

OULDI project

Narrative 10

Zanele is a lecturer in the Adult Nursing Department. She has discovered a bank of video clips appropriate for online learning activities on her module, Initial Assessment and Diagnostic Skills, and wants to develop a consistent design to minimise cognitive dissonance for her students, a high percentage of whom are dyslexic.

There are two particular reasons for her interest in redesigning her module for blended learning: firstly the NHS dictated a 25% reduction in contact hours with students and also because allowing students to learn outside the classroom frees up time in the classroom to reinforce the learning, and to address any areas that are troublesome for students. The CMP led her department head to request a workshop to explore ways in which to incorporate online learning activities in their curriculum. If she had been the only participant in the two-day workshop, the changes that she embraced would have made it worthwhile.

The workshop that proved the best for Zanele's department was *Carpe Diem*, the format developed by Gilly Salmon (BDRA, 2010). The tools that overlap with those that were used in the OULDI project the Curriculum Map and the Action Plan. She also used the etivity template from *Carpe Diem*. Zanele is an "ideas person", and had the rest of the group in stitches as she developed her ideas and took them home for her husband to translate into reality in the virtual learning environment (VLE). In brushing up her module site, she needed help from one of the project team as she was adamant that she wanted all the posts to be in Comic Sans font, for the sake of the dyslexics, and this proved difficult to achieve in Blackboard.

Using the tools that she did, Zanele was able to create a coherent design for her module. Her enthusiasm (and her husband's help, no doubt) went a long way towards making her the person in the workshop that achieved more than double the output of any other participant. She developed 7 comprehensive – and progressively more complex – etivities that allowed her students to master skills that would normally take up a fair amount of class time. While the time to develop them was not negligible, the etivities can be recycled for each cohort, thus freeing her up to tackle her next online learning project.

There is no doubt that the *Carpe Diem* process created the space for Zanele to think about the way that she taught students, to reflect on successes and failures, and to discuss her options with both her colleagues and the facilitators of the event. While not one of the learning design methodologies promoted by the OULDI project, *Carpe Diem* was right for the situation; in fact none of the digital options on offer would have engaged Zanele or her colleagues in the same way, and their design processes would not have been challenged or changed.

There is evidence that some academics prefer the old way of doing things, a preference which may have several underlying reasons and that others respond well to representations of learning ; Zanele is one such. Not only do representations help her to make better choices about her design, they also help her students to master the environment and the content. Representations help academics, for instance, to customise their VLE sites in ways that may be more intuitive to students than the usual template. One of Zanele's colleagues has been drawn by her enthusiasm and is now working with her on her new venture. In general, her department tended to be generally negative, which does not promote sharing and collaboration.

Where academics are prepared to engage with curriculum design, and invest a not inconsiderable amount of time in mastering the tools and the concepts, they are rewarded with greater long term efficiency. This is particularly the case when activities developed are able to be reused for a fair length of time. If, however, the tools are complex or require a new skillset, the efficiency decreases. Paper-based approaches seem to suit most people better than digital tools.