, but focussed on the creation of artefacts. In previous years, departmental industry liaison meetings repeatedly expressed the same concerns and wish list: ‘Give us students who can think!’ As a result, more energy was invested in training students to mind map, brain storm and produce rough visuals.

In his article for the American Institute for Graphic Arts (AIGA), Polite (2004:online) from the Philadelphia University of the Arts maintains the most important question in design education revolves around “how to make the students slow down and think?” Furthermore, he describes how “students want to rush in and make finished projects”. Barry Jackson (1995) from Middlesex University raises questions about the quality of student learning and assessment in design as he describes a typical studio-based learning environment mirrored in my own practice. Lecturers provide students with assessment tasks in the form of a brief, which describes a problem, and most of the student-lecturer interaction takes place in the studio or classroom.
Souleles (2005) also aims to describe prevailing teaching and learning methods in studio-based disciplines which include ‘sitting-by-Nellie’ or hand holding, project-based learning and the ‘final show’ in the form of a summative portfolio exhibition.

The question I began asking at this time was, “are we using teaching and assessment methods that encourage students to think?” This also prompted me to question how we defined ‘thinking’ relevant to the process of design. Was it merely an activity that prompted good ideas?

Jackson (1995) and Oxman (2001:269) point out that existing teaching and learning theories exist, but that the application of these concepts to art and design subjects remains relatively unexplored. Could I use my newly gained knowledge to create a teaching and assessment strategy that incorporated these theories? Moreover, could I use the internet, an online classroom and technology to facilitate this new development?

Answers to these questions were investigated, explored and are discussed in later chapters as a reflection of my personal journey.

1.4 Goals of the study

The research methodology used in this enquiry was design-based research, otherwise referred to as a design study. Fundamentally, design-based research attempts to narrow the chasm between research and educational practice in a manner that embraces two concepts: the need for educational change and a desire for understanding (Gravemeijer and Cobb, 2006:45).
The Design-Based Research Collective (2003:5) elaborates on this notion of ‘understanding’ as the ultimate goal of a design study and “educational research that strives to create usable knowledge that informs practice and encourages innovation”.

Related to my own teaching, the goals of my study were to:

a. clarify characteristics of the design process relevant to the creation of an artefact in graphic design.

b. explore the distinctive nature of successful e-learning environments and formulate a model for use in my own classroom that enables the design process.

c. design, develop and implement e-learning, as part of a mixed-mode studio environment, which enables the design process.

d. analyse and report on the students’ experiences of e-learning as part of the mixed-mode studio environment to inform improvements.

1.5 The research problem and questions

My research problem addressed the following:

‘The effects of using an e-learning environment as part of a mixed-mode studio to enable the design process’.

The overall aim of this research was to explore the use of technology as a tool which enables the design process. By questioning whether this was possible, the study asked the following questions:
• What aspects of the design process can be facilitated using e-learning?

• What factors should be considered when designing a successful e-learning environment?

1.6 The scope of the project

This project consisted of two components, judged as a whole. The first component was the development of an e-learning intervention to enable the design process. The second component was a dissertation which describes the design, development and implementation of the e-learning intervention and reports and the students’ experiences.

1.7 The structure of the dissertation

The dissertation comprises the following chapters:

Chapter 1:

Chapter 2: Literature review

This chapter compares and contrasts ideas and theories relevant to the study and provides a lens through which the problem will be investigated. It is divided into two distinct sections.

Firstly, I clarify what constitutes the design process in a studio-based learning environment such as graphic design. Secondly, I explore the idea that, when designing an effective e-learning environment which
enables the design process, pedagogy, learning theory and experiential
design is considered.

Chapter 3: Research methodology
This chapter describes the methodology used in my research study, its
characteristics and why this method was chosen. It also provides an
overview of the participants, ethics and data collection methods and
instruments. The research design describes the phases of the
experiment, which led to the development of a conjectured design
process used as the instructional starting point for the technology based
intervention.

Chapter 4: Data presentation and analysis
This chapter reports on the design experiment based on the goals of the
study. The conjectured design process model upon which the design of
the second year e-learning environment was based is explained, and
technologies supporting the implementation of the model described.
The data collection measuring tool, in the form of a focus group, is
analysed and findings are reported.

Chapter 5: Conclusion and recommendations
The final chapter describes and summarises the outcomes of the
investigation and makes suggestions for improvements and
opportunities for further study.
Chapter 2
Literature Review
This section reviews empirical findings relative to the overall aim of my study, namely to explore the use of technology as a tool which enables the design process. In sections I explore areas stemming from the questions, relating to the problem, as described in Chapter one:

a. The first section clarifies what constitutes the design process relevant to the creation of an artefact in graphic design. This was necessary in order to define concepts relevant to the design process and isolate potential activities manageable using ICT.

I explore the history of design process, design process models and I introduce design thinking as a possible alternative to the design process.

b. I explore the idea that, in designing an effective e-learning environment that enables the design process or a way of working, pedagogy, learning theory and design aesthetics are considered.

2.1 Clarification of what constitutes the design process

When I examined my own understanding of the design process, I realised it revolved around idea generation and artefact development. Landa (2006:12), educator and author of Graphic Design Solutions, confirmed this understanding and described the design process as "the motions and activities a student goes through in order to conceptualise or come up with an idea or concept" and "the creative solution to the design problem, the primary idea behind the piece." An interview with Raymond Pillay (2010:pers.
Comm., 25 February) from Assagay and Javelin, who also moderates the Graphic Design department’s third year portfolios, revealed his notion of design process as something that “begins with the big idea and manifests itself in the product”. He continued by describing thinking and ideas as "the same thing".

The questions I began asking at this stage of my investigation were:

a. Is the design process an activity that focussed on the production of an artefact?

b. What role did thinking play in the design process? Was it an activity that focused on producing original ideas?

In order to answers these questions I examined the characteristics of the design process and tried to contextualise the activities described within a learning environment.

2.1.1 History of the design process

As a noun, the word ‘design’ means amongst others things, “the act of creating an artefact, artistic in nature and based on a plan” and the designer as “the one who created and often executed plans for a project or structure” (Merriam-Webster Dictionary, 2009).

Historically the concept of ‘design’ and the ‘designer’ developed in the early 1900’s along with the advent of mechanisation. As division of labour
increased productivity, the craftsman or maker separated from the production plan. The British Design Council (2007a) cited Wedgewood pottery as an example of how this development resulted in the emergence of the design process. In the 1920’s the Bauhaus school of architecture and design was hailed as the first to consider design as a vital part of production. The Bauhaus theory of form follows function described how the pottery as artefact, dictated the design process in order to ensure quality, consistency and timely production. The designer, as part of this scenario, emerged as a separate entity in his or her own right, as a creative thinker.

At the same time, the modernist movement questioned the relationship between science and design. The desire to produce works of art, based on objectivity and rationality, led to efforts to ‘scientise’ design and produce ‘design methods’ (Cross, 2001:49). The British Design Council (2007b:5) describes how, in 1960, Bruce Archer recognised the design process as being part cognitive, part intuitive and concluded, the design process was scientific and attempted to formalise the creative process. What followed was the mapping of the design process in the form of models, which attempted to show best practice or a way of working.

2.1.2 Models of design process

Although current academic literature on the subject of design process is specific and inclusive of architecture (Oxman, 2001), artificial intelligence (Mostow, 1985), interior/ environmental design (Ozturk and Turkkkan, 2006) and graphic design (Oxman, 2001), these researchers' motivations were the
same as they attempted to identify a design process model supporting best practice in studio based environments.

Design process models reflected in Appendix 1 were adapted from Dubbley (2005) and the British Design Council (2007a). Through the creation of this table I recognised my application of design process, as a lecturer in graphic design, was similar to Luttrop and Greenwald’s model (in Dubbley, 2005), as illustrated in Figure 1.

**Figure 1:** Graphic design problem-solving model by Luttropp and Greenwald (2009)

![Graphic design problem-solving model](image)

Light gray show interaction with client
Dark gray shows design phases
Medium gray shows production

- Define the project
- Develop budget and schedule
- Conduct research
- Ideation
- Preliminary comps
- Presentation and critique
- Refinements
- Final presentation
- Final comps
- Approvals
- Production
- Distribution
- Final project review

In my experience, second year lecturing staff *defined the project* in the form of a design brief, and the design phases in the model followed. Presentation and critiques were conducted on a one-to-one basis or in large groups, with approval granted by lecturers for print. Academics connected to studio-based learning environments described a similar educational methodology to my own, in their own teaching environment (Oxman, 1999; Jackson, 1997; Polite, 2004; Lawson, 1980).
As a lecturer I realised many of the characteristics that featured in other models were missing in my adopted approach. Archer (British Design Council, 2007a) speaks of the intuitive and cognitive as well as communication as part of the design process, while Lawson (1980) mentions that product and process are two different things. Pugh, Cooper and Souza (Dubbley, 2005; British Design Council, 2007) include iterative phases, feedback, collaboration, self-assessment and learning.

2.1.3 Design process or way of working and education

Historically, design education methodology can be traced back to the French design institute, the Ecole des Beaux Arts. This system included the setting of a design problem as the initiation of the educational process, the studio as the simulation of the professional environment and the design process as the studio methodology. Furthermore, the studio master or tutor served as a guide and critic and intervened in the students designing, while the juror system was a means of evaluation of the final product (Cuff, 1991).

Despite this, it would be foolish to ignore that the outcome of any graphic design project results in an artefact or product of some nature. Contextually, this product communicates or visualises ideas using image and text, and in this regard, it is everywhere:

...touching everything we do, everything we see, everything we buy: we see it on billboards and in Bibles, on taxi receipts and on websites, on birth certificates and on gift certificates, on the folded
In an educational setting, students are required to develop these products in a manner that becomes a demonstration of what the student has learnt and a measurement of their ability to think creatively or “put existing ideas together in new combinations” (Amabile, 1998:79). By proposing designerly thinking, Oxman (1999) recognises the need to develop the cognitive aspects of design that extend beyond the artefact as an expression of creative thinking and demonstration of what has been learnt.

2.1.4 Designerly thinking or design thinking

In his seminal work on intelligence, Sternberg describes how ‘successful intelligence’ is a balance between analytical, creative and practical abilities (Sternberg and Williams, 1996). He explains that analytical thinking requires evaluation, analysis and comparison, and creative thinking, invention, discovery and ideation. Practical thinking is tying everything together as individuals apply what they have learned.

Design thinking as a concept emerged in the 1990’s when Roger Martin (2007) suggested that the best leaders integrate left brain, analytical thinking with right brain intuition. Based on Martin’s notion of integrated design, Tim Brown cemented the principles of design thinking when he created IDEO, a design consultancy. Although no clear definition of design thinking is available (Brown, 2009) it has core characteristics (Brown, 2009; Burney, 2007; Burney, 2006):
a. It focuses on how (design process) not what (design artefact).
b. It is a process of designing, regardless of the physical manifestation.
c. It strives to balance (left brain) analytical mastery and (right brain) intuitive originality.
d. It uses divergent thinking to create choices and convergent thinking to make choices.
e. It uses analysis to break problems apart and exploit existing knowledge, and synthesis to put ideas together and create something new.

David Burney (2007) from Red Hat Communications has developed a seven step process which he felt served as a common vernacular for design thinking. The table below has been adapted and illustrated from Burney (2007, 2006) and Brown (2009).

**Figure 2:** Seven step model adapted from Burney (2007, 2006) and Brown (2009)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Define</th>
<th>understand your problem and user, analyse</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Research</td>
<td>experience, observe, understand, empathise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideate</td>
<td>Non-judgmental, divergent thinking, collaborate, explore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prototype</td>
<td>rapid, synthesise, get feedback, fail, change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choose</td>
<td>converge, review, select, relinquish ownership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implement</td>
<td>plan, assign, execute, deliver</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learn</td>
<td>analyse, discuss, feedback, measure</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Although Burney (2007) acknowledges the model appears linear, he stresses that any stage of the design thinking process could be adopted at any time, and revisited as often as is necessary. Brown (2008:online) referred to his model as a “series of spaces” as opposed to a series of steps.

What I understood at this point was the need to stimulate my students in a way that developed their cognitive, intuitive and practical thinking skills. Relative to design thinking, my colleagues and I have in the past acknowledged the development of students’ creative thinking skills as vital. Pioneers in the field such as de Bono (1970), Osborn (1991), developed methods that aimed to enhance one’s ability to generate ideas. Some of these methods were included in the curriculum.

As described in Burneys’ model, at some stage in this creative thinking process however, it becomes necessary to adopt a convergent approach to one’s thinking. This involves ‘thinking about your thinking’, making judgments and translating the connections made during the convergent stage into practical solutions (Chaffee, 1994). In cognitive psychology this activity is recognised as critical thinking.

Chaffee (1994) confirms Brown’s (2009) belief that creative thinking and critical thinking work hand in hand, and cannot be separated. He elaborates by describing creative thinking as the production of innovative ideas, and critical thinking as making informed decisions about the ideas, which leads to reflection, clarification and improvement. He also acknowledges that critical thinking is not one way of thinking, but “an approach to the way we make sense of the world” (Chaffee, 1994:94).
2.1.5 Summary

The first section of this chapter clarifies what constitutes the design process relevant to the creation of an artefact in graphic design. This was necessary in order to define concepts relevant to the design process and isolate potential activities manageable using e-learning. I acknowledge that at this point my perception of the design process was narrow but now includes insight into a complex activity that describes a way of working, inclusive of creative and critical thinking skills.

Lawson (1980) and Oxman (1999) describe two common features of design education that transcend countries and design domains. The first is a focus on artefact as evidence of learning instead of focussing on a way of working. The second feature is evaluation based on the outcome or artefact instead of on process of learning, which means students strive towards solutions as opposed to methodology or way of working.

Hence, it is proposed, design thinking or designerly thinking is adopted as a cognitive approach to design education.

2.2 The design of an effective e-learning environment

Bransford, Brown and Cocking (2003) explain how computer technology was introduced as an instructional method as early as the 1960’s. I was introduced to the concept of mixed-mode learning when I attended a Blackboard Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) course at the Durban University of Technology, called Pioneers.
Mixed-mode, blended learning or resource-based learning are interchangeable terms that describe a pedagogical approach, that includes face-to-face contact, and content made available through technological means. Usually this includes e-learning, a term which describes structured materials or content that is web-based, web-distributed or web-capable (Nichols, 2003; Government Gazette, 2004).

As previously mentioned, in my experience students were reluctant to follow through on the design process when working towards an artefact. After the completion of my Assessors Training course I realised that assessing the design process and rewarding students for their efforts could help improve their interest in making the design process overt. Departmentally, lecturing staff are responsible for delivery of materials, monitoring and managing the project as well as assessment of the work completed. Logistically, monitoring 55 odd students’ design process in this way is tedious, and at that stage I was hoping that a VLE could help manage this. I hadn’t yet considered other benefits of using ICT.

2.2.1 Design considerations of a successful e-learning environment

The idea of creating a successful learning environment emerged in the 1940’s as the concept of general education evolved into "something more than putting discrete items of knowledge into students’ heads" (Schulman,2002:online). Benjamin Bloom (1985) pioneered this ideology
when he designed his Taxonomy of Educational Objectives as a system for classifying desirable types of learning in an educational setting. Schulman (2002:online) explains how Bloom’s taxonomy was soon adopted as a framework for designing successful courses and programmes, a heuristic for instructional design. It evolved into something that described an ideology and a normative system of education.

Initiatives in higher education today argue for new approaches to designing learning environments which, Schulman (2002:online) points out, has nothing to do with a new taxonomy, as “all the likely taxonomies have been invented, and in nearly infinite variety” Schulman argues for a focus on ‘professional education’ that requires students to think, perform particular skills, and to practice and act in ways consistent with the norms, values and conventions of the profession they are studying.

Linked to the designing of successful learning environments are the principles and methods of instruction or pedagogy. Modern pedagogy has evolved over time, and today, styles of instruction seek ways to stimulate students and to develop their independence and initiative as they acquire knowledge. The advent of technology has resulted in the development of new pedagogies by influencing what activities are possible, what they might potentially achieve, and how they are carried out (Robertson, Fluck and Webb, 2002-2004). These technology types include, for example, the World Wide Web (WWW) using the Internet, online learning, e-mail plus the use of cell phones and i-pods.
In e-learning circles, there is an ongoing debate whether it is the use of technology or the design of the instruction that improves learning (Clark, 2001). Firstly, researchers support the notion that technologies do have learning benefits, but they remain a method of delivery (Ally, 2004; Nichols, 2003; Chickering and Ehrmann, 1996). They suggest it is the instructional strategies built into the learning materials, and not the medium of instruction that promotes learning. These authors generally agreed that learning theory and pedagogical strategy are paramount to the success of e-learning.

Secondly, linked to successful learning in any environment is the concept of student engagement. The challenges related to student engagement in online delivery are inclusive of traditional environments, but also present unique obstacles related to the type of technology used.

Thirdly, the design of an online learning environment, for example, includes traditional elements of graphic design such as colour, image and text, but the difference lies in the nature of the environment. Unlike traditional media, it is a literate rather than a visual medium, is time sensitive, interactive rather than passive, and relies on information architecture in order to organise, classify and organise content (McGovern, 2001). The debate that rages in this domain is whether Instructional Design, which focuses on how to structure material for learning, holds the key to good e-learning environment (Nichols, 2003). Some authors are of the opinion that instructional designers are more like engineers (Quinn, 2005:11) and focus on design models that deliver functional content, but lack the notion of experiential design. Papert (2002) believes that if we are to engage learners in knowledge building that focuses
on heart and mind as described by Kuh (2003), we needed to create experiences that are ‘hard fun’.

Based on the above, the following section discusses the nature of a successful e-learning environment from two perspectives: a) a learning perspective (pages 23-46) including learning theory, pedagogy and student engagement, and b) experiential design (pages 47-54) by describing the way the classroom looks and functions.

2.3 Student engagement

Schulman (2002: online) explains if we follow Bloom’s taxonomy, we begin with the first category of knowledge, moving towards comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation. Despite adaptations to this taxonomy by Anderson and Krathwohl (2001) in the 1990’s, ‘remembering’ relative to knowledge remains the first level on the taxonomy.

Schulman’s (2002: online) view on taxonomies is “play with them!”, and in his Table of Learning he places engagement and motivation at the top of his list. He claims “knowledge begins with student engagement, which in turn leads to knowledge and understanding”.

To this end, I have decided to begin this argument with student engagement.
2.3.1 What is student engagement?

George Kuh, director of Postsecondary Research and Planning at Bloomington University, hosted the American National Survey of Student Engagement or NSSE. The main aim of the survey is to provide information regarding student engagement at higher education institutions, plus benchmarks for effective educational practice.

Kuh (2003:25) defines engagement in terms of two key components: the first is the amount of "time and energy students devote to educationally sound activities, inside and outside of the classroom". This links to the students’ willingness to invest in learning. The second component is what institutions do to create conditions that foster this reaction, and includes the employment of effective educational practices that encourage students to do so.

The results of the South African Survey of Student Engagement (SASSE) supports Kuh, and adopted the benchmarks identified by the NSSE, which link academic performance with student engagement, and describe a 'student experience' which impacts on the likelihood of success (Strydom. and Mentz, 2010:9; Dewey in Westbrook, 1999).

When discussing engagement theory, some theorists argue the principles of motivational theory overlap with engagement theory. Russell, Ainley and Frydenberg (2003) agree engagement and motivation are often treated as the same thing, but stress the common denominator revolves around behaviour. They explain, motivation is about "energy and direction, the reasons for behaviour or why we do it" (Russell et al, 2003: online). Malone’s (1981)
theory of motivation describes how conditions that motivate are linked to some type of reward that encourages the behaviour to reoccur. Extrinsic rewards are external or outside of the task itself, such as praise or grades. Alternatively, intrinsic rewards occur within the individual as a positive response to the task itself.

On the other hand, engagement is about direct behaviour, and "describes energy in action, and the connection between person and activity" (Russell et al., 2003: online). A positive connection is linked to words such as 'engaged', 'committed' and 'involved', whereas 'disaffected' and 'alienated' suggest the opposite. These authors add that engagement is more likely to be adversely affected since it links to behaviour, as a student can be psychologically motivated to learn, for example, but disengaged through the learning experience.

2.3.2 Factors affecting engagement

The benchmarks identified by the NSSE as effective educational practices promoting student engagement, include the following (Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, and Whitt, 2005):

• a level of academic challenge focussing on intellectually challenging and creative work.

• active and collaborative learning based on the premise that students learn more when they are intensely involved in learning and reflection, especially through discussion and interaction.
• an enriching educational experience which includes the use of technology.

• a supportive campus environment that enables the student to cope and thrive socially and academically.

• student/staff interaction which emphasises healthy relationships.

2.3.3 Engagement and the use of technology

With reference to Kuh, Deneen (2010:online) concludes any adoption of technology should support the NSSE findings, and can contribute to engagement if pedagogy drives the learning environment. She defines student engagement and technology as "a rendezvous between learning and the digital tools and techniques that excite students".

2.3.4 Creative environments and engagement

In her book Creativity in context, Teresa Amabile (1996) describes the impact motivation has on creativity, which subsequently impacts on students’ engagement in the creative design process. Collins and Amabile (1999) stress how motivation towards task links strongly to stages of the design process and assessment practices.

During the divergent or brainstorming stages of the design process, focus is on generating ideas or solutions to problems. Here, Amabile (1998:79) explains how vital intrinsic motivation is when dealing with creativity, and
claims "people will be most creative when they feel motivated primarily by the interest, satisfaction and challenges of the work itself – and not by external pressures". Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi’s ‘theory of flow’ proposes a similar concept. He argues for a frame of mind, linked to human happiness and fulfilment, where "people are so involved in an activity that nothing else seems to matter" (Deitz, 2004: online). Flow is common in creative spheres and describes a time when work flows easily as opposed to feeling frustrated with your task (McGuiness, 2006).

The convergent stage of the design process focuses on evaluating and choosing ideas, completing the task, and communicating results. Information received from the external environment, such as goals, criteria for success (assessment) and informative feedback enables engagement by encouraging students to assess their creative effort within a given context (Collins and Amabile, 1999).

A number of theorists describe ideal environmental conditions that motivate intrinsically and support the theory of flow. In Table 1, I condense those described by Malone (1981), Vockell (2010) Csikszentmihalyi (Dietz,1994; McGuiness, 2006) and Amabile (1998,1996), and include related guidelines for application in an educational setting.
Table 1: Environmental factors affecting intrinsic motivation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor and description</th>
<th>Related guidelines in education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Challenge</strong>: Learners enjoy a challenge that requires skills.</td>
<td>Set personally meaningful goals with clear criteria for performance and allow as much freedom as possible in finding their own solutions. Give concrete, immediate feedback on performance that explains how well students are doing. This makes it easier to adjust for optimum performance or flow. Provide feedback on creative work as well as professional behaviour. Set appropriate tasks. Too high a challenge will produce anxiety and frustration. Too easy a challenge will produce boredom.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Curiosity</strong>: Something in the environment attracts attention and promises new knowledge.</td>
<td>Stimulate sensory curiosity through use of technology. Stimulate cognitive curiosity by making students wonder about something.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Control</strong>: Learners have a basic tendency to want to control what will happen to them.</td>
<td>Makes the cause-and-effect relationship clear between what they do in the classroom and what happens in real life. Allow learners to have some say in how they will learn something. Explain why subject matter is worth learning, and that their work will have powerful effects.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fantasy</strong>: Learners use mental images of situations not present to stimulate their behavior.</td>
<td>Make a game out of learning. Help learners to imagine themselves using the information learnt in real life settings. Make the fantasies intrinsic not extrinsic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Competition</strong>: Learners satisfied by comparing their performance favourably to that of others.</td>
<td>Although competition occurs naturally as well as artificially and is more important to some than others, it produces negative effects on motivation. Create a learning environment that is relatively free of competition as students who lose at competition often suffer more than the winners profit. This is especially relevant in a creative environment. Competition also reduces the urge to be helpful to others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Co-operation</strong>: Learners feel satisfied by helping others achieve their goals.</td>
<td>Co-operation occurs naturally as well as artificially, and is more important for some people than for others. Encouraging co-operation develops interpersonal skills and is a useful real-life skill.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Recognition</strong>: Learners feel satisfied when others recognise and appreciate their accomplishments.</td>
<td>Recognition requires the process, product or some other result of the learning activity to be visible. This differs from competition in that it does not involve comparison with the performance of someone else.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.3.5 Summary
Researchers agree when students are engaged in learning it signifies a willingness to devote time and energy to educationally meaningful activities. They also agree on the importance of creating an active, collaborative learning experience that concentrates on healthy faculty/student relationships, coupled with a rich learning environment that uses technology.

In this section I established that motivation and engagement are two different concepts, with engagement linked to direct behaviour and *energy in action*. Despite this, engagement and motivation are connected when involving creative activities, especially during stages of the design process and assessment. Hence, any adoption of technology as part of learning should support and promote these concepts.

### 2.4 Learning theory and e-learning

There are many schools of thought pertaining to learning theory applicable to e-learning environments. Ertmer and Newby (in Ally, 2004), cite behaviourism, cognitivism and constructivism as appropriate e-learning strategies. Weller (cited in Nichols, 2003), includes collaborative learning, problem-based learning, narrative-based teaching and situated learning as philosophies potentially underpinning e-learning. Likewise, Bransford, Brown and Cocking (2003), describe four overlapping lenses through which effective online, constructivist learning environments could be viewed: namely learner-centred, knowledge–based, formative assessment and community of learning.
In contrast, two learning theorists, Stephen Downes (2000) and George Siemens (2004) argue that past theories “were developed in a time when learning was not impacted by technology” (Siemens, 2007:online) and have contributed to a new learning theory that accommodates learning tools in a digital era, calling it connectivism. A central tenet of this theory insists current theory looks at learning that is brain-based, and ignores learning that occurs outside of people, that is, learning that is stored and manipulated by technology.

In the following sections I describe three main educational approaches or philosophies, namely, Behaviourism, Cognitivism and Constructivism, and link them to appropriate pedagogies, student engagement and a mixed-mode studio.

2.4.1 Behaviourism

Bower and Hilgard (1981) describe how Watson, Thorndike, Pavlov, Skinner and Hull predominantly influenced the behaviourist school of thought. These theorists collectively argued that an indication of learning was an observable change in behaviour, and that it had nothing to do with what went on in one’s head. Learning was approached as an outcome, expressed as a product of a stimulus-response-feedback and reinforcement process, and motivation to learn was driven by rewards and punishments (Merriam and Caffarella, 1991). Even creative behaviour, Skinner argued, could be promoted by following it with a reinforcer (Epstein, 1991).
Ally (2004:7) suggests that behavioural learning can be used to teach explicit knowledge or the 'know what' in an e-learning environment. These are expressed as behavioural objectives such as what the student will be able to say, do or write at the completion of the lesson (Alessi and Trollip,1985). Ally (2004) describes how online testing, for example, determines whether the outcome has been achieved, and feedback allows students to monitor how they are doing and take corrective action. Although this type of activity has its place in e-learning environments, it only deals with the ability to recall or state information. According to Bloom (1985), knowledge is a low level activity on his taxonomy but a necessary one if we wish learners to progress to the next level, being comprehension, which is necessary for transfer.

According to Jackson (1995:online), "unlike other academic subjects, design has a small body of factual knowledge which a student has to acquire and which can be assessed". However, this factual knowledge underpins a 'visual vocabulary' relevant to 'visual literacy' recognised by Dondis (1972) in his book *A visual primer of visual literacy*. In other words, vocabulary as explicit knowledge underpins the "dialectic process" (Oxman, 1999:108) described in design thinking and acknowledged by Donald Shon (Smith, 2001a) which requires design students to reflect on and discuss their own work.

### 2.4.2 Cognitivism

Researchers such as Gardner (1999), Bruner (1986) and Ausubel (1968) challenged the behaviourists' notion that human beings were a blank slate and could be trained to do anything. Their cognitive theories focussed on the
workings of the mind, and viewed learning as an internal mental process that develops capacity and skills to learn better. Theorists recognise the ‘black box’ of the mind and liken it to a computer: "information comes in, is being processed, and leads to certain outcomes" (Learning theories knowledgebase, 2008: online).

Cognitive theory recognises processes such as memory, perception and attention, individual differences and problem solving as vital to understanding (Ally, 2004; Alessi and Trollip, 1995). Hence, cognitive strategies can be used to teach tacit knowledge or ‘know how’ through processes, practices and skills that apply explicit knowledge (Ally, 2004:7; Bloom, 1985).

**Memory**

Ally (2004) describes how cognitive theory looks at learning as information processing. Using one’s senses, information is transferred to a sensory store and then working memory. Working memory is where active thinking occurs and can only store a limited amount of information, which is eventually transferred to long term memory for storage. Consequently, working memory and long term memory form nodes which connect to form relationships, or networks. Ally (2004) emphasises the need for a learning strategy that enables learners to retrieve existing information from long term memory to help make sense of the new information, while limiting the cognitive load on working memory. This can occur in three ways:

- Information needs to be ‘chunked’, or presented in manageable amounts, to facilitate processing in working memory and prevent
overloading. Between five and seven chunks of information is accepted as feasible. (Miller cited in Ally, 2004).


- Ausubel (1968:iv) insists “the most important single factor influencing learning is what the learner already knows”. He emphasises scaffolding and developed the concept of advance organisers, to provide support for new information by prompting what is already known.

If we acknowledge the writings of online learning theorist Siemens (2004), the use of memory as a means of retrieving knowledge needs to be considered within the context of technology and the internet. Siemens (2004) argues that it is impossible to experience or remember everything; that through the Internet other people’s experiences and hence their knowledge becomes paramount to our knowledge. John Seely Brown (2000:20) supports this argument and points out “the internet leverages the small efforts of many with the large efforts of few”, hence the emphasis shifts from knowing what or how to knowing where to find it. Secondly the skill now lies in recognising connections and patterns, and evaluating the worthiness of knowledge (Siemmens, 2004).

**Peception**

Kolb (cited in Ally, 2004) suggests two components make up our learning experience: perceiving and processing. Learners use their
sensory systems to perceive and absorb information before understanding and processing can occur.

When using communication technologies, perception can be facilitated through the use of colour, sound, visuals, animation, position of screen elements, and characteristics of text such as size and colour, (Alessi and Trollip, 1995).

2.4.3 Constructivism

We can distinguish between cognitive (individual) constructivism in the writings of Piaget (1929), Dewey (in Field, 2005) and Schön (1983), and social (community) constructivism as described by Vygotsky (1978), Bruner (1967) and Lave and Wegner (1998).

Although cognitivists recognised the importance of the mind, learners were present to assimilate knowledge through what teachers presented, or through transmission of information. Jean Piaget (in Merriam and Caffarella, 1991) was the first philosopher to suggest humans learn through experience and are actively involved in constructing meaning, rather than passive recipients of knowledge. The core of constructivism as expressed by Karagiorgi and Symeou (2005:18) explains

...individuals live in the world of their own personal and subjective experiences. It is the individual who imposes meaning on the world, rather than meaning being imposed on the individual.
In this way, learners are central to learning, as the individual interprets and processes information to create meaningful understanding. Constructivism supports the notion of generative learning, which asks students to create meaning from what they are studying by using and applying the information in a variety of contexts. It “requires students to take static information and generate fluid, flexible, usable knowledge” (Wilson, 1996:67). In addition, Jonassen (1999) adds that the primary goal of constructivism is to foster problem solving and conceptual development, and is well suited to ill-defined or ill-structured domains.

**The idea of a learning community**

Social constructivism acknowledges that real-life learning is messy and complex, and predicts learning is effective when ‘learning environments’ emulate this ‘fuzziness’. Moreover, it reinforces this ‘learning environment’ as a place where “learners construct understandings and develop skills relevant to solving problems” (Driscoll, 2000:376). Learners become investigators, seekers and problem solvers and instructors become facilitators and guides (Ally, 2004; Bransford et al., 2003; Wilson, 1996). However, Wilson (1996: 5) warns against the presumption that “person-in-environment” places the learner in isolation, especially when likening it to the lone “nerdy surfer of the Internet”. He therefore finds the term ‘learning community’ more appropriate. Wilson (1996:5) elaborates on the idea of ‘learning communities’ where groups of learners work together, supporting and learning from one
another as well as their learning environments. Equally, Wenger (2006:1) speaks of ‘communities of practice’ and states that although the phenomenon is age-old, what is new is how they relate to learning and knowing. He describes communities of practice as “groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do better as they interact regularly”. Furthermore, they share three characteristics: domain (implies a commitment and shared competency in an interest), community (members engage in joint activities and discussions, help each other and share information) and practice (implies a sharing of tools, experiences and ways of solving problems). David Harrington (in Conti and Amabile, 1999: 258) observes the impact of the social environment on creativity and recognises that in order to support ongoing creativity in a group, it is essential to develop a collaborative 'creative ecosystem'.

...because creative people tend to be curious and active, their ecosystems need to provide them with encouragement and opportunities for playful task engagement. These opportunities sustain their intrinsic motivation towards their work. (Conti and Amabile, 1999: 258)

John Seely Brown (2002: online) writes extensively about using technology to create ‘learning ecologies’, which he explains as "an environment that fosters and supports the creation of communities". He argues a shift is occurring from "using technology to support the individual" to "using technology to support relationships" and this
underlying concept of “helping us help each other” is fundamental to lifelong learning.

Lastly, Siemens (2003) describes the major spaces ideally needed in technology driven communities:

a. A space for Gurus and Beginners to connect (master/apprentice).

b. A space for self-expression (blog, journal).

c. A space for debate and dialogue (listserv, discussion forum, open meetings).

d. A space to search archived knowledge (portal, website)

e. A space to learn in a structured manner (courses, tutorials).

Furthermore, Downes (2004:24) elaborates on the values of blogging and believes that they offer students a chance to “reflect on what they are writing and thinking as they write and think about it”. He also describes how blogging is about reading and engaging with content and authors – “reflecting, criticising, questioning and reacting”.

Constructivism and collaboration

Social constructivism, as proposed by Vygotsky in the 1930’s (McCleod, 2007) and later recognised by Bruner (1986), places learning into a social context, and suggests knowledge is created through collaboration and sharing of culture. Brown (2002) describes
knowledge as an iceberg, (Figure 3) and declares that since explicit knowledge

...lives in people and their practice, it comes alive in and through doing things, in participation with each other in the world. Tacit knowledge can be distributed among people as a shared understanding that emerges from working together.

Figure 3: Knowledge as iceberg (Brown, 2002)

McLoughlin and Lee (2007) describe how appropriate use of wikis, blogs and social networking sites can support and encourage knowledge sharing and collaborative content generation.

Personal conversations with colleagues during 2011 raised the issue of social networking and the Internet. It was mentioned that students were ‘picking up bad habits’ and ‘spending way too much time on Facebook’. McGuinness (2011: online) maintains “Creativity is not 100% efficient. It requires idle conversation, new connections and
sources of information – all of which can be found in abundance on social networks". He argues for guidelines and proposes that we encourage students to develop relevant, professional networks with peers and professionals, which promote learning and sharing of ideas and best practices.

**Constructivism and learned-centred environments**

Bransford et al. (2003:133) use the term 'learner-centred' to refer to "constructivist environments that pay careful attention to the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and beliefs that learners bring to the educational setting" as this affects their abilities to solve problems and acquire new knowledge. This is especially true when dealing with technology, as Bennett *et al.* (2008:777) dispute Prensky’s (2001a)) claim that young people live their lives immersed in technology”.

Anderson (2004) also argues how learner-centred contexts do not cater to the individual whims of students, but rather serve as a bridge to connect institution and student across which new knowledge builds. Chickering and Ehrmann (1999) point out a communication technology such as electronic mail, for example, strengthens student-faculty interaction as it enables a speedy and safe exchange of work, without the demands of face-to-face communication.
Constructivism and assessment

Wiggins (2004) argues that far too many educators treat assessment as a means to an end, as opposed to activity that is central to learning. Jonassen (1999) recommends an assessment strategy where demonstration of knowledge acquisition or products, form only part of the assessment, and that process should also be evaluated. Constructivist assessment-centred environments revolve around providing feedback and opportunities for improvement, relevant to a set of goals.

Bransford et al. (2003) remind us that formative assessment uses feedback to improve learning, and summative assessment measures learning describing the level of competency. To facilitate thinking and learning with understanding, assessment needs to include the following: a) feedback, b) guidance, c) evaluation, and d) assessment (Wilson, 2004; Bransford et al., 2003).

a. Feedback

Race, Brown and Smith (2005) write extensively on feedback. They agree prompt feedback describes what is known and unknown, and helps to focus learning by signalling the state of understanding. They also emphasise the importance of group and individual face-to-face feedback and discuss the advantages and disadvantages of using electronic feedback.

Race et al. (2005) acknowledge the range and variety of
electronic feedback is vast and inclusive of email, track changes and comment options on software programs. The advantages and disadvantages of electronic feedback and face-to-face feedback are highlighted in Table 2 (Race et al., 2005).

b. Guidance
According to Race et al. (2005) guidance provides feedback for future direction. In order for guidance to be effective it should focus on the sharing of information and exploring alternatives, as opposed to advice given.

c. Evaluation
Evaluation, according to Race et al. (2005) describes success relevant to a set of criteria. The focus is on providing students with information on how they can improve their work relative to a standard. Moreover, criteria help students to reflect-on-action as described by Schon (Cross, 2001) in a way that develops personal judgement.

d. Assessment
Assessment ranks students according to a set of criteria.
**Table 2: Electronic versus face-to-face feedback: advantages and disadvantages.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Email</th>
<th>Computer-delivered</th>
<th>Face-to-face feedback</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Can be sent at any time or place.</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feedback can be edited before sending.</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students can receive feedback when they are ready.</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feedback can be tailored to individual students' needs, strengths and weaknesses.</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One can keep track of feedback given.</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students can reply directly about your feedback.</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students can refer to feedback again and again.</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can respond individually or one to many.</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students can learn from feedback given to others.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can work through feedback at own pace.</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students who don't understand responses can question you further at the time of delivery.</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feedback uses advantages of tone of voice, facial expression and body language.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feedback is personal, intimate and authoritative.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feedback can be perceived as threatening and critical.</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feedback can be embarrassing.</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Constructivism and meta-cognition**

In order to solve problems, students need to understand how they perform cognitive tasks such as remembering, learning and problem solving. This “thinking about thinking” (Downing, Cheung, Wong & Shin., 2007: 27) is called meta-cognition and focuses on the process of problem solving. A Rich Environment for Active Learning (REAL) (Dunlap and Grabinger, 1996) encourages students to reflect on the
thinking processes and outcomes of a learning activity. Similarly, John Dewey argues for a ‘time out’ (Waks, 2001:40) from practice in order to reflect on the problem solved calling it reflection-on-practice. This self-reflexive process involves three important skills (Downing, et al. 2007):

- Knowing how to reflect and analyse thought
- Knowing how to draw conclusions from that analysis
- Knowing how to put what has been learned into practice

In a social constructivist context it requires students to explain and defend their decisions to one another, leading to consensual understanding (Karagiorgi and Symeou, 2005).

In the following diagram (Table 3) I adapted Downing, et al. (2007) and Weinstein, Schulte, and Palmer’s (2002) LASSI (Learning and Studies Strategies Inventory) model describing meta cognitive processes, and related them to potential e-learning activities enabling these processes.
Table 3: Meta-cognitive process adapted for e-learning.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Meta-cognitive activity</th>
<th>e-Mail</th>
<th>Online discussion</th>
<th>Blogs</th>
<th>Private online diaries or journals</th>
<th>Online survey using scales</th>
<th>e-Portfolios</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self-evaluation during summative and formative assessment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Identifying strengths and weaknesses after completing an assignment.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Identifying what they know and don’t know.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning and self-regulation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Give clear expectations and deadlines</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Encourage early submission of formative assessments to aid ‘interim’ work</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Debriefing the thinking process</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Students thinking about thinking processes and making them explicit</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talking about thinking</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Identifying fears and expectations</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Students rate confidence levels</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keeping a thinking journal</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Evidence of achievements related to learning outcomes is described</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Describes feedback received and action taken</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Constructivism and learning styles**

Gardner (1999) believes there are multiple intelligences that humans use concurrently at some level when solving problems and developing skills. While White (cited in Ford, 2006) denounces this and questions the origin of these intelligences, educators embrace Gardner’s recognition of learning styles, as their experiences in the classroom
confirm that students learnt in different ways. Ally (2004:14) defines learning style as "how a learner perceives, interacts with, and responds to the learning environment". Gardner (1999) and then Kolb (1981), recognised cognitive style or learning style, as the learners preferred way of thinking, remembering or problem solving (Ally, 2004). Gardner (1999) explains we can use the concept of multiple intelligences to create meaningful learning through multiple approaches to understanding.

John Seely Brown (2000:online) writes “the web is the first medium that honours the notion of multiple intelligences” and declares that educators now have a chance to engage learners in their ideal way of learning, abstract, textual, visual, musical, social and kinesthetic. Strategies for accommodating diverse learning styles and promoting concepts of brain-based learning include the use of verbal, textural and visual information to encourage differences in processing and encoding (Ally, 2004).

On the other hand, Bennett, Maton and Kervin (2008:780) warn against generalisations made by researchers such as Prensky (2001a, 2001b) and John Seely Brown (2002) regarding learning styles and a generation of digital natives. Bennett and colleagues explain how students change their approach to learning “depending on their perception of what a task requires and their previous success with a particular approach” (Bennett et al.:780).
Constructivism and information resources

Jonassen (1999:225) explains learners need information with which to construct meaning and supports the concept of rich sources of ‘just-in-time’ information which are ‘learner-selectable’. He adds, the problem informs the type of information needed which should be included in the problem presentation and in the form of information banks linked to the learning environment. When using technology this includes text documents, graphics, sound resources, video and animations. Dunlap and Grabinger (1996: 66) describe this educational strategy as using “rich environments for active learning” or REALs (2003). However, Jonassen (1999) warns against using the World Wide Web as a generic, default storage medium that enables access to multimedia resources through hyperlinks. He encourages filtering during lesson planning, and Web links that support the problem solution and information needed to perform the task.

2.4.4 Summary

The previous sections arrived at an understanding that a learning environment that uses a combination of face to-face interaction and e-learning is referred to as mixed-mode or blended learning. It was also established in order for the learning experience to be beneficial and pleasurable, pedagogy, learning theory and user experience needs to be considered.
Pedagogy relates to the activities designed to facilitate learning and when speaking of e-learning, include the WWW, online learning and e-mail for example. It was emphasised when speaking of e-learning and learning theory there are many schools of thought, but behaviourism, cognitivism and constructivism was discussed and deemed relevant to the study.

Regarding e-learning, researchers established behaviourism was used to teach explicit knowledge or know what, and cognitivism dealt with memory, perception and attention.

Constructivism was recognised as the most appropriate learning theory and recognises that students are active learners and create meaningful understanding of information through various processes and activities. It was proposed that interaction and collaboration with others in the form of a community was vital, as was feedback and assessment practices that recognise assessment as part of learning.

2.5 Experiential design and e-learning

In 1999, Pine and Gilmore described a shift in economics from a service economy to an experience economy. Essentially, they proposed, engaging people in a product involved staging an experience which includes entertainment, escapism, educational and aesthetic realms. George Norman (2004), philosopher and author of Emotional Design: Why we love (or Hate) Everyday Things, elaborates on this concept and proposes a framework for developing products that include their attractiveness, behaviour and the image they present to the user. These dimensions translate into three design
modes, namely visceral, behavioural and reflective. Visceral design relates to how users respond to the impact and appearance of a product or its desirability; behavioural design is about function and usability; and reflective design relates to the users’ feelings about the product, whether they enjoy using it and find it useful.

In an interview Norman (2004:online) states “I want products that are a joy to behold and a pleasure to use”, and observes “we now know how to make products that work fine; how do we make products that make you smile?” He stresses the need for ‘user-centred design’, which places the user at the centre of all e-learning design initiatives, and argues that cognition and emotion work together (elearningpost, 2001). Although Norman acknowledges the need for ‘pedagogical usability’, the underlying premise of his thesis is that attractive products work better because they make people feel good, which puts them in a better frame of mind to solve problems and learn. These concepts, now referred to as experience design, are accepted as crucial to e-learning developments (Lenker, 2002; Mok, 1996). The following sections highlight necessary design considerations to enable a good design experience.

2.5.1 Writing for the Web, or Web-enabled materials

Jakob Nielson and George Norman founded the Nielson group which specialises in design experience and usability engineering. Nielson (1997) explains people rarely read Web pages, instead they scan them and pick out
keywords and sentences. He advises when writing for the web, designers reduce cognitive load by applying the following:

- Meaningful subheads
- Bulleted lists
- Highlighted keywords or concepts
- Short paragraphs
- The 'inverted pyramid' (Jeney, 2006) as writing style, starting with the conclusion or key concept
- Simple writing style with half the word count used in conventional writing
- Never use a long word when a short word will do
- Use active voice and first-person language
- One idea per paragraph

Alessi and Trollop (1995) add the following when laying out text in Web-enabled materials:

- Do not underline type that is not a link
- Text should be lean and teach only what is needed – no more
- Should be clear and use common language and consistent terminology
- Sentences should be well formatted and attention paid to line breaks and paragraphs
- No blinking text as it is annoying and decreases legibility.

2.5.2 Type and technology

Lynch and Horton (2008) outline the most common difficulties when using
type and technology. On-screen type renders at a low resolution, approximately 85 pixels per inch, which affects legibility. Therefore choice of font, to maximise visibility and ease strain on one's eyes, is limited to type with certain characteristics.

- Fonts should be limited to those designed specifically for Web use, such as Georgia, Verdana and Trebuchet which have large x-heights and open counter spaces (See Figure 7)
- Contrast between type and background colour should be high
- Research has shown 11 point type with 13 point leading is the easiest to read as continuous text on the Web (Wheildon cited in Lynch and Horton, 2008).
- Avoid overuse of capital letters only.

*Figure 4: Example of legible web fonts*

Georgia 123
Myriad Pro 123
Trebuchet 123
Verdana 123

2.5.3 New browser windows

Nielson (2011) recommends that links do not open in a new browser windows as these clutter up the computer window. If you need to send your reader outside of your site, Lynch and Horton (2008) recommend this is made clear to your reader. Figure 8 shows how the use of link titles can accomplish this.
2.5.4 Internet conventions

Nielson (2005a) explains how Web-enabled environments have common design elements that users expect to see and work in a certain way. He labels this phenomenon as Jakobs’ Law of the Web user experience, and claims "users spend most of their time on other websites", therefore, designers need to make sure a users’ expectations are met. "If they expect something to work in a specific way, then that is how it should work" (Nielson, 2011:online). These mental models of how things work (Lynch and Horton, 2008) govern, for example, design patterns of links, back buttons, placement of navigation bars and sign in boxes.
2.5.5 Hyperlinks

According to Nielson (2004) textual links should be coloured and underlined which clearly indicates the areas function. Different colours for visited and unvisited links should be maintained in variant shades of the same colour as different colours create confusion. Other good design elements include:

- use of link titles to indicate link destination
- deep linking for usability. In other words, links that go directly to a site’s relevant interior page and not a generic link to homepage

Lynch and Horton (2008) also emphasise the importance of the link description. They suggest good links describe the page that will load as opposed to non-descriptive *click here for more information* links.

2.5.6 Interactivity versus interaction

Lulee (2010) explains how the term interactivity is often confused with interaction. She emphasises interactivity relates to technology and the interaction it allows through user control. Wagner (1997:20) best described interaction when she defined it as “reciprocal events that require at least two objects and two actions. Interactions occur when these objects and events mutually influence one another”. Michael Moore (cited in Anderson, 2004:45) proposed three types of interaction in this regard; namely student-student, student-teacher and student-content interaction. Accordingly, this also defines two areas of interaction: single-user and multi-user interaction.

Single-user interaction describes how the user *interacts* with the content or the web page. Nichols (2004) argues for two types of interactivity, indicative and simulative. Button rollovers, site navigation, or clicking a button to start an animation or turn the page is indicative interactivity. Nichols (2003:2) states
that "simulative interactivity is interactivity that enables students to learn from their own choices in a way that provides some form of feedback". Flying a plane in a virtual environment that simulates reality or online quizzes that explain incorrect answers, for example, provide simulative interactivity.

Multi-user interaction describes how the user interacts with others. Nielson (2005b) lists the following as potential interactivity in e-learning that supports interaction:

- Forms for feedback or asking questions
- Online voting
- Features for sharing pictures or stories with comment capabilities
- Message boards
- Forums for offering and receiving advice.

2.5.7 Noise

In 1983, Edward Tufte, an expert on information graphics developed the concept of signal-to-noise ratio (Lynch and Horton, 2008) which is now applied to all types of communication. He declared communication consists of useful information - the signal - which is degraded by irrelevant information - visual noise. Lynch and Horton (2008:online) describe noise as 'webjunk' and characterise it as anything that demands attention at any cost. Included in this description are gratuitous web animation or Flash and page overcrowding. This principle relates strongly to interactivity.

2.5.8 Scrolling and attention.

Nielson (2010) suggests scrolling down or across for information be avoided
where possible. If this is unavoidable however, he recommends the most salient information should be ‘above the page fold’ or within a screens’ viewable area. ‘Above the fold’ means viewable ‘without further action’ (Nielsen, 2010: online). This principle is also related to screen resolution, and Nielsen (2006) advises pages should be optimised for 1024 x 768.

2.5.9 Images or diagrams

Alessi and Trollop (1985) recommend that pictorial images are only used when instructionally useful and they support the text.

2.6.10 Colour

Colour should be used to attract attention to important information, but care should be taken not to overuse. Colour should be consistent with common usage, for example, red for stop or green for go.

2.6 Conclusion

The understanding I have reached thus far is that the design process extends beyond the realms of the lecture room and the ‘big idea’. It involves planning and strategy, creative problem solving, collaboration, reflection on practice and communication. As Hugh Dubbley (2005:5) explains: “we study the design process to know what we do and how we do it. To understand and improve it. To become better designers.”

Design thinking as the design process requires the student to actively understand and analyse problems, and find strategies for solving them. It means they need to involve themselves in recurring design research activities
that inspires and stimulates their knowledge acquisition. Design thinking
requires reflection in practice and on practice; between lecturers and amongst
their peers, coupled with a sound design vocabulary that can accommodate
these conversations.

I now understand that using sound instructional frameworks in an online
environment can potentially facilitate and manage many of the stages of the
design process.
Chapter 3
Research methodology
Research, from the French word *recherché*, means to go about seeking and involves an orderly investigation into a subject matter that adds knowledge to something already known, or it investigates a new problem or phenomenon. According to Leedy and Ormrod (2005) the purpose of formal research is to increase our understanding of the phenomenon in which we were interested, and in turn report to others.

This chapter describes the types of data collected for the study, which aims to provide a snapshot of the implementation of an e-learning environment that uses innovative learning materials to enable the design process. Furthermore it discusses the data collection instruments, research methodology, research plan, sample group, ethics and analysis methods.

### 3.1 Data collection

The collection of data relevant to an investigation provides us with "information used as a basis for reasoning, discussion or calculation" (Merriam-Webster, 2009). When placed within a context or situation, this information gives the observer a 'snapshot' of what seems to be true at a point in time (Leedy and Ormrod, 2005:89). The research methodology directs and represents this truth to others in a quantitative or qualitative way.

Quantitative methods, referred to as experimental or positivist studies, explain, predict and control phenomena through observation and measurement. Qualitative research, referred to as interpretative, constructivist
or post positivist method, answers questions by describing and understanding phenomena from the participants’ view (Leedy and Ormrod, 2005).

Based on my goal of measuring students’ experience of a phenomenon, and the characteristics of qualitative research as depicted by Greyling (2007) in Table 4, I understood my study falls into the social sciences paradigm.

Table 4: Characteristics of qualitative research (Greyling, 2007)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Qualitative research is conducted in natural settings; it is field-focused.</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The researcher is a key instrument of data collection.</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The research focuses on the lived experiences of participants.</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qualitative research is concerned with matters of meaning; it is interpretive.</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data are collected mainly in the form of social texts.</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data analysis is inductive; the aim is not to prove or disprove hypotheses.</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.1.1 Data collection planning matrix

As described in Chapter one, the overall aim of my research was to explore the use of technology as a tool in engaging students in the design process. I wished to understand the potential of e-learning as a phenomenon generally not associated with studio-based learning environments (Souleles, 2005). The questions I attempted to answer during the course of this study influenced the type of data collected and the manner in which this data was measured,
analysed and presented. My data collection, planning matrix after Greyling (2007), describes the following:

a. questions I asked relevant to the study

b. rationale behind these questions relevant to understanding the phenomenon in question

c. source of the data as a basis for reasoning, discussion, measurement and analysis

**Table 5: Data collection planning matrix based on Greyling (2007)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What I needed to know?</th>
<th>Rationale</th>
<th>Data source</th>
<th>Data type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What constitutes the design process, relevant to the creation of an artifact in graphic design?</td>
<td>To design a model which informs the development of an e-learning environment that promotes engagement in design process.</td>
<td>Research literature</td>
<td>Preliminary research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is the distinctive nature of successful e-learning environments?</td>
<td>To inform the development of engaging, technology driven pedagogies.</td>
<td>Research literature</td>
<td>Preliminary research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research question 1</td>
<td>To link the model of the design process to technology driven pedagogies</td>
<td>Research literature Online artefacts</td>
<td>Preliminary research Primary data collection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What aspects of design process can be facilitated using e-learning?</td>
<td>To apply established concepts behind technology driven pedagogies, with the desired outcome of creating a useful and pleasant learning experience.</td>
<td>Research literature Focus group interview.</td>
<td>Preliminary research Primary data collection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research question 2</td>
<td>To report on the e-learning experience from the students perspective. To gain insight into possible improvements.</td>
<td>Focus group interview. Participant observation</td>
<td>Primary data collection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How would second year graphic design students experience the intervention?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.1.2 Data collection measuring instrument

One of the goals of this study was to analyse and report on the students’ experience of the e-learning environment, hence obtaining a broad spectrum of ideas on how to improve the learning intervention. To this end, I selected focus group interviews as my data collection, measuring tool.

Motivation for choosing focus groups

Focus groups were chosen over personal interviews for the following reasons.

Firstly, Beck, Trombetta and Share (1986:73) describe focus groups as "an informal discussion among selected individuals and about specific topics relevant to the situation at hand". This essentially describes a structured group conversation which, it is assumed, provides us with genuine information on how people have experienced a common event (Barbour and Kitzinger, 1999; Vaughn, Schumm and Sinagub, 1996).

Secondly, according to Vaughn et al. (1996) individual interviews are less likely to produce frank and open discussion. The group dynamic in focus groups produces a wider bank of data through interaction, stimulation, and provides valuable insights into attitudes, ideas, opinions and experiences (Barbour and Kitzinger, 1999). Additionally, the comfort of a group means respondents are not required to answer every question which elicits a more genuine response (Byers and Wilcox, 1998).
As a researcher I am aware of the limitations of focus groups, namely that the type of data generated is qualitative data, making it difficult to analyse (Leedy and Ormrod, 2005).

**Sample group or participants in study**

During the course of this study, access to participants was limited to the population enrolled in the Communication Design course at the Durban University of Technology and further, to students enrolled in their second of study.

In qualitative studies, the choice of participants is either referred to in general terms or relates to the purpose or goals of the study (Trochim, 2002). Since the ultimate goal of this study was to analyse and report on the students’ experience of the e-learning environments, I sampled for purpose and diversity. Trochim (2002) describes this as sampling for heterogeneity, which supports my primary interest, namely obtaining a broad spectrum of ideas on how to improve the learning intervention.

When describing participants in a study, the methods used for their selection provides information about the potential for bias in a study which potentially undermines its’ validity (Herrington, McKenney, Reeves and Oliver, 2007). As a qualitative researcher, I am aware my research is exploratory in nature, and understand I need to enter the study with an open mind (Leedy and Ormrod, 2005). I am also aware of the validity of what seems to be true, due to the close relationship I have with the participants (Barab and Squire, 2004).
Ethics

As my study involves the use of human subjects as central to the investigation, ethical responsibility was vital. Subjects were in no way exposed to physical or psychological harm, and every attempt was made to protect them from unusual stress, embarrassment or loss of self-esteem (Leedy and Ormrod, 2005).

Although the subjects participated in the study as part of their curriculum, informed consent was obtained from each student. Consent forms explained the nature of the study, and participants were given the option of withdrawing their contributions to the course content, as part of the study, at any time. (See Appendix 1 for copies of informed consent forms).

During data collection and analysis, the participants’ right to privacy was respected, and at no time are they referred to by name (Leedy and Ormrod, 2005).

Setting up the focus group

According to Barbour and Kitzinger (1999) and Vaughn et al. (1996), the following needs to be considered when setting up a focus group: a) recruitment of participants, b) structure, c) choosing a setting, d) preparation of discussion guide, e) the moderator, and f) recording of discussion.

a. Recruitment of participants
Before setting up the focus group, participants were recruited by inviting them to participate. A notice serving as a reminder was displayed in the classroom, which detailed the time, place and date of the discussion.

b. Structure
Structure relates to the number of participants used in the focus group and the number of focus groups needed. Researchers disagree on the number of participants, with numbers ranging from eight to twelve (Kitzinger and Barbour, 1999), six to eight (Krueger, 1998), or five to six (Green and Hart, 1999). Brown (1992) advises six to twelve numbers in a heterogeneous study. Since the ultimate goal of this study required me to sample for heterogeneity as described by Trochim (2002), I invited twelve participants.

c. Setting
Due to the nature and duration of the discussion, it was important to choose a comfortable, informal and private venue. (Barbour and Kitzinger, 1999). The fourth year seminar room was selected as it provided for all of the above criteria. Snacks and drinks were also provided.

d. Preparation of discussion guide
A discussion guide highlights the topics and issues to be covered during the interview. It provides a framework for the moderator, and details the main questions as well as prompts and probes that focus the discussion. (Heinzmann, 2009). The interview guideline
used during the focus group was adapted from Heinzmann (2009) and Leedy and Ormrod (2005) and is presented in Table 6.

The conjectured design process model I developed as the instructional end point (see Figure 12, page 76) was used as a basis for developing the interview guideline. This focussed the questions on the students’ experiences, relevant to various activities outlined in the model.
Table 6: *Interview guideline for focus group*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research question</th>
<th>Interview question</th>
<th>Probes</th>
<th>Prompts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Research question 1</strong> What aspects of design process can be facilitated using e-learning?</td>
<td>Can you name activities that make up the design process?</td>
<td>o Can anyone think of any others?</td>
<td>o Could you explain that concept to me again?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What motivates you to participate in the design process?</td>
<td>o What did you learn from that?</td>
<td>o What do you mean by...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>We’ve described the different aspects of the design process. Could you explain how you feel technology is used to facilitate these processes?</td>
<td>o How does it help you to learn?</td>
<td>o Can you give me an example of...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How would you like to see technology used in the future to facilitate the design process?</td>
<td>o How does it help you to interact?</td>
<td>o You used the term... Can you you expand on that?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Research question 2</strong> What factors should be considered when designing a successful e-learning environment?</td>
<td>What should we think about when using technology to facilitate the design process?</td>
<td>o How does it affect the way you are assessed?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How do you feel about using technology to facilitate the design process?</td>
<td>o How does affect the way you reflect on your work?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Research question 3</strong> How would second year graphic design students experience the intervention</td>
<td>o How does that relate to how things were done in the past?</td>
<td>o Why do you think that is so?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Is it useful? Do you feel it has value? Is it pleasant? How can this be improved on?</td>
<td>o Please elaborate/ explain again.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o Why do you feel that way?</td>
<td>o How exactly?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

e. The moderator

The moderator is responsible for directing and maintaining flow during the discussion and should, ideally, have no vested interest
in the outcome of the focus group. The nature of my research methodology, Design-based research, enabled me to moderate the focus group without threatening the validity of the study.

f. Recording the discussion

It is recommended all comments are captured using an audio recorder. The Olympus DM 450 digital voice recorder was used during my focus group, and the recording capabilities on a Nokia cell phone used as a back-up. Written notes were also taken as a means to record nonverbal behaviour.

The audio recording was transcribed, and the transcripts served as a primary source of data.

3.1.3 Data Analysis

A grounded theory approach was adopted during the analysis of the focus group transcript and written artefacts allowing my "participants to speak in voices that are clearly understood" (Strauss and Corbin, 1998:56). Open coding, using line-by-line analysis and margin notes was used to identify common concepts in the text. These concepts were then grouped into categories and sub-categories for presentation.

3.2 Research methodology

The term research methodology describes an approach taken by the researcher when investigating a subject matter, and defines "a set of
procedures” that we use to understand our world better (Merriam-Webster, 2009).

### 3.2.1 Awareness of appropriate methodologies

I identified two potentially suitable methodologies through which I could conduct my investigation: action research and design-based research. The fundamental characteristics of action research after Kurt Lewin (in Ferrance, 2000) and design based research after Ann Brown (Barab and Squire, 2004), are compared in Table 7.

**Table 7: Comparison of fundamental characteristics of action research and design-based research**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Research takes place in an educational setting</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Embraces self-reflective processes that allow for inquiry and discussion into own practice</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encourages collaborative activity amongst colleagues</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Method deals with the empirical or was theory-orientated</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involves iterative cycles of development</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research informs and changes the researchers practice</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Method results in an innovative learning intervention or object</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study concerns localised practice, and not generalised contexts.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Method is solution-orientated</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student is subject and object of enquiry</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

My research goal, to understand how a learning intervention works through the participants’ perspective, rested within the paradigm of qualitative
research. Designing a learning intervention based on cognitive science, is empirical in nature and lies within the paradigm of quantitative research. This combination of positivism and constructivism, referred to as mixed methodology (Brown, 1992), led to my choosing design-based research as my research methodology.

3.2.2 Design-based research

Historically, educational researchers and cognitive scientists worked in isolation, and the cognitive science of learning was removed from teaching practice (Brown, 1992). As a result, researchers studied these processes isolated from context which led to an incomplete understanding of how learning occurred in a naturalistic setting (Barab and Squire, 2004).

John Dewey, an educational reformer, called for the unity of theory and practice in the 1890s (Westbrook, 1999). A century later, Ann Brown embraced “the new science of learning” (Brown, 1992:8) as a means to understand how people learned in context, with the goal of providing evidence-based claims to this effect. At the same time, various types of instructional design models existed (ADDIE, for example) but lacked a sound scientific knowledge base as a starting point to developing instructional models (Gravemeijer and Cobb, 2006:45).

This desire to create credible research in education requires an investigative approach Brown called design experiments or design-based research (Brown, 1992). In collaboration with Allan Collins (1992), this methodology bridged the gap between laboratory-based educational research and learning that occurs in a naturalistic context. [I have analysed the characteristics of design-based
research (Gravemeijer and Cobb, 2006; DBCR, 2003; Brown, 1992; Collins, 1992) in relation to qualitative and quantitative research (Leedy and Ormrod, 2005) and presented them in Appendix 2).

Hence, a design experiment or design-based research begins with a problem in an educational environment and attempts to solve it by designing an innovative learning intervention (Sandoval and Bell, 2004). The ultimate goal is to develop local instruction theories which inform practice.

A key concept in design research is that it is research driven. This means it should have clear goals and use empirical research and theory to design and develop learning environments or interventions, followed by implementation and evaluation of the proposed solution in practice using an iterative process of micro cycles of analysis (Herrington et al., 2007). This involves efforts to understand how the intervention works within the context, then redesign and re-implementation. As educators and designers, the aim is to understand the relationships between educational theory, designed artefact and practice (DBCR, 2003; Gravemeijer and Cobb, 2006).

The characteristics described above remain true to my objectives, and describe a methodology best suited to my goals: to use new pedagogies to engage graphic design students in the design process. In addition, design based research accepts that contextual or naturalistic research is messy and unpredictable, which allowed me opportunities to make mistakes, modify my design and my thinking (Brown, A. 1992; Collins, 1992; DBRC, 2003; Gravemeijer and Cobb, 2006). Collins, Joseph and Bielaczyz (2004:18) best described this approach when they argued:
...this approach of progressive refinement in design involves putting a first version of a design into the world to see how it works. Then, the design is constantly revised based on experience, until all the bugs are worked out.

I also realised early on in my study that it would be difficult to complete a fully functional e-learning environment that accomplished all my objects. Design-based research goes beyond the perfection of a product, and focusses on models of innovation, and data that describes how the intervention works (DBCR, 2003; Brown, 1992; Collins, 1992).

3.2.3 Challenges of design-based research

Although Barab and Squire (2004:12) describe how design-based research has grown in "popularity and significance", they acknowledge the methodology is in its infancy. The challenges linked to design-based research include variables, the notion of context and validity and reliability.

Variables

According to Leedy and Ormrod (2005:218), a variable is "any quality or characteristic in a research investigation that has two or more possible values". In research that establishes causal relationships, one variable (the cause) influences another variable (the effect). An independent variable is the "possible cause of something" and manipulated by the researcher. A dependent variable is the observed result of the independent variable or outcome, and "in the social sciences and education, often some form of human behaviour" (Leedy and Ormrod 2005:218).
Scientific experiments control variables, which define boundaries and subsequently render the study trustworthy, free from bias and replicable. The challenges in design-based research involve describing variables in a realistic setting, and controlling those that affect the design intervention. (Barab and Squire, 2004; Collins et al., 2004). Hence, Collins et al. (2004) agree, in design-based research, no attempt is made to control variables or hold them constant. "The goal instead is to identify all the variables or characteristics of the situation that affect the dependant variable of interest" (Collins et al., 2004:5).

Context

The notion of context is key to design-based research. This is due to the assumption that cognition is not located in the individual thinker but "is a process that is distributed across the knower, the environment in which knowing occurs, and the activity in which the learner participates" (Barab and Squire, 2004:1).

Design-based research focuses on understanding how learning occurs in the "messiness of real-world practice" and context viewed as "a core part of the story" (Barab and Squire, 2004:3). To this end, a successful innovation is described as “a joint product of the designed intervention and the context" (DBCR, 2003:7).

The challenge in this regard relates to context as a variable. Variables define boundaries and subsequently render a study trustworthy, free from bias and replicable. Context, on the other hand, is difficult to
describe in terms of boundaries and what constitutes naturalistic. Barab and Squire (2004:11) conclude:

...the goal is not to sterilise naturalistic contexts from confounding variables so the generated theory is more valid and reliable. Instead, the challenge is to develop flexibly adaptive theories that remain useful even when applied to new local contexts.

In addition, design-based research does not attempt to gain experimental control. Cobb, McClain and Gravemeijer (in Barab and Squire, 2004:10) accept the context and the complexity of dependent variables in their ‘teaching experiment’ and implore researchers “to intervene where possible, using interventions as opportunities to examine core theoretical issues and explore learning” and. In this way, a successful learning innovation is a joint product of the designed intervention and context.

**Validity and reliability**

Defined, validity relates to the accuracy of a study in terms of what is measured or concluded relative to the real world. Validity relates to reliability regarding the extent to which these measurements or conclusions give consistent results and whether they are replicable. Internal validity implies the study was conducted with rigour, and looks at how measurements were taken, what was measured, and causal relationships. External validity refers to the extent to which the results of the study are transferable to other contexts, and reliability relates to how these measuring procedures would yield similar results under repeated

In design-based research there is a tight relationship between the researcher, designers and implementers, and in some cases the researcher is the designer and implementer (Hoadley, 2004). Barab and Squire (2004:10) explain the researcher is causing the interactions they are making claims about, which threatens the validity of the study:

\[\text{\ldots if a researcher is intimately involved in the conceptualization, design, development, implementation, and researching of a pedagogical approach, then ensuring that researchers can make credible and trustworthy assertions is a challenge.}\]

Similarly, design-based research moves beyond simple observation and involves the engineering of context "in ways that allow us to improve and generate evidence-based claims about learning" (Barab and Squire 2004:2). Design-based research recognises participants as central to the study, and co-participants in both the design of the intervention and the analysis (Barab and Squire, 2004). Hoadley (2004:204) mentions how these characteristics blurr the ‘objective’ researcher-participant distinction.

According to Leedy and Ormrod (2005:88) the researcher is a catalyst "whose primary function is to collect, organize and report what the collected data seem to indicate". This approach means any competent person could complete or replicate the study.
3.3 Assumptions

Assumptions that enable this study to take place include the following:

a. All participants have completed a first year of study offered as part of a course in Communication Graphic Design.

b. All participants have basic computer skills inclusive of Microsoft Word and PowerPoint, understand how to send electronic mails (e-mail) and can use the Internet to conduct searches for information.

c. All participants have access to a computer laboratory linked to the World Wide Web.

d. The institution at which the students are registered is subscribed to Blackboard WebCT 6.

e. Researchers have received training in Blackboard WebCT 6, and are familiar with the associated terms used and potential applications of the VLE.

f. It assumed that researchers attempting to imitate this study will familiarise themselves with the technical aspects of technologies such as Flickr, Blogspot, and Adobe.
3.4 Research design

Although various researchers affiliated to design-based research adopt different strategies for solving a research problem (DBCR, 2003; Ritland, 2003), I selected the research design described by Gravemeijer and Cobb (2006) to conduct my experiment. Simple in structure, it recommends a three-phase research plan, namely preparing for the experiment, experimenting in the classroom and conducting retrospective analysis, each of which is discussed in more detail below.

3.4.1 Phase one: Preparing for the experiment

According to Gravemeijer and Cobb (2006:48), preparing for the experiment begins with the identification of the goal of the study, or "instructional end-point". In this instance, the goal was to use an e-learning environment to enable the design process. The "instructional starting point" (Gravemeijer and Cobb 2006:49), focusses on the consequences of earlier instruction, and informs the "instructional end-point". Additionally, instruction affected by history, tradition and current assessment practices influences both the instructional starting point and end-point.

My graphic interpretation of the "initial preparation for the experiment" as described by Gravemeijer and Cobb (2006), is depicted in Figure 8.

*Figure 7: Graphic interpretation of preparing for the experiment*
The instructional starting point

My instructional starting point concentrated on unpacking consequences of earlier instruction, and occurred over a two year period. It began with an Assessors' Training course, which required participants to submit a self-reflective portfolio focussing on assessment practices and consequences of instructional practices. In addition, preliminary research provided me with insights into how history and studio-based teaching traditions had informed my practice.

An online learning course offered by the institution, using the Blackboard Virtual Learning Environment, introduced me to the concept of e-learning. This in turn highlighted the potential of using new pedagogies to improve on my teaching and the manner in which my students could learn.

The following tables (Table 9 and 10) summarise the consequences of my earlier instructional practices, exposed in my self-reflective portfolio, plus historical and traditional influences as described in the literature review.
### Table 8: A summary of the consequences of earlier instructional practice, as influence on my instructional starting point

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional starting point</th>
<th>I compiled a self-reflective portfolio on assessment practices as part of an Assessors training course, which revealed the following:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Assessors training course</strong></td>
<td>a) My assessment practices were based on the development of a product and excluded process as part of assessment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b) Over-assessment led to racing from production of artefact to production of artefact. This allowed no time for peer assessment or reflection on practice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c) Norm-based assessment methods created a competitive work environment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>d) Lack of assessment criteria, that served as a guide for the creation of the artefact, feedback and assessment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>e) The lack of a concrete knowledge base to support production of artefacts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>f) Students were needy, and demonstrated reluctance when it came to decision-making regarding their work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>g) There was a focus on creative thinking skills, but not on critical thinking skills</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 9: A summary of historical, tradition and assessment practices as influence on my instructional starting point

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional starting point</th>
<th>As discussed in Chapter two, studio-based practice is based on the <em>Ecole des Beaux Arts</em> system, which embraces the following:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>History</strong></td>
<td>a. Setting of a design problem as the initiation of the educational process,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tradition</strong></td>
<td>b. the studio as the simulation of the professional environment,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Assessment</strong></td>
<td>c. design process as the studio methodology,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pioneers: the Blackboard</strong></td>
<td>d. studio master or tutor served as a guide and critic,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>WebCT6 online learning course</strong></td>
<td>e. master or tutor intervened in the students designing,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>f. juror system was a means of evaluation of the final product,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>My participation in the Pioneers online learning course using the Blackboard Virtual Learning System, highlighted the potential of facilitating parts of the design process using e-learning.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Instructional end-point

Gravemeijer and Cobb (2006:50) describe how the instructional starting point provides insight into "potential instructional end-points" or goals. They explain how end-points lead to the formulation of a local instructional theory consisting of "conjectures about a possible learning process, together with conjectures about possible means of supporting that learning process".

3.4.2 Phase two: The design experiment

According to Gravemeijer and Cobb (2006) this phase begins with the conducting of the design experiment. Once the starting points are defined and the endpoints are specified, a conjectured local instruction theory is formulated by the design researcher. This in turn leads to a process of microcycles of iterative testing, improving and understanding. The overall goal is not to prove whether the intervention works, but rather to understand how it did so within the context of the proposed local instructional design. This formative evaluation allows the design researcher to gather information on how the intervention succeeds which informs better design.

My instructional end-point, or goal, culminated in the development of a conjectured design process model (Figure 11), focusing on a cognitive-based way of working and learning in a mixed-mode, studio-based educational environment. The model describes a possible learning process that revolves around the development of core skills, namely practical thinking skills, creative thinking skills and critical thinking skills.
This design experiment as an object developed over a period of four years, involving numerous cycles of iteration. Initially, I had intended to use the Blackboard VLE exclusively for on-line content, but as the study progressed, I found alternative, more effective platforms for some activities. The means of supporting the instructional end point eventually embraced the use of new technologies inclusive of e-mail, the Blackboard WebCT6 VLE, Facebook, a blog, Flickr and e-portfolios using Adobe Portable Documents Format. The design experiment is presented in detail in Chapter four.

3.4.3 Phase three: Retrospective analysis

The DBCR (2003:7) describes how, during this phase, the intervention is ‘frozen’ and then evaluated in a summative manner. Data collected during this phase concentrates on evaluating the consequences of the conjectured design.
Chapter 4
Design presentation and analysis

[Phase two: reporting on the design experiment]
4.1. Introduction

The primary objective of a design-based study is "to develop broad models of how people think, know, act and learn" and to generate evidence-based claims about learning (Barab and Squire, 2004:5). The overall goal is not to prove whether the intervention works, but rather to understand how it did so within the context of the proposed local instructional design. This formative evaluation allows the design researcher to gather information on how the intervention was succeeding which informs better design (Brown, 1992; DBCR, 2003).

As described in Chapter one, the overall aim of this study is to explore the use of technology as a tool, which enables the design process, therefore my research problem addresses the following:

‘The affects of using an e-learning environment as part of a mixed-mode studio to enable the design’

Related to my own teaching, the goals of the study are to:

a. clarify characteristics of the design process relevant to the creation of an artefact in graphic design.

b. explore the distinctive nature of successful e-learning environments and formulate a model for use in my own classroom that enables the design process.

c. design, develop and implement e-learning, as part of a mixed-mode studio environment, which enables the design process.

d. analyse and report on the students’ experience of e-learning as part of the mixed-mode studio environment.
This chapter reports on the design of the learning intervention based on my goals. It is acknowledged that independent variables may affect the success of any design in practice, and where possible the contextual variables potentially impacting on success are also mentioned. These relate to setting, nature of learners, resources and support for implementation, professional development, financial requirements and implementation path (Collins et al., 2004).

4.2 Design of the learning intervention based on goals

Preliminary research as part of data collection, and described in the literature review, yielded the information I required to meet my initial goals. This not only led to my understanding of concepts relevant to the design process, but linked them to a learning environment by describing learning theory and technology driven pedagogies. The questions I now asked revolved around the development of a model. How do I tie together concepts I’ve understood and apply e-learning to the design process in meaningful way?

Sternberg’s (in Plucker, 2004) Triarchic Theory of (Successful) Intelligences describes how intelligent behaviour in an individual arises from a balance between creative, analytical and practical abilities. This concept seems to align itself with the principles of design thinking, divergent thinking aligned with creative thinking, convergent thinking with analytical and practical thinking with the making of something new or synthesis.

In the following figure (Figure 8) I have considered this alignment and linked their development with the principles of behaviourism, cognitivism and
constructivism. Finally I have assigned potential activities of e-learning to the table.

Figure 8: Design process related to summary of themes discussed in the literature review
4.2.1 Goal: clarify characteristics of the design process relevant to the creation of an artefact in graphic design

The development of the previous table enabled me to design a conjectured design process model that fulfilled my first goal: clarify characteristics of the design process relevant to the creation of an artefact in graphic design. It also enabled me to align these characteristics with desirable outcomes in a learning environment, which I based on my understanding of learning theory.

Again, the model begins with the three successful intelligences according to Sternberg (1996). These align creative intelligence with divergent thinking, convergent with analytical thinking and synthesis aligns with the development of practical thinking.

*Figure 9: Conjectured design process model*
4.2.2 Goal: explore the distinctive nature of successful e-learning environments and formulate a model for use in my own classroom that enables the design process

The design of the conjectured design process model has been adapted to pedagogies supported by technologies. These are discussed and reflected upon in detail the following section.

*Figure 10:* A graphic interpretation of the conjectured means of supporting the design process incorporating e-learning
4.2.3 Goal: design, develop and implement e-learning, as part of a mixed-mode studio environment, which enables the design process

The following section describes and reflects upon how new technologies were used to implement the conjectured design process model, and is divided into two sections.

The first section reports on the use of technologies using guidelines described by Collins et al. (2004:38): a) goals and elements of design, b) settings where implemented, c) description of phases (if any), d) outcomes found and lessons learned. Although interventions were implemented at different times, efforts have been made to present the designs in a logical order. Technologies used include an internal and external weblog (blog), Flickr, Blackboard WebCT6 VLE, Adobe Pdf’s, and email. The second section describes how the various technologies integrated into an assignment or instructional sequence, as part of the design process.

4.2.3.1 Gluebook - an external weblog

Goals and elements of design

My decision to start a blog occurred early in the Pioneers course. Excited at the prospect of using technology in my classroom and armed with very little learning theory, I developed the Gluebook blog using blogspot.com as my weblog publishing tool. A simple two column template was used, with a customised header and background inserted.

The goal behind the blog was to provide students with a condensed, trustworthy and rich source of information on South African design topics of varying interest, and beyond the scope of graphic design. In
this way the blog has been used to publish information that relates to design, but also as Downes (2004) points out, to steer a student’s approach towards a subject and generate interest. Additionally attempts are made to create relationships between seemingly unrelated topics and ‘sew(s) together what is now a lot of learning with no real connection among the disciplines’ (Richardson in Downes, 2004:26).

Settings where implemented
All students had all day access to a computer laboratory that contains 28 Apple Macintosh computers. (For further sections and description, unless otherwise stated, the settings where implemented, as described here, are applicable).

Description of phases
The blog developed over a period of approximately six months. Phases of development occurred as my understanding of the blogspot environment improved. These phases did not affect my goals or content of the blog.

Outcomes and lessons learnt
My first misconception regarding the blog was based on a ‘build it and they will come’ mentality: that students would find it interesting and automatically go there. A casual request in the classroom for a show of hands as to who had visited the blog, revealed otherwise. In an attempt to generate more interest I introduced showcase posts on current students, in the graphic design course, who produced exceptional work. This seemed to generate more interest, and the number of visits rose
over the course of the year. Tracking software revealed the site has had 7,500 visitors since its inception in 2009, but there is no way of knowing exactly who they are.

The difficulties I experienced using the blog involved the following:

- Learning how to use a blog effectively is time consuming. This involved learning how to use widgets, setting up RSS feeds, tracking, and understanding how to generate traffic on the blog. Recent improvements in the way the blogspot site functions has since made these tasks simpler.
- Searching for information, verifying sources, checking links and re-sizing images, when creating posts, is time consuming.
- Since the blog was in the public domain, I remained sole author. Efforts to get students to contribute posts, proved labour intensive as plagiarism was problematic.

The major lesson I have learnt is running an effective, lively blog needs collaboration in terms of input. To this end, I have invited staff members from Jewellery and Interior Design departments to submit posts via e-mail or as draft submissions on the blog. They have agreed to contribute acknowledged written content, correctly saved images and verified links. There are also opportunities to include input from other universities.

At the time of writing, the blog was under re-construction. The blog design, structure and content links are explained in Figures 11 and 12 on the following pages.
**Figure 11: Blog posts and sidebar features of blog Gluebook**

1. Customised header
2. SIDEBAR FEATURES
   - Subscription to an RSS feed
   - About us
   - Links to Agencies and studios in South Africa
   - Links to design competitions: local and abroad
   - Link to the Graphic Design Alumni Facebook account which features Alumni news and job posts in local Durban studios
   - Links to past students’ work featured in various sites including Flickr
Figure 12: Blog posts and sidebar features of blog Gluebook

SIDEBAR FEATURES cont.

- Link to Flickr site
- Links to design e-zines
- Links to various other local blogs
  [This is a Blogspot widget that can be inserted into any Blogspot sidebar]
- Blog posts automatically archive
  [This is a Blogspot widget that can be inserted into any Blogspot sidebar]
- News feed featuring design orientated news from around the world.
  [This is a Blogspot widget that can be inserted into any Blogspot sidebar.]
4.2.3.2 Flickr

Goals and elements of design

Flickr is an image hosting website and online community offering two types of accounts, Free and Pro. I opened a Free account which I intended to use as a virtual archive for students’ work, linking to the blog and Blackboard online classroom. The site allows users to upload 300Mb of images, and a photo stream enables visitors to see the most recent 200 images. The remaining uploaded images are still stored on the site and can link to blog posts.

Figure 13: Flickr homepage.

The flickr site features three sets. ‘Play’ features work done by students outside of their university environment.

‘Work’ featured student work and comments on how some of it was executed.

‘After dark’ features photographs of students at events, and at final year exhibitions.

The goal behind using flickr was to create a virtual archive of students’ work that could be referred to when students set standards for their own performance. Additionally, the idea was for contributing students to provide short feedback on how the image or artefact was created, enhancing learning. In this way, it was hoped tacit knowledge could be transferred through the students’ experience.
Figure 14: Student uploading Flickr with feedback

Student contribution and feedback potentially enables other students to learn.

The quote shows:
‘cheated and used the fish eye filter in Photoshop to create this effect’.

Figure 15: Flickr photostream

Figure 16: Flickr ‘Work’ set
Flickr introduced me to the concept of an online community, as people with similar interests share ideas and comment on one another’s contributions. The ‘contacts page’ allows for interested parties or persons to request ‘contact’ via e-mail, which means they automatically subscribe to your photostream, and become part of your community.

![Contacts page]

Outcomes found and lessons learned.

The difficulties I experienced using flickr involved the following:

- Collecting, re-sizing and uploading images onto the site was time consuming.
- When setting up the flickr site, I selected myself as author. A later effort to change the privacy function on the site, allowing students to log in and upload work themselves, was not possible.
once the site was active. This meant the site would have to abandoned, and a new site opened with this option.

• Always presume that students are aware of posts made in an online environment. Five minutes after posting an example of a past student's work, I received an e-mail requesting that I remove the item as he was not happy with it.

• A structured lesson on how to save images for the web for fast download time was needed. I also found it necessary to hold a workshop on how to upload images into Flickr, and how to use the comment, tagging and set tools.

• Students also need to be aware of how to protect their own work from plagiarism by saving their work at a lower resolution or using a watermark.

4.2.3.3 The Blackboard WebCT6 online classroom

My decision to use an online classroom was based purely on exposure to this environment through a University Online Learning Course. Besides using PowerPoint, I had no previous experience in using technology to enhance my lessons, and subsequently, use of the environment was largely exploratory. Initially I thought the environment would assist me in managing the course by monitoring the submission of work, for example. It was only through the development of the design process model (section 4.2.2) I understood the potential of the online environment to help facilitate the design process.
I used various menu options as part of the Blackboard Content Menu at different times, some worked as anticipated and others did not suit my needs. Subsequently, the following section looks at the design of the Blackboard WebCT6 online classroom using self-designed instructional material and Blackboard menu options that best met the objectives of the study.

All students had all day access to a computer laboratory that contains 28 Apple Macintosh computers. (For further sections and description, unless otherwise stated, the settings where implemented, as described here, are applicable).

The following sections describe the goals and elements of design behind the development and use of the Blackboard VLE homepage, media library tool, weblink tool, discussion tool and assessment tool. In some instances, where relevant, I have mentioned the outcomes and lessons learnt.

The Blackboard VLE homepage

After logging into the system students are confronted with the classroom homepage (Figure 18) which sets the tone for the content. The graphics describe the fundamental purpose of the learning environment, namely to ‘talk’, ‘learn’, ‘go!’ and ‘info’.

The built in Blackboard course tools rendered ‘visible’, and used in the content menu, include Learning Modules, Media Library, Web
Links, Chat, and Discussions. There are two customised external links including the Gluebook blog and a link to Flickr. A customised internal link, Designers Cookbook, takes one to an online learning resource. Information centered on the screen means no scrolling is required to view the page.

Figure 18: Screen shot of the online classroom homepage

Blackboard menu options, plus customised links which features Cookbook as an internal link, and Flickr plus Gluebook as customised external links.

The homepage sets the tone for the classroom and works around ‘talk’, ‘learn’, ‘go!’ and ‘info’ and describes what students can expect from the classroom.
I attempted to apply the principles of experiential design throughout the construction of the classroom. Visual consistency is achieved by using the same colours, fonts and image type throughout. A header is visible on the classroom homepage, and is used repeatedly throughout the Designers Cookbook. The header is also visible in ‘learning modules’ but appears in a different colour to help signify the different between learning sections and assignment sections.

*Figure 19: Top bar of with pictures of students creates student presence*

The colours that appear consistently throughout the classroom are web safe.

*Figure 20: Web safe colours used in design of classroom*

The legible, web safe typeface, Trebuchet MS is used throughout, with Bold and Italic versions applied to headings and when emphasis is needed. Consultation with a small group of students revealed that 14 point was the preferred font size for body copy in
terms of legibility. One student commented the ‘larger font makes it look as though there is less to read’ (2010: pers. comm.).

**Figure 21: Trebuchet font. (Zoepke, 2011)**

Trebuchet MS regular
Trebuchet MS regular
Trebuchet MS regular
Trebuchet MS regular

**Media library tool**

The goal behind using the Media Library tool was to create a glossary of terms that supported the building of a visual vocabulary. All terms used in PowerPoint presentations as part of an instructional lecture, are saved here for later reference. Where possible, the same images or examples used in the lectures are included.

**Figure 22: Screen shot of the Media Library tool used as a glossary**

Clicking on the term opens the description of meaning and features visual examples. As implemented in the Cookbook, key points are highlighted in red and in a larger point size to accommodate scanning.
**Learning Modules tool**

The motivation behind using the Learning Module tool was twofold. Firstly I wished to provide students with their briefs or assessment tasks linking relevant, just-in-time information and examples. Secondly, in my experience, students often lost printed briefs or failed to take comprehension notes on verbal briefs, which meant I needed to repeat information on a regular basis. Using the online environment was a bonus as it encouraged students to become more independent and not rely on me for information.

Initially briefs were designed using Frontline web design software, and later Expressions Web. When designing the briefs, I adhered to a strict three column grid to create order, and visual noise was avoided.

Personally, the biggest bonus in using an online environment to present briefs was student independence. Any requests for information regarding ‘what do we need to do?’, ‘when is it due?’, ‘can we do this?’ were now met with ‘read the brief online, and then you are welcome to discuss it with me’.

The disadvantages of using an online environment to present briefs include the following:

The development of the brief using html software is time-consuming and requires previous knowledge in web-design software.
• Uploading the document onto the VLE requires good Internet connections.

• Internet speeds limit the types of information that can potentially link to the document. For example, an instructional video or animation takes too long to download.

*Figure 23: Screen shot of assessment task in Learning Modules.*

The built-in advance organizer is used to structure the learning process.

The assignment specifics are outlined in terms of what needs to be completed, deadlines, and assessment criteria. Students are prompted in terms of what was learnt and what now needs to be demonstrated as part of their learning.

External hyperlinks are filtered and take students directly to task-specific information that supports the problem solution. Some links offer explicit knowledge and others ‘how to’ tacit knowledge.

A link to Flickr shows examples of previous students’ work.
Web Links tool

The objective of the web link tool was to create an online repository for web links that students found interesting and relevant, with each link filed under a relevant section, for example Illustration, History or Design. Initially it was difficult to get students to contribute voluntarily, and as a result I implemented a compulsory contribution as part of their introduction to the online classroom. Students were instructed to visit the site of their choice, describe it and link it.

Although the Web Links tool works simply and efficiently, I found students were not only reluctant to contribute, but tracking revealed they rarely used the links posted. I have subsequently implemented the use of the bookmarking site Diigo, which was met with enthusiasm. Diigo allows students to create private or public website collections of personal preference. It is also easier and more convenient to use.

Discussion tool

The Blackboard VLE allows for three types of discussion to occur: Blog, Discussion or Journal. In my online classroom I experimented with the Blog, Threaded Discussion and Private Journal options.

The motivation behind using the Blog tool was to promote student-student interaction, and help develop a sense of community, as students worked together to make sense of their prescribed topic.
At the same time it allowed for self-expression in a safe environment, and exposed learners’ attitudes and beliefs towards a topic as they attempted to solve their design problem. Downes (2004) mentions how blogging also creates equity in a classroom, by allowing the quiet students to have a writing space to voice their opinion.

I experimented with the Discussion tool in a different way, as part of reflection in practice. Based on what they had learned, students were required to comment on what they needed to think about before they shot a photograph for a magazine article. Their comments also signalled their state of understanding relevant to the task.

The Journal tool was used as a private conversation tool between students and myself. The main objective was to commit students to reflect, mid-year, on their strengths, weaknesses and opportunities for improving their performance.

The Blog and Discussion tools were used during an assessment task or brief requiring students to write a short article on tattoos and why people have them. They also needed to interview someone with a tattoo. The subsequent article and a photograph, styled and shot by the students, were incorporated into the design of a double page spread for a magazine.
The theme of the Blog was ‘The history of tattoos and why you think people get them!’ Each student was required to post, and then comment on a post. Contributions debated the history of tattoos, why people get them, the types available, how to remove tattoos, personal meaning and tattoos, and whether or not having one would jeopardise chances of getting a job. The question of religion and tattoos was raised, as well as freedom of choice (see Appendix 3).

What impressed me during the debate was the enthusiasm students showed, and the strength of their arguments which included referencing and links to relevant sites. They also demonstrated tolerance for others opinions and expressed their own in an appropriate manner [all spelling as appears on the blog has been retained for purposes of authenticity]:

‘Tattoos from my knowledge were used by the Japanese people for cultural reasons and in some societies they were used for marking prisoners.’

‘From my knowledge and form what i’ve read from the bible is says... the first tattoo was marked on Cain by God so people can see that he was punished by him for killing his own Brother.’

‘For those who don’t yet know im christian and from the other coments I didn’t see any indepth religious views so I found a interesting article, is a bit long but interesting...’

‘Interesting feedback so far... personally I think the time of getting a tattoo as an act of rebellion has passed, they are becoming more and more accepted and have lost their taboo...’

‘I interviewed the owner of Eagles Tattoo Parlour and he said that tattoos on men are a show of force and strength as when males engage in battle with one and other the first thing noticed is the rolling up of sleeves hence showing their tattoos... their own mark of strength.... he said that this trend started with the aborigines!’

‘I’ve seen that some people get a tattoo to cover up a scar, either to feel better about getting through a tough time or to symbolise their new found ‘life’ or ‘strength’. The one guy I interviewed had an Ace of Spade card tattooed on his wrist to mark the
fact that it had saved his life. In a true life story I watched on tv, called "Why I Wore Lipstick to My Mastectomy", the lady had recovered from breast cancer and to symbolise her journey and recovery, she had a rose tattooed over.

'I had a chat with a client from skin trade tattoos and was under the impression that some time ago an 8000 year old mummy was found with tattooed markings on his back. Experts believe they had both religious and medicinal significance. Very cool.'

'Not sure if this will help. But the conversation is interesting! Go to http://jeffsotoart.blogspot.com/ to find out why Jeff gets tattoos! Go to his post called 'Tattoo post'. Brilliant tattoos...if you're into that sort of thing!

Although the Threaded Discussion got very ‘messy’, with multiple threads repeating similar themes by different students, the conversational activity was vibrant and meaningful (see Appendix 4).

'Before taking a picture I have to consider the amount of light in relation with my object, the angle and rule of thirds. These are the common basics one has remember when taking a picture.

'Playing around and taking shots at different angles can give good pix, during a shot one should try by all means not to move.'

'I've learnt that you shouldn't take one picture and think it will work. You should really play around more and you'll realise that you'll have better pictures than the one you decided on.'

'Every picture has its story. Whether it is of high quality contrast in a black and white photo or a nice sepia photo, who says we need colour all the time. Don't get me wrong full colour works but why not play around a bit "I'll rather play around and get it wrong a few times and be different."

'Anyone can take a photo of a guy sporting his chops, it's the composition and lighting that capture the atmosphere and the mood of the photo...what do you want the atmosphere to be?? Will you use hard contrasting light, back lighting or a soft light to create the right mood?"

'Composition and light play a huge role in determining if your subject is dark and mysterious or dramatic or lomo or "as it is" or fun or comical or friendly or with attitude or theatrical or typical or original or just plain normal. So it really depends on what kind of feel I'll be giving to my layout and article as to what kind of photo's will be produced...'
‘We all know that good things in life often happen by mistake. Photography is no different. Often the best pictures taken are those that are an “accident”.’

The Private Journal tool worked technically, but students were reluctant to post. Previous attempts at reflection on practice were hand written, and students seemed more comfortable expressing themselves, in a private capacity, in this way.

The Assessment tool

The Assessment tool was used as a means of providing feedback to students, signalling their state of understanding of explicit knowledge. The Assessment tool as a link in the Blackboard contents bar was hidden from the students’ view, and the assessments built into the Learning Module using the advance organiser.

**Figure 24: Brief in Learning Module using the advance organiser to link to online test.**
No marks were awarded for completing the online test, and students could redo the test any number times.

The types of questions used included true/false, multiple choice, fill in the blank and matching question to answer (the following figures depict each type of question).

**Figure 25**: Example of a true /false type question in online test

![Figure 25](image1)

**Figure 26**: Example of a multiple choice type question in online test

![Figure 26](image2)
Students were also able to check their answers against a rubric which indicated the correct answer and I provided feedback on incorrect answers using simulative interactivity.
A second self-test option using Eclipse Crossword was uploaded into the Learning Module. Students could change the crossword answers, and redo the crossword if they chose to do so.

**Figure 29:** A simple example of an interactive crossword puzzle using Eclipse

Students seemed to enjoy the online test and in particular the crossword puzzle. Some students repeated the online test after re-reading the Cookbook.

4.2.3.4 The Designers Cookbook

The instructional material featured in the Designers Cookbook was created as a separate learning object, using the web design software Microsoft Expressions Web.

*Goals and elements of design*

The aim of the book is to build explicit knowledge, visual vocabulary, and provide a rich source of just-in-time information. This material is usable in two ways: students can visit the information at their leisure
using the created link on the menu or homepage making it is learner-selectable. Alternatively, pages of the Cookbook can be included as part of a Learning Module. By using the design problem or brief to inform the type of information needed, I can provide links to specific and relevant sections of the Cookbook.

The Designers Cookbook uses cooking as a metaphor to explain how design fundamentals or ‘elements of design’ are similar to ‘ingredients’. As in cooking, different combinations of ingredients give you different outcomes. Here the ‘principles of design’ are called ‘recipes’.

Figure 30: Screen shot of The Designers Cookbook, Homepage
The analogy of a cookbook is used, suggesting design elements are the basic ingredients of any visual communication blended together in a creative way.

Hyperlink to ‘ingredients’ or elements of design, including Point, Line, Texture, Shape, Colour and Value.

Hyperlink back to Contents page.
Figure 32: Shape homepage with screen shots of three hyperlinked pages from The Designers Cookbook.

Contents page with hyperlinks to each page of section.

Navigation to move forward or back one page.

Information is chunked, with key points highlighted in red and a larger point size, to accommodate scanning.

Concepts are contextualised across disciplines to encourage transfer.

 Thumbnails serve as hyperlinks to larger examples. The thumbnail image shows part of the large image and not a miniature version of the entire picture.

Deep hyperlink to external site. Opens in new browser window, and information is content specific. Links expand on explicit knowledge or build tacit knowledge.
The Designers Cookbook was developed over the course of a year since it required knowledge of html or a web design program. As designer and developer this meant I was responsible for implementing the design and uploading it onto the classroom. The phases of the design were therefore limited to this knowledge and as this increased, the design was adapted. The software program Frontpage was used to create this phase.

My initial concept behind providing students with explicit knowledge involved a hyperlink to a design elements page. This in turn linked to various topics which presented as a single web-page requiring scrolling down to view the information. The following figures graphically show what was achieved.

Figure 33: Phase one: Elements of design homepage

Figure 34: Phase one: Colour homepage and content
I realised early on the design of this layout presented problems in terms of the user experience. Visually, I felt the viewer was presented with too much information at one time, and chunking of information was difficult. This was confirmed when I asked a student for feedback and they exclaimed: “it’s too much to read!” The amount of information presented also required scrolling down too far.

*Outcomes and lessons learnt*

The outcomes and lessons learnt during the development of the Designers Cookbook include the following:

The design of the online Designers Cookbook requires knowledge of an html or web design programme which took time to learn. Designing in this way means corrections made to the environment requires re-design and re-uploading. This is tedious and time consuming.

Hyperlinks to sites on the Web change over time. This means that links are broken and need repairing. In future I will refer to designers and their work, but exclude links to their sites. These can be included in the briefs if necessary.

4.2.3.5 The use of Adobe Portable Document Format (pdf)

*Goals and elements of design*

The goal behind using Adobe pdf was twofold: it was used as a means to present assignments or explicit knowledge, and also for self-evaluation and formative feedback.
The motivation behind using pdf’s for content, was based on slow upload and download times of large files or documents presented in the Blackboard environment. This was especially true when these files included video footage. Adobe InDesign was used to generate rich sources of information by linking video files which support written information, and by playing these inside the document.

*Figure 35: Adobe pdf with video link playing inside the document*

Pdf’s were also used to stimulate students’ meta-cognitive processes, by focussing on analysis and reflection in a number of ways.

Firstly, students were encouraged to make choices regarding their work. In the subject of photography for example, numerous images are taken
as potential solutions to the brief, and students are required to select work for submission, referring to the assessment criteria as a guide.

Another mode is that, working in groups, they are required to discuss their selections and to explain and defend their decisions to one another. Finally, using the Sticky Note tool in Adobe Pro, they validate their choices using the visual vocabulary acquired through explicit knowledge presented as part of the assignment. Students are also encouraged to identify weaknesses in their work, recognising what they know or do not know.

Figure 36: Students using Sticky Note in Adobe pdf, to analyse and reflect on work

The saved documents, using the ‘smallest file’ option in Adobe Pro are then emailed to me. The Sticky Note tool allows me to post feedback on
comments, and these emailed back to the student. Marks awarded as part of process are based strictly on the students’ ability to reflect on their work. Students are also encouraged to put what they learned into practice by correcting work or repeating the assignment.

*Figure 37: Using Sticky Note in Adobe pdf, to provide feedback*

*Outcomes and lessons learned*

The outcomes and lessons learned using pdf’s were numerous. The use of pdf as a reflection and analysis tool had a number of benefits. It enabled students to develop their analytical skills, the use of their visual vocabulary and signalled their state of understanding regarding the topic.

The use of pdf and email proved useful as a management tool, as it was easy to keep track of student submissions, and students no longer had...
an excuse regarding timely submission of work. It also provided opportunities to give immediate feedback when I was not available, outside of class time. Some students also made use of Google Chat which enabled me to provide live feedback, while referring to emailed work.

**Figure 38: Using Google Chat to provide live feedback**

4.2.3.6 Integration of technologies used into a potential work-flow

As mentioned, the previous sections describe and reflect upon how new technologies were used to implement the conjectured design process
model. This included the use of an external weblog, Flickr, Blackboard WebCT6, and Adobe pdf's. The following diagram represents a potential workflow, integrating the previously discussed technologies and using the conjectured design process model as reference.

The core concepts of design thinking were used as a starting point and are represented in yellow. These concepts are aligned with activities using the technologies described in the previous sections.
**Figure 39:** Potential work-flow, integrating the previously discussed technologies and using the conjectured design process model as reference.
4.2.4 Goal: analyse and report on the students’ experience of e-learning as part of the mixed-mode studio environment

The following tables were created using a qualitative, grounded theory approach, to analyse the transcripts from the focus group and relevant digital content. Open coding, using line-by-line analysis, was used to identify common concepts in the text. These concepts were then grouped into categories and sub-categories for presentation.

Based on the focus group comments, five broad themes or categories were identified, namely: a) community of practice or creative ecosystem, b) assessment, c) learning style, d) meta cognition and e) learner-centred environment. Sub-categories or concepts found in the text were linked to each category. These described the students’ experience relative to characteristics of a successful e-learning environment as discussed in the literature review.

**Community of practice or creative ecosystem**

The analysis of this category highlighted ten concepts relevant to the students’ experience: interaction, feedback, motivation, knowledge, reflection, co-operation, connectivity, recognition and competition.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student comments</th>
<th>Concepts</th>
<th>Category</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[feedback] gives you so much more confidence and then some people will put work that they've done at home and then you can look at it and it can inspire you to do much more</td>
<td>Interaction Feedback Collaboration Motivation</td>
<td>Community of practice ‘Groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do better as they interact regularly' (Wenger, 2006:1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...it's nice cause you're visually seeing and interacting with your other students</td>
<td>Student-student Interaction</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...[Facebook] and they can give you feedback and you can like communicate with them</td>
<td>Interaction Feedback</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...[Facebook] when you see your classmates' work ...you get so exposed to other peoples designs and that's when you grow</td>
<td>Collaboration Reflection Motivation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...[Facebook] and then you understand why...your...that things that you do in class are so...why you getting 50's...and that's why you're not getting 80's...that's why you also understand you get a broader mind</td>
<td>Reflection Motivation Explicit knowledge</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...and then someone put on there...‘Guys I need your help, this is not working, what would you recommend' and then people would be able to just log in, comment, go out, have it always on you know...</td>
<td>Collaboration Cooperation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...I think it would be nice if we ... have a blog that we could all go to and interact with and maybe briefs were put on the blog more of an interactive that we could all comment</td>
<td>Interaction Collaboration</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...[about a blog] we wanted to start a conversation about different works, similar to how Facebook is...I mean that generates a lot of discussion but more of the academic thing rather than just a fun...</td>
<td>Interaction Explicit knowledge Tacit knowledge</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...like rather actually try and help each other</td>
<td>Cooperation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...get your work out there and start showing people and that's the only way to start linking up with people with the same, the same sort of ideas...</td>
<td>Connectivity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...Facebook is amazing for just contacting people...and if you have connections or people in other places that are doing similar things then it's also start connecting to a bigger sort of area or people in the same field</td>
<td>Connectivity Domain</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...[Facebook] when they see my work they get interested and that promotes me as a graphic designer</td>
<td>Connectivity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...[Facebook] so it opens a lot of connection doors</td>
<td>Connectivity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...there's a big benefit to having a sort of digital portfolio, so all your work that you do and have it online</td>
<td>Connectivity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 10: Analysis of focus group transcripts: Category: Community of practice or creative ecosystem
...promoting them to get all their stuff as a digital portfolio...so they, they're exposed to a much broader area as opposed to just their classroom

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recognition</th>
<th>Connectivity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

...it's like one of those...a snowball effect; the more people are going and commenting, the more other people are gonna want to have their stuff there and then it's like once it's set up and once it's running, then it's really good...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recognition</th>
<th>Interaction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

...I think on a board is not a good idea ‘cause you won't be able to get feedback... you just see and say..'Oh, it's nice'

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recognition</th>
<th>Interaction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

...and then you can have a thousand people check your work that you’re putting out...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recognition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

...and on a blog...don't limit it to school [comments]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recognition</th>
<th>Interaction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

...where I see somebody’s work and I’m like... I want to explore it more

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Motivation</th>
<th>Competition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

...even if my...illustration wasn’t the best; but because of the comments that are on the blog of my other work, then you get to know like what’s your strong point...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recognition</th>
<th>Motivation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

...seeing that other people are doing other stuff and learning fast and producing really good stuff...like that promotes you to do your own stuff on the side...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Motivation</th>
<th>Competition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

...[recognition using a board] it’s just that you need a balance between all of them so

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Face-to-face</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

...we use technology to collaborate people...I’ve already skyped with a guy in Lithuania...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Connectivity</th>
<th>Interaction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

...we end up looking at other people’s work for inspiration when we are actually inspiring, can inspire other people as well

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Connectivity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

...I think that with Skype as well I can encourage people.
A recurring theme was interaction with fellow students in a common space, either Facebook, via cellphone or on a blog which proved the most popular. Words associated with interaction included ‘visually seeing’, ‘communicate’, ‘feedback’, ‘comment’ and ‘conversation’ and ‘inspire’. The term ‘interaction’ was also used.

- [Facebook] and they can give you feedback and you can like communicate with them
- there’s a BBM group. That’s awesome
- [about a blog] we wanted to start a conversation about different works, similar to how Facebook is
Analysis revealed the need for recognition on a number of levels, firstly, on a local level amongst their peers, both physically and virtually, and secondly, on the World Wide Web:

- promoting them to get all their stuff as a digital portfolio...so they, they're exposed to a much broader area as opposed to just their classroom
- I think on a board is not a good idea 'cause you won't be able to get feedback... you just see and say..'Oh, it's nice
- and then you can have a thousand people check your work ...out
- and on a blog...don't limit it to school [comments]
- because of the comments that are on the blog of my other work, [then] you get to know like what's your strong point

The concepts ‘confidence’ and ‘communicate’ were linked to feedback through commenting in a social networking environment.

Students hinted at the need for an environment that fostered competition: ‘when I see somebody’s’ work and I’m like...I want to explore it more’, and ‘seeing other people doing stuff ...like that promotes you to do your own stuff on the side’. In both instances, the ‘competition’ concept coupled with the concept of ‘motivation’.

Assessment

The analysis of this category highlighted four major concepts relevant to the students’ experience: feedback, interaction, knowledge and motivation/engagement.
**Table 11: Analysis of focus group transcripts: Category: Assessment**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student comments</th>
<th>Sub-category</th>
<th>Category</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>...I found myself...I mean that anytime that I just e-mail you at certain time</td>
<td>Feedback Control</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of the day and then get the e-mail back and that like immediate feedback so I</td>
<td>Student-staff interaction</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>can get onto it instead of having to wait until I come to tech</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...it helps a lot, like of course it does cause you can send a picture to</td>
<td>Feedback</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>someone and then get feedback point by point, ummm...you know, and that's</td>
<td>Interaction</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>interaction</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...then when it gets to the blog you get critted by your classmates and even</td>
<td>Feedback</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the lecturers if they are in the blog...</td>
<td>Community</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...so it's encouraging with the internet, where...we get pdf's and...get</td>
<td>Feedback</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>encouraged and, and not live for the mark but live to be good designers and</td>
<td>Student-staff</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>explore but it's not about marks at the end of the day...</td>
<td>interaction</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...you need everyone's opinion; you need everyone's opinion because everyone</td>
<td>Feedback</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>thinks differently; people like different things</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>... you get more honesty from a stranger than someone you know</td>
<td>Feedback</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...if I've got mine [work] on Facebook...you get such awesome feedback</td>
<td>Feedback</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...[online quiz] you can do uh...like a questionnaire to see whether you</td>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>understand what you've read so I thought it was quite useful...</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...[the quiz] it forced you...it actually forced you to not read but understand</td>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...when you are forced to actually answer questions that we should know, and</td>
<td>Motivation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>then you realise you don’t, it forces you to go back and then when you go</td>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>back and read it again, you reading it with a whole new frame of mind</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...[online test] little test things that you can so, definitely helps a lot</td>
<td>Motivation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>than just giving us a document...cause it boring really</td>
<td>Engagement</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...[online quiz] you actually know about it cause you've understood it</td>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Constructivist assessment-centred environments revolve around providing feedback and opportunities for improvement, relevant to a set of goals (Bransford et al., 2003)

Jonassen (1999) recommends an assessment strategy where demonstration of knowledge acquisition or products form only part of the assessment, and that process should also be evaluated.
[online quiz] … Once you understand it, you’ll remember it

…… doing the crossword puzzle it made me understand because they gave a definition then you had took for the word: once you remember that it’s always going to stay in your mind

…. [the crossword] and it was fun… it was different

… I didn’t think I’d learn doing a crossword puzzle but it helped so much; cause then you know what it is and then you sit there and like, well I’ve read through everything, now what could it be and it forces you to stimulate and then you get going again.

… [the crossword] you want to finish it as well; very involved… it’s a crossword you don’t leave a crossword… you have to finish this thing… you must finish it.

**Figure 41**: Analysis of focus group transcript represented as a bar chart: Category: Assessment
The online testing of tacit knowledge in the form of an online quiz or crossword puzzle was favourably received and described as ‘useful’ and helpful through ‘helps’ or ‘helped’. The major observation, through analysis, was that both activities promoted understanding.

- it actually forced you to not read but understand
- it forces you to go back and then when you go back and read it again, you reading it with a whole new frame of mind
- once you understand it, you’ll remember it
- doing the crossword puzzle it made me understand because they gave a definition then you had took for the word: once you remember that it's always going to stay in your mind
- you actually know about it cause you’ve understood it

The concept of knowledge and understanding coupled with words that suggested students were actively engaged in learning, and included ‘involved’, ‘stimulate’, ‘fun’, ‘different’ and ‘useful’. The phrase ‘you were forced to’ appeared frequently.

The advantages of using email to provide electronic feedback was associated with the words ‘anytime’, ‘immediate’, ‘interaction’ and ‘encouraging’. Feedback from peers and strangers on the World Wide Web was favourable and expressed as ‘awesome’, ‘honest’, and broad: ‘you need everyone’s opinion’.

Comments suggested the Internet provided opportunities for student-staff interaction.
• immediate feedback so I can get onto it instead of having to wait until I come to tech

• get feedback point by point, ummm...you know, and that's interaction

• we get pdf’s (via email) and...get encouraged

**Learning style**

The analysis of this category highlighted four repeating concepts relevant to the students' experience: **user experience or usability, control, the need for visual material and interactivity.**

**Table 12: Analysis of focus group transcripts: Category: Learning style**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student comments</th>
<th>Concepts</th>
<th>Category</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>...in the brief you've got a hyperlink, or whatever to websites where you can actually see...so then you have like quite a good understanding of something before you even approach the project</td>
<td>Interactive Control Visual</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...also surrounding projects that we do...into different areas or different ways of applying that style, of different stuff like that and then in the brief you've got a hyperlink where you can actually see um...those processes</td>
<td>Interactive Control Visual</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...because its visual and you can see what's happening</td>
<td>Visual</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...and having links to go to and having pictures rather than just a written brief</td>
<td>Interactive Visual</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...the links is a good thing</td>
<td>Interactive</td>
<td>Learning style</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...that for the cookbooks like on line it's much easier and interactive</td>
<td>Interactive Usability</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...like when you go to it 'cause if you look at a book you get bored with the book and you wasn't to just put it to the side - but the internet, obviously you want to go in and look at this, and you look at that...</td>
<td>Curiosity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Cognitive style or learning style is the learners preferred way of thinking, remembering or problem solving.*

(Ally, 2004:14)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning style</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>‘How a learner perceives, interacts with, and responds to the learning environment’ (Ally, 2004:14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive style or learning style is the learners preferred way of thinking, remembering or problem solving. (Ally, 2004)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Control</th>
<th>Usability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>pdf</td>
<td>It’s there, so you know I can go back and refer to my notes – I find it easier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Usability</td>
<td>.... Cause it’s on the site...it’s on the computer but if you hand out the sheets, I mean the thing 20 minutes it’s gone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Usability</td>
<td>...You can get it anywhere as well…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Usability</td>
<td>...I found it quite useful because all the information is summarised</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control</td>
<td>.... I found it helped me a lot because you can watch it over and over again</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Usability</td>
<td>....[cookbook] when you had the time to sit and actually read everything, it was very helpful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Usability</td>
<td>...the notes were very helpful...cause the ones that were on pdf; I found reading from the pdf much easier from than using the internet cause when you use the internet you have to wait to log in where with the pdf you just click on the next page and he next page comes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual</td>
<td>...[pdf notes] it’s just with that kind of stuff I reckon just like as ....much imagery as you can find</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual</td>
<td>...I learn a lot like when I’m watching videos, I learn the most from that</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual</td>
<td>...I learn) even tutorials on the internet when someone’s talking to you and you’re watching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual</td>
<td>...[pdf notes] it’s just with that kind of stuff I reckon just like as much imagery as you can find</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual</td>
<td>...I learn a lot like when I’m watching videos, I learn the most from that</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual</td>
<td>...I learn) even tutorials on the internet when someone’s talking to you and you’re watching</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 42: Analysis of focus group transcript represented as a bar chart: Category: Learning style

User experience was positive as students described the e-learning materials as ‘helpful’, ‘easier’ and ‘useful’. Negative comments revolved around use of the internet, ‘[pdf’s] much easier than using the internet’, and ‘when you use the internet [online classroom] you have to wait to log in’.

Students indicated the e-learning materials gave them control over their learning:

- [hyperlinks] you can actually see…then you have a good understanding of something before you approach the subject
- you can actually see
- I can go back and refer to my notes… I find it easier
- You can get it anywhere
• you can watch it over and over

The need for visual material in terms of image and video came across strongly through the use of ‘where you can see’, ‘you can watch it’ and ‘as much imagery as you can’. Students also said:

• I learn the most from videos
• when I’m watching videos, I learn the most
• [tutorials on internet] when someone’s talking to you and you’re watching

Interactivity and the use of the Internet to direct students to task specific information via hyperlinks was viewed favorably. Words associated with hyperlinks included ‘see’, ‘understand’, ‘easier’ and ‘good’.

Meta-cognition

The analysis of this category highlighted five concepts relevant to the students’ experience: reflection, self evaluation, analyse, practice and recognition.
### Table 13: Analysis of focus group transcripts: Category: Meta-cognition

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student comments</th>
<th>Sub-category</th>
<th>Category</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>…[a blog] it’s really good cause you can like really develop doing that…some people write a diary it’s just their way of developing</td>
<td>Reflection</td>
<td>Practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>…on our blog I think it would be better if we all learnt how to do that…I mean if we could all…encouraged to put our stuff on there and write about our own work</td>
<td>Reflection</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>…[pdf] that if our work is good enough you should be able to know if it’s good or not, to be able to judge your standard we should …like how we’ve been marking our own work; I know it helped a lot because you know, and also having to be criticised</td>
<td>Reflection</td>
<td>Self-evaluation Analyse Feedback</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>…[pdf] we need to learn which is good and to be able to accept the fact that ok, my work isn’t up to standard…’cause I think if you know your mistakes you can completely better yourself on it…</td>
<td>Reflection Analyse Practice Self-evaluation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>…and also for us to have to really think about our work because before I e-mail, I’m having to write about my photographs, so then I’ll be saying…telling you what I think is good about them…it’s forcing me to look at it and judge for myself…</td>
<td>Reflection Analyse</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>…[pdf] it actually makes you look at your work at what’s weak, what’s strong and then kinda get to what you wanna do if something’s wrong you just wanna take off more pictures…</td>
<td>Reflection Analyse Practice</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>…but now with the blog you get people who say it’s good and some say it’s not good but then you weigh up their opinions and therefore you feel more confident</td>
<td>Self-evaluation Reflection Recognition</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>…[blogging] would really help because at, at the same time you have to crit yourself as an individual before you even put up your work to a blog…</td>
<td>Reflection Self-evaluation Analyse</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>…[comments] first of all you’re going to have a sense obviously to know if it’s good advice or bad advice</td>
<td>Analyse</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>…don’t think South Africa,…so knowing somebody else from a different world, allows you to kind of step out of your world and kind of look at it and say hey…’Wait a minute’.maybe…</td>
<td>Feedback Analyse Interaction</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>…technology in general helps us to see our design like, from an outside point of view…you know, and you get to…theen criticize our own work, like better…if we can see…it if we can put it out there and then see it from a different perspective</td>
<td>Feedback Recognition</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Meta-cognition
Called ‘thinking about thinking’ and focuses on the process of problem solving. (Downing et al. 2007: 27)
Analysis described an environment that encouraged problem solving through pdfs and email by fostering reflection and analysis plus the drawing of conclusions from that analysis.

• if our work is good enough you should be able to know if it’s good or not, to be able to judge your standard

• we need to learn which is good and to be able to accept the fact that ok, my work isn’t up to standard

• it’s forcing me to look at it and judge for myself...

• it actually makes you look at your work at what’s weak, what’s strong

Analysis suggested this process allowed students to put what was learned into practice, indicated by ‘you can better yourself’ and ‘what you wanna do if something’s wrong’.
Students expressed the desire to keep a thinking journal in the form of a blog, which allowed for reflection but also interaction and feedback via the World Wide Web.

Words associated with blogging included ‘write about’, ‘crit yourself’, ‘different world’ or ‘out of your world’ and ‘outside point of view’. The data suggested that critique via blogging encouraged the analysis of the validity of feedback.

• first of all you’re going to have a sense obviously to know if it’s good advice or bad advice

• you get people who say it’s good and some say it’s not good but then you weigh up their opinions

Student centred environment
The final category highlighted a single concept relevant to the students’ experience. It was suggested the concept of a learner-centred environment was needed when adopting technology as part of learning, by paying careful attention to the skills individual students brought to the classroom.

Phrases associated with the adoption of technology as part of learning included ‘we need to take it slow’, ‘technology is huge’, ‘the class gets treated as a whole’. Words that described one students’ attitude towards technology included ‘fear’, ‘vast’ and intimidating'.

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### Table 14: Analysis of focus group transcript represented as a bar chart: Category: Learner-centred environment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student comments</th>
<th>Sub-category</th>
<th>Category</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>…we need to take it slow for some people haven’t touched a computer in their lives</td>
<td>Explicit knowledge</td>
<td>Learner-centred environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>……like a major issue I think is that hmmmm…you know, that the class gets treated as a whole…like you know, there’s, there’s no room for individuals</td>
<td>Explicit knowledge</td>
<td>‘…pay careful attention to the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and beliefs that learners bring to the educational setting’ (Bransford et al., 2003:133)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>…technology is huge and we must be taught not to fear it ‘cause it’s so vast; you know where to start; it’s intimidating</td>
<td>Explicit knowledge</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>…I think it should be introduced [technology]. I mean we all come from different schools</td>
<td>Explicit knowledge</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 5
Conclusion
5.1 Background

This dissertation set out to examine new ways of teaching and assessing second year graphic design students in a studio-based environment. The overall aim as described in Chapter one, was to explore the use of technology to enable the design process in a way that prompted students to think. Secondly, but also importantly, I wanted to know whether e-learning, which is not normally associated with studio-based learning environments, could be used to facilitate the learning process. In this final chapter I present a bird’s eye view of what I did, and reflect on what I understood as a result.

5.2 A bird’s eye view

The first objective of the study was to understand what design process meant within the context of a studio-based learning environment. The literature review in Chapter two revealed a potentially complex set of attributes, linked to stages which not only encouraged creative thinking, but also meta-cognition. It also introduced me to the concept of design thinking as an alternative to the design process – which focuses on a way of working as opposed to an outcome in the form of an artefact. Secondly I explored the nature of successful e-learning environments from an educational, aesthetic and practical point of view.

Understanding the importance of meta-cognition and design thinking lead me to Sternberg’s (in Sternberg and Williams, 1996) idea of developing the whole student. His theory describes how developing an intellectual balance between creative, analytical and practical abilities is ideal. By aligning Sternberg’s theory with the core principles of design thinking I developed a
conjectured design process model which is presented in Chapter five. I also explained the design and implementation of this conjectured design process model relevant to e-learning. My data collection presented the results of my final aim - to understand the student’s experience of using e-learning.

5.3 New perspectives

When I initially embarked on this study, e-learning and then the design process was my focus. In the course of the research, two major shifts in my thinking occurred. Firstly, a broader acknowledgement of the design process and its characteristics focused my attention on how to use e-learning. Secondly, an understanding of learning theory, especially Constructivism, influenced my teaching approach and helped me to make connections between the design process and how students developed understanding and a way of working. This subsequently informed the e-learning choices I made.

5.4 What I have learned

Although this study focused on e-learning and the design process (with the aim of understanding the relationships between educational theory, designed artefact and practice) unexpected outcomes revealed the difficulties of creating a community of learning. Traditional studio-based learning environments and and assessment methods encourage competitiveness, and my students who were used to such environments and methods, revealed a reluctance to collaborate or share information. On the other hand, during data analysis it became apparent that students have a need for a collaborative, interactive and cooperative community of practice. I have grown in my understanding that a creative ecosystem needs to be nurtured face-to-face and then perhaps transferred to the virtual environment.
5.5 Challenges
The challenges I experienced during this study relate specifically to the research methodology. Design-based research prefers collaboration between persons linked to the context of the study. As a researcher I worked alone, and although acceptable in terms of the methodology, support and interaction with interested parties within my own department could have strengthened the study.

5.6 Contributions to knowledge in the field
I believe this study provides those involved in studio-based learning environments with potentially useful information in two areas. It shows how the design process integrates with learning theory. It also shows how e-learning, not usually associated with studio-based learning, is a useful tool for the development of meta-cognition and a creative ecosystem.
References


DBRC see Design-Based Research Collective.


Durban University of Technology. 2005. Assessment Policy.


Gravemeijer, K and Cobb, P. 2006. Design research from a learning design perspective.


## Appendices

### Appendix 1

*Design process models adapted from Dubbly (2005) and Design Council (2007)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Developer/s of design process model</th>
<th>Key characteristics of the design process model</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1945  | George Polya, professor in mathematics Stanford, wrote *How to Solve It.* | 1. Heuristic solution to solving any problem  
2. Gave rise to the concept of design process as problem solving                                          |
| 1963  | Bruce Archer from the Royal College of Art                              | 1. Key stages were introduced  
2. Combination of the intuitive and the cognitive  
3. Formalised the creative process as part of the production process  
4. First to include communication as part of process                                           |
| 1965  | Bryan Lawson                                                           | Products of a process and the process are two different things                                                 |
| 1972  | Don Koberg and Jim Bagnall                                             | 1. Added feedback to their model as a way of ‘never going forward without always looping back to check on yourself’  
2. Added analysis and synthesis                                                                |
| 1980  | Brian Lawson                                                           | Recognised the conscious attempts to solve a problem, and unconscious incubation periods as part of design process |
| 1984  | Gerhard Pahl and Wolfgang Beitz                                       | Developed model for students to help them to learn to design                                                |
| 1994  | Stuart Pugh                                                            | Revised existing linear models which suggested that design problems are solved in one go, by introducing cycles and iterative phases |
| 1996  | Paul Souza                                                             | Spiral model that included learn and listen as a stage, and goal as motivation                               |
| 2001  | Alan Cooper                                                            | 1. Goal directed  
2. Collaborative  
3. Egoless  
4. Appropriate design  
5. Assessment and self-assessment                                                          |
| 2003  | Clement Mok and Keith Yamashita American Institute of Graphic Arts    | 1. Acknowledges team work  
2. Rapidly learning and “tacking” based on your successes and failures                                   |
| 2007  | Design Council                                                         | No set best practice in design process                                                                       |
Appendix 2

Characteristics of design-based research (Brown, A. 1992; Collins, 1992; Gravenmeijer and Cobb, 2006; Design-based Research Collective, 2003) and compared to qualitative and quantitative research (Leedy and Ormrod, 1989)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QUALITATIVE RESEARCH</th>
<th>DESIGN RESEARCH</th>
<th>QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>PURPOSE</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpretative, constructivist, postpositivist</td>
<td>Applies existing empirical knowledge in a real world context</td>
<td>Traditional, experimental, positivist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seeks understanding</td>
<td>To build new theory, artefacts artefacts and practices that impact on learning and teaching</td>
<td>Seeks explanations, predicts and generalises</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exploratory, and observes to build theory from the ground up</td>
<td>Helps us to understand the relationship between educational theory, designed artifact and practice</td>
<td>Establishes, confirms or validates relationships (causal)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presents multiple perspectives that have equal validity</td>
<td>Develop innovative instructional theory in domains that are not commonly understood</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PROCESS</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holistic and emergent focus, design, measurement and interpretations emerge and possibly change along the way</td>
<td>Research takes place in authentic setting - contextual and naturalistic</td>
<td>Concepts, variables, hypothesis and methods of measurement defined before the study begins.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Researchers interact with their participants</td>
<td>Intervention based on existing empirical knowledge</td>
<td>Researcher remains detached from participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Categories emerge from the data leading to context bound info and patterns</td>
<td>Aligns theory, design, practice and measurement over time</td>
<td>Takes place in contrived, controlled environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Based on phenomena that occur in naturalistic setting</td>
<td>Emphasis is on successes and failures on intervention as opposed to the artifact itself</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Iterative with feedback from colleagues and using participants to help draw conclusions aids validity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Involves multiple dependent variables</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QUALITATIVE RESEARCH</td>
<td>DESIGN RESEARCH</td>
<td>QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### DATA COLLECTION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Qualitative Research</th>
<th>Design Research</th>
<th>Quantitative Research</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Uses multiple forms of data collection such as observations, interviews, objects, written documents, electronic documents (i.e., e-mails)</td>
<td>Many dependant variables – researcher may not pay attention to them all</td>
<td>Identify one or few variables that are intended for study and collect specific data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reality is not easily divided into measurable variables</td>
<td>Triangulation and time frame of study in years lends itself to internal validity</td>
<td>Ensuring each variable is standardised with validity and reliability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Researchers become the research instrument because the bulk of data collection is dependent on personal involvement (interviews and observations)</td>
<td>No attempt to keep variables constant – just identify them</td>
<td>Data can be converted to numerical indices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small sample group</td>
<td>Surveys and questionnaires can be standardised</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>External validity can be achieved through time, place and people – aims for ecological validity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### DATA ANALYSIS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Qualitative Research</th>
<th>Design Research</th>
<th>Quantitative Research</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inductive reasoning – make specific observations and draw inferences from them</td>
<td>Observations, and reasoning is validated through participant input and feedback from colleagues</td>
<td>Deductive reasoning – hypothesis or theory and drawing logical conclusions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subjective in nature</td>
<td>Process documentation creates evidence</td>
<td>Objectivity in data analysis</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### REPORTING FINDINGS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Qualitative Research</th>
<th>Design Research</th>
<th>Quantitative Research</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interpretative narratives</td>
<td>Process is as important as outcome, and is well documented</td>
<td>Reduce data to means, medians or stats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Looks at patterns and themes which are described and interpreted</td>
<td>Narrative and uses thick description which allows readers to draw their own conclusions</td>
<td>Large number of scores depict a norm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Results are formal and scientific using passive voice and impersonal language</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

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Appendix 3

Letter of consent: focus group participants

LETTER OF CONSENT: Focus groups

Dear Student

As a Masters student in Graphic Design, (Title of study: Lurking, linking and learning), I am inviting you to participate in a research project that will study the effects your e-learning has on engaging you in the design process. I am asking you to take part in a focus group. It should take about 20 minutes of your time to complete.

The results of this project will gauge the success of the technologies used in the classroom and gain various opinions on the design and educational value. Through your participation, I hope to understand how to improve the environment. The focus groups are casual and open ended and any opinions you may have on the subject, no matter how honest, is appreciated. I hope the results will be useful and will share them by referring to them in my masters' thesis and future publications.

This study presents no risks to you, and if you decide to participate, I guarantee that your responses will be confidential. Your participation is voluntary and there is no penalty if you do not participate.

If you have any questions or concerns about participating in this study, you may contact me at 031 3736648, or email me at sharonzoepke4@dut.ac.za.

Name: .................................                                      Date:

........................................

Signature:
Appendix 4
Letter of consent: participants

LETTER OF CONSENT:

Dear Student

As a Masters student in Graphic Design, (Title of study: Lurking, linking and learning), I am inviting you to participate in a research project that will study the effects your e-learning has on engaging you in the design process.

The results of this project will gauge the success of the technologies used in the classroom and gain various opinions on the design and educational value. Through your participation, I hope to understand how to improve the environment. The focus groups are casual and open ended and any opinions you may have on the subject, no matter how honest, is appreciated. I hope the results will be useful and will share them by referring to them in my masters' thesis and future publications.

This study presents no risks to you, and if you decide to participate, I guarantee that your responses will be confidential. Your participation is voluntary and there is no penalty if you do not participate.

If you have any questions or concerns about participating in this study, you may contact me at 031 3736648, or email me at sharonzoepke4@dut.ac.za.

Name: ........................................ Date: ........................................
........................................

Signature
### Appendice 5

*Blackboard VLE data: blog posts*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Topic: The history of tattoos</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>tattoos</td>
<td>Date: 05 August 2008 14:42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goodstone Mphana</td>
<td>tattoos were basically used by different cultures long time ago, they were however used for cultural reasons such as initiation. Nowadays people just do tattoos to decorate their skin or just for fun.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Topic: The history of tattoos</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tattooooos</td>
<td>Date: 05 August 2008 11:25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motlatsi Kathekiso</td>
<td>Tattoos from my knowledge were used by the Japanese people for cultural reasons and in some societies they were used for marking prisoners. I think people get tattoos for fun today. Some people get them for personal reasons like for example portraying a tattoo of your first son/daughter.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Topic: The history of tattoos and why you think people get them!</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>tatoos?? fo sho!! fo sho!!</td>
<td>Date: 31 July 2008 14:13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ntokozo Mthembu</td>
<td>From my knowledge and from what I've read from the Bible is says... the first tattoo was marked on Cain by God so people can see that he was punished by him for killing his own Brother (but it is assumed that is was a tattoo). I find tattoos fascinating in ways that there are some people who have the courage to lay their bodies for marks I would like to have one but not a hectic, scary, demonic one if you get what I mean you dig!?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Topic: The history of tattoos</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>tatooze to the taboolze</td>
<td>Date: 30 July 2008 13:22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jared Kieser</td>
<td>Interesting feedback so far... personally I think the time of getting a tattoo as an act of rebellion has passed, they are becoming more and more accepted and have lost their taboo... all the people I have spoken to got their tattoos for different reasons... (religious, fashion, memorial, prison) and all the tattoo styles were different from each other... (tribal, star, black, full colour etc) even though I don't have any and probably never will get a tattoo, I still dig tattoos... seen some pretty cool ones and some terrible ones... people should do what they want.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Like most trends...they start out underground and move into the mainstream, until they become meaningless, hence the countless butterflies on the hips. Unless of course one gets a tattoo for some of the other reasons that you mentioned.

so this is another ranting about the age-old struggle over "what is and what isn't wrong with tattoos" you might think. the truth is that it all boils down to freedom of choice and not giving a sh*t what people would think, wich in the end doesn't have a right or wrong. you cannot begin to even think you know a person just because they have tattoos. by simple human interaction you can understand people and maybe even have a nice talk about their tattoos. it is just a medium that suits the human canvas nicely.

I think you're wrong... It's because people give a damn that they have tattoos. Unless they have significant meaning in your life, why would you get one. maybe you'd like to read a few other posts and make a comment!

I think a tattoo should be a message about yourself, give an idea into your character. So it irritates me when you see girls coming up with their little butterfly tattoos on their hips, which shows they just want a tattoo because its the "in" thing...

A person should preferably come up with their own design somehow and request the tattoo artist to do that for them rather than choosing from a catalog and seeing the same tattoo on someone else. Time should go into the choice of a tattoo and not be a rash decision seeing since its permanent.

You also see in the music scene, most artists have a tattoo or are covered in them, it starts to get a bit cliche, like just a trend, like "oh, here's another hardcore band with their piercings and tattoos ".

Yes people have the right to do what they want, but try finding originality in it.

Tattoos should be an expression of ones self and not just the cool thing to do.
whatever? I tell you the truth, only when tards bound by peer pressure, low self-esteem, drunkenness, and the "inability" to make decisions for themselves, dictated to by the unimaginative world, only when they catch a wake-up and think for themselves, imagine for themselves, and stop stealing the individual expressions of others and making it their own, only then will they be seen as an individual creation, not part of a group, but as an original individual.

Author: [redacted] Date: 04 August 2008 11:04

High five! Go team! Now lets all go get a star tattoo or wait, a fairy princess!

>Subject: Let people be... Topic: The history of tattoos

Author: [redacted] Date: 29 July 2008 12:26

Some people get tattoos just to look cool, fit into a certain group, or religiously. Some say tattoos are a way of rebelling, getting attention or going through a painful process because they want to feel (cause of depression). I say let people be, do what you want to do on your body.

>Subject: Religion Topic: The history of tattoos

Author: [redacted] Date: 27 July 2008 14:46

For those who don't yet know im christian and from the other coments I didn't see any indepth religious views so I found a interesting article, is a bit long but interesting...

"Ye shall not make any cuttings in your flesh for the dead, nor print or tattoo any marks upon you: I am the Lord." Leviticus 19:28

This passage is both in the Christian Bible and the Jewish Torah, which share the Old Testament. Traditionalists in both religions speak out against getting tattoos and point to this passage as the reason, but modern times have seen the acceptance of tattoos into most spiritual communities.

It was said in the past that tattoos were the "mark of the beast" that is referenced in the bible. The devil is said to come and collect all souls that have the "mark of the beast" on judgment day, and tattooing has been interpreted as that mark in extremist Christian groups. Now, however, crosses, rosaries, praying hands and other Christian symbols are better represented in tattooing than any other organization. It is no longer a taboo amongst Christians, but instead has become a source of pride.

It was once against the law for Jews to get tattooed, and it was a crime punishable by the rejection of being buried in a Jewish cemetery. However, post-Holocaust, after countless Jews had been tattooed with numbers against their will by Nazis, this law was no longer enforced. Getting a tattoo by choice is still highly looked down upon in most strict Jewish communities, but is becoming less so with each generation.

Pagans celebrate their religion and spirituality with tattoos of pagan symbols. Stars, trees, and the elements are tattoos chosen often by everyone, but pagans take credit for most of the most popular tattoo designs. Buddhists have been tattooing since before Jesus was said to have been alive, and their designs are still in practice today.

Hindus are able to get tattoos, except for pictures of their gods. They can get the names of their gods...
tattooed on them, but not the actual images. Every other type of image is allowed.

Islam also prohibits any type of body mutilation, much like Christianity and Judaism, and tattooing is included. True believers of Islam follow this rule carefully and stay tattoo-free.

Article is from http://www.tattooinfo.net/Scripts/prodList.asp?idCategory=28

Comments

Author: Mike Muya Date: 30 July 2008 11:22

Jesus died on the cross so that we can be set free from the law of moses. If you gonna live according to the law make sure you dont break any of them. the bible says you break one law you break all of them. The old testament was written before Christ came to die on the cross, but thank God he came now we live under grace. Jesus says, it not what you put in that makes you unclean, its what comes out. God will use anyone with a heart after him, regardless of what you look on the outside. David is remembered as a man after Gods own heart, yet he did lots of things that was not good in Gods eyes.

Author: Bryce Louw Date: 24 July 2008 18:38

I personally find UV tattoos the most interesting and appealing, in terms of a tattoo for myself, uv's are the way to go. Here are a few examples of UV tats as well as info regarding the inks used. Copy this into your browser http://www.tampaintattoostudio.com/blacklight.html The HTML creator isn't working for me O.o Regarding my opinion on why people get tattoos, i think it's a form of personal expression, whether it be attention seeking or purely personal, it's still expression and everyone is entitled to that.

Author: Phiwayinkosi Khumalo Date: 24 July 2008 10:22

I think tattoos are just a trend it's either you join it or you don't, Look at how gals have butterfly tattoos on their backs and guys like to have tattoos on neck with their names or a barcode. However I do believe that all tattoos have a meaning but half of the people don't know it they have tattoos for the fun of it.

Author: Wesley Weitz Date: 23 July 2008 15:11

i feel that all tattoos should flow, instead of having a crappy tattoo by itself then trying to make it flow when your bored of it or as a cover up. Think before you leap cause its gonna STAY there, my general feeling on tattoos is either a nice moari tattoo like NZ or a good tribal will do or even if you go get a sleeve. For those of you not knowing what that is, its when you get your whole arm done or leg. for more sexy time go to http://www.chopper-tattoo.com

Attachments: image17.jpg
YEAH! i think this guy absolutely is right. I wish i had his intake on life maybe he could run for president

Author: Dineo Mote Date: 05 August 2008 09:49

i think each person has their own reason of having a tattoo. In most cases it because they just love a certain design and love to have it on their skin. lv also learnt that other people cover the scars and they have tattoo's as permanent make up. In a way that is convenient to a certain extent. People should really take time to think about a design and what would it mean to them, because this will be with you for life.

Personally id love to have one

Author: Tercia Van Staden Date: 23 July 2008 11:52

Why do people permanently mark their skin? The guy i interviewed said that he got his first tattoo at the age of 13, and it kind of became an addiction for him. Other people think that by physically hurting their bodies they will take away the emotional pain they are feeling. Some people also feel more comfortable and beautiful with themselves. I think people also do it because they are attention seekers and crave attention from the public

Author: Alastair Laird Date: 23 July 2008 10:02

Most bali's also go through midlife crisis and feel getting a tattoo will make 'em look hard. Getting a tattoo and then turning into a wrinkled prune in your old age is a bad idea I don't care what anyone says, but most rappers have stories behind their chops. Anyone could get a tattoo and it just boils down to a choice you make whether you want one

Author: Jesselene Pandaram Date: 22 July 2008 13:41

I interviewed the owner of Eagles Tattoo Parlour and he said that tattoos on men are a show of force and strength as when males engage in battle with one and other the first thing noticed is the rolling up of sleeves hence showing their tattoos... their own mark of strength.... he said that this trend started with
the aborigines!

Comments

Author: [Name] Date: 22 July 2008 14:05
I didn’t know that, sounds cool :D

>Subject: why? Topic: The history of tattoos

Author: [Name] Date: 22 July 2008 09:46
i believe that people get tattoos for specific reasons and no matter what their reasons are, its their body and they can do whatever they want. they shouldn't be discriminated against what they decide to put on their body and when it comes to obtaining a job, one should be selected on their abilities and not their appearance.

Comments

Author: [Name] Date: 22 July 2008 09:52
true that i want to be a tattoo!

Author: [Name] Date: 22 July 2008 09:53
if thats your belief that its your body what u r doing is telling God that what he created is not PERFECTION that u can do better...

Author: [Name] Date: 22 July 2008 13:43
Sad to say but people do judge a person on appearance because that is what they view first and especially when applying for a job the person who is doing the interviewing doesn’t have the time to get to know what a great person you are underneath all the tattoos.....

Author: [Name] Date: 22 July 2008 13:57
you know j, you are right to a certain degree. that is how people do think but dont you think that a person who is in a position to interview someone should know better than what someone looks like and once they have spoken to them will pick up if the person has potential or not.

Author: [Name] Date: 22 July 2008 13:58
At the end of the day its what job the person is applying for .... Sometimes tattoos fit right in.....

Author: [Name] Date: 22 July 2008 14:08
people should be hired on their abilities but many people do look at appearances. FIRST IMPRESSIONS DO COUNT, especially in an interview

Author: Sharon Zoepke Date: 22 July 2008 15:52
Sometimes tattoos do fit right in. All you need to do is look at the number of lecturing staff who have tattoos! Not too sure if that would go down well in the Maths department.

Author: [Name] Date: 24 July 2008 10:08
I agree with u on that people shouldn’t be discriminated because of their tattoos however i think some tattoos can say something about that person eg, prison tattoos are unique and have a bad meaning behind them judging from what the prisons are known for. but i would recommend for such tattoos to be hidden from the public eye.

>Subject: Cosmetic comfort zone

Author: [Redacted]  
Date: 22 July 2008 09:35

I’ve seen that some people get a tattoo to cover up a scar, either to feel better about getting through a rough time or to symbolise their new found ‘life’ or ‘strength’. The one guy i interviewed had an Ace of Spaces card tattooed on his wrist to mark the fact that it had saved his life. In a true life story i watched on tv, called "Why I Wore Lipstick to My Mastectomy", the lady had recovered from breast cancer and to symbolise her journey and recovery, she had a rose tattooed over

Comments

1  
Author: [Redacted]  
Date: 22 July 2008 09:46

on the guinness world records show some years ago, i saw a ho that got chops all over to cover up her dermal condition and keep it on the down-low hahaaaa. she had over 90% cover of her body and had to apply base everyday so she could go to work and appear normal.

>Subject: a medical side

Author: [Redacted]  
Date: 22 July 2008 09:32

After a small chat with a herbalist in westville’s village market on the henna leaves used in henna tattoos i learnt that the henna tattoo is not only used for decorative or religious means but also places on sprains and bruises due to the face that the henna leaves contains natural herbs that is absorbed into the skin.

Comments

Author: [Redacted]  
Date: 22 July 2008 09:36

okay, you’ve got me there, didn’t do that much research, I’m just using general knowledge but I’ll get you on the next topic ha ha ha

Author: [Redacted]  
Date: 22 July 2008 09:38

yes, they also use henna on hindi, tamal and muslim brides when they get married. They put henna on their hands, feet and nails

>Subject: New inks mean easy removal!

Author: [Redacted]  
Date: 22 July 2008 09:30
“Yeah Jonty, but when you are older, I guarantee you will regret getting the tattoo and the worst part is you can never get rid of it fully.” That’s what my pops told me when I told him I was keen for a tat. Thanks to researchers at Massachusetts General Hospital (MGH) and Brown University a new ink is being developed that can be removed with a single treatment. Sorry for you pops. Richard R. Anderson is at the forefront of this new technology and says it will be completely safe as well as easy to remove, regardless of the amount of colour used. The ink should be available for public use within one or two years.

Comments

Author: [Redacted] Date: 22 July 2008 09:39
okay, I hear you but a tatoo is a flop by 1 thing because when you get old and your body gets all rinkled up, the tatoo hardly gets recognised anymore it fades away or takes the shape of your skin

Author: [Redacted] Date: 22 July 2008 09:46
In my one interview, the guy said that there is a ‘patch’ you place over your tattoo to remove it. He said it contains magnesium (which apparently the body hates). The body then repels the magnesium along with the ink. But this process is best used for small, full inked tattoos and is painful, stinks, is slimy green ooze and takes about two weeks.

Author: [Redacted] Date: 24 July 2008 18:20
Don’t think a bad smell and some bollocks pain is gonna stop someone who really wants a tat removed from doing so...I say WOOHOO, coolios to the new ik technology! Good job

>Subject: tattoos
Topic: The history of tattoos

Author: [Redacted] Date: 22 July 2008 09:30
tattoos are a form of body art, that firstly started of as a form of traditional methods of applying design. Now days people do it because of the popularity, significance/symbol to the person such as your star sign, some people get tattoos because it just looks cool on your body and also to portray a persons character or a certain image that they want to perceive.

Comments

Author: [Redacted] Date: 22 July 2008 09:33
na mayn wrong again. Tatooos can be traced back to the ancient times of tribes and clans that existed thousands of years ago, they used tattoos to label themselves so they could be easily recognised in which tribe they belonged into

Author: [Redacted] Date: 22 July 2008 09:46
dats true, some have em as a reflection of who they are

Author: [Redacted] Date: 22 July 2008 14:02
I agree... everyone has their own reasons and meanings behind their tattoos
whatever the person chooses, to have a tattoo and what image that person chooses, its up to that person because sometimes that tattoo has a very special meaning for that person and no one would want to deprive a person of something special that makes that person happy. so its all about personal choice

Author: Sharon Zoepke  Date: 22 July 2008 16:01

you are very right! That concept was called ‘tribalism’ and showed that you belonged. If you think about it, many people do it for the same reason today!

Author:  Date: 22 July 2008 09:22

some people get tattoos because of peer pressure, or make them feel like they belong to a group, to feel accepted

Comments

Author:  Date: 22 July 2008 09:28

maybe but most of them do it for spiritual reasons, some for personal ones and some get it because they were doing time in jail and they got it by force and not by choice

Author:  Date: 22 July 2008 09:43

one always has a choice son its mostly peer pressure as wendy said.

Author:  Date: 22 July 2008 13:48

I agree with you on this is not always by choice.... And if you have interviewed more than one person you would know that peer pressure isn’t the reason behind getting tattoos.....

Author:  Date: 22 July 2008 13:59

i agree. you really need to do more research.. get your facts straight............... 

Author:  Date: 22 July 2008 14:04

i accept what s and j is saying but this world is changing a lot and alot of young people are getting influenced by media and people around them to do things to be cool, to do whatever it takes. so it is just upto the person. do what you want with your body but think before, so you know you wont regret it!!!!!!!!

Author:  Date: 22 July 2008 09:18

what affect that tattoos have in the work field?
Some people look down at people with tattoos especially in many professional work fields, so it can be hard to find work if you have many tattoos. Then people just need to wear long sleeve shirts most of the time to cover them up!

Comments

Wrong, people with tatoos find it hard to fit in the work place because they find themselves being labeled as criminals or thugs and they are given a hard time at work, their superiour may also wnt to check if they've got any criminal records or not. hows that for some info. ha ha ha

nah i agree with because the work place is a professional environment and you have got to look the part!

how do you know this? have you been looked down on before?

i disagree because you shouldn't judge people by what they look like. its not what you put in that makes you unclean, its what comes out- meaning its the heart that testifies to the true condition of the person and not the outward appearance

To , i havnt experienced it myself, but i interviewwed this man and he told me this problem and he had a hard time looking for a job. he has one now but he always have to wear a long sleeve shirt to cover his tattoos that are all over both his arms.

i know it depends on which job you want to take so its actually up to the employer and his/her thoughts on tattoos.

for all the people that disagree- yeah it is wrong to look down on a person before you even get to know them, but when you are being interviewed, they are not gona take the time to get to know what you are all about. you are just there for the job and you dont get a second chance to make a first impression so sad to say, but your appearance does matter

People get tattoos as a form of expression, for some it is something meaningful. But for most it is just a mere fashion statement. A tattoo is simply just a mark made permanently onto the skin. Others get tattoos to be seen as different, or rather a want a sense of belonging.
i agree with you, but people dont remember that tattoos are PERMANENT and if you want to remove them you have to go through expensive laser surgery which could leave you scars!!!
Go here! to find out why 'normal' people get tattoos! This site has an interview, tattoo designs and tattoo trends!

Leave a comment and let me know if agree or disagree about what has been said!

Comments

1 Author: [Text] Date: 24 July 2008 09:58
I think normal people get tattoos because they want to experience something new in their life. Some people do tattoos for the fun of it I say this because mostly girls like butterfly tattoos on their back and guys like to put a name of a famous place or their names on their backs. However there is strong meaning behind any tattoo but its on the individual to find out what the desired tattoo mean.

>Subject: Why? Topic: The history of tattoos
Author: [Text] Date: 21 July 2008 09:01
These days people get tattoos for so many different reasons. For aesthetic appeal. To "fit in". For sentimental significance or to tell a story about their life experiences, eg. fighting cancer or a near death experience. To show people what kind of person they want to be persieved as, whether its their faith, their personal oppinions about things, or their lifestyle etc. Or just to make a bold statement.

>Subject: Full Body Transformations Topic: The history of tattoos
Author: [Text] Date: 17 July 2008 11:54
People like Tom leopard, Lizard Man,The Enigma and The Great Omi have always captured our imagination as freaks, outcasts and circus acts with their strange and freakish outward appearance. From being a half leopard anthropomorphic hybrid with whiskers to having a gaint blue puzzle span the surface of your body these men travel the world showcasing their abnormal bodies.

Attachments: enigma.jpg; leppard.jpg; lizard_man.jpg; omi.jpg;

Subject: Why do people get tattoos Topic: The history of tattoos
Author: [Text] Date: 16 July 2008 18:41

Not sure if this will help. But the conversation is interesting! Go to http://jeftsotoart.blogspot.com/ to find out why Jeff gets tattoos! Go to his post called 'Tattoo post'. Brilliant tattoos...if you're into that sort of thing!
People get tattoo's for cosmetic, religious, sentimental, memorial, magical and other reasons. It can be used as a symbol of belonging e.g. gang tattoos. Tattoos also are used to identify people e.g. the Jews during the time of Nazi Germany. Sailors used to get tattoo's as souvenirs for the places they had been, which began to give tats a bad reputation. Many criminals got tats to show how "badass" they were.

I think people get tattoos to be seen as 'different' or to be rebellious, when in actual fact they are conforming to a specific stereotype. People with tattoos may appear to be 'hardcore', and want to be perceived in a certain way. I think people get tattoos to make a statement, sometimes its for attention and now its seen as the 'cool' thing to do. People may get a tattoo that has sentimental value or simply to make a mark on their body.

It's kinda like a way of expressing who you are and what you represent!
Threaded discussion: What I need to think about….

For your current project you will need to take a photograph for use in your double page spread. In the discussion below I would like you each to think about the following...

1. What do I need to think about before and during the shoot/or

2. What skills have I learnt so far that will make my picture great!

Make one suggestion only and comment on someone else’s suggestion.

Subject: shooting photos  
Topic: What I need to think about....  
Author: Goodstone Mphana  
Date: 05 August 2008 14:57

Before taking a picture i have to consider the amount of light in relation with my object, the angle and rule of thirds. These are the common basics one has remember when taking a picture.

I have learnt some of the great skills in photograhpy that includes lomography, implied line and the use of light when taking a picture.

Reply  Forward

Subject: Taking a picture  
Topic: What I need to think about....  
Author: Motlatsi Kathekiso  
Date: 05 August 2008 11:00

When taking a picture we must consider light, angle and the rule of thirds. Playing around and taking shots at different angles can give good pix,during a shot one should try by all means not to move. I have learned that using of implied line and light will make my pictures great.

Reply  Forward

Subject: flashing, lights....  
Topic: What I need to think about....  
Author: Dineo Mote  
Date: 05 August 2008 09:57

You should really look at the angle, light, position and composition.

Iv learnt that you should'nt take one picture and think it will work. You should really play around more and you'll realise that you'll have better pictures than the one you decided on.

I love this thing...

Reply  Forward

Subject: Colour aint that great! (smily face)  
Topic: What I need to think about....  
Author: Wesley Weizt  
Date: 30 July 2008 14:18

every picture has its story. Weather it is of high quality contrast in a black and white photo or a nice sepia photo, who says we need colour all the time. Dont get me wrong full colour works but why not play around a bit " I'll rather play around and get it wrong a few times and be different“ quote from Jonathan Hurd.

With b&w and sepia photos it's a little uncontrollable, maybe with a colour photo you'll see a bag under a table and with b&w or sepia the shaddow would be strong enough and you might not even see the bag
at all or enough not to make your eye focus onto it. Now here are two nice photos I feel suit what I'm trying to say. Wes for president.

Attachments: 2006_05_pearljam.jpg down_spread_lrg.jpg

Comment

Subject: Re: Colour aint that great! (smily face) Topic: What I need to think about....
Author: [Name] Date: 30 July 2008 14:27

Interesting approach Wesley, I fully agree with you.

I couldn't view those two fotos you attached though.

Comment

Subject: Re: Colour aint that great! (smily face) Topic: What I need to think about....
Author: [Name] Date: 31 July 2008 08:57

How come I can see them? Maybe other people can't either. I'll ask Sharron about that.

Comment

Subject: Re: Colour aint that great! (smily face) Topic: What I need to think about....
Author: Sharon Zoepke Date: 04 August 2008 15:43

Good thinking... not so sure about the president bit though!

I could open the pics fine. Really great example of a double page spread using lots of negative space.

Reply Forward

Subject: capture the mood Topic: What I need to think about....
Author: [Name] Date: 30 July 2008 14:02

Well I am impressed... it seems that all of you understand the importance of composition and lighting...

In all my years in the studio I have come to value these two aspects more than subject matter... anyone can take a photo of a guy sporting his chops, its the composition and lighting that capture the atmosphere and the mood of the photo...

What do you want the atmosphere to be?? Will you use hard contrasting light, back lighting or a soft light to create the right mood?

Don't be afraid to experiment and explore with angles... make mistakes... I did in my early days...

If anyone needs help please, don't be shy, come tap me on the shoulder and ask for some help or advice..... I'll do it for free.
remember everyone...... "day or night, check your composition and light....and you will come right"

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject: Re:capture the mood</th>
<th>Topic: What I need to think about....</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Author:</td>
<td>Date: 30 July 2008 14:06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>shot boet, you're such a good ou! ay, no hundreds!</td>
<td></td>
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<table>
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<th>Subject: Re:capture the mood</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Author:</td>
<td>Date: 31 July 2008 08:57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hahaha you made me chuckle! very valuable advice</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Reply**  **Forward**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject: bringing disco back!</th>
<th>Topic: What I need to think about....</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Author:</td>
<td>Date: 30 July 2008 13:42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i’d like to be thinking about nice things like rooibos tea and wooden floors and the lomo disco’s of ’85-’93. Or else i might get a fright and screw up the shot.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Composition and light play a huge role in determining if your subject is dark and mysterious or dramatic or lomo or "as it is" or fun or comical or friendly or with attitude or theatrical or typical or original or just plain normal. So it really depends on what kind of feel i’ll be giving to my layout and article as to what kind of photo's will be produced...

**Reply**  **Forward**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject: During A Shoot</th>
<th>Topic: What I need to think about....</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Author:</td>
<td>Date: 30 July 2008 11:03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i find when taking a picture, the thing i always try to look out for is composition and lighting. Those are the two things that i always cant seem to get right. Any suggestion will be greatly appreciated. And as for what one needs to think about, in accordance with the discussion, the time of the day (lighting), composition (what is it you trying to capture) and what style (light,lomo,line). capturing motion in to freeze frame one needs to look at the content as design.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Subject:** Picture Perfect  
**Author:** Tercia Van Staden  
**Date:** 30 July 2008 10:32

We all know that good things in life often happen by mistake. Photography is no different. Often the best pictures taken are those that are an "accident". I've often heard people say "I just took the picture, I didn't even think about the subject", and their pictures are really brilliant. For others, photos are all about composition, lighting and shutter speed, which works for them too, their pictures also turn out great. So I think it just all depends on what you like and what you want out of a photograph.

---

**Subject:** the best things happen by chance  
**Author:** Stephen Atterbury  
**Date:** 29 July 2008 12:59

During a shoot, i will be thinking about light and composition like everyone, but then there's also playing with the aperture and ISO speeds to get exactly what you looking for in a specific shot and specific time of day.

I've found that i enjoy taking photos where there's chaos mixed in with something calm, it creates a division in the photo; making an interesting photograph.

---

**Subject:** An award winning picture...  
**Author:** Lele Dinte  
**Date:** 29 July 2008 12:42

Angles, lighting, background, all the elements of taking a picture are needed through the process of creating an award picture.

I must say that the tree part rule is what i always think of, now that i know what it means. With that rule and those elements u got yourself an award winning picture right ther.

---

**Subject:** Bustamove  
**Author:** Jonathan Hurd  
**Date:** 29 July 2008 09:39

So here's the deal. lighting and composition are on the top of my 'important things to do while taking a photograph' list. Obviously subject matter is important but getting the lighting and composition spot on is imperative to a swankingly impressive photo. Next on my thought process, is originality. Im not amped on following norms and being a sheep. Even if i get it wrong a few times, id rather fail at doing something different a few times, as opposed to being unoriginal.

In terms of taking photo's of tattoo's and such. Im lost.

Any suggestions?

---

**Subject:** Re:Bustamove  
**Author:** Sharon Zoepke  
**Date:** 29 July 2008 13:04

...you're not taking a picture of tattoos.. you're shooting a portrait of a person that has a specific tattoo(s). Capture the person.

---
Subject: Re:Bustamove

Author: Stephen Atterbury

Date: 29 July 2008 13:13

Its always cool catching interesting photos that you don't see in everyones photo albums, and not just the average "post card" photo, but in our photography now as a subject, its important to remember the basics and stick to the brief to achieve your max mark for your photographs, instead of just handing in all your favourites.. As with taking photos of tattoos, take care with focus on subject and obviously with lighting used properly you'll be able to intensify the area where the tattoo is.

Comment

Subject: Re:Bustamove

Author: Sharon Zoepke

Date: 29 July 2008 13:16

Remember that 'sticking to the brief' means understanding that you are being asked to show that you understand a particular aspect of design or photography etc. This doesn't mean you can't push the limits!

Reply Forward

Subject: I think i got this on lock down

Author: Ntokozo Mthembu

Date: 29 July 2008 09:25

This photography thing is so cool becuse the more you play around with a camera you end up fluking and taking really cool pics. but as time goes by i think il have this camera thing on lock down!!

What i have learnt so far is that pictures are boring when taken on the dame level or eye level you have to explore different angles and composition is really what makes your picture hot!!!!!!

Reply Forward

Subject: My opinion is.. um... this...?

Author: Bryce Louw

Date: 24 July 2008 18:59

I'm new to this photography thing and i find the best way to figure out a camera is to play around on auto, jotting down certain settings that the camera uses itself in certain situations and apply that knowledge to photographs in full manual.

What i find appealing in photographs will differ from the next person. But in my opinion subject matter is often worth nothing if the lighting and compostition is horrible. What i'm saying is that a photo focusing on light can be a thousand times better than a photo of an amazing boat (just an example). I feel subject matter is not nearly as important as lighting or composition, so get your ideas of lighting down and make sure the image or idea you can fathom in your head is managable by your equiptment.

Something to consider, in terms of lighting is the cast shadows that singular light sources create. I find cast shadows in natural outdoor photography particularly attractive. They create an alternate element of depth as well as giving the viewer a sense of situational awareness (I'm trying to describe it in the best way i can...horribly in other words).

Feel free to rain your criticism down upon my horrific english and incohesiveness...that's not a word!

Reply Forward

Subject: Mise en Scene

Author: 

Date: 

Topic: What I need to think about....
Composition is an integral part of a photo shoot, possibly the most important aspect. As designers, we have learnt the Rule of Thirds, which enables us to create clear, crisp, critically acclaimed compositions with our little picture boxes.

Author: Charl Uys
Date: 24 July 2008 10:58

One of the most important factors contributing to a good photograph is LIGHTING. It is crucial that the light (preferably natural) suits the mood and feel of the picture. Waiting for the correct moment of the day can turn a photo from simply a good picture, to a Pulitzer Prize winning shot.

Wait for the right moment.
Kill time.

Author: Luke Molver
Date: 24 July 2008 10:50

Inspirational stuff!

Author: Charl Uys
Date: 24 July 2008 10:59

Good photography can only be captured in the moment, unexpectedly. There is no real way to plan a photograph, sure there are certain methods people follow but after using similar formula's things become unoriginal. Everyone thinks the same way, they are trapped in a box with no escape. So for me, I am a strong believer in the 10th rule...forget all rules, do your own thing.

Author: Alastair Laird
Date: 23 July 2008 10:14

What about the first rule?
Do
Not
Talk
About
Fight Club.

Author: Luke Molver
Date: 24 July 2008 10:52

if you dont know the rules you can't break the rules.

Author: Kevin Goss
Date: 29 July 2008 09:07
### Hyperlinks for info on portraits!

**Author:** Sharon Zoepke  
**Date:** 22 July 2008 15:44

There are two sites under 'Web Links' (on your left menu) for great info. Remember to add any other sites that you find and save them in the right category ie. Photography. This way we can access them anytime!

### Strike a pose!

**Author:** Sharon Zoepke  
**Date:** 22 July 2008 15:30

Remember you are shooting people. And some are uncomfortable in front of a camera. What can you do to put them at ease.

Look at the poses in the pics attached.  
Attachments:  
- face_tattoo.jpg  
- grrr_tattoo.jpg  
- looking_right_tattoo.jpg

### What does format mean?

**Author:** Sharon Zoepke  
**Date:** 22 July 2008 15:24

Can anyone tell me what 'format' means and why you need to think about it?

---

**Comment**

**Subject:** Re: What does format mean?  
**Author:** Amber Grant  
**Date:** 31 July 2008 08:55

Format is whether or not you want to shoot a portrait or landscape shot. You need to think about it as this can create quite an effect. For example, if you are taking a photo of a tall skyscraper, shooting it portrait will emphasise the height of the building.

**Comment**

**Subject:** Re: What does format mean?  
**Author:** Sharon Zoepke  
**Date:** 04 August 2008 15:49

Exactly!

### What is important

**Subject:** What is important  
**Author:** Sharon Zoepke  
**Date:** 22 July 2008 15:24

Can anyone tell me what 'important' means and why you need to think about it?

---

**Comment**

**Subject:** Re: What is important?  
**Author:** Amber Grant  
**Date:** 31 July 2008 08:55

Important is the obvious reason why you are shooting the portrait. Is it for a wedding, a school photo, a magazine, a calendar, etc. Focus on why the photo is needed and what the end goal is.

**Comment**

**Subject:** Re: What is important?  
**Author:** Sharon Zoepke  
**Date:** 04 August 2008 15:49

Exactly!
i think the first thing one needs to think about when taking a photo is their composition and subject matter - is it interesting enough to grab the attention of a viewer and appealing enough to hold that attention? natural lighting is always important when shooting a pic as it can give you a good overall look depending on what time of the day it is and if that doesn't work there's always your flash!

Author: [Redacted] Date: 22 July 2008 14:18

When taking photo's we should take into consideration, composition, light and angle. But most important is to capture what you are saying through the picture...."A picture is worth a thousand words"

Author: [Redacted] Date: 22 July 2008 13:55

You are so right [Redacted] Look at how these three pics of the same person say completely different things!

Author: [Redacted] Date: 22 July 2008 14:25

photography is all about the moment you are capturing. the image must tell a story and in order for a brilliant picture, everything has to be perfect like the lighting composition, subject matter/focal point, angles, etc.

Comment

Author: [Redacted] Date: 22 July 2008 14:01

I agree with you [Redacted] for the picture tells the story....

Comment

Author: Sharon Zoepke Date: 22 July 2008 14:29

The key word here is planning and thinking about what you are trying to do! But also remember we sometimes have 'happy accidents'.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject: composition &amp; light</th>
<th>Topic: What I need to think about....</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Author: Sheree Conway</td>
<td>Date: 22 July 2008 13:40</td>
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</table>

By using the rule of thirds this creates a balance and good composition within a photo. Decide what kind of light source would be best for the essence of the environment you are trying to create and capture.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject: what i've learnt</th>
<th>Topic: What I need to think about....</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Author:</td>
<td>Date: 22 July 2008 09:57</td>
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when taking a picture, one has to consider the following, light and rule of thirds to give you best results.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject: Re:what have we learned</th>
<th>Topic: What I need to think about....</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Author:</td>
<td>Date: 22 July 2008 09:52</td>
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moving around your object all the time can give you nice pix

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Subject: SUBJECT MATTER</th>
<th>Topic: What I need to think about....</th>
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<tr>
<td>Author:</td>
<td>Date: 22 July 2008 09:47</td>
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if u gonna take a mundane pic always try to take advantage of your surroundings and light source because the outcome might surprise you...Remember Fundis pic of the knife...

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<th>Subject: Re:SUBJECT MATTER</th>
<th>Topic: What I need to think about....</th>
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<tr>
<td>Author:</td>
<td>Date: 22 July 2008 09:54</td>
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ukutheth'inyani andiyati ukuthi yini imundane pic, ngiyaqela ukuthi ungingchazele

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<tr>
<th>Subject: Re:SUBJECT MATTER</th>
<th>Topic: What I need to think about....</th>
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<tr>
<td>Author:</td>
<td>Date: 22 July 2008 22:02</td>
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Ek kan nie daardie taal verstaan nie.

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<tr>
<th>Subject: Re:taking photos at the beach</th>
<th>Topic: What I need to think about....</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Author:</td>
<td>Date: 22 July 2008 09:48</td>
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nice gal ill try dat. and

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Subject: Re:taking photos at the beach</th>
<th>Topic: What I need to think about....</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Author:</td>
<td>Date: 22 July 2008 14:25</td>
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</table>
yeah than do da beach is a good place to take out pics especially in the early morning and late afternoon when the light hits the water and you get all these cools colours from the sunsets

Subject: LIGHTING AFFECTING THE SHUTTER SPEED AND FOCUS  
Topic: What I need to think about....  
Author:  
Date: 22 July 2008 09:38  
In earlier or less advanced camera's the lighting and auto focus in the camera itself can cause many issues, most common being a blur to the picture. Fortunately with there being a low light and if you use no flash you can use this to ur advantage, it's not easy since the low amount of light causes the shutter to remain open longer giving you a wonderful blur if it is planned or a horribly blurred photo.

Subject: Re:LIGHTING AFFECTING THE SHUTTER SPEED AND FOCUS  
Topic: What I need to think about....  
Author:  
Date: 22 July 2008 09:56  
I've had too much experience with low lighting causing my images to blur, but not knowing what the problem was. I always had to use the Auto settings. Using another camera, i've found great options that allow me to take better, in focus images with low, artificial or night lighting. I've learnt how to make great effects with the ISO settings and fire sticks.

Subject: Re:LIGHTING AFFECTING THE SHUTTER SPEED AND FOCUS  
Topic: What I need to think about....  
Author: Sharon Zoepke  
Date: 22 July 2008 14:50  
Great to hear that you are trying new things That how you learn! Well done.

Subject: Curtain Flash  
Topic: What I need to think about....  
Author:  
Date: 22 July 2008 09:58  
In some cameras - if you look for it, you can actually use the flash along with the blur. This is called curtain flash and the effect I find is usually even more interesting than just a straight up blur. What your camera does with a curtained flash is it opens the shutter for a long time, as said, usually for a second or longer, and then emits one burst of flash right before the shutter closes again or alternatively right at the beginning of the exposure. Not all cameras can do this, of course but it'll be worth your while going through the manual and trying it out. Check out the attachment for an example.

Attachments: Max_Normal_20070615_1682_copy_filteredsmall.jpg

Subject: Re:LIGHTING AFFECTING THE SHUTTER SPEED AND FOCUS  
Topic: What I need to think about....  
Author: Sharon Zoepke  
Date: 22 July 2008 10:50  
Remember to think about taking a tripod with you when shooting your pics. This will help.
Subject: Re: LIGHTING AFFECTING THE SHUTTER SPEED AND FOCUS  
Author: Sharon Zoepke  
Date: 22 July 2008 15:48

Great post everyone. Remember, those of you that are not that advanced. Select a lens using the icons on your camera. You can normal select a portrait, landscape or macro mode. The one you choose will depend on how close you are standing to your subject and whether you want your background to be in focus.

Reply  Forward

Subject: angles  
Author: Fundiswa Phungula  
Date: 22 July 2008 09:37

when it comes to light the thing one should take into consideration is the time of day and were the light is coming from and where its going. The angle that one chooses must have good shadows and the different effects of the lights must be well balanced.

Comment

Subject: Re: angles  
Author: Jeffrey Parsons  
Date: 22 July 2008 09:55

Don't forget the effects that you can get when you use a specific type of lighting. We are talking about natural lighting, such as when the sun is behind the subject there will be a cast shadow coming towards you, giving a very nice dramatic effect (especially from a low angle). The subject will be dark so consider having a reflective, (white polystyrene board), to direct a slight front light to light up your subject. To me, light is what makes a photo stand out and can really make a difference.

Comment

Subject: Re: angles  
Author: Sarah Inggs  
Date: 22 July 2008 13:53

true, but hey if its not perfect we have photoshop! good job technology is improving everything is just getting better...

Comment

Subject: what have we learned  
Author: Sharon Zoepke  
Date: 22 July 2008 14:34

You are right...Photoshop can be used to 'tweak' a picture, but it cannot make a poor photograph great!

Reply  Forward

Subject: what have we learned  
Author: Fundiswa Phungula  
Date: 22 July 2008 09:35

we've been given natural light that reveals things as they are, so natural light is the way to go. it only calls for patience until you get the right light that you require.

Comment
Subject: Re: what have we learned

Author: Fundiswa Phungula

Date: 22 July 2008 09:39

I certainly agree ongama natural light is the real thing there are no touches from "photoshop"

Comment

Subject: Re: what have we learned

Author: Sifiso Mhlongo

Date: 22 July 2008 09:46

I hear you there my fellow classmate, natural light is the best and it gives you perfected pics but it is also time consuming, you can not always have the same light that you want, you have to wait for the sun to go down if you want a pic with less light or take a pic in the afternoon if you want 1 with a lot of light, so you see that it is sometimes good to develop/create your own light to get that perfect pic that you so desire, i mean it wont harm you 1 in a while

Comment

Subject: Re: what have we learned

Author: Mpumelelo Mtshali

Date: 22 July 2008 09:49

dats true dats why agencies dnt depend on dat coz time is money

Comment

Subject: Re: what have we learned

Author: Sharon Zoepke

Date: 22 July 2008 10:53

I think you are all correct! Natural light is great if you can use it. But using a studio with lighting gives you control. Speak to the Photography department about using their studio! You never know they might squeeze you in!
Appendix 7: E-mail correspondence with students

>Hi Sharon, been meaning to talk to you, but totally forgot yesterday, need some help, and guidance on the following matters;

the illustration faces I got 33 for, I mentioned to you that I had my line and fulls deleted and no longer have those files. So did my best, not sure if I understand what exactly you want us to do, could you just also have a look at what I have done, and see where I am going wrong.

Will you be available at tech tomorrow, for a small sit down and chat session?

Hope you have a stunning evening

Much love x

>Hi, Hope I see you today.

Your illustrations need a lot of work!!!
It has nothing to do with what you have or don’t have... You need to show me that you can use the software...and that you understand when to use illustrator and when/how to use photoshop. Find illustrations that you would like to copy or bring in the ones you have and we can work out together how to do something!

Come on, last lap around the block...nearly over!!!!
I look forward to seeing you soon!!!

Please be here for briefing tomorrow.

Warm regards

>Hi Sharon

I do log in and check different working line on photographs I think I’m clear now all the information I get it on the table content (design techniques photograph,) I sow horizontal, vertical, diagonal and implied line, I learn now that, each an every time I had to get a brief not to asking information to other students as I always do.

I wish to get feedback please if you can able to respond, I lost my lomograph picture but I will able to redone those picture and send to my Facebook thanks enjoy long weekend.

>Hi Sharon

I’m sick at home with glandular fever, but doing my best to get all the work done. I’m just a little worried
about being able to show you my work and get feedback.

Would it be possible to take photos and send them through to you

>Hi Sharon

Am I on the right track?

Screen shot 209-14 at 7.56.19 PM.png

207K  View  Share  Download

>Sorry I too k so long to reply...been sick at home and internet is +@@%#@#

All of these are appropriate...and very good. The sock colour scheme would be called a random scheme..it's a great photo. All of them work very well!

Good work

>Hi Sharon

I have been in a bit of a fender bender this morning on my way to Durban, but I'm alright. My car has been towed, but I am able to get lift into Durban tomorrow to hand COP and the illustrations in. I have emailed through COP just to show you that I have done it.

Regards

>Okay. Not a problem.

Warm regards

Sharon

>Hey i emailed you last night but now have them all in one pdf plus my comments thanks!!

20918527.pdf

9427K  View  Download

>Hi

Thank you for submitting. But, your file is too big bokkie!!
You can give it to me tomorrow on your usb.

Regards

>hey this is the smaller size of my previous pdf sori about that!!!

[Attachments]

>Hi
Thank you for submitting.

The pics are fabulous. Marks on pdf are for comments. Prints will be assessed later

Regards

[Attachments]

>hey sharon thanks for the comments yes :) uhm just wanted to submit my coke poster (grey) final illustration i can work on a final color one and forward it thats if its cool with you. coke attached. hope you are enjoying your holidays

[Attachments]

>Hi Sharon, its Ntokozo mtshali 20710730. I sincerely apologise for the late work.

[Attachments]

>Hi
Thanks for the great comments. I really like the first two shots. The colour works well and so does the composition. The other two are less interesting in terms of their composition. Do you have more we can look at?

I'll see you tomorrow.
Warm regards

[Attachments]

>Dear Sharon can i please submit these photos im Bongumusa Gama

[Attachments]

>Hi Bongumusa
Thank you for the pics.
The term monochromatic means 'one (mono) colour (chroma)'. So be careful how you use that term in your explanations.

Warm regards

Hi Jean Pierre
I know you wanted to shoot pics for your next brief...
I'm trying something that I'm not sure will work...

I have attached an html file that is the same as the brief you will find online in the classroom...
download and when you open it, do as follows

>open with > select a browser (ie firefox)
This should open up the doc as a web page and you can follow all the links etc.

Let me know if it works!

Regards

It worked thanks Sharon. Really appreciate it.

Enjoy your holidays.

Sent from my BlackBerry® wireless device

Hi Sharon. I have been trying to take new pictures just to improve on the other ones that i have sent you months ago.

Regards

Hi Phila.
These look good.
I love the t-shirt pic....and your explanations and understanding of how the colours work is good. Well done.

warm regards

Sent from my BlackBerry® wireless device
Hi Njabulo.
I think the shoe picture is your best pic! The red shoes are your focal point and the others create a lovely texture. Although you have planned your other pics, I believe your understanding of the rule of thirds is maybe a bit fuzzy. Let’s chat today or when you have a chance.

Warm regards
Sharon

Hi Sheron, plz let me know if u got these.

[Colour Photos.pdf](#)

248K  View  Download

Hi Sheron,

yes, I got them. Thank you for the comments!
I do like the idea of having a vibrant spot colour with neutral backgrounds. I think we can play a bit with ‘curves’ in one or two. Bring them in and let’s chat.
Appendice 8
Private Journal entries: reflection on practice

Reflection on practice

If you want to meet your goals you need to understand what you're good at and what you're bad at. Try to think of more than one thing in each category.

In the journal below, create a single entry, think about your performance during the year and complete the following:

1. I am really good at...
2. I really struggle with....
3. I plan to change things by...

My Journal
Subject: Garrrrrr.... Topic: Reflection on practice
Author: Stephen Atterbury Date: 02 September 2008 11:53

This year started out with allot of enthusiasm; was looking forward to developing on what we had learned in the first year. I think that I've put in a reasonable amount of effort into reaching deadlines with a good enough end product. I've found that it hasn't felt like there's been as much pressure on us as first year, which at a stage left me feeling a little dissatisfied with the course.

criticism aside, i feel like this year has sparked a bit of my creative thinking, with ability in drawing; i've started drawing allot more and incorporating those drawings into illustrations and designs.

I've really enjoyed photography as a subject, i think it answers the first question with what i think I'm good at. I've used some of my photography for use in design for myself and look forward to integrating it into design for projects in the future. I think i have a reasonable eye when it comes to "seeing" a picture and have a reasonable understanding of my camera.

I really enjoy illustrator and think my ability in designing from thought to screen is pretty good, it also takes up allot of my personal time.

I struggle with commitment to my ideas, often i don't have confidence in what I'm doing, therefore loosing interest (this being more evident in figure drawing and drawing that have to be integrated into designs). It's mostly because I look at some of the designs i've done for myself and think that if only we had a more interesting brief that would actually have something i enjoy, my projects would turn out allot better.

another struggle for me, as common as it is, is coming into class, within this year there's been allot of times we come into class and not had lectures, so from a personal side, i don't enjoy having to make the effort to get ready, wait for buses, and get to tech and learn nothing. I think I struggle with group work, because i don't really like relying on people fro something thats going to affect my mark, but i've gotten better with this as i noticed in our last history project.

I can change this by trying not to think about what i enjoy and if the project doesn't fit that , that i should approach it with the same enthusiasm as something i would enjoy.
Thank you for your comments. We will try to address the issues you have.

I think your photography is coming along really well...I am impressed with the commitment you have shown towards Illustrator. This will only benefit you later.

Not having confidence at this stage is pretty normal. If you aren't sure, ask a staff member or even a fellow student. The briefs you get are actually interesting...in industry you will spend days designing OMO packs (mmmmm...not very interesting)

I think your last comment is great. Try to inject enthusiasm into everything, even though you might not enjoy it that much. Also remember that learning is up to you....there is a fabulous library on campus and you have the best mac computer lab, at your disposal, in the Southern hemisphere (yes really!)

No day should pass by without you learning because you're waiting for someone to teach you something!!!

I think that I am good at typesetting. Its something i've always enjoyed, getting everything in the same format and I love typography. I'm also very resourceful. I think I'm also good with doing research. Altho I struggle a little bit with finding a solution and sticking with it, or developing it to the best outcome. I'm indecisive. But find that the more time spent on it and discussing it with others, the 'brain breakthrough' occurs and I find my way.

I struggle a lot with drawing. I over-analyse what I'm drawing and end up spending too much time redoing it, instead of moving on to fix or finish it.

The way I am going to change this, is to keep developing my ideas and have many different solutions before I hand them in. I've also got my friends' opinions on my work & make those changes. I keep trying to 'loosen up' (more) and have fun. With drawing, i'm going to try spend less time stressing about it and get on with it.

Being indecisive is normal at this stage. Try to dive in and get help or opinions quickly, so that if you are going off in the wrong direction you can get back on track.

Speak to students who are good at the thing you're working on... they will more than likely give you good advice.

Read, surf the internet and practice, practice.
Subject: Reflection on years performance

Author: Nicole Goss

1. I feel that my strengths lie in my dedication and work ethic. I always try hard, continuously trying to better my work and can see the growth that I have achieved. I don't have a distinct style which allows me to look at what others have done and be inspired, incorporating various elements into my designs ensuring my designs don't become static. I really enjoy looking at tutorial sites and seeing how others have done things. I really enjoy photography and am lucky enough to have the equipment in order to achieve good results. (As well as resources such as Kevin when I get stuck! :) ) 2. I really struggle with drawing which is a major component in this course. I struggle to finish work as I feel there is always so much more I can do to improve. Time management has become a recent issue as I am trying to juggle two courses at once. This year I feel I get demotivated very quickly and don't feel the passion as I once did. 3. In regard to the drawing aspect I know that all I require is practice, I plan to try and draw more often. I hope this will inspire me to do bolder drawings and try new things as I grow my talent and abilities. Time management is always a problem so I feel I just need to structure my life more and waste less time. When I get given a brief I plan to start right away, and try and find an angle that will keep me interested and motivated to finish. Overall I feel this year has been successful and I am continuing to grow as a designer. I plan to maintain the standard that I have set and hope that I can achieve my goals of obtaining a full bursary for my 3rd year.

Comments

Author: Sharon Zoepke Date: 05 August 2008 11:23

Nicole. You can feel very proud of your commitment to the course. This attitude will always take you far!

Drawing is a big issue in Second, but in third year it is much easier! (and much more fun!) Your photography will stand you in good stead in third because you can always choose to use this medium over illustration!

You are burning the candle on both ends! Be careful and remember to reward yourself for all your efforts. Remind yourself that you're doing a good job! Try to relax and enjoy what you do.

Good job as always!

Author: Amber Grant Date: 06 August 2008 12:05

Thank you for the encouragement! :)
I enjoy History but I find it quite a bit more challenging this year.

I can definitely improve in figure drawing as this is definitely one of my weaknesses. I enjoy the drawing assignments we get given, but I find with drawing, I have to really try hard just to pass. I can improve in drawing by maybe going for extra lessons or drawing in my spare time.

In general I can do better in all the subjects if I just put in more effort and time, as I definitely need to manage my time better. I can also improve by focusing more on the process work.

Subject: design techniques, communication          Topic: Reflection on practice

Author: Dineo Mote                                  Date: 05 August 2008 09:38

I really struggle with submitting on time. This is because I know that I am very slow on applying my work on computer. Therefore my work is finished late. The only way I can overcome this is to make a decision with my design as soon as possible, then I can make changes while applying it computer. I believe I am good at having good well planned work. Process work is what I enjoy. And most of all is the end product of my design.

Comments

1 Author: Sharon Zoepke                              Date: 05 August 2008 11:14

Process work should take up more of your time at this stage...ie. second year...because you are still learning.

If you are slow on the computer, what can you do to correct this?

Subject: Reflection on practice

Author: Dineo Mote

1. I am good at photography, illustration and design. Logo design interests me a lot as does typography and animation.

2. I really struggle with... I don't 'really struggle' with anything the course offers. Obviously the course is challenging- which is good. But my head is above the water. I would say I am least experienced in the field of magazine layouts but I don't 'really struggle' with it.

Sharon, in your opinion, what is my weakest area and

3. how do you propose I improve on this?

I try to keep a good balance between all the things I do and in this way aim to be competent in all aspects of the Graphic Design course while realising that I need to specialize in the long run. I believe that in getting a strong all round knowledge of design I will be able to make an informed choice at the end of third year as to what I want to do for my degree.

Comments

1 Author: Sharon Zoepke13                                Date: 18 August 2008 10:29
Wow, what a level head. I can see that you are very motivated and I think your attitude will always take you far!
I don't think that you have a weakness as such. Getting a broad understanding is always a good idea.
Just enjoy and keep up the enthusiasm.

Subject: What Makes and Breaks Me
Author: 
I am really good at using gouache paint, I see myself good at photography and thinking of different ideas for new projects.
I really struggle with computers, especially when we start new programs, such as indesign and illustrator. I also struggle with Figure drawing, drawing naked people just does not do it for me.
I plan to change this by being more positive about it, in believing that I can use new programs, and practicing more and more to draw naked figures, even though its not something that I would do in my spare time...

Comments
Author: Sharon Zoepke Date: 30 July 2008 11:25
Well thought. Remember to try and incorporate what you are good at into your work when you can.
Technology freaks most people out, and working under pressure makes learning software harder...just practice as much as you can, and go onto the web sites in web links, and others for tips and tutorials that can really boost your understanding!
Drawing naked figures is not essential, you will need only one figure drawing at the end of the year for portfolio! Drawing is training your eye to see... so drawing anything will help.
Being positive is also have the battle won!

Subject: My pros and cons(i feel so gay right now sharon you jst don't know:)
Author: 

Author: Date: 04 September 2008 11:21
Ok the thing is that i always have these great ideas on how to execute designs!!! especially the grunge kind of style but the thing is that i cannot execute it to the "t" it just looks great in my mind but come to paper or screen thats just a whole new story,i also really like mat kays style i try to practice it now and again!!!!
What i can say im really good at, is conceptulising just coming up with the ideas at the top of my head is what i can say i can do. if you can help a dude out with execution that would be most appreciated yeah

yeah!!!! holla back Shaz(;

Comments

Author: Sharon Zoepke  Date: 16 September 2008 14:14

Okay, toxic here’s the low down!
Everyone starts off with great ideas in their head. (Why do you think Van Gogh cut off his ear!) …the skill lies in getting them onto paper.

With more experience, your head and hand will meet and you'll get it to work the way you want it to...But look at Matt Kays' sketches...(got to Gluebook and click on his flickr link). The guys draws all the time. The secret is no secret.. practice, practice and practice!

Subject: time management

Author:  Date: 04 September 2008 11:57

I have struggled lately with my time management, I always take a long time working on one assignment and loose time on other projects. My other problem that I Intend fixing is my research, not much time is put on it. In that case I end up submitting work that Im not happy with. Well I believe in my drawing skills and I have seen how good they look when processed into the computer. What can make me a better person in the design field is spending time researching, doing process work and than going into the computer.

Subject: I BATTLE WITH

Author:  Date: 21 August 2008 11:58

i battle with a lot of things and at times it feels as if i don't know why i am here and the struggling is messing with my confidence..Some lectures don't help coz they sometimes make me feel worse, but mostly the battle is with design techniques, and photography. But I'm trying because i got myself a photography student to teach me the basics, MAYBE THAT WILL BE HELPFUL

Comments

Author: Sharon Zoepke  Date: 02 September 2008 14:27

I am sorry to hear that you are battling. What you need to understand that it is normal to struggle when you are still learning how to do something!

But you need to speak to lecturers more so that they can help you..let them know when you feel that they are not helping you by making comments that upset you. Also understand that sometimes comments can be hurtful if you take them personally. It's about your work, not you!
You need to spend more time on the computer learning. Photography basic were dealt with very thoroughly in class... read your manual to find out how your camera works.

Please consult more!

Subject: how to reach my goals
Author: Goodstone Mphana Date: 05 August 2008 15:08
I can't really say i'm that good but i think in design techniques and drawing my performance is much better than in other subjects.

I seem to struggle in communication design i really don't know why, but i think i really need to pay more attention and do some research in order to achieve good marks as in other subjects.

Comments
1 Author: Sharon Zoepke Date: 08 August 2008 12:03
I agree with you. Your techniques are strong!

Communication Design is tricky..but it does help if you ask yourself ...'what do I need to understand before I start this project'. Make a list...and then do your best to find out as much as you can.

This process may use up three days of your time in the beginning, but will save you a lot of time in the end! And remember that we are always there to help you at any time!
Appendix 9: Transcription of focus group discussion
Okay. First question basically is. Based on what you did in first year, how do you feel about using technology, as I’ve described, as part of your learning or your design process in second year? Anybody?

Well, I think that it would have been a lot more helpful if we’d had the interaction with the lecturers in the first year; like it would have helped, big time; but I find that this year, when we use the pdfs like communicating by lecture, getting them to comment on your work straightaway you’re able to fix the stuff; like at the time.. it helps so much more..

You can’t rely only on, on that - you have to see the lecturer, the people have to be there, that’s called for a thing like to get comments like Justine’s saying like, like on the hour so that you can use email and that sort of stuff but you still need to have like contact either with your lecturers every day, I think cause otherwise….

It’s not a correspondence course, which everyone keeps saying, but at the same time it is nice to have that. So I think it maybe should have been introduced in first year but maybe it’s also good that it wasn’t in the sense that it forced us to come to lectures so that in 2nd year we didn’t abuse it, like I know some people did, but most of us didn’t.

It’s just that the thing is, Umm.. there’s, there’s two sides to this ‘cause right now we were using the computer like 100% of the time and some people were struggling because there were anonymous to it last year so…like small things like how to save properly, having printing issues, your work is shifting and you’re like, what’s going on you’re confused, you’re stressing, you’re frustrated but at the same time, is.. some people in matric, we all come from different walks of life so some of us have effectively speaking, never seen a computer so if we have to come into first year, and, and be like heavily involved in technology, some of us will be so scared that we will leave and end up shying away our love of graphic designs so I think that a slow introduction like starting off with gouache only and, and working with your hands more so in first year and slowly kinda-like melding into computer work in earnest; it’s a good introduction; ‘cause we need to take it slow for some people haven’t even touched a computer in their lives…

But it will be a very like… frustrating thing for someone who has never seen computers and expected to pdf, psd, and lead… and it scares you.

I think what Cas says is right ‘cause like a major issue I think is that hmmm.. you know, that the class gets treated at a whole… like you know, there’s, there’s no room for individuals, so like Cas is saying, people come from different backgrounds and lecturers are, from my experience of it, aren’t looking, or looking at people’s situations and using, or using their sense to say that, that person needs some extra attention in this area.. umm..so that there’s sort of….and also they end up talking, relating more with the people who know what they’re doing, because they are relating; you know, instead of actually going, like further and showing, like showing people how to do it….

I think that can also be avoided by having like an introductory to any new project whatever, where everyone needs face-to-face, like all the students are here, the lecturer is here, and you started off… and I think the projects need to be started off a lot better than they are but you need to sit down, you need to all be given the brief and discuss it amongst the class and get all your issues out on the first day you get your brief; everyone must have the deadlines, the date with no exceptions; I think it needs to be a lot more structured because when lecturers change deadlines or change the brief halfway through, I think it makes it very hard for everyone to stick to what it is (interruption)….
Clarity, it’s clarity. 

Ja, and that’s why I think communicating via email like, has helped so much this year, because… if I don’t know something I know I can email (interruption)

But not everyone’s got access to email… so those people actually end up getting an extra advantage as opposed to the people that don’t have access to that stuff …. (interruption)

We had the whole introduction to everything first, a clear out all the cobwebs, ok

In terms of say, an ideal scenario for most people, would you agree with what was said…Do you agree?

I think ummm, ummm, the lecturer… they teach us how to print our stuff I think it’s not that helpful for to have a paper for him to teach us.. I think he must send us to the printers, to see how they do it [interruption]

Hey, big time, ja,, ja we need a trip to a proper printer [interruption]…… that will help a lot

Okay, so if we can just go back a little bit. Briefs were mentioned. If we start at the beginning of a project and we say a brief was given, how do you think (and remember the list of things) how do you think technology could be used to make briefs better?

By using what we did with having an interactive brief because videos I found helped me a lot because you can watch it over and over again and no matter who watches it you get it because it’s visual and you can see what’s happening and having different links to go to and having pictures rather than just a written brief [interruption]

The links, the links is a good thing like I think, also surrounding projects that we do if more research goes into different areas or different ways of, of applying that style of, of different stuff like that and then in the brief you’ve got a hyperlink, or whatever to websites where you can actually see umm… those processes….. or you know, that sort of style so then you have like quite a good understanding of something before you even approach the project.

So, just so that I can elaborate, and I don’t want to put words in your mouth now, but for example, if you had something like this… and I know it was on the classroom… What do you think? How would you prefer to have it; this sort of information. For example in terms of your experiences of the classroom, What did you feel when you went there. I mean, did you enjoy it? Did you like it? Not like it?Did you find it irritating going to another place to get your brief or…

I thought it was obviously a little bit irritating to log in and then your passwords were incorrect and stuff, but when you were in it, when you had the time to sit and actually read everything, it was very helpful

Same time this, these briefs you can’t use them ‘cause it’s on the site..its on the computer but if you hand out the sheets, I mean the thing 20 minutes it’s gone. So with this, it’s forever there, it’s there so you know I can go back and refer to my notes - I find it’s easier.
I just felt that uh.. that for the cookbooks like on line it's much easier and more interactive like when you go to it 'cause like if you look at a book you get bored with the book and you want to just put it to the side – but with the internet, obviously you want to go in and look at this, and you look at that...

You can get it anywhere as well...ja [interruption]

Maybe I was to open a new tab and look it up...look it up.... The research.....

Just quickly ...just want to check...have you tested that you can hear all the voices around this table?

I have tested it...if you speak clearly like yu are, it will be fine...hope...otherwise we'll just have to do it again!

But I want to hear from this side of the table too...what was your experience?

I found it quite useful because all the information is summarized you can do uh ...like a questionnaire to see whether you understand what you've read so I thought it was quite useful ...

So did you...in your experience when you did, because I know we only did one... did you enjoy doing the quiz. Can anyone remember doing that... [interruption]

It forced...it actually forced you to not just [interruption] read but understand....ja 'cause like it's very easy for us to all read something but when you are forced to actually answer questions that we should know, and then you realize you don't, it forces you to go back and then when you go back and read it again, you reading it with a whole new frame of mind and the fact that it gave you all these questionnaires, little test things that you can do, definitely helps a lot than just giving us a document .....here's the notes, read it... cause it's boring really... it's evident with the pdp test ... if you think about it...how many times have you had to rewrite the pdp test... but because we've read it, like, 3 or 4 times and we didn't actually learn it... [interruption] learn it ... I think that's where the problem was with that.

So, if you say learning...do you think it's remembering or understanding?

Understanding... visual... completely understanding.... 'cause now when you ask someone about it, you actually know about it 'cause you've understood it

Once you understand it, you'll remember it [interruption]

It's not an issue, ja ....

SO WOULD YOU SAY THEN THAT LIKE THAT LITTLE ONLINE TEST YOU'VE BEEN GIVEN A SECTION AND THEN GIVEN AN ONLINE TEST, AND IT DOES HELP YOU TO UNDERSTAND THINGS BETTER

Oh... a lot better

How did you feel about the crossword, for example, when we did silkscreen?

Uh... Uh... well the notes were very helpful... 'cause the ones that were in pdf ; I found reading from the pdf much easier from than using internet...um...'cause when you use the internet you have to wait for it to log in where with the
pdf you just click on the next page and the next page comes and doing the crossword puzzle it made me understand
because they gave a definition then you had to look for the word; once you, once you remember that, it’s always going
to stay in your mind; it’s something that, that won’t [interruption]
And it was fun... it was different; Like I didn’t think I’d learn doing a crossword puzzle but it helped so much; ’cause then
you don’t know what it is and then you sit there and like, well I’ve read through everything, now what could it be and
then it forces you to stimulate and then you get going again.
You want to finish it as well; very involved... it’s a crossword [interruption] you don’t leave a crossword [interruption] you
have to finish this thing... you must finish it.
It’s just that with that kind of stuff I reckon just like as much imagery as you can find about actual people using a
silkscreen and the process of that stuff because obviously we’re visual people like that’s why we’re doing this course,
because I find that like I learn a lot like when I’m watching things like pictures and videos, I learn the most from that,
like even tutorials on the internet when someone’s talking to you and you’re watching like most stuff on paper...
They show you something like that then the whole class tends to copy that one style ... you know what I’m saying...
[interruption] yes... I’m talking about things where the is one like the process of silkscreen where you know, it’s not like
there’s a lot of different ways to know the structured sort of thing
Ja certain things you have to switch off
I was just going to add a note about showing examples of what you expect because I remember, first year when we
did... ah... it was design techniques we were working gwash...... doing our last project... ah.. the lecturer showed us like
where [interruption] previous.... So, ja that’s one of the things we do struggle with because we don’t know what to put
out there ‘cause we don’t know what people [interruption] expect
And I mean there is a good side too is the fact that you have to interpret it yourself but I think it is also quite limiting
because I might go down a totally different path and then come to Tech and I’m wrong & then all my work that I have
done all that energy is spent and I’m wrong, but I think definitely seeing more examples of what we’re expected to do
would help [interruption] ... not just internet stuff, like stuff people have done at Tech ...
It’s like a little bit of competition ‘cause you see like that year [interruption] they can do some of our stuff and then like
you can use in your head you like I’m going to do better than......
It’s the same principle even in industry because before you start a logo or anything you look for examples of you know,
then you know what the standard it is and then you can either surpass it or just meet it and then somebody says, do
something and then you’ve got no records whatsoever you don’t know how much effort to put in so you just get
confused [interruption]
You don’t know where the bar is so then how can you get higher on the bar when you don’t know what you’re going
for, ja..
How does technology affect the way you talk about your work?

How do you mean?

With others or with, for example, with your peers or with your lecturers… How does it change or how do you think it could change the way you talk about your work at the moment….let’s start with the first. How does it affect how you talk about your work to other people, or with other people?

I found myself… I mean that anytime that I just email you at a certain time of the day and then get the email back and that’s like immediate feedback so I can get onto it instead of having to wait until I have to come to Tech. If I’m sick I can still do the work and just email you then you reply then technology helps us connect the testing so…[interruption]

I think there is no doubt that there’s a lot of pros to being able to do it but the major issue is like going back to it is that not everyone is able to do it and then it creates a divide in what you’re doing or I don’t know if there is some way to set up that people can have more access to that .umm… obviously that is quite a hard thing….

I think looking at it from a different way, [interruption]

It helps a lot, like of course it does, ’cause you can send a picture to someone and then get feedback point by point, umm… you know, and that’s interaction, you’re learning, so that’s.. ja… a good thing but,,,

They’ve basically said everything that I wanted to say…

Okay, what about your peers? Do you use for example, this side maybe, do any of you use other technologies to talk about your work with your peers or with other people? [Interruption]

BBM…there’s a BBM group, a Graphic Design 2 Group and there’s a few members say about 13, so as many people can join as possible, that’s awesome ’cause if I don’t know how to do something on a certain programme, I’d say ’Hey Guys…how do you resize something on Photoshop” and someone will reply “Do this, do this, do this” and then immediately someone will be able to help me [interruption] it’s just so handy

I can imagine that would be helpful…

Must be so frustrating if you don’t.. like I know….

You need…obviously a blackberry to….

Obviously you would but …. 

So let’s say for those that don’t have a blackberry. What, how else do you think?

Well.. Facebook

Okay, how do you use Facebook for example
I think ….. (inaudible) take all of us [laughter]
Some people do this
I think it forces us to like go and look at it and then we can say why it's really good. I know like the portraits and stuff.
if I've got mine on Facebook and you get such awesome feedback; it gives you so much more confidence and then
some people will put work that they've done at home and then you can look at it and it can inspire you to do so much
more; so it's definitely nice 'cause you're visually seeing and interacting with your other students [interruption]
And also you know, like photography as well [interruption]
Ja... Facebook is amazing for just contacting people and also, and also if you do your own design and you put it up
and Um... and if you have connections or people in other places that are doing similar things then it's also start
connecting to a bigger sort of area of people in the same field Um... so ja, ....
And I think Facebook does also help to promote you, you know, 'cause there's people for me, for instance, I've got
people with their friends, but then I don't really know them…. it's just people I invited and they invited me so when they
see my work they get interested and that promotes me as a graphic designer.... so people out there can see..
[nterruption]
And promotes graphic design [interruption]
And you can get people to [interruption]
Ja.. and you can get huge jobs; I mean I was asked to do a design for someone; I mean I couldn't do web design so I
said, "No" but he said that please can you give me a contact with someone who can to do this so it opens a lot of
connection doors and also different companies will have a Facebook page and then your life... page and they can give
you a feedback and you can like communicate with them so.....
I think um...basically, what you're saying about the pro's of this stuff is that there's a big benefit to having a sort of
digital portfolio, so all your work that you do and have is online and all you have to do is send a link so someone to see
and then [interruption]
Ja...Facebook is a means of doing that [interruption]

Does anyone have an online portfolio?
I've got Deviant Art one.......two guys in class.... who have a blog
I have [interruption]
Oh, and Emmanuel................[interruption]
A blog about design ...... or..[interruption]
It's really good 'cause you can like really develop by doing that; you can go back and I mean, some people write a
diary it's just their way of developing, I guess... on our blog I think it would be better if we all learnt how to do that.. I
mean if we could all have, like the knowledge of being able to have our own web site and encouraged to put our stuff
on there and write about our own work and any work we like of our friends, be able to post a link onto our page like I
think it would be awesome...

It's not that hard hey...um there's a lot of ways that you can sort of set up that sort of stuff... like even ummm... what's
it called “Works” or something ...ja WORKS you can create your own web site and then run it for free, basically ... but
it says “Works” at the end... like if you just sort of [interruption]

Even if we go...

If we start educating people about that stuff and also promoting them to get all their stuff as a digital portfolio then, then
they're really like, really up a level, so they, they're exposed to a much broader area as opposed to just their
classroom.

And I think we need to know that now ...'cause I think that with job..work experience you need to do, jobs you need to
get you have to have an electronic portfolio ... so I don't think any of us know how to do that .. like legitly so, ....

Ja.....

Um...Do you want to say something, because everyone else is talking?

Hilton, what do you think?

I'm fine

Also, the thing is like as someone said ummm... [interrupted laughter]

There's a lot of companies and brands/friends that have Facebook pages and there's a lot of competition, there's a lot
of blogs, a lot of exposure basically on social networks like Facebook and when, when you're going there you can see
your, your classmates' work or you enter a competition.... but you, you get so exposed to other people's designs and
that's where you grow, that's where you ... [interruption]

So true...

Also....

and then you understand why... your... your... that things that you do in class are so ??? why you getting 50's why
you getting 40's and that's why you're not getting 80's..... that's why you also understand you get a broader mind
[interruption]

Like quality and where, like what's better because I think the best thing for us to know is that if our work is good
enough you should be able to know if it's good or not; to be able to judge your standard we should like how we've been
marking our own work; I know it helped a lot because you know, and also having to be criticized I think is very important too.

I’d like to talk more about that too…

Ja…

Because it’s important…

We need to learn which is good and to be able to accept the fact that ok, my work isn’t up to standard but yours is really good; why is yours good and why is mine bad; to understand it and then to move forward ’cause I think if you know your mistakes you can completely better yourself on it …

SO HOW CAN WE USE… WE DO START, WE HAVE STARTED I THINK, MAYBE USING PDFs WHEN YOU CHOOSE YOUR PHOTOGRAPHS… DOES THAT HELP? [interruption]

Definitely

Describing your work maybe?

And also for us to have to really think about our work because I found before I email, I’m having to write about my photographs, so then I’ll be saying… telling you what I think is good about them and what the subject matter all that stuff… it’s forcing me to look at it and judge for myself … Wow … the subject matter isn’t really strong in this photo, maybe I need to take another one …

Anybody else?

But you should be able to tell people to do it in class ’cause people just don’t do that kind of stuff …

Oh they do, believe me, there are a lots of e-mails… {nods around table}

I reckon a lot of people don’t

How do you feel about that… does it work for you?

Ja… it does because it actually makes you look at your work and look at what’s weak, what’s strong and then kinda get to what you wanna do if something’s wrong you just wanna get take off more pictures and find better stuff to actually send in and get more feedback..

Okay. So is feedback important to everyone? {visual agreement}

Ja you need to know where you’re going wrong in order to improve

Before the feedback…

And not after……
And you say yes? (agreement around table)

like a group of us …seen the other guy from our class, tall guy, go to do the .... and go and shoot photos together…

Together….

Together...

You say ok, ?  Um… Um….

Okay. So would you use technology perhaps to even do that?

Ja, definitely

Alright if we can go back to the blog thing…somebody mentioned or said it would be nice to have an
individual blog…but then it was also put out there, maybe a collective blog would also be good. Where
everybody's just linked so that it becomes a class blog?

Click, Click, Click… that's the start of it but..

Ja…

Mean but I don't think it really kicked off like it should have but I think it would be nice if we all kinda had like a..a
kickstart in the right direction that we have like a blog that we could all go to and interact with and maybe briefs were
put on the blog more of an interactive that we could all comment we wanted to start a conversations about different
works, similar to how Facebook is; like you can go into her album and then comment on it 'cause I mean that
generates a lot of discussion but more of the academic thing rather than just a fun [interruption]

Like rather actually try and help each other and then let someone put on there..."Guys I need your help; this is not
working, what would you recommend" and then people would be able to just log in, comment, go out, have it always
on, you know…something like that

Ja I think we should be blogged

Definitely [interruption…laughter]

You got blogged

I guess personality …...

You mentioned that we started click click quite late as an experiment. What would you do... I'll ask you...what
would you do to make something like that work better?…Does anyonbody have any suggestions about how
something like that could be working or used to work better?
I think don’t limit it to just to people’s work…like post if you see a cool web site, or a cool design web site posted on that wall and then people actually want to go and see like, ay…maybe someone’s got a cool web site… then you go into that link… so anyone who sees anything [interruption]

Make them want to go

Ja

Exactly.. and then the more…it’s like one of those…a snowball effect; the more people are going on and commenting, the more other people are gonna want to have their stuff there and then like once it’s set up and once it’s up and running, then it’s really good.

Very helpful as well

And, it’s also like…”cause I never like know what’s cool so when I feel like just surfing… like cool design and stuff…

Like… update your status, say guys look, our class is blogged with something, people, our friends, your friends, her friends, all our friends and then we can start something there… don’t just make a blog and then just like relax…

[interuption]

Get it out there; advertise it on Facebook, have it in your message, status… like really…

And then you can have like you could have a thousand people check your work that you’re putting out…

Like a art I mean when you come to exhibition, I don’t think it should be once a year we get to see everyone’s work…

[interuption] it should be throughout the year…

Do it properly…and like maintain it properly…and like keep it regular…

Keep it legit; so then you have like a third year portfolio you go in and follow like certain students … you can go in and see like.. for now, it’s been a little hesitant for me ‘cause I don’t know what to expect for third year… the only way I’m going to find that out is by going to the exhibition.  I think it should be throughout the year to be more interactive with each other … I know Vega does a thing when you work together with first, second and third years … and like a team…and I think that would be really cool ‘cause you’re combining the technical like skill with the young, fresh ideas that are completely naïve…

That’s brilliant… that’s really good…

And it’ll force us to like become like linked as like little groups …I don’t know… and also to have more friends in the field; like….

And we’re all doing the same things…there’s no reason why we shouldn’t all be discussing it [interruption]

Activity bounces…..
There's one thing that I like thought for a while is for, for a while is more competition and more incentives and like little things, you know... and like also where we... where like there's like a competition, we all work together like that day and

When you say competition... can you elaborate... meaning?

I don't know, like um...

The T-shirt thing we got given for the competition... it had money. We used that competition as our control project and although the timing was a bit off, everyone was so into doing it because not only to produce the work for your mark, but the fact that there was a chance you could win money... just made everyone so much more interested...

And also, like the sensible... project crow was that they were actually going to use that thing... you know

More motivated..?

Ja...

Of course...

Very motivated...

So you reckon that having a prize... so what... in other ways?

There's a lot of ways to do it... but

Tell me...

It's not even the prize... just to know that your design could be chosen... like this whole Cop 7 Team... I mean it's a huge thing for us to do. A lot of responsibility and it almost makes you... O.K. my work has to be on good standard because if it isn't, the world is looking at this... so it forces you to really try your best... and when you try your best, your work is generally really good.

And also, one thing that is quite cool is like, if we have a project or something... if we have like a cool project Um... then like organize an exhibition of that... and organize an event around it like... you know like, that Friday... you know... this is a project, this is what the theme was and then you've got all your things up..... then ja... [interruption by cell phone]

I like the idea of what's being said there... can we explore that a little more? How could we... [interruption] So what you're saying it would be a face-to-face thing as opposed to using technology [interruption] saying that it needs to be a little bit of both... not individuals... but also...

Feedback... like actually enjoying each other's work... and like not only congratulating each other but being able to sit and appreciate everyone's work, 'cause I know the face illustrations I never got to see anybody else's and it would be
so nice if we could all like together discuss it and maybe do like a little slide show where we all show each other’s
...maybe have a good laugh about some of them... I think it will bring everyone together as a unit... [interruption]
And also, we need like an exhibition, an exhibition area...like that is an exhibition area ...
Ja...
Like just a little room like with some beanbags, a little table and then an area where people can just exhibit and then
also that’s an area to like use to have events for like... and sell beer also....
What do you prefer...seeing peoples fwork online or digitally, as opposed to face-to-face, or on the board like
the work at the back there?
A bit of both ...
Both!!
Face-to-face is better of the two ‘cause you get to ... but you can’t always do that ...you know what I mean?
I remember when Liandra? was here we had an exhibition of our, our posters he actually [interruption] gave us a crit
on how we did... like that whole week and, and with those posters I think those were like the most genuine ‘cause we
used our hands more than we used computer and., and that really helped...’cause it cut out it’s less time as you, you
usually say.. it takes you less time to make sure that you have it on point by hand ... then you can go to the computer
because most of us I’m sure would just go straight to the computer and see what we can do but it doesn’t work like that
... we have to think and we have to use our hands first
Get back to the basics...
Ja.. I think we forget that...
That first step of art like this ... have a pen and pad
Ja...
We forget that first step and at the same time like I think I remember in High School every term there was some sort of
an award or certificate for someone who has really, really tried ‘cause that also builds confidence ..just as well ‘cause I
mean if you all quiet and that’s great.. I think it’s one of the best I’ve seen and that stays between us... some of us are
really shy and we are very scared to show our work ‘cause we, we’re not that...you know, we, we not open about
anything, but now if you guys have to say..”Ok, look guys..put up your work and let’s talk about it or take pictures” and
... it, it just makes you feel good; like, like the girl Olivia she’s so quiet but I’m sure that was a booster ...she.. she “I
can actually do this!” so...  [interruption]
And also she really deserves the recognition...
Ja... but no one knows of her work and no one knows of her ‘cause we’re always in our own world so I think at the end of every term you guys say... like this person has really improved, this person is doing well, and... I mean... just like a sort of recognition at the end of every term or semester...’cause we all work so hard mmm... but everyone thinks... you know I mean just so good to let people know “Ok guys... she’s doing well or he’s doing well...

And it need not necessarily be the best in the class...

But it’s like improved...[interruption]

I think... recognition... I think they do it in third year.

On a board?

On a board...

So if we get back to the technology again...what I’m trying to find out is whether that would work as well as say a for example...we did a blog... say a class blog or flickr... If you recognised people there, would that also be a boost. Do you think it needs to be on a board?

It’s not that...it’s not that... I think they all have their pros’ and they all have their benefits, it’s just that you need a balance between all of them so... you can’t just have that thing where people... I mean like have both... you know like and look at things from different angles and come, you know, ...

I think on a board is not a good idea ‘cause you won’t be able to get feedback... You just see and say “Oh, it’s nice”

[interruption]

You can’t all tick the page ...

Ja...

But also, for example on the board, you could just have an exhibition for school and on a blog, don’t limit it to school so if you’re doing side jobs and... [interruption]

So, at the same time it encourages like healthy competition sort of, where I see somebody’s work and I’m like... and I, I, I want to do more, I want to explore it more and then when I come to Tech and even...even if my...my...my logo wasn’t chosen or my illustration wasn’t the best, but because of the comments that are in the blog of my other work, then you get to know like, like what’s your strong point ... for example, some people are strong with illustration and they’re not strong in logo design and if, if, if, you... let’s say you weren’t bad in a logo project...and I got a 40...and it discourages you, sort of, but if you’ve got your other work where, where, where you expose your strength, let’s say you’re an illustrator or you, you’re a photographer umm... then you’re going to know instantly where your strong point is and by the time you get to third year, you know which field you are going to go to into [interruption]

Ja, Ja
So, it could work on the board strictly for school and then if there were to be a blog don't limit it to school...

And then it also promotes people doing... think 'cause obviously ummm... the course just gives you the basics you know, and...and the course, depending on how far you take it, I mean, as an individual you can take it as far as you want to...you've got the access to everything and that sort of stuff... seeing that other people are doing other stuff and learning fast and producing really good stuff... like that promotes you to do your own stuff on the side and I think you learn the most doing your own stuff on the side where, where you follow... you're not following anyone's rules... you're doing this design out of your personal freedom... [interruption] that's it......

You're not... not... you're not regulated by any boundaries, you know; you just do your own thing; and that's important, I think for people to do it more often.. 'cause a lot of people only do the school projects, you know, and then they...they could be really good at this thing and they don't even know it, like...

You do... but nobody knows about it...

No...

So that would be a good way of saying... 'guys it's not only me?'

With technology as well 'cause everyone's exposed to it... but not exposed at school ok, so with.. with the blog as well...um... it's good 'cause we depend...we, we so trust what the lecturer says that we think that they are the industry and every lecturer says "No... it's not good" then we just feel crushed ... but now with the blog you get people who say it's good and some say it's not good but then you weigh up their opinions [interruption] and therefore you feel more confident... and then one lecturer that says "I don't like this then you just feel like “Oh my... it sucks" [interruption] It's for the public...so then you get feedback from the public ... there for everyone to see, so you get feedback from the public, you know...

The whole blog thing... sometimes the guys... or whatever... and I explain to them they don't understand..

It's very difficult...

And then I show them the blog...and they say "ok, Ja I see ...the I show them the blog....this is what you do ... and show them you see that this is what happens ... and then they understand...

'Cause not many people understand....

They've got a proper... got a visual aid, they can see what's there.... ok that's how you're doing it....

Oh maybe your work is not up to standard... maybe you get in the 40's... getting better... then some other peoples' not say "Ja" if I show ... they understand ..

Right... ja.
I’m sorry… just to like, it’s very vital that we know where, where we strong at umm.. because umm…umm… [laughter] like umm…ummm.. [laughter] it’s, it’s, it’s very vital that we, that know where, where we strong at, as designers umm..like to, to, to know our strong points and… like also with regard to blogs…and, and Facebook?

Facebook, like umm.. like I got umm.. someone said like we…we…so depend on…on…what the lecturers say and umm…and as individuals as classmates we never really crit each other.. umm…as this year because [interruption] don’t want to hurt her feelings, don’t want to be honest… just go and ask the lecturer … and the lecturer is gonna tell us something else or …

So how would technology change that?

It wouldn’t really help because at, at the same time you have to crit yourself as an individual before you even put up your work to a blog.. ok this is up to a good standard I’m going to upload it to the blog…. that’s the first step…. to be confident about your work and then when it gets to the blog you get critted by your classmates and even the lecturers if they are in the blog [interruption]

So you pass level 1 and then level 2….. Facebook then they are [interruption] they don’t want to say it in your face [interruption] they will say it, be more stimulated over Facebook or the blog……

You can joke about it maybe..?

They’re braver … ja

They make a comment and then… then… hide, and, and with the blog thing or Facebook or anything it’s, it’s much… you can get more honesty from a stranger than someone that you know

Ja…

So, the people that are going to be visiting the blog they going to put in what they think which is going to be honest more than what we as a class ‘cause as you said, we might be afraid to hurt someone’s feelings… they are going to put it as it is and that’s going to help you …

And how does that…how do you feel when a stranger crits your work as opposed to somebody you know?

A designer…for example… can’t be like a carpenter or something… [interruption]

First of all you’re going to have a sense obviously to know if it’s good advice or bad advice

They can’t make judgement..
You like.. Ok.. thanks .... you look at your work and like...actually you know ... like Cas puts his logo on and some
guy like said “Maybe you should try and do this and this” and I was like looking and like, what he was saying was right
... you know. Sometimes you look at your work for so long that you can’t see something that’s so simple that was...
that would make it better and it’s just one small little touch ...

I know my work is not OK ... I try but sometimes I see something ... then I’m jealous, you know ... [laughter...
inaudible]  Ay.... This is cool and I come to class it’s different ...... back there I’m a man... then I come here I’m a
baby!

So you’re saying that people who aren’t designers must comment as well [interruption]

Ja

You need everyone’s opinion [interruption]; you need everyone’s opinion because everyone thinks differently; people
like different things

True

And the public is going to see your work and try and understand what you’re trying to say so you need comments on
everyone...

And you need to know how to handle those comments...

True

One last question....I want to know how we could use...How you think we could use technology to collaborate
with others?...collaborate means working with other people.

Ja, I’ve actually been speaking with this guy in ‘Maritzburg  this web development guy whilst starting up a web site with
that’s basically like Facebook except it’s like its own domain where you have photography design, this, this... you go
onto it, they’ll have like a list of designers Umm... and with like attachments but they’ve got their own profile, their own
all their work up, and then you know, then all the photographers so... and with, and with all their contact details and
stuff as well so then it’s a medium that anyone can use; if someone’s looking to get work done they get it there, they
can check all these portfolios; if they’re looking for a photographer as well, then they can check or if a designer needs
a photographer there’s the detail’s there and they can choose a style that, that they like and then it promotes people to
start working; like doing projects together you know, so you’re using those two things or Umm..ummm... like ja, I don’t
know about design projects but I’m sure it could work..

Ja, Umm... we can use technology to collaborate people in such a way that we encourage people to open accounts on
different web sites, like I... and have my logo there and I’ve already skyped with a guy from Lithuania .. we skyped
and then I’m like, ok cool.. ay...this is the first time I’ve seen a black designer [laughter] so now I have a friend there
who is willing to accommodate me when I’m ready so, I mean if we tell people .."Guys listen, guys go to open an
account see what you get..
Ja, I know, you're right

There's no? like, like 'cause there's some people don't know and then we end up looking at other people's work for inspiration when we are actually inspiring, can inspire other people as well ... so I think ... [interruption] that's how we collaborate with other people, so I mean, I graphic art designers... I have two friends from Texas who I'm, I'm going to be skyping about graphic art ......but not many people know about graphic art, but some of us should have it 'cause we're that good so I would...I think like this encourage people to open accounts get some views from people

[interruption] see......

Ja

Get some [interruption]

To use it properly and consistently, I think 'cause...

Ja, you know what then people can, can get jobs, can... you know, so I think and, and share ideas as well, so you'll get more than just a, a, person, a South African opinion – you get someone whose got a different train of thought from another world and you know it, it, it helps you broaden your mind as well so..

Completely

I think having accounts and different sites and posting your work you should, you should advertise [interruption]

It's just taking a pride in what you're doing basically... all of this what we're saying, basically saying, get your work out there and start showing people and that's the only way to start linking up with people with the same, the same sort of ideas, you know... and the more people with the same ideas get together, the more ideas they'll come up with to promote what they're doing, so... you know

Anybody else think about ways to collaborate with others? What about other universities?

To compete... Vega should see our work, CTI should see our work [interruption] 'cause those are the people who.....[interruption]

Organise like a competition [interruption]

That you could, that you, you know like you could get a lot of people skypes out of that event.... It's like you know that rowing race, that, that University has... what's it... Oxford and Cambridge like that sort of thing, like CT and Vega.... every year we have like, a competition created on like a certain theme for that year ...

Okay...what about doing the same [interruption] but not in the same town?

Digital... except the only problem there is that you can't, you can't it's harder to base an event around it and then events also basically using technology to bring people together for them to be face-to-face and then discuss some [interruption]
So then again, that balance between the two, so you use it to connect, but then you come together face-to-face?

I think that’s very important because then you also you, you, you’re a lot more at ease and you’re relaxed and you’re at this event and you’re there to have fun anyway so you end up [interruption] and it’s also stuff that you’re passionate about and you want to talk to other people and then they’re also passionate so they’ll be like, that’s very cool, and then like, and then you know, you, you create links like that and then also people in industry… that’s a big event that you’ve created and obviously you use technology to promote that event and to market that event and you can use your own designers to do the design to promote that event, but if you get it big enough then it sort of becomes (a centre) or (incentive) for people in the industry to go and check that stuff out; ‘cause also recruitment, you know, for them, so if it’s a big event and major stuff’s being done and you’ll meet people there that, that can offer people work, you know that’s….

Does anyone else have any…does anybody else use skype?

Ay, no.

I just have Skype; I don’t have the internet

You use skype? …..Okay, you mentioned skype; does that help you to connect with that person although not face-to-face…?

It’s better ‘cause it’s, it’s… you see them… and, and this is what we do, we usually um… like, like … I called this guy and he was from China…. Oh, cool, cool… what is that ….[interruption]

Ah… that must have been a whole thing……

It was just so amazing so…I think that with Skype as well I can encourage people…”Hey guys, speak to other people not just….. don’t think South Africa, like… those, those people. we use our culture to, to design that everything that we think is based on what we see around us….how we feel, how we see things….so knowing somebody else from a different world, allows you to kind-of like step out of your world and kind-of like look at it and say hey….“Wait a minute”.. maybe…

Ja

Maybe if I take a bit of that, a bit of that …and this comes out so I think , ja, like open accounts get Skype, get on Skype and get to talk, just talk…..

I think like that basically as a sort of a concluding statement, or whatever, you know we’re kind of going round in circles saying the same thing…but basically promote using technology…. there’s no doubt that… that using technology has endless benefits to it but you need to create the hype around it… and you need to, you know, promote it to be used to its full potential and then once you do that, it will, it will run itself, you know, ‘cause people will be… it’s like Facebook,
look how fast Facebook's spread because more people got on it, the more people wanted to be on it. So do you, do you…. if you figure out the ways of promoting umm.. using technology, then, then it will..

And promoting technology, I mean you have to get back to the basics, like posters… that’s it...

Do a last closing statement from everybody...some are very quiet...

But that’s what this focus groups all about...you don’t have to say anything... In closing, what would you like to make....would you like to say one thing?

Ja... just one thing... a problem about opening an account that... that other people stealing your work; that’s the only thing .. ’cause...

Ja but everyone steals everything Bru...

It’s the risk you have to take these days ....

You can steal something and maybe use it as a weapon but someone actually taking your work...

There are ways of protecting and that’s, that’s like low Res...

Low Res... absolutely

Low Res ...

Honestly, if someone wants to do that, they are going to do it and then it’s not very much you can do about that... so I think don’t worry about the risks, just look at the positives of it [interruption]

Still students...

Very nice

Umm.. I think well... technology in general just about sums up the thing in my point of view, technology in general helps us to see our design like, from an outside point of view... you know what I’m saying...you know, and you get to...

then you get to criticize our own work, like better ...if we can see...if we can like put it out there and then see it from a, from a different perspective, you know what I’m saying ...

So if I can clarify..maybe if you only get feedback from a lecturer or criticism you do tend to take it personally; but because you’re getting feedback from a whole lot of other people as well...you think, oh! Okay maybe it wasn’t because of [interruption]

It’s all relative

...Okay, so you take the good with the bad...
As well as I think technology is huge and we must be taught not to fear it 'cause it's so vast; you don't know where to start; so it's intimidating; I think fear is a...it's not really the technology itself it's the fear...so the more you, you make us dependent on it, the more we feel comfortable around it; so, the more briefs on, online, then the more comfortable we'll be going online to, to look for, for the briefs... the more comfortable we are... so I think and I mean that graphic design as a whole relies on technology and if the internet was to shut for one day... I promise you, we'll all lose our jobs... lose our minds..... for one day I gone nuts... I need to see other work so...

So ja, we need to be taught the importance of it and have it more, more from day one... of, of, of graphic design, so, ja, the importance of it and the danger of it as well....

So, like just back to the first thing we said is that don't... before it becomes the general practice.... you need to look at what's available to... ummm... ja

But it is available at varsity... once you're here. Then the playing fields level; you're saying maybe at home... it's not quite as fair?

Ja, so keep that in mind

So you must have a balance between what is needed at home and what is needed here.

Last year... like my first year... using the internet for such a long period... (inaudible)

But do you think people need more training in how to do that or do you think everybody... [Interruption] more introductory, sort of, and not presume that everyone knows. Do you want to say something?

No

Ja... I just think that it should be introduced 'cause umm... I mean we all come in different schools, like not everyone know about computers, know how to operate them and stuff, so if, like first year, like everything is like, go to everyone, like you know, then it'll be cool...

Make you feel more comfortable...

Ja

Are you happy with what's been said?

Like Veronica once the basics is taught and everyone's like at the same level, then you can build on that...

And you can also help each other maybe... Brad, last closing note... time's up. Okay great, thank you everybody. Do you want to say one last thing?

After people have been introduced to the internet umm... it's also encouraging when the lecturer is umm... they, they give a site that we can go to and... because when you, you, you, are in Varsity umm... like I've been noticing most of the time, students they... like, live to pass... you live for the 50% at the end of the year umm... and that is not good
because the thing that we are taught here, we are taught to be good designers, not taught to get a 50% of the mark; so regardless of whether you get 50% of the mark at the end of the year umm... but then you should, you should be a good designer after, after you get your diploma...so it is encouraging with the internet where, where, where we get pdfs umm... and pdf and certain things to see certain people's work, get encouraged and, and, and not live for the mark but live to be good designers and explore [interruption] but it's not about marks at the end of the day ...

People need to start realizing that...

3 years from now you won't even remember...

They need to realize that this now, is the time to take advantage of, of your time and that you need.. if you get to the end of third year and you've only... 'cause I've also what I was saying to you the other day, Sharon, like, like a literature degree; you've finished that, that's four years of studying, everyone is on level playing fields, you know... [interruption] Design is your portfolio is what sells you and if you haven't worked hard for three years, that's going to be so obvious in what you're looking at...

Vey true, thank you. Thank you.